Verbarium

I libri di Michele Ranchetti

Ludwig Wittgenstein
Lecture on Ethics

Introduction, Interpretation and Complete Text
Edited by Edoardo Zamuner, E. Valentina Di Lascio and David Levy
With Notes by Ilse Somavilla

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Contents

Introduction

1. In 1929 Wittgenstein was invited to give a lecture to the group 'The Heretics'.[1] The lecture was concerned with a subject—ethics—that Wittgenstein never extensively addressed again in his life. The *Lecture on Ethics* is one of the few public lectures that Wittgenstein delivered to an audience not exclusively composed of philosophers. This explains the warning with which Wittgenstein opens his lecture:

> [An] alternative would have been to give you what is called a popular-scientific lecture, that is a lecture intended to make you believe that you understand a thing which actually you do not understand, and to gratify what I believe to be one of the lowest desires of modern people, namely the superficial curiosity about the latest discoveries of science (*TS* 207: 1).[2]

Wittgenstein gave other public lectures during his philosophical career, but they were mostly directed at philosophers. In November 1912, he read a paper at the Moral Sciences Club.[3] This was probably the first

[1] Wittgenstein, Ludwig. "A Lecture on Ethics". *The Philosophical Review* 74 (1965): 3-12, see the editors' introduction.

[2] References to Wittgenstein's manuscripts and typescripts are made according to the following system. The abbreviation *TS* refers to single typescript items of the *Nachlass*. The abbreviation *MS* and *MSS* refer, respectively, to one and more handwritten items. In this edition, we shall use '*TS* 207' in order to refer to the typescript known as "A Lecture on Ethics." The abbreviation '*MS* 139a' and '*MS* 139b' refer to the two handwritten versions of the lecture, while '*MSS* 139a and 139b' refer to the two versions considered together. For more information about the abbreviations and the reference system, see the editors' introduction in Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Wittgenstein's* Nachlass. *The Bergen Electronic Edition.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

[3] The webpage of the Moral Sciences Club reports the following information from the minutes of the meetings:

> Wittgenstein gave his first paper to the Club in Michaelmas 1912. He and Moore had persuaded the Club to appoint a Chairman to prevent futile discussions and to

of several short communications that he gave to this and other societies.[4] In 1929, Wittgenstein wrote "Some Remarks on Logical Form", which was supposed to be read to the Joint Session of the Mind Association and the Aristotelian Society. Wittgenstein read a completely different paper instead, on the notion of the infinite in mathematics. In April 1941, he was invited to deliver a lecture at the British Academy. Although he wrote a draft of the lecture, known as the 'Philosophical Lecture', the talk was never delivered.

Wittgenstein wrote his lecture during a phase of intense philosophical work, thus writing the lecture was a sort of interruption of his ongoing work. This phase of intense productivity followed a period in which he devoted himself to activities that had no connection with philosophy. Between 1920 and 1926, he taught as a schoolmaster in various villages in Austria. In 1926, after resigning his post, he served as gardener's assistant in a monastery at Hütteldorf. Later, in late summer, he took over the project of designing and realising his sister's house in Vienna. This task totally absorbed him for two years. It was only in 1928 that he decided to return to philosophy. Apparently, his choice was prompted by his having attended a lecture on the foundations of mathematics held in Vienna by L. E. J. Brouwer, in March 1928.[5] On the 18th of January 1929, Wittgenstein returned to Cambridge, where C. K. Ogden invited him to give what became "A Lecture on Ethics."[6]

change the rules so as to limit the duration of talks to seven minutes. Wittgenstein's contribution came on 29 November (the Club's meetings had moved to Fridays to avoid clashing with the Apostles).

See http://www.phil.cam.ac.uk/news_events/msc_hist.html (last access 20th July 2006)

[4] Cf. Redpath, Theodore. *Ludwig Wittgenstein: a student's memoir*. London: Duckworth, 1990, pp. 77-86. See also the webpage of the Wittgenstein Archive, Cambridge:

Since becoming professor, Wittgenstein had been active once more in the sessions of the Moral Science[s] Club, whose chairmanship continued to be held by Moore until 1944. He gives a seminar paper there on 2 February and on 19 February a lecture to the Mathematical Society.'

See http://www.wittgen-cam.ac.uk/cgi-bin/text/biogre10.html (last access 17th July 2006).

[5] Von Wright, Georg Henrik. *Wittgenstein*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982, p. 25.

[6] Monk, Ray. *Ludwig Wittgenstein: the duty of genius*. London: Cape, 1990, p. 255.

2. The lecture was published posthumously in 1965, in the *Philosophical Review*. It is a transcription of typescript 207 of Wittgenstein's *Nachlass*. At that time, it was common knowledge that Wittgenstein had also produced two handwritten versions. In his "The Wittgenstein Papers," von Wright records that "[t]wo manuscripts of this lecture are known to exist or to have existed. The one listed as 139a differs in some interesting respects from the typescript (207) [...]. The manuscript listed as 139b is temporarily missing. It was in Gmunden in 1952."[7] Von Wright compiled the first version of his catalogue in 1968. Since then, the catalogue has been updated and reprinted a few times. The status of the three versions, however, remained unchanged until 2000, when the Bergen Electronic Edition of Wittgenstein's *Nachlass* was published. It was only then that transcriptions and digital facsimiles of *MS* 139b were added to the catalogue. This was made possible by the discovery, in 1993, of *MS* 139b in the posthumous estate of Rudolf and Elisabeth Koder.[8]

According to the Bergen Electronic Edition, there are three full versions of the lecture. They are the *MSS* 139a and 139b, and *TS* 207. The present edition puts forward a novel account of the genesis of the lecture. We believe that *MS* 139a is not actually the first draft. There is another draft, much less defined in quality and clarity, which is included in *MS* 139a itself and has been overlooked by other editors. This draft is constituted by two deleted pages of apparently random remarks written on the reverse of pages 15 and 16 of *MS* 139a.[9] On the basis of strong textual evidence we present them as prior to, and separate from, *MS* 139a.

This edition presents what we shall call a 'conjecture' about the genesis of the lecture as well as a 'speculation' on the possible meaning of a drawing in landscape position sketched on the reverse of page 17 of *MS* 139a. According to the conjecture, the two deleted pages of notes written

[7] *Wittgenstein*, p. 53.

[8] For more details about the circumstances in which they were found see the notes by Ilse Somavilla in this volume.

[9] Manuscript page numbers refer to the page numbers of the original manuscript in its diplomatic version. In the case of the two deleted pages and the drawing, there were no page numbers written on the reverse of the sheets. We shall always refer to these three pages as the reverse, respectively, of pages 15, 16 or 17. In all other cases, we shall refer to the page number that appears in the upper right corner of the manuscript. Note that the first five pages of *MS* 139a are numbered with Roman numerals.

on the reverse of pages 15 and 16 of *MS* 139a constitute the preparatory work from which Wittgenstein obtained *MS* 139a. The notes written on the reverse of page 16 precede those written on the reverse of page 15 in the order of composition. There are thus four versions of the lecture. They are the two deleted pages on the reverse of *MS* 139a, *MS* 139a, *MS* 139b and *TS* 207. According to the speculation, the drawing sketched on the reverse of page 17 may be a figurative representation of Wittgenstein's first idea for the lecture he thought to give concerning ethics.

3. The present edition consists of three parts. The first contains a detailed introduction to the background of the lecture. It focuses on the nature of the ethical demand Wittgenstein felt, probably throughout his life. It is this that Wittgenstein tried to resolve or work through in his early philosophical writings. The majority of his work prior to the lecture concerned logic. However, in his wartime notebooks he devoted half a year to reflections on a few central difficulties in ethics. These reflections were Wittgenstein's most lengthy, but they proved problematic and inconclusive. He re-used little of his prior ethical work when composing the *Tractatus logico-philosophicus*. Instead Wittgenstein moved the ethical beyond the limits of language to the mystical.

The first part also includes a close reading and interpretation of the lecture. The lecture articulates a view that is clearly descended from the same logical framework as the *Tractatus*. The presentation is entirely different however. Wittgenstein presents a view of ethics that, while grounded in considerations of language and logic, appeals to the audience with examples drawn from personal and common experience. The lecture is forceful and rich in metaphors whose meanings require careful reconstruction. Moreover, the antipathy to talking about ethics in the *Tractatus* is absent in the lecture. Instead, Wittgenstein expresses an admiration for our recurring inclination toward fellowship by using language to share the anxieties faced by moral subjects.

The second part of this volume presents the diplomatic and normalised versions of the manuscripts and the typescript. The presentation is preceded by a textual introduction to the transcriptions, a speculation on the meaning of the drawing and a description of the manuscripts. This textual introduction describes the process of transcription as well as the editing of the diplomatic and normalised versions. It also

addresses the issue of the chronological relations between the three versions listed in the catalogue of Wittgenstein's writings and what we regard as the first draft available of the lecture.

In the third part, notes by Ilse Somavilla close the volume. These notes present some historical and stylistic aspects of the lecture. The account presented is consonant with a more traditional way of reading Wittgenstein's works. Somavilla shows how some themes of the lecture are grounded in Wittgenstein's personal experience. The notes also outline a continuity between the *Notebooks*, the *Tractatus* and the Lecture on Ethics, which are seen as expressions of the same philosophical concern. It is Wittgenstein's preoccupation with the limits that constrain our language when it tries to express contents that transcend the experience of the world, such as the problem of what ethics is.

Somavilla emphasises the ethical component in Wittgenstein's style, that is the simplicity and clarity of expression, particularly as seen in the *Tractatus*. The style of the Lecture on Ethics, though, is described as differing from both his philosophical works and his personal diaries. By means of a narrative tone, Wittgenstein presents three examples of his personal experience that might show what constitutes ethics. These are the experience of wonder at the existence of the world, the feeling of absolute safety in God and the feeling of guilt. He considers the feeling of wonder as the 'experience par excellence' for the understanding of the ethical. In the discussion of the examples, Wittgenstein refrains from theoretical analysis and merely hints at what cannot be said in ordinary language. His restraint both in content and in language, the simplicity in his style, however, must not lead us to believe that the thoughts expressed are equally simple and clear.

E.Z.

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We thank the *Philosophical Review* for allowing us to reproduce the text of "A Lecture on Ethics" published in 1965. However, we decided not to use this text in the present edition.

We are personally grateful to Michele Ranchetti, Walter Cavini (University of Bologna), Luca Castagnoli (Magdalene College, Cambridge), Antonella Cosi (University of Edinburgh), Simonetta Nannini (University of Bologna), Peter Lewis (University of Edinburgh), Chris Cowley (University of East Anglia) and Lorna Duckworth.

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While the above people and institutions have all generously shared their experience and knowledge with us, all remaining errors and shortcomings are solely our responsibility.

E.Z., E.V.D.L., D.L.

I

Wittgenstein's Philosophical Work on Ethics

by David Levy

I

1. Wittgenstein turned to philosophy from engineering in 1911 when he was 22. He had become interested in areas of mathematics that had led to an interest in logic. As Bertrand Russell's pupil he began to work on and write about the problems of logic.

Memoirs and biographies concerning Wittgenstein record that he was a serious person with consuming thoughts regarding what was required of him to make of his life something worthwhile or decent. Wittgenstein's concern could and has been called an ethical, as well as spiritual, one.

However, while he wrote a great deal about logic and language during his life, he wrote little about ethics. Of what he did write, even less resembles ethical theory or the moral philosophy studied in academia.

There can be no question that ethical concerns, broadly conceived, were constant in Wittgenstein's life. The testimony of his friends and the evidence of his notebooks and diaries is overwhelming. There is therefore a gap between the enduring importance of ethical matters in Wittgenstein's life and the dearth of his writings on the matter. Establishing his personal views on ethics is principally an endeavour in biography which I cannot undertake here.

I shall confine myself to what Wittgenstein was willing to commit to paper. My purpose is to introduce and explain the ideas concerning ethics that are found in Wittgenstein's writings prior to the Lecture on Ethics. This introduction with its explanations will help in the close reading and interpretation of Wittgenstein's Lecture on Ethics undertaken in the following chapter.

Wittgenstein published little while alive, so I will use his surviving unpublished writings. In his writings, some of his ideas concerning eth-

ical matters are found. Plainly, from the considerations above, the ideas in his writings may give an incomplete impression of his personal views. Nonetheless these ideas are ones that made a first step from musing or reflection to something more considered. Wittgenstein was not given to idle musings even in his diaries. Some of his ideas made a further step to a written form for others to hear or for Wittgenstein to re-use. Therefore, notwithstanding the possible illumination of testimony, the understanding one can gain from Wittgenstein's writings has a good claim to concern his most considered view of ethical matters.

In the remainder of this part I shall review the number and origin of Wittgenstein's early writings and the character of his ethical inquiries. In part II, the centre of this introduction, I shall elaborate, by example and quotation, three principal themes in Wittgenstein's ethical investigations in his wartime notebooks. To do so, I shall first provide an extended example of the kind of ethical experiences and worries Wittgenstein was concerned to address. Part III discusses the transition to Wittgenstein's first book the *Tractatatus Logico-Philosophicus*, the omission of elements of the former from the latter and the final position at which he arrived.[1]

2. Wittgenstein's first philosophical writings concerned logic. He composed some notes on logic in 1913. Subsequently he dictated further notes on logic to G. E. Moore in 1914. From late 1914, shortly after joining the Austrian army at the start of the first world war, he began writing dated remarks in the first of three notebooks used during the war.[2]

A selection from the *Notebooks* were copied into a manuscript that Wittgenstein conceived of as a draft work on logic, something perhaps

[1] The *Tractatus*, as it is commonly called, was first published in German under the title *Logisch-philosophische Abhandlung,* in *Annalen der Natur- und Kulturphilosophie* n. 14 in 1921. It was published with corrections in English in 1922 followed by a revised version published in 1933. Other translations were subsequently published. I shall refer to: Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. International Library of Psychology, Philosophy, and Scientific Method. Translated by C. K. Ogden. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981.

[2] All of these works are published together in: Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Notebooks, 1914-1916*. Edited by G. H. von Wright, and G. E. M Anscombe. 2nd ed. Oxford: Blackwell, 1979. I shall refer to these notebooks as *Notebooks*. I shall cite entries only by date. These will fall solely between 1915 and 1916.

to publish.[3] In reference to the work he eventually published, the *Tractatus*, this manuscript is called the Prototractatus.[4]

The core of the Prototractatus was probably complete by 1916 and it was certainly a work on logic.[5] That it was conceived as a work in logic is suggested by Wittgenstein's original intended title: "The Proposition" (*Der Satz*).[6] Certainly, entries in the *Notebooks*, from which the majority of the material for the Prototractatus is drawn, concern themselves overwhelmingly with logic, language and the expression of thought until May 1916. In connection with these topics Wittgenstein also discusses the nature of philosophy and the nature of the thinking subject whose thoughts are expressed through conformance with the logical structure of language.

3. Prior to June 1916, no written work of an obviously ethical nature by Wittgenstein has survived.[7] There is little reason to suppose that there was any to survive as Wittgenestein's philosophical activity had been directed toward logic. He characterised his philosophical task as the explanation of the form of a proposition and thereby all being (22.1.15). After serving almost two years in the war, the discussion of logic in the *Notebooks* pauses on 11 May 1916. Notebook entries resume on 11 June 1916 but now on an investigation in ethics.[8] A two month period of intensive work princi-

[3] Evidence of an intention to publish is the summary nature of the work (there is a prefatory note that this manuscript is a selection of the best from his other manuscripts) and the inclusion of a foreword.

[4] The Prototractatus was discovered after Wittgenstein's death and published as: Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Prototractatus: An Early Version of Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971.

[5] For the sequence of composition of the Prototractatus see "Some Pre-Tractatus Manuscripts" in McGuinness, Brian. *Approaches to Wittgenstein: Collected Papers*. London: Routledge, 2002, pp. 259-269, and Kang, Jinho. "On the Composition of the Prototractatus." *The Philosophical Quarterly* 55 (2005): 2-20.

[6] Bartley, William Warren. *Wittgenstein*. London: Quartet, 1974, p. 28.

[7] Wittgenstein made coded diary entries of ethical import in his notebooks prior to May 1916, but these pertain to Wittgenstein's feelings not an investigation of ethical matters. The coded entries are published in: Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Geheime Tagebücher, 1914-1916*. Edited by Wilhelm Baum. 3rd ed. Vienna: Turia & Kant, 1992. I shall cite coded entries as for the *Notebooks*, but with the prefix 'GT', e.g. GT28.5.16.

[8] Frustrated with his work, Wittgenstein noted earlier that he has been thinking about the purpose (*Ziel*) of life. GT28.5.16.

pally on ethical matters begins 11 June and ends 11 August. This is followed by another month-long gap. Wittgenstein renewed his efforts for two more month from 10 September until 17 November 1916. After that there are some scattered comments culminating in a final entry on 10 January 1917 concerning suicide as the elementary sin.

Barely four months spread over half a year constitutes as much as Wittgenstein ever wrote concerning ethics. In length, only the Lecture on Ethics, 13 years later, is comparable. But the compact, dense nature of Wittgenstein's *Notebooks* entries makes them by far the widest ranging and most intensive single work of his on ethics. While he would return to concerns raised in the *Notebooks* in work after the Lecture on Ethics—e.g. on the nature of the self and the will—none of it would have the ethical purpose of this period. Compared to his *Notebooks*, no written work reveals more directly Wittgenstein's ethical anxieties or his search for their resolution.

It is notable that Wittgenstein's discussion does not begin as a continuation of his philosophical work in logic. He is not for instance working through a difficulty in his theory or addressing something overlooked.[9] Rather his inquiries have a personal quality. The questions to which he addresses himself seem asked by and of him. He begins with questions much closer to that any thoughtful young adult might ask. Why am I here? What should I do? What can I do? He begins as follows.

> What do I know about God and the purpose of life?
> I know that this world is[exists].
> That I stand in it like my eye in its visual field.
> That something about it is problematic, which we call its meaning.
> That this meaning does not lie in it but outside it.
> That life is the world.
> That my will penetrates[pervades] the world.
> That my will is good or evil.
> Therefore that good and evil are somehow connected with the meaning of life.
> The meaning of life, i.e. the meaning of the world, we can call God.

[9] Wittgenstein may have thought there *should* be a connection between his doctrines regarding the limits of expression and the mysterious nature of the ethical, see GT6.7.16 and GT7.7.16.

> And make of it the simile of God as father.
> Prayer is thinking on the meaning of life.
> I cannot direct the happenings of the world according to my will, but am completely powerless.
> I can only make myself independent of the world—and so in a certain sense master it—by renouncing any influence on happenings (11.6.16).[10]

His concern seems no less than the meaning, point or purpose of life.[11] His interest is of course not in any kind of life, nor even another person's life, but the purpose for his life, signalled by his use of 'I'. Different ethical themes and ideas emerge in subsequent pages of his *Notebooks*, but they all originate, in their ethical character, from a central concern with the problematic nature of the purpose or meaning of life. I shall illuminate three of the central themes below.

As a topic, it is an abstract one. Wittgenstein makes it more abstract by beginning with such minimal assumptions: the world is, I am, I am in the world, life has meaning, my will can be good or evil. It is reminiscent of Descartes' near *ex nihilo* approach in his *Meditations*, famously built on, "I think, therefore I am." More, Wittgenstein goes in many directions, some contradictory, during his inquiries. The abstraction and variety of the themes Wittgenstein develops—as well as their inconclusive development—make a brief or clear exposition of his ethical ideas in the *Notebooks* difficult. That said, the opening entry quoted above is as good a concise statement of the problems, themes and conclusions Wittgenstein addressed in his first written work on the ethical as one could hope for.

II

1. We can, I think, initially make progress with many of Wittgenstein's themes in the *Notebooks* by considering a less abstract example. This example will keep at the fore the ethical nature of the kind of worries Wittgenstein was addressing. It will also counteract the abstraction of Wittgenstein's approach with one whose ethical anxieties are more

[10] Translations are usually the published ones except where the sense is at risk. Items in square brackets are variant translations.

[11] The German words he uses are *Zweck* and *Sinn*.

immediate, even if they are not those common in philosophical ethics. The example is given in terms and themes that recur, sometimes identically, in the *Notebooks*. Wittgenstein's early philosophy is notable for its dearth of examples. The Lecture on Ethics is in sharp contrast because it is replete with examples.

Consider a man, Andrei, who has murdered his ex-wife after creeping into her home. He has not been found out and likely never will be because an innocent man has been convicted of the crime. Now at one *level* these are so many facts: Andrei killed his ex-wife; another man was convicted for what Andrei did and now is confined to prison; his ex-wife lived from the time of her birth to the time Andrei killed her; had he waited another day, she would likely have lived another day; he had a bowl of borscht before leaving to kill her.

Andrei's difficulty is that he has not accommodated himself to these facts. He knows them and does not doubt their truth. But he cannot accept them. Instead he struggles against these facts. He is intermittently disturbed by them, sometimes finding himself thinking obsessively about them, other times feeling ill at ease or unsettled.

When he reflects on these facts to resolve his unease, the intent in his reflections divides into two. First, there is his effort to *understand* the significance of these facts. Second, there are his possible *responses* to them, i.e. what to do about them.

His anguish may express itself in an internal debate between the inclination to put the killing behind him and his own insistence that something must be done if he is to have peace:

> That she is dead and that you killed her are facts like any others, none is more important than another.
>
> —Well these facts seem more important to me. After all they're about me and what I did.
>
> Yes, but you have to be objective about them, not just think about how *you* see them.
>
> —Of course I know they are "just" facts, but some have meaning beyond being "merely" factual. Not all facts are the same, obviously. Some are more important or useful or valuable.

> At any rate it is pointless considering what the facts mean now, who knows how they are connected to the future or past. They might have no impact.
>
> —Yes, but I have to know *now* what they mean.
>
> When your life is at an end, someone will know what it meant—or not. Maybe it will not be known until the end of time.
>
> —But surely they mean something now, for *me*, even if not for the whole world.
>
> Right, if you want to know what the facts mean, you had better ask yourself because they're just facts. If they mean something more it is because you want them to or they touch you in some way.
>
> —That cannot be the whole of it, because I cannot just wish her and what I did away. I am suffering. There is something I have to find out: how this happened, why it happened and what I should do about it. It is like the answers I want are more than just the facts.

Andrei is not considering the meaning of life or the purpose of the world, but he does want to know what these facts mean. He wants to know their significance, specifically how he should respond to them. Wittgenstein's concern is similar, but more general. I will elaborate Andrei's difficulties below, choosing terms and considerations that also emerge in Wittgenstein's ethical discussion in his *Notebooks*.

2. Andrei's internal debate illustrates the complexities involved in trying to understand facts as meaning anything more than what describing those facts mean. Understanding the facts' significance seems twofold. What is the meaning or significance of the fact? Why does it mean what it does? In this case, what is the significance of the fact that Andrei killed his ex-wife, and why does it have that significance?

It is immediately noteworthy that if one's reflections on the facts are considered solely as an effort to describe these facts, then these questions make little sense. For, if one were describing a fact, then the meaning of one's description is simply what is described. Similarly, asking why a description describes what it does is absurd. That is what it is to describe or to be a description.

By contrast, Andrei's problem during reflection on these facts is that their significance or meaning seems to alter depending on how he considers them. Considered differently, the same facts vary in importance.

(i) The idea of levels, mentioned above, is one way meanings alter. Considered *merely* as facts, that he killed his ex-wife is little different from myriad other facts regarding the day of her death or any other day. On what basis are some facts more significant or meaningful than another? They seem, as it were, all on the same level, something signalled by calling them 'merely' facts. When Andrei considers them in this way, the significance of what he has done seems nugatory. For, his wife's death is on the same level as a stone falling, a chicken laying an egg or any other fact.

It is only on a *higher* level that they acquire distinguishing significance or greater importance. What is the higher level of meaning though? It comes, for instance, when Andrei allows that he did not merely kill her, he murdered her. The higher significance is that it was murder. Instead, the higher meaning Andrei understand may be that killing is against God's commandments or that killing makes one evil.

Andrei may understand matters on a *personal* level. If he does, the important facts are those that involve him personally, viz. not that she is dead, but that she died by his hand. The important fact is that he is now a murderer or that she was not a stranger but his ex-wife, a woman with whom he shared life. For Andrei, the personal level comprises the facts that involve him as opposed to those of which he is unaware or he believes do not involve him.

There is a subtlety in the idea of a personal level of significance. For Andrei need not think that the significance he discerns in the facts in which he is involved are significant for all. Rather, the meaning of these facts is relative to him, to his perspective. He could express this saying, "To me, that I killed her is of the first importance. What do I know of another man? I haven't had his life, seen what he's seen."

By contrast Andrei might seek the *absolute* meaning of the facts, expressible by asking solely for their objective meaning. Or, remonstrating with himself, he might insist that he should be logical as opposed to sentimental or emotional. The meaning he discerns should, he supposes, be one that anyone could recognise at any time, from any perspective, from a higher level or not.

(ii) Considerations of time also shape Andrei's attempts to understand the facts. He does not know how matters will develop. Any understanding he has seems vulnerable to future events and facts. Indeed, the meaning of what he does (or has done), considered in terms of its impact, may be indeterminate. Perhaps Andrei will be found out and punished. Perhaps it will come to light that his ex-wife was involved in a terrible conspiracy that Andrei inadvertently brought to an early, valuable end. In short, the significance of what he has done seems a hostage to fortune.

Instead Andrei may think that the significance of these facts will only be determinate upon his death when set against the actuality of his complete life. Suppose he wonders whether what he has done has made him an evil man. Well, this, he could think, depends on how he lives the rest of his life. Redemption may yet be his.

But if, in part, the significance of the facts over which Andrei agonises depends on the future, why should they depend only on *his* future? If his actions, and the facts surrounding him, affect the future then surely this includes the future beyond his death. In that sense, what Andrei seeks is the meaning of these facts for all time. Perhaps in the future, the distinction between killing and murder will be revealed as inconsequential or nothing will come of Andrei's deed and his ex-wife's death will be of no consequence, at least with eternity as its background.

Conversely, it may be the permanence or immutability of these facts that torment him. Even his death cannot free him from the blot these facts make on the world. Those facts, though in the past, are eternal.

(iii) The significance of these facts has varied above with Andrei's different perspectives on the facts. This will prove intolerable if he must still decide among perspectives. For each of these might be thought on the same level. And each perspective might be thought inert insofar as none demands adoption, any can be ignored.

Andrei's disquiet by contrast appears as a demand insofar as it is an intrusion that puts him ill at ease. It is as if the facts demand something of him. But if they are inert, the demand would seem, of necessity, to originate in Andrei.

In defiance, Andrei might say, "She's dead, what is it to me now?" But of course this is bluster for he does care about the fact that he killed his ex-wife. It is revealed by his unhappiness, by his feelings of guilt. His happiness is interrupted by the voice of conscience or by the feel-

ing that God will disapprove when Andrei reaches the Final Judgement. The significance of these facts, as against myriad others, is that they affect him. That is the evidence of experience.

(iv) Andrei can look to the facts for their meaning, but his reflections have led to himself. This is one answer to the question of why the facts mean what they do: the meaning originates in him. He may think therefore that when he has decided what meaning to give these facts, that is the meaning they will have for him.

However this is at odds with how his anxieties appear in him. His anxiety is that the meaning of what he has done is unknown to him. His suffering appears to him as a lack of clarity or a lack of resolution. Something is bothering him. He knows plainly enough what it is. It is that he killed his ex-wife without consequence for himself. The consequence he expects is what her death by his hands will mean for him. It may mean that he will spend 30 years in hard labour. It may mean that he is condemned before God. It may mean nothing. If his anxiety concerns which of these is the meaning of what he has done, then equally plainly it is not in his gift which it is.

Rather, the meaning of what he has done will be determined by those who stand in judgement over him. These may be his fellows who sentence him to hard labour. Or it may be God who condemns him. Or again, Andrei may think that his fate was sealed before his murder, that everything in his life led up to that point, that it was fate. He may lament, "It is my fate to suffer and always was."

These ways of thinking about the matter suppose that there is an ordering agency, a power in the universe such that things happen as they do and mean what they do. What if such a power was absent or inactive, at least some of the time? It seems obvious that what Andrei has done must mean something just because of what it is—murder, say—not because of how the world actually goes. It must have an *unconditional* meaning, quite apart from its effect, *if any*, on the course of the world.

3. Andrei can respond many ways to his situation. His efforts to understand the meaning of what he has done, to resolve himself to the facts of his wife's death may not evoke a response beyond persistent unhappiness. If he does respond, his responses may be expressed, broadly, as actions or attitudes.

(a) His choice of actions are few because he cannot directly alter the facts of what he has done. He can try, indirectly, to alter the facts by doing penance or by minimising the impact of his ex-wife's death. The penance Andrei seeks will express his understanding of the meaning of what he has done. Through penance he may alter the meaning of what he has done.

By committing suicide Andrei can seek to obliterate the facts. At one level this is futile for the facts remain, at another it is complete as an end to his suffering. His suicide would express his being overcome by the meaning of what he has done, e.g. because he feels that anything else in his life is irremediably polluted.

Andrei can withdraw from action into self-conscious inactivity. For Andrei may think that after what he has done, confidence in knowing what he should do is misplaced. His least inclinations are now suspect in the light of what he proved capable of doing. Andrei could express himself by saying he doubts his self-control or his sense of right.

(b) Given that the facts are immutable, action may seem futile. All that may be left to Andrei in his efforts to resolve himself is a new attitude to the facts—one in which his disquiet is lessened.

The disquiet and unhappiness can persist though. Antagonistically, he may become enraged that this should have happened to him. Why, he asks, did it come to this? How did this happen? Or, in supplication, he may be bewildered by what he has done, lamenting remorsefully, "How could I do it?" These and their variants each express Andrei's irresolution to the facts that is the root of his unhappiness. Better, his continuing unhappiness is interdependent with continuing attitudes of irresolution to the facts. In the extreme this will be a delusional denial of the truth of the facts themselves.

Andrei's attitude could instead focus on the moment. He focuses on one day at a time, not thinking what tomorrow may hold. In this way, he will not fear punishment nor hope for absolution. Alternatively, he can ignore the present and take the long view. Andrei will think that the meaning of what he has done—its significance—will become apparent later, in the fullness of time. As above, the fullness of time might mean the fullness of Andrei's life or the fullness of all time.

Indeed, the immutability of the past might well encourage another response: what is done is done, leave what cannot be changed. Andrei's inaction may express this: his powerlessness in the face of fate. Since he

is evidently powerless to control himself as he should and is powerless to control the course of the world, Andrei may seek independence of the world, merely existing, passively carried by events.

Less passively, in attitude at least, Andrei can wish that things were different, that he had not killed her, even while knowing that it is only a wish, with no chance of fulfilment. This attitude is a resolution of his unhappiness perhaps, though it is not an acceptance of the facts. His wish expresses his non-acceptance.

Lastly, Andrei may accept the meaning of what he has done. The precise expression of his acceptance will vary in ways that would be difficult to anticipate. However, seeking proper punishment would be one. Strangely, resolving his anxieties by accepting the meaning of facts that require his punishment might make him happy—despite the sufferings of punishment—just because he now understood and was doing what is demanded. This too is a surrender to powerlessness, but of a different kind. Andrei is not inactive, but now active in harmony with the world, with its order, which he could call the will of God.

4. We can take stock of Andrei's position as follows. Andrei is persistently anxious. He seeks a resolution of his anxiety by considering his position in the world relative to the source of his anxiety, viz. his killing his ex-wife. He feels that if he can just get a clear understanding of his situation he can resolve his disquiet. But the clarity he wants is elusive. Worse it seems to depend on him. Yet his own involvement is equally problematic. His existence seems of paramount importance, yet it is unclear what about him is implicated in or conditions the meaning of the situation. More, on the one hand it seems that it is up to him to resolve the situation, while on the other he seems, and might always have been, powerless.

The elaboration of this example shows the shifting significance of facts and corresponding responses. The significance of facts is here more than what is expressed by a description of those facts. The meaning here concerns the purpose demanded of the person who understands them. Roughly, the meaning of the facts, in this sense, is how one should respond to them.

Wittgenstein's concerns are similar to Andrei's: he is anxious about what the world means or the purpose it expresses. The chief difference is that Wittgenstein begins with all the facts of the world, not some to

which he is personally related. The efforts to find a resolution of their anxieties in the ethical significance of facts—of his place in the world—are elusive and problematic. Some similarities in approach and conclusion are as follows.

A disturbed conscience is a sign of misunderstanding, disharmonious attitude or the voice of God (8.7.16, 29.7.16, 30.7.16, 13.8.16). God is fate or God is the world (8.7.16, 1.8.16). The problems of life are intertwined with temporal perspectives (6.7.16, 8.7.16, 14.7.16, 2.9.16, 7.10.16). Ethics concerns the absolute or non-contingent (24.7.16, 30.7.16, 2.8.16, 10.1.17). Ethics is an attitude to fact (29.7.16, 4.11.16). The personal is essential to the ethical (1.8.16, 2.8.16, 5.8.16, 12.8.16, 2.9.16, 17.10.16). Resolution and happiness depend on accepting the facts (6.7.16, 8.7.16, 13.8.16, 29.7.16, 2.12.16).

The difficulty in the reflections are similar too. Several times in his *Notebooks* entries on ethics Wittgenstein starts anew (8.7.16, 21.7.16, 9.10.16). Several times he self-consciously allows that his progress is confused or unclear (29.7.16, 30.7.16, 2.8.16, 5.8.16).

It is therefore, I think, fair to claim that my Andrei example gives immediate application of the ethical anxieties that motivated Wittgenstein as well as many of the routes Wittgenstein travelled in his reflections. However, a deeper understanding of Wittgenstein's views on ethics can be had by reviewing in detail three central inter-related problems around which the majority of the *Notebooks* entries on ethics revolve. Here too the parallels with Andrei will be evident, but now in Wittgenstein's more austere and abstract terms.

The first problem concerns the meaning, significance, importance or value of facts. The problem is that all facts seem like they are on the same level with regard to importance or value, but if there is good and evil then where is it if not in the facts?

The second is the problem of the unworldliness of the subject. The problem is that the subject whose ethical engagement is essential for ethical significance must be in the world, but cannot in a factual or worldly sense be so.

The third is the problem of the powerlessness of the will. The problem is that the subject seems powerless to affect or effect events in the world, but on the contrary cannot be passive, for the exercise of will seems a condition on being a subject.

5. Wittgenstein emphasises that the world itself is not morally loaded, i.e. does not have moral meaning. Everything in the world, as constituents of facts, is on the same level. "A stone, the body of an animal, the body of a human being, my body, all stand on the same level" (12.10.16). And no constituents are essential or more important than any other. "For it must be all one, as far as concerns the existence of ethics, whether there is living matter in the world or not" (2.8.16). So for Wittgenstein, worldly events, insofar as they are transitions among the factual constituents of states of affairs, are also one the same level with the world's constituents. "That is why what happens, whether it comes from a stone or from my body is neither good nor bad" (12.10.16). Wittgenstein's conclusion is an explicit denial of value in facts, "The world itself is neither good nor evil" (2.8.16).

So, if there is good and evil, which Wittgenstein took to be so, then it must originate or inhere in something other-worldly. One possibility is a domain beyond the facts or on another level. Even before his ethical reflections, Wittgenstein tentatively endorsed this possibility:

> Suppose there is something outside the facts? Which our propositions are impotent to express? But yet we do have, e.g. things and we feel no demand at all to express them in propositions (27.5.15).

More, he described understanding something higher this way, "To believe in a God means to see that the facts of the world are not the end of the matter" (8.7.16). Wittgenstein certainly thought that the ethical was not like the factual. "Ethics does not treat of the world. Ethics must be a condition of the world, like logic" (24.7.16). Being a condition of the world means at least that it is *not* contingent, that the possibility of the ethical does *not* depends on *how* the world actually is. Ethics is absolute.

There are conditions on the possibility of the ethical. He asks, "Can there be ethics if there is no living being but myself?" (2.8.16). He answers, echoing that ethics is a *condition* of the world, "If ethics is supposed to be something fundamental, there can [be ethics with the subject as the only living being]" (2.8.16). The place of the subject is made more explicit when Wittgenstein adds, "If I am right, then it is not sufficient for ethical judgement that a world is given" (2.8.16). In other words, for there to be ethical judgements, there must be subjects who make these judgements as well as what is judged.

The place of the subject in ethics is made more explicit when Wittgenstein says, "Good and evil only enter through the subject. […] good and evil […] are not properties of the world" (2.8.16). The subject, the person engaged in understanding the world, originates good and evil. He is essential to any significance beyond mere description of facts, to higher meaning. He imbues the world with meaning among which would seem to be good and evil. This cannot originate in others if the world is to be one that he understands and experiences. For, "What others have told me about the world is a very small and incidental part of my experience of the world. I have to judge the world, to measure things" (2.9.16).

The subject's engagement is personal and perspectival. The personal engagement of the subject is a function of his will, his capacity to act. "Things acquire 'significance' only through their relation to my will" (15.10.16). The will is detailed further below. The subject's perspective alters the standing of things and thereby their significance. For taken by themselves as things, all things are on the same level. Wittgenstein says, "As a thing among things, each thing is equally insignificant […]" (8.10.16). Recalling that things (and facts) are inert, he says, "For 'Everything is what it is and not another thing.'" (15.10.16).

The difficulty Wittgenstein confronts, like Andrei, is the arbitrariness of perspective. For instance, one can emphasise the perspective that emphasises *immediate* appearances or a longer view. "For it is equally possible to take the bare present image as the worthless momentary picture in the whole temporal world, and as the true world among shadows" (8.10.16). Taking one over another will alter what one can expect of one's situation, "Whoever lives in the present lives without hope and fear" (14.7.16), and, "Only a man who lives not in time but in the present is happy" (8.7.16). It is similar for an eternal perspective in contrast to one fixed amidst past and future. "The usual way of looking at things sees objects as it were from the midst of them, the view *sub specie aeternitatis* from outside" (7.10.16).

The problem then is that the facts—and the world which they constitute—are not good and evil, nor do they have such ethical properties. Yet, there is good and evil. So where is it? Wittgenstein accepts that ethics must not be *in* the world, but must be *of* the world—like logic. Ethics is a condition of the world, meaning that ethics is absolute insofar as it does not depend on how the world is, only "that the world is."

And this last, Wittgenstein assumed at the outset.[12] Ethics is itself conditional on there being a subject. The subject is the one capable of ethical understanding, whose engagement with the world gives it higher, ethical meaning.

6. There is an obvious objection to this picture. The subject surely *is* in the world. If the subject is the origin and bearer of good and evil, then why, at least insofar as the world is part-constituted by the subject, is not the world good or evil? Indeed, if the subject is in the world and is the bearer of good and evil, why may he not be analysed or described like anything else in the world. In short, if the subject is the origin of the ethical, then surely he will yield to investigation like anything else in the world.

Wittgenstein however doubts this, for, odd as it seems, the subject does not appear in the world. What is inescapable in experience is being a subject who thinks, perceives, etc. Having a perspective seems a *sine qua non* of experience: "The situation is not simply that I everywhere notice where I see anything, but I also always find myself at a particular point of my visual space […]" (20.10.16). Yet, "In spite of this, however, it is true that I do not see the subject" (20.10.16). The problem is that, "I confront every object objectively. But not the I." (11.8.16).

The investigation mooted above seems in actuality ill-suited to the task of investigating the subject, something that Wittgenstein had considered during his prior work on logic.

> I have long been conscious that it would be possible for me to write a book: "The World I found." […] In the book "The World I found" I should also have to report on my body and say which members are subject to my will, etc. For this is a way of isolating the subject, or rather of shewing that in an important sense there is *no such thing as the subject*; for it would be the one thing that could not come into this book (23.5.15).[13]

Wittgenstein plainly finds the problem baffling. The one thing that seems omnipresent is impossible to locate, "Where in the world is a metaphysical subject to be found?" (4.8.16). "[…] Isn't the thinking

[12] See above, part I, § 3, first line of *Notebooks* entry for 11.6.16.
[13] My emphasis.

subject in the last resort mere superstition?" (4.8.16). "The I, the I is what is deeply mysterious" (5.8.16).

He makes tentative steps toward clarification. First, "The I is not an object" (7.8.16). Second, he addresses common sense, viz. the subject's body is in the world.

> The philosophical I is not the human being, not the human body or the human soul with the psychological properties, but the metaphysical subject, the boundary (not a part) of the world. The human body, however, my body in particular, is a part of the world among others, among beasts, plants, stones, etc., etc. (2.9.16).

Nonetheless, his conclusion in the first instance is negative: "It is true that the perceiving[knowing] subject is not in the world, that there is no perceiving subject" (20.10.16). But this cannot be correct, for the reasons given above, viz. ethics depends on the subject. He repeats, "Were there no will, neither would there be that centre of the world, which we call the I, and which is the bearer of the ethical" (5.8.16), and, "[…] the subject is not a part of the world but a presupposition of its existence […] good and evil […] are predicates of the subject […] not properties of the world" (2.8.16). His position is then that ethics requires a subject who is *engaged* with the world but who is not *in* the world. As Wittgenstein puts it, "Good and evil only enter through the subject. And the subject is not part of the world, but a boundary of the world" (2.8.16). (The subject as the limit of the world will be discussed in part III below.)

The problem remains that the knowing or perceiving subject seems non-existent insofar as it cannot be perceived or described or investigated. Yet a subject is needed, for it is a condition on ethics and a presupposition of the world's existence.

Wittgenstein offers an amendment, "The thinking[perceiving] subject is surely empty illusion. But the willing subject exists" (5.8.16). The immediate difficulty is therefore ameliorated, "So there really is a way in which philosophy *in a non-psychological sense* can and must address the I" (11.8.16). Wittgenstein bypasses the difficulties with the place of the subject in the world by making him unworldly and focusing instead on the subject's engagement with the world through his will: "The subject is the willing subject" (4.11.16).

7. Wittgenstein found the idea of a willing subject rich in difficulties. More entries are devoted to the will than any other topic. His inability to resolves these difficulties probably explain the inconclusive end of his ethical entries in the *Notebooks*. It was likely on his mind when he turned to the Lecture on Ethics.[14] He continued to produce treatments of the difficulties arising from the will from the time he returned to philosophy in the late 1920's almost until his death.

The will is in one sense central to the subject's engagement with the world, with the way in which it becomes meaningful. But equally it seems that the will is powerless because, "The world is independent of my will" (5.7.16). Wittgenstein emphasises that the world is independent of one's will and *disjunct*, "The world is *given* me, i.e. my will approaches the world completely from outside as something ready-made" (8.7.16). The subject has not made the world, nor can he control it, but his engagement with it is integral with the world's happenings, for "[…] we have the feeling of being dependent on an alien will" (8.7.16). The idea is a familiar one. "God in this sense would be simply fate or, what is the same thing, the world independent of our will" (8.7.16). When one is subject to fate, one seems to act to make one's future, but the events consequent on one's actions were already determined. One's willing seems paradoxically both redundant and necessary.

The consequence of the world and subject's independence from each other is that there is no connection between what happens and what we will or want:

> Even if everything we wish for were to happen, this would still only be, so to speak, a grace of fate, for what would guarantee it is not any logical connection between will and world, and we could not in turn will the supposed physical connection (5.7.16).
>
> For it is a fact of logic that wanting does not stand in any logical connexion with its own fulfilment (29.7.16).

Certainly there is no logical connection between one's wanting something to happen and its happening if by that is meant that one's wanting it makes it so, for often what one wants does not or could not happen. When there is a physical connection between wanting and events, it is not because one wills that connection. One could not for instance will the connection between objects described by theories of gravity such that they fall when dropped. The physical connection is in any case a contingent one because, to repeat, what one wills may not happen.[15]

[14] See "Speculation on the Content of the Reverse of Page 17 of *MS* 139a" in part II of this volume.

The difficulty therefore is grave because the subject seems at one remove from the world in which he seemingly acts and to whose facts and states of affairs he feels he must direct his ethical engagement. So, Wittgenstein tries again to develop a minimal account of will. He begins, "I will call the will above all the bearer of good and evil" (21.7.16).

The first important refinement he makes is against the idea that the will, in the ethical sense, is a power of action intrinsic to a body. He imagines a man who is paralysed but could make his wishes known to another who would act on them. He could therefore wish the death of another and thereby do evil. For Wittgenstein, the paralysed man "in the *ethical sense* is the bearer of a *will*" (21.7.16).

The second refinement is his claim that a being capable of perception and thinking must be possessed of will: "But can we conceive a being that isn't capable of Will at all, but only of Idea (of seeing for example)? In some sense this seems impossible" (21.7.16). He re-affirms that the will is a condition on the possibility of the ethical, "if it were possible [to have a being with thought but not will] then there could also be a world without ethics" (21.7.16).

Third, Wittgenstein notes that willing is not something that happens *to* the subject because one cannot experience one's act of will, "The act of will is not an experience" (9.11.16).

Having made these refinements Wittgenstein is again stymied by fundamental obscurities in the nature of the will. "Is it possible to will good, to will evil, and not to will?" (29.7.16). "Is the will an attitude

[15] The physical events of the world, according to Wittgenstein, are not inter-related with each other such that one must follow another. He wrote earlier of the contrast between logical and physical necessity: "The freedom of the will consists in the fact that future events cannot be KNOWN NOW. It would only be possible for us to know them if causality were an INNER necessity—like, say, that of logical inference" (27.4.15).

And in the context of the discussion of the will he emphasised, "it is clear that the causal nexus is not a nexus at all" (15.10.16).

towards the world?" (4.11.16). Here Wittgenstein is even unclear about, as it were, what the possibilities are. Indeed, since the body is part of the world, and given that the world is independent, it is not clear that the will is related to the body:

> […] I can imagine carrying out the act of will for raising my arm, but that my arm does not move. […] the act of will does not relate to a body at all, and so that in the ordinary sense of the word there is no such thing as the act of the will (20.10.16).

This is an insuperable obstacle to any view of the will as the capacity for bodily movement, so Wittgenstein is forced to the tentative conclusion that, "The will is an attitude of the subject to the world" (4.11.16).

However, this conclusion is inadequate. The will must be exercised toward *something* about which one can think or perceive, not the whole world. Wittgenstein offers an argument to this conclusion as follows:

> The will seems always to have to relate to an idea. We cannot imagine, e.g., having carried out an act of will without having detected that we have carried it out.
>
> Otherwise there might arise such a question as whether it had yet been completely carried out.
>
> And the will does have to have an object.
>
> Otherwise we should have no foothold and could not know what we willed.
>
> And could not will different things (4.11.16).

The thought is that if one could not distinguish between the objects of the will, then one could not distinguish between different acts of will. If one could not distinguish wanting water from wanting whisky then there could be no difference—of which one was aware—in seeking one or the other. I must be able to think of and perceive the object of my will if I am to will it.

From these considerations Wittgenstein concludes that the will must have a "foothold" in the world. "It is clear, so to speak, that we need a foothold for the will in the world" (4.11.16). The object of the will is

not the whole world but only a limited aspect of it. For the whole world being subject to my will is contrary to its independence. Wittgenstein says: "My will fastens onto the world somewhere, and does not fasten on to other things" (4.11.16).

The question, though, is where in the world does the will fasten itself? Wittgenstein answers, "If the will has to have an object in the world, the object can be the intended action itself" (4.11.16). This suggestion is problematic since the required conception of an action is not obvious. For if we presume that the body performing the action is in the world, then it, like the world *in toto*, must be independent of the will and so no foothold. "Does not the willed movement of the body happen just like any unwilled movement in the world, but that it is accompanied by the will?" (4.11.16).

In other words, if the will is disconnected from the world and therefore the body, does an action comprise worldly movements *alongside* willing accompaniment by the subject? As Wittgenstein puts it, "Then is the situation that I merely accompany my actions with my will?" (4.11.16). Is the will therefore redundant?

Wittgenstein responds with considerations against any conclusion that the will is redundant in effecting action:

> Yet it is not accompanied just by a *wish*! But by will.
>
> […] how can I predict—as in some sense I surely can—that I shall raise my arm in five minutes time? That I shall will this?
>
> We feel, so to speak, responsible for the movement (4.11.16).

These considerations suggest a contrast between wishing and willing. Wishing may well be mere accompaniment to what occurs, but willing is integral with action. Wittgenstein expresses the difference as follows: "The wish precedes the event, the will accompanies it," and, "Wishing is not acting. But willing is acting" (4.11.16). However this must not be construed as a restoration of the idea that the will is part of a causal nexus in which events are *caused*. "The act of the will is not the cause of the action but is the action itself" (4.11.16). Nor must this be understood as indirect causation. "The fact that I will an action consists in my performing the action, not in my doing something else which causes the action" (4.11.16).

Wittgenstein offers an argument for the identity of willing and action: "it is impossible to will without already performing the act of the will" (4.11.16). The implication, which he takes as clear, is that willing cannot itself depend on willing for this would lead to a regress since we should have to posit a third willing to actuate the second so as to actuate the first. Willing must be immediate and unitary and its relation with acting that of identity. Wittgenstein says: "When I perform an action I am in action," and, "One cannot will without acting" (4.11.16).

These are conclusions arising from conceptual considerations. However, they fly in the face of common sense, viz. that one's willing need not become action because, e.g., of paralysis or obstacle. Wittgenstein acknowledges this, "But, of course, it is undeniable that in a popular sense there are things I do, and other things not done by me" (4.11.16). Wittgenstein also considers the seemingly common sense objection that, "I cannot will everything" (4.11.16).

However, he counters these common sense objections with further conceptual considerations. Wittgenstein doubts that one can express something beyond the limit of what we could will. He says, "But what does it mean to say: 'I cannot will *this*'? Can I try to will something?" (4.11.16). The idea here is that what cannot be willed, putatively referred to by 'this', is illusory. For if what 'this' refers to is *describable*, and is therefore a possibility *in* the world, then of course *that* cannot be willed, because the world is independent of the will. If on the other hand, 'this' refers to an action being performed, then self-evidently it can be willed. (If what 'this' refers to is not describable nor an action, then it is of course empty.) Either way, the idea that the limits of what can be willed can be descriptively delimited is, though common, mistaken.

He makes the point differently when he says, "For the consideration of willing makes it look as if one part of the world were closer to me than another (which would be intolerable)" (4.11.16). This similar thought is that it is absurd to suppose that there are some parts of the world I can experience and act upon and some I can *only* experience, as if I could describe the location of an actual place but not go there. If a worldly location *can* be *described*, then a route to it must be possible.

Unfortunately, these counter-arguments serve solely to restore the balance of difficulties. On the one hand, the willing subject is essential to ethics and willing is action with a worldly object. On the other, the

world, in which the subject's body stands, is independent of the subject's will such that the events of the world happen according to a will wholly alien to the subject. In short, the will is powerless.

8. In the face of these difficulties, Wittgenstein should return to the modest position outlined at the outset (part I, §3 above), "I can only make myself independent of the world—and so in a certain sense master it—by renouncing any influence on happenings" (11.6.16). He adds, "In order to live happily I must be in agreement with the world. And this just is what 'being happy' means" (8.7.16). "I am then, so to speak, in agreement with that alien will on which I appear dependent. That is to say: 'I am doing the will of God'" (8.7.16).

Of course this leaves it no clearer what it is that one should do or, what comes to the same thing, what the significance of the world and the purpose of life is. Wittgenstein's intense meditations on the world in search of the ethical end in an inconclusive mire of paradox-like problems. Almost with resignation, Wittgenstein says, "And yet in a certain sense it seems that not wanting is the only good" (29.7.16).

III

1. While the *Notebooks*' exploration of ethical themes and difficulties ended inconclusively, this was not true for Wittgenstein's work on logic. In consequence, it is notable that a very small fraction of Wittgenstein's ethical explorations appear in the *Tractatus*. In the Prototractatus, where Wittgenstein directly transferred *Notebooks* entries to a draft manuscript, there are no remarks on ethics until page 71, out of 116 pages of numbered propositions.[16] The following statements appear there as a seeming conclusion:

[16] There are some sections on the unworldliness of the subject on page 60, but it is not definite that these are drawn from similar *Notebooks* passages since none is identical. There are two page numberings in the Prototractatus, probably corresponding to a first draft followed by amendments and a final numbering. On the earlier numbering, the ethical propositions fall on page 37 of 58.

6.2 Ethics does not consist of propositions.
6.3 All propositions are of equal value.
7 Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent.[17]

There is no further detail and no discussion of the will. In subsequent pages further entries are added though few. Fewer entries still relate to the central ethical problems Wittgenstein had wrestled with in the *Notebooks*. Instead, Wittgenstein is determined to draw a veil over the topic by emphasising that the ethical cannot be expressed in language.

The idea that there are limits to what can be expressed in language had been developed earlier in the *Notebooks* and in earlier sections of the *Tractatus* (5.5 & 5.6ff). It is beyond the scope of this introduction to summarise the view of logic and language of the *Tractatus*. Two ideas established by 1916 in the *Notebooks* and later in the core of the *Tractatus* are important for the notion of inexpressibility that Wittgenstein uses to exclude his earlier ethical writings. Each relates to a distinction Wittgenstein made between what can be *said* in language and what is *shown* by language.

(a) Wittgenstein claimed that there was a limit to what could be expressed in language. Specifically, language could only describe *contingent* states of affairs, that is states of affairs that could be true or false. So language can describe the world but it cannot describe the *essence* or nature of the world, viz. what *must* be either true or false about the world or what is a *condition* of the world.

For example, language cannot describe logic nor can thoughts concerning logic be meaningfully expressed in language.[18] Logic is, in the context of the *Tractatus*, the order or form the world has such that states of affairs are articulated in ways mirrored by the articulation of language. Roughly, in the same way that the form of words in a sentence determines its meaning (i.e. what it is about), so too states of affairs in the world are formed in the inter-relations between objects. According to the *Tractatus*, when a sentence and a state of affairs have the *same* form,

[17] See "The Unsayable: A Genetic Account" in McGuinness, Brian. *Approaches to Wittgenstein: Collected Papers*. London: Routledge, 2002, p. 173. The sections of the *Tractatus* and Prototractatus are numbered from 1 to 7 with subsections numbered after the decimal point, e.g. 6.4 and 6.422. I shall refer to sections solely by section number.

[18] Strictly, propositions of logic are senseless, see 4.461 and 4.12f.

and the state of affairs is the case, then the sentence is true. That the form that is the same *is* logical form—and that logic is the possibility of identical form—cannot be described or *said* using language, but it is *shown* when true sentences are expressed in writing or speech.[19]

The application of this idea to ethics is immediate, given that Wittgenstein had determined that ethics was a *condition* of the world, "Ethics does not treat of the world. Ethics must be a condition of the world, like logic" (24.7.16). Therefore ethics cannot be said, only shown.

(b) Wittgenstein claimed that the subject whose thoughts were expressed using language could not himself be described by language. The thinking subject, the 'I', like logic, is also outside the limits of language. More precisely, in the *Tractatus*, the subject is the limit of what can be described by language. The analogy Wittgenstein used was with an eye and what it sees. The eye cannot see itself seeing and yet it is the eye's attributes (e.g. its position, depth of field, etc.) that limit what is seen (5.633).

The expression of a thought presupposes the thing whose thought is being expressed. Yet nothing in what is expressed describes the thinking thing. Suppose I say, "I am hungry." Among the entities referred to by 'I' is my body, and there can be bodily facts concerning hunger that make my statement true. But my body does not have the thought that it is hungry, I do. My body has the chemical processes that make it a fact that I am hungry. However, I am not my body, for my body can change without changing my thinking, e.g. when I get my hair cut or have a tonsillectomy.

Suppose I am called Charles and I say, "Charles is thinking of Paris." Even here there are two distinct thoughts: thoughts of Paris and thoughts of Charles thinking of Paris. So even though I am Charles, and my sentence describes Charles when he has thoughts of Paris, it does not describe the person thinking of Charles thinking of Paris. It is as if when I think of myself thinking there are two I's: the one thinking and the one thinking about me thinking, as if one looks from above on the other thinking. And if I were to try to describe the "second" 'I' thinking about me thinking, that description would be the expression of the thoughts of another "third" 'I' looking on the second. Every

[19] The saying and showing distinction is developed throughout the *Tractatus*, but see especially 3.26, 4.1212 and 5.526.

attempt to describe the subject whose thought is expressed requires another subject whose thought regarding the first subject is expressed, but who is not described. It is an endless regress.

The thinking subject is beyond description yet every sentence of language that is expressed is the expression of the thoughts of a thinking subject. So language cannot *say* anything about the thinking subject, but the thinking subject is *shown* by expressions of languages being also expressions of thought. In this sense, the subject is the *limit* of language.

The considerations by which Wittgenstein arrived at this conclusion are similar to those he employed in discussing the problem of the unworldliness of the subject. Indeed, many entries from the *Notebooks* were transferred intact to this part of the *Tractatus.*[20] However, the emphasis given to these considerations in the *Tractatus* is almost solely linguistic. Wittgenstein is especially concerned to establish that the subject is the limit of the world and therefore beyond language and description.

2. We can say in brief where those ethical topics of the *Notebooks* appear in the *Tractatus*. The powerlessness of the will is affirmed in just two sentences taken directly from the *Notebooks* (6.373, 6.374). The unworldliness of the subject is argued for in one page, comprising eight sections (5.63-5.641), whose context concerns the limits of language. Obviously the *Tractatus* passages are faint echoes of *Notebooks* equivalents.

The remaining theme of the three discussed above, the value of facts, is given an alternate treatment focusing on the value of *propositions*, viz. value is among the mystical, i.e. what cannot be said. Wittgenstein begins with, "All propositions are of equal value" (6.4). He continues:

> The sense of the world must lie outside the world. In the world everything is as it is and happens as it does happen. *In* it there is no value—and if there were, it would be of no value.
>
> If there is a value which is of value, it must lie outside all happening and being-so. For all happening and being-so is accidental.

[20] Cf. 2.8.16, 12.10.16 and 20.10.16. References to the *willing* subject are excised from many entries otherwise transferred extant.

> What makes it non-accidental cannot lie *in* the world, for otherwise this would again be accidental.
>
> It must lie outside the world (6.41).

There is an argument in this passage proceeding from the assumptions that everything in the world is contingent—i.e. that it could be otherwise—and that value must be absolute, that it cannot be contingent. From this it follows directly that value cannot be in the world. It is noteworthy that Wittgenstein connects the "sense of the world" with value, implying that the sense of the world turns on the matter of value. The argument of 6.41 obliquely provides the argument for 6.4, since propositions can only picture using logical form what is *in* the world. Wittgenstein makes the point several times, "Propositions cannot express anything higher," (6.42) and, "It is clear that ethics cannot be expressed" (6.421).

Curiously, Wittgenstein here places his sole remark—and then obliquely—about the willing subject, "Of the will as the bearer of the ethical we cannot speak" (6.423). He also attempts to express a variation on the idea that the will is the attitude of the subject to the world:

> If good or bad willing changes the world, it can only change the limits of the world, not the facts; not the things that can be expressed in language.
>
> In brief, the world must thereby become quite another, it must so to speak wax or wane as a whole.
>
> The world of the happy is quite another than that of the unhappy (6.43).

This represents a subtle revision of Wittgenstein's earlier treatment. In the *Notebooks*, Wittgenstein was determined to find a foothold—a point of contact—for the will in the world. Instead, in the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein uses a connection between the subject as the limit of the world and the will. In consequence, the will can act and, while it cannot affect the movement of the world, action can alter the sense of the world by altering its limits. Altering its sense will alter its significance and, perhaps, lead to the kind of acceptance of the facts that eases the subject's ethical anguish. This is an opaque passage that existed in similar form in the *Notebooks*—though with an explicit link to meaning waxing and waning too (5.7.16).

In the *Notebooks*, Wittgenstein considered the subject's ethical engagement as perhaps a striving for harmony with the world. But he was baffled as to what the mark of such harmony would be, since, being an ethical matter, it could not be a mark *in* the world (30.7.16). One rough way to think of Wittgenstein's idea in 6.43 is to consider the subject as an accompanist to a band that is indifferent and unresponsive to his playing. The subject may play *against* the band, attempting to alter its playing. Insofar as he does so, the result will be increasing cacophony—and perhaps his own frustration to be heard. Alternatively, if the subject plays a complement to the band's playing, the musical whole will be greater, even though the band is indifferent. The thought is that cacophony is a waning of the whole musical enterprise, while augmented harmony is a waxing of the whole.

With regard to the value of facts, Wittgenstein says little more besides re-affirming that the subject who is outside time will understand his situation quite differently (6.4311, 6.4312). However, Wittgenstein says more about *value* in the preface to the *Tractatus*. Wittgenstein was adamant that the preface was an essential part of his book.[21] Specifically, he gives the *Tractatus* as an example of value, the sole example given prior to the Lecture on Ethics.

> If this work has a value it consists in two things. First that in it thoughts are expressed, and this value will be the greater the better the thoughts are expressed.
>
> [The book deals with the problems of philosophy]. I am [...] of the opinion that the problems have in essentials been finally solved. And if I am not mistaken in this, then the value of this work secondly consists in the fact that it shows how little has been done when these problems have been solved (*Tractatus*, Preface).

The *Tractatus* is valuable because of something it does, viz. expresses and shows. The *Tractatus* has an author though and it is the author who has done these things in the activity of producing his book. The author is expressing thoughts and showing how little has been done. The value

[21] See Wittgenstein, Ludwig, C. K. Ogden, F. P. Ramsey. *Letters to C. K. Ogden: With Comments on the English Translation of the* Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus. Edited by G. H. von Wright. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1973, p. 55.

therefore attaches to the author's activities. According to Wittgenstein, it is not necessary that anyone should read the *Tractatus* for it to be valuable. It is not that what is valuable is the state of affairs *resulting* from reading the book in which someone understands the thoughts expressed or sees how little has been done. Rather, it is the activity of expressing thoughts clearly in the service of clarity that is valuable. The value of the work, if we take Wittgenstein at his word, would not diminish if all copies were destroyed in an instant.

Wittgenstein has eloquently given an example that largely meets the ethical difficulties in the *Notebooks* while showing what cannot be said. For here is a subject, the author, whose activity is not valuable for its worldly effects nor for any significance the subject imputes to the world, but for its being that activity alone.

3. From the preface and the review above one could think that the *Tractatus* is an ethical work or principally ethical in purpose.[22] Wittgenstein claimed this in a letter he wrote in late 1919 when trying to get the work published.

> The book's point is an ethical one. I once meant to include in the preface a sentence which is not in fact there now but which I will write out for you here, because it will perhaps be a key to the work for you. What I meant to write, then, was this: My work consists of two parts: the one presented here plus all that I have *not* written. And it is precisely this second part that is the important one. My book draws limits to the sphere of the ethical from the inside as it were, and I am convinced that this is the ONLY *rigorous* way of drawing those limits. In short, I believe that where *many* others today are just *gassing*. I have managed in my book to put everything firmly in place by being silent about it.[23]

However, his claim is not credible. First, the vast proportion of Wittgenstein's work prior to the publication of the *Tractatus* concerns

[22] This idea has gained currency recently in the wake especially of Diamond, Cora. "Ethics, Imagination and the Method of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*." In *Bilder Der Philosophie: Reflexionen über das Bildliche und die Phantasie*. R. Heinrich and H. Vetter (eds.), 55-90. Vienna, Munich: Oldenbourg, 1991. Reprinted in Read, Rupert and Alice Crary (eds.). *The New Wittgenstein*. London: Routledge, 2000.

[23] Letter to Ludwig von Ficker reprinted in Wright, G. H. von. *Wittgenstein*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982, p. 83.

logic. Second, most of the content of the *Tractatus* was complete by 1916 when Wittgenstein turned to his ethical reflections. Third, in the Prototractatus the first statement of the major sections of the book on the first page of the manuscript omits anything beyond section 6, suggesting that the ethical reflections were not originally envisioned. Fourth, even in the throes of his ethical reflections, Wittgenstein does not characterise his work as ethical, saying, "My work has extended from the foundations of logic to the nature of the world" (2.8.16), further suggesting that his *original* intent was toward the foundations of logic. It is therefore implausible that the *Tractatus* was conceived or executed as an ethical work or a philosophical work concerning ethics.

Of course this is no obstacle to thinking that the *Tractatus* may serve more than one purpose. Certainly Wittgenstein, as is demonstrated above, had a serious concern with ethics and ethical matters. And he probably realised that by delimiting clearly what can be said, he was defending serious matters like morality and religion from the methods of investigation proper to the empirical sciences.[24] Perhaps he also felt that lucidity about these limits would expose public moralisers as empty talkers.

Notwithstanding the above, Wittgenstein began his ethical reflections in the *Notebooks* with seemingly *personal* demands formulated as a series of questions concerning the meaning and purpose of life. I have demonstrated that these questions proved difficult to answer conclusively.[25] In the *Tractatus*, the difficulties are not taken up or resolved but are instead relocated beyond the limit of what can be said. Could this have been a satisfying response to Wittgenstein's sense of the ethical demand on him?

It is doubtful. Rather, Wittgenstein's resolution of ethical demand is indicated in his second remark in the preface regarding the value of the *Tracatus*, viz. how little is achieved when the problems of philosophy

[24] This goal is attributed to Wittgenstein by one of his few friends to have the *Tractatus* explained to him by Wittgenstein. See Engelmann, Paul. *Letters From Ludwig Wittgenstein: With a Memoir*. Translated by L. Furtmüller. Edited by Brian McGuinness. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1967, pp. 96-99.

[25] I have been unable to discuss another central ethical theme in the *Notebooks* that is the most elusive. This concerns the possibility that the world itself is expressive, not least because it is itself an expression of subject himself, of his soul. This theme is, by far, the least represented in the *Tractatus*. Cp. 24.7.16, 19/20/21.9.16, 15.10.16 and Tilghman, B. R. *Wittgenstein, Ethics and Aesthetics: The View From Eternity*. Swansea Studies in Philosophy. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991.

are resolved. The resolution of the ethical demand and the anxiety regarding the problematic nature of the meaning or purpose of life comes upon understanding that there is nothing to be said. Wittgenstein elaborates this idea in the penultimate section of the *Tractatus*, which follows that on ethics:

> For an answer which cannot be expressed the question too cannot be expressed.
>
> *The riddle* does not exist.
>
> If a question can be put at all, then it *can* also be answered (6.5).

If a question can be expressed in language, it is because what the question describes is in the world. If the question's object is in the world, then an answer regarding it can similarly be expressed. If the question cannot be expressed, then there can be no answer, not least because, strictly, there is no question. So, Wittgenstein concludes, "*The riddle* does not exist." What is *the riddle* though?

The problems of philosophy were, according to Wittgenstein's preface, solved. So the riddle cannot be among these. Nor is it a scientific problem. Wittgenstein wrote, "It is not problems of natural science which have to be solved" (6.4312). Wittgenstein explained to his translator that 'riddle' in German could have a "higher" meaning when it related to the riddle of the world's existence or of human life. More, the definite article in 'the riddle' meant "the riddle 'par excellence'."[26] Therefore, it seems clear that 'the riddle' is the problem of the meaning or sense of life.

This connects the riddle and its non-existence with Wittgenstein's remarks on the problem of life:

> We feel that even if *all possible* scientific questions be answered, the problems of life have still not been touched at all. Of course there is then no question left, and just this is the answer (6.52).
>
> The solution of the problem of life is seen in the vanishing of this problem (6.521).

[26] *Letters to C. K. Ogden*, pp. 36-37.

Understanding that there is no problem of life—at least one that can be expressed in language—is a resolution of the anxiety associated with the (now putative) problem. However this could suggest that Wittgenstein thought that the ethical was illusory, since nothing could be said about it and none of its problems could be expressed in language. As it were, the resolution of one's ethical anxieties comes when the urge to speak of them is calmed, for then *nothing* remains of them and nothing further is demanded of the subject.

This is a mistake. Resolving ethical anxiety is not the solution of a riddle—though it may be a by-product—nor is inaction. Two things are required for resolution: understanding and seeing through what is required. Wittgenstein articulates this view as follows.

First, he writes, "The facts all belong only to the task and not to its performance" (6.4321). Originally, 'performance' had been translated as 'solution'. Wittgenstein explained that the *correct* sense was what someone did to satisfy an order they had been given, i.e. its execution or performance.[27] In context, the facts are a state of affairs in which one does what is required, but what is required is not determined by that state. So, understanding one's task—that is, understanding the solution of the riddle—does not involve understanding the facts. Therefore that there can be no fact-related question does not also indicate that there is no task. Rather it indicates that attention to the facts tells one nothing of the task required.

Second, Wittgenstein gives immortality as an example of a non-solution to the problem of life. For, how would living forever solve the problem of life? Presumably it only prolongs it. That problem must be solved outside time, "The solution of the riddle of life in space and time lies outside space and time" (6.4312). However, in explaining how immortality is an inadequate solution, Wittgenstein makes it clear that it is not inadequate because it fails to achieve a result or *effect* one wished to "attain."[28] Rather, it is inadequate because one will not thereby be able to see through or complete one's task. Therefore, a solution to a riddle must not be one by virtue of its effects, but by the *activity* it enables. It is therefore apparent that the resolution of ethical anxiety as the solution to the riddle of

[27] *Letters to C. K. Ogden*, p. 36.
[28] *Letters to C. K. Ogden*, pp. 35-36.

life cannot consist solely in effecting a state of inactivity or emptiness even if those anxieties are thereby becalmed.

Third, the riddle may not exist in that it cannot be expressed in language, but the inexpressible exists. "There is indeed the inexpressible. This appears; it is the mystical" (6.522).[29] Wittgenstein does not say how it appears, but it does. There is therefore something to understand regarding the ethical, the higher domain.

The position arrived at is one that affirms an ethical domain and affirms that when one understands it one will understand the activity required to fulfil the purpose of life. However, it is crucial that one look to the ethical or higher domain for the purpose of life and not to the world of facts and language.

In the Prototractatus Wittgenstein wrote that if one understands his work, one will disregard the propositions in it and "approach the world on the right level" (6.55). For logic, this means recognising the metaphysical propositions of philosophy as nonsensical and confining oneself to propositions on the level of facts and natural science (6.53). For ethics, this means attending *solely* to a higher level than the level of facts.

Wittgenstein famously ended the *Tractatus* thus: "Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent" (7). A final question lingers as to whether the 'must' of this injunction is a simple expression of the limits to language or an ethical demand. On the one hand, Wittgenstein had allowed that nonsensical language *could* be used.[30] What, after all, is the harm of speaking nonsense?

On the other hand, if Wittgenstein's view is accurately represented above, then ethical activity directed toward the level of facts, toward the world, toward what can be spoken about in language is futile, meaningless and troubling. It is therefore not required. Indeed, it cannot be fulfilling the purpose of life.

[29] The passage given is Wittgenstein's emendation of the printed text, see Lewy, C. "A Note on the Text of the *Tractatus*." *Mind* 76 (1967), p. 420.
[30] "For the very reason that a bit of language is nonsensical, it is still possible to go on using it [...]" (23.5.15).

What the Lecture on Ethics says is quite striking and does not look much like modern moral philosophy, not least because it comes to the conclusion that language used ethically is nonsense. My philosophical exposition will not be concerned to make what is said in the lecture look more like modern moral philosophy. Instead, I will be concerned to do at least three things.

First, I should like to clarify what is said. I will do this directly by a judicious reprise of the narrative points in the lecture. I will do this indirectly when explicating some of the unusual things Wittgenstein says about exploding books, running up against cages and experiencing wonder at the existence of the world.

Second, I should like to elaborate what is said by offering an interpretation of what I think Wittgenstein may have been thinking when he expounded his view. I shall do this by referring to some of his previous or contemporaneous ideas. The interpretation I will arrive at is not one I can claim he definitely intended. However I claim it is plausible and philosophically illuminating. The interpretation in brief is that Wittgenstein thought that the use of language with an ethical sense does not apply to the natural world, but that it applies extra-logically to the person using it. The tendency to use ethical language is attempting to say something about oneself that is not expressible in natural terms. This tendency shows something that elicits respect, specifically fellowship.

Third, I will make some brief remarks concerning the relation between Wittgenstein's view of ethics and moral philosophy more generally. The three concerns I have set out are addressed largely within the subsequent three parts bearing roman numerals.

It is worth noting that the Lecture on Ethics rarely receives a close

reading.[1] More often the lecture is taken as the last gasp of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*-era views or as a transitional work showing few of the merits of what came before or what was to come. It is true that the themes Wittgenstein explores and the framework in which he works are found in his *Notebooks* and developed in the *Tractatus*. There are many differences though, particularly in the style of exposition and the kinds of supporting considerations given. Wittgenstein adduces conclusions from considerations regarding what one would say in one circumstance rather than another, experiences presumed shared by his audience and remarks about the grammar of specific words, e.g. wonder or miracle. Considerations like these are instead the hallmarks of Wittgenstein's later work. As a public lecture, it has the unusual quality of allowing Wittgenstein to speak personally and in dialogue with actual rather than imagined interlocutors. Yet the many drafts of the lecture indicate that his view was nonetheless a considered one.

Combining elements from Wittgenstein's early and later philosophy in a medium for the personal expression of his reflections on ethics to an immediate audience, the lecture deserves and repays a close reading. There is every reason to think that it reflects a statement of Wittgenstein's view of ethics. However, an interpretative concern besets any reading from the first. Wittgenstein famously closed the *Tractatus* by enjoining silence regarding the inexpressible, amongst which he included ethics. He also condemned talk of ethics. The concern is therefore whether Wittgenstein's lecture is an instance of hypocrisy? We should presume in favour of a man well-known for his moral seriousness and I shall be concerned below to avoid the imputation of hypocrisy while interpreting the Lecture on Ethics.

[1] The lecture is considered on its own terms in Redpath, Theodore. "Wittgenstein and Ethics." In *Ludwig Wittgenstein: Philosophy and Language*, edited by Alice Ambrose and Morris Lazerowitz, pp. 95-119. London; New York: Allen & Unwin, 1972. The lecture is given a close reading to support over-arching theses concerning Wittgenstein's views on ethics in Edwards, James C. *Ethics Without Philosophy: Wittgenstein and the Moral Life*. Tampa: University Presses of Florida, 1985, and Shields, Philip R. *Logic and Sin in the Writings of Ludwig Wittgenstein*. Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1993.

I

1. Wittgenstein begins by saying what his lecture will not be. It is not a lecture about logic nor science nor popular science. He also says his lecture will not be interesting, but rather solely useful (139a: II).[2] This is an unusual aim for a lecture that concludes by saying that what is spoken or written about ethics—the lecture's topic—is nonsense. Yet, Wittgenstein says that he is speaking about something on which he is "keen" (139b: 2).

Wittgenstein's subject in the lecture is a wider conception of ethics than that given by Moore, viz. "the general enquiry into what is good." The conception is widened by substituting 'value' for 'good' (139a: III). The conception is thereby widened to include what is ordinarily called aesthetics. However, 'value' is further elaborated by suggesting that an enquiry into value is synonymously described as an enquiry into what is 'really important' (139a: 4) or of 'absolute importance' (139b: IV). He introduces another set of synonyms for value and good connected with life, viz. 'the meaning of life', 'what makes life worth living', 'the right way of living'. What is notable is that ethics, on Wittgenstein's proposal in the lecture, is the activity of enquiry whose *objects* are valuable, important and connected with living.

2. Wittgenstein then turns his attention to the language of ethics. He notes that the use of language to describe the objects of ethical enquiry admits of two uses or that each use has a different sense. The 'trivial' or 'relative' senses are unproblematic because in each case the sentence can

[2] I shall refer to the manuscripts for the Lecture on Ethics by their *MS* numbers followed by page references to the pagination of the manuscripts, not the page numbering of this volume.

References to sections of the *Tractatus* will be by paragraph numbers. These refer to: Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. International Library of Psychology, Philosophy, and Scientific Method. Translated by C. K. Ogden. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981.

References to entries in Wittgenstein's *Notebooks* will be by date and will fall between 1914 and 1917. These refer to: Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Notebooks, 1914-1916*. Edited by G. H. von Wright, and G. E. M Anscombe. 2nd ed. Oxford: Blackwell, 1979.

All references in the main text are from Wittgenstein's work prior to the lecture, shortly after the lecture or concerning the lecture itself.

be understood as referring to a prior standard. With the standard in mind, these senses can be understood as matters of fact insofar as each makes a claim in respect of a prior standard, viz. such and such is good because it meets or exceeds some standard. For example, a man is a good tennis player if he can return an adequate proportion of strokes. As matters of fact, Wittgenstein thinks that these senses do not imply a judgement of value or if they do it is only of relative value, viz. relative to the standard tacitly in question. Implicitly, Wittgenstein does not find the judgements whose expressions are language in relative senses problematic. They are analysed as statements of fact.

However this is not the case for the second use or sense of ethical language. This is the 'ethical' or 'absolute' sense and it is problematic because it is not a judgement of relative value. Expressions used in this sense are judgements of "absolute value" (139b: 6). They are not analysable as statements of fact because, according to Wittgenstein, "no statement of fact can ever be, or imply, a judgement of *absolute* value" (139b: 6). It is because they are not analysable as statements of fact that they are problematic.

3. Why are expressions of judgements of absolute value not analysable as statements of fact? The short answer is that all facts and all propositions expressed in language "are as it were" or "stand" on the "same level". Being on the same level, none is higher or lower. None is "sublime, important, or trivial" in the way required by a judgement of absolute value (139a: 8, 139b: 7).

Wittgenstein illustrates what he means by describing a book that could be written solely by an omniscient being. The book would contain a whole description of the world. The description would be complete insofar as it would include the movements of all objects and the mental states of all people that have ever lived. It would collect all true propositions, including those of science and relative judgements of value. This book would not however contain, Wittgenstein says, any judgements of absolute value or logically imply such.[3]

[3] This recalls the problem of the value of facts described in part II, §5 of "Wittgenstein's Early Ethical Writings" in this volume, hereafter "Early Writings."

He cuts off a line of agreement to his claim. It might be thought that value is in the mind and that it is someone's thinking something valuable or good that makes it so (139a: 8). For Wittgenstein though, this will not do. If a state of mind suitable for projecting value into facts or propositions is *describable*, then it is a fact like any other, neither higher nor lower. We are expected to infer that, by contrast, if a mental state is *not* describable, then it is obscure how the value of a proposition could be related to an undescribable mental state—and how the value of the state might be projected into the proposition. The line of agreement proposed is undercut because if the mental state is describable, it has no value to project; and if the state is not describable, then any value it has is unsuitable for projection into a proposition or state of affairs.

Recall that the book describing the world *in toto* includes also the mental states of everyone that has lived. In this book a murder could be described in graphic detail to include the "studied cruelty" of the murderer (139a: 8). The murder and its description might elicit responses in us such as outrage or sadness, but each would just be another fact no more or less important than a stone falling. Indeed it is obvious to Wittgenstein that there could be no scientific book whose subject matter was "intrinsically sublime" or above other subject matters (139b: 8).

Wittgenstein offers a striking metaphor when he says that if a book on ethics could be and was written, it would "with an explosion destroy all the other books in the world" (139a: 9). I shall have more to say about this metaphor in part II, §3 below. Wittgenstein says little to explain it. He says that words as used in science are capable only of conveying *natural* meanings and senses, of expressing facts. Ethics, Wittgenstein says, if it is anything is *supernatural*. So words are inapt for, more accurately incapable of, conveying supernatural meanings or senses.

4. Wittgenstein turns from language toward more concrete thoughts about the ethical. First he asks, what would one be describing if one said of a road that it was the absolutely right one? The sense of absolute here is one that rules out the road being right because of a prior purpose or destination. Wittgenstein says it is a road upon which it is necessary for everyone to go when they encounter it. If one did not do so, then one must feel ashamed. Similarly, a state of affairs describable as the absolute good is one that everybody must bring about regardless of prior inclina-

tion. If one did not, one must feel guilty. However, Wittgenstein thinks even if such states of affairs are imaginable, they are illusions for they correspond to nothing. Indeed they could not correspond to anything, for there are no such roads or states of affairs with "coercive power in itself" like that of an "absolute judge" (139a: 10, 139b: 10). Here, Wittgenstein's thought depends on the simple denial that states of affairs can necessitate the will.[4]

5. What is it we have in mind that inclines us to use expressions with an ethical or absolute sense? If it is not the illusory imagined states of affairs above, perhaps it is the contents of particular experiences. These experiences are personal experiences and there can be no certainty that others will have had them too. That said, Wittgenstein offers two experiences that incline him to use expressions in an ethical or absolute sense. He feels confident the audience will have had similar thoughts or experiences.

His first experience is of wondering at the existence of the world. This inclines him to say, "how extraordinary that anything should exist." His second is of feeling absolutely safe. This inclines him to say, "nothing can injure me whatever happens." Wittgenstein does not doubt these experiences. However, he asserts that the verbal expression of these experiences is nonsense.

In the first example, one misuses the verb "to wonder" if one could not conceive the object of wonder not to exist. Since one could not conceive the non-existence of the world, it is nonsense to suppose that one wonders at its existence. Naturally, it is possible to wonder why the sky is blue as opposed to cloudy, but this is not to wonder at the existence of the world, only the character of a part of it. The word 'wonder' may be ambiguous between awe and curiosity. The sense in which Wittgenstein is using 'wonder' is closer to curiosity.

In the second example, if it were true that someone were safe whatever happens, then it ought to be impossible to imagine circumstances in which he suffered harm. But no one living is ever situated such that there could not be *some* circumstances in which he came to harm. Invulnerability to physical harms is contrary to the nature of mortality.

[4] The relation between world and will was something over which Wittgenstein had laboured in his *Notebooks*, as discussed in part II, §7 of "Early Writings," this volume.

6. The expression of these ethical experiences is then nonsensical. A first diagnosis of their nonsensical character is offered when Wittgenstein says that each is a misuse of language. Each appears to be a simile, but is not. If an expression is a simile, it "must be a simile for *something*" (139b: 15). A simile describes a fact in an indirect way. However, if that is right, it must be possible to drop the simile and describe the fact directly. The problem is that with ethical expressions, when we drop the simile, there is no fact to be described. So much was established above when Wittgenstein made clear that there were no ethical facts or facts that implied judgements of absolute value or importance.

Wittgenstein makes the point in respect of religious language by introducing a third experience that inclines one to use expressions in an absolute sense. One could express the experience of feeling guilty by saying, "God disapproves of my conduct" (139b: 14). While this may seem a useful simile, the implication is that it is a misuse of language since there is no fact that could be described more directly that would *still* be an expression of the experience of feeling guilty.

7. Wittgenstein suggests we have arrived at a paradox, for want of a better name (139a: 16). The experiences given above seem to have absolute value. But experiences are facts. And facts do not have absolute value. So experiences cannot have value, because they are facts, and facts cannot have value. The paradox is that these experiences "seem to" have absolute value. The paradox is acute since these experiences *seem to* have "supernatural value" (139b: 16).[5]

There is a way to meet the paradox that Wittgenstein is tempted to use but rejects. Wittgenstein suggests that we consider the first example experience above—wonder at the existence of the world—as we might regard a miracle. If we regard something as a miracle we regard it as something that cannot be explained, something supernatural. This, Wittgenstein notes, is not the same as regarding something as yet to be explained by, for instance, science. In such a case, we are merely without a present explanation and there would be little point in calling it a miracle. Indeed, looking on it this way denies its miraculous character.

[5] Again Wittgenstein is alluding to the problem of the value of facts discussed in part II, §5 of "Early Writings," this volume.

This reveals that there is again a relative and absolute sense in the use of 'miracle'. In the relative sense, a miracle is a fact that has not yet been grouped with others in a scientific group (139b: 16). So long as we regard the putative miracle as a fact, it cannot be miraculous in an absolute sense since as noted above all facts are on the same level. Regarding something as a miracle in the absolute sense must be to regard it as something other than a fact. In so doing though, we unfit it for expression in language which, as noted above, can convey solely natural meanings, i.e. facts. In short, if it is a miracle in the sense of non-factuality then it cannot be expressed. If it is a miracle in the sense of a fact yet to be explained, then it can be expressed but is no miracle. Once again it seems that using linguistic expressions in an absolute sense is nonsense.

8. Wittgenstein rejects another way of meeting the paradox. One could note the recurring temptation to use ethical and religious language in an absolute sense while allowing that a suitable logical analysis of that language has not been found. However, a logical analysis may yet be found. Why suppose in advance that a correct analysis cannot be made? Might not a correct logical analysis of ethical language reveal that experiences of absolute value are natural facts? In other words, our inclinations to speak as we do reflect thoughts which, when correctly analysed, will be unproblematic. We simply lack the correct analysis now.

This approach is rejected because Wittgenstein sees immediately that no description could describe what he means by absolute value. He rejects any description of absolute value "*ab initio*" because it could not signify anything, i.e. have any meaning (139b: 18). Proffering descriptions to Wittgenstein allows him to see in a flash that expressions used in the absolute sense are *essentially* nonsensical. That is, it is not for want of analysis or for want of a better formulation that they are nonsensical. In contrast to his first diagnosis of nonsensicality—viz. ethical language is a misuse of language—his second diagnosis is that they are not attempted uses of language in any ordinary sense. For in using these expressions, Wittgenstein thinks we try "*to go beyond* the world" and thereby beyond language and meaning. As he puts it, we run up against the "walls of our cage" (139a: 20).

9. So Wittgenstein arrives at the conclusion that the tendency of all men who have tried to speak of ethics or religion was to overreach language. Their efforts were hopeless. Insofar as ethics concerns the activity of speaking about the absolutely valuable or what is absolutely important in life and living: it cannot be expressed in language, can be no science and can add nothing to our knowledge. This negative conclusion is made despite Wittgenstein's avowing a deep respect for the the tendency of the human mind to overreach language thus.

II

1. The lecture on ethics given by Wittgenstein is notable for its negative conclusion that using language in its ethical or absolute sense is nonsense. This is more notable for standing opposed to three positive things Wittgenstein says about the content of the lecture. First, he says that the subject is one on which he is keen and which is close to his heart. Second, he thought what he had to say was useful (139a: II). Third, he thinks the use of ethical language documents a tendency of the human mind that he cannot but respect and which he would not, for his life, ridicule (139a: 21). An interpretation of what Wittgenstein is saying in the lecture must therefore meet these constraints if it is to be plausible.

A simple resolution of the opposition might suppose that what Wittgenstein thinks is useful is the recognition that the ethical sense of language is nonsense. Recognising it for nonsense might be liberating or practical. However, the supposition ignores at least the third and possibly the first points he makes. For how can one respect the urge to speak nonsense? It is doubtful that he would say this of all nonsense. For instance, people tend to speak about metaphysics which on Wittgenstein's view in the *Tractatus* is also nonsense. People also tend to express superstitions concerning broken mirrors or ghosts. No doubt this is nonsense too, but hardly likely to elicit Wittgenstein's respect.[6]

[6] Note that 1929 is prior to Wittgenstein's reflections concerning J. G. Frazer's *The Golden Bough*. See Orzechowski, Andrzej, and Pichler, Alois. "A Critical Note on the Editions of Wittgenstein's Remarks on Frazer's *Golden Bough*." *Wittgenstein Studies* (February, 1995).

It seems then that Wittgenstein distinguishes kinds of nonsense, the kind that could elicit respect and the kind that could not. There is a precedent for distinguishing ways in which language can fail to be significant. In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein distinguishes between language that is nonsense (*Unsinn*) and senseless (*sinnlos*). Nonsense has no application to reality, *a fortiori* the question of its truth or falsity cannot arise. Senseless language applies to reality but fails to do so in the right way—viz. with the form or articulation required for significance, for having sense, for referring to facts or states of affairs. In the *Tractatus* tautologies, contradictions and mathematical equations are senseless (4.461, 4.4611 & 6.22).

2. My proposal is that we can make best sense of the ideas behind the lecture on ethics if we consider the nonsense Wittgenstein delineates as being of a special kind. The special character of this nonsense is that it applies to the person using language in the absolute or ethical sense. That is, in using language in the absolute sense, the speaker is trying to express something about himself. Or to put it passively, language used in the ethical sense is not about the world but about the person using language in that way. (Of course, as nonsense it applies to and is about nothing worldly.) Roughly, the use of language in an ethical sense is personal. It's application is not to the world, but to a person.[7]

Immediately, it must follow that whatever sense of person I am suggesting it cannot be an ordinary worldly one.[8] Claiming that language used in an ethical sense is grammatically reflexive says little. Wittgenstein already considers this thought when he cuts off the line of agreement that locates value in mental states. It is a line he rejects because the person studied by psychology or physiology is, roughly, a collection of facts: facts about mental states, facts about the movements of bodies and their parts. As long as we remain amongst facts, Wittgenstein's claim that values are not to be found or implied by facts blocks clarification by this route.

[7] To be clear, nothing of what follows is intended for construal as equivalent to expressivism, emotivism or non-cognitivism about moral matters. Considerations against thinking so are given below, §6.

[8] This recalls the problem of the unworldliness of the self described in part II, §6 of "Early Writings," this volume.

The sense of person needed, I suggest, is a transcendental or philosophical one. The application of language used in an ethical sense is to a metaphysical as opposed to a phenomenal or worldly subject. Wittgenstein notes in the *Tractatus* that, "The philosophical I is not the man, not the human body or the human soul of which psychology treats, but the metaphysical subject, the limit—not a part of the world" (5.641).[9] I do not suggest therefore that Wittgenstein's immediate insight into the essential nonsensicality of using language in ethical senses is mistaken. The person in question—viz. the philosophical, metaphysical or transcendental subject—is not in or part of the natural world. Indeed, it is the *essential* nonsensicality that is important to distinguishing the special kind of nonsense the use of language in an ethical sense produces.

In the *Tractatus* nonsense (*Unsinn)* is a consequence of putative signs having no place in the symbolism of language that gives signs application to the world (3.32f). There is nothing essential about nonsense, it is accidental that the sign is not in the symbolism. It can be put right.[10]

Senseless (*sinnlos*) language uses signs within a symbolism, but the propositions expressed lack significant application to reality, i.e. they lack meaning (4.4611). Tautologies are an example of this. One knows nothing of the weather when one knows it rains or does not rain (4.461). The sign, 'rain', applies to the world fine—e.g. in "The rain has not stopped"—but it is permissibly combined in the symbolism so as to have no application to reality when used in a tautology. Senseless language is not, in some sense, malfunctioning language. It is better to say that it is empty, because there is no experience or thought of which senseless language is the expression. One cannot experience a tautology or think a significant thought by means of it, because there is no possible state of affairs like it, i.e. with the same form. The rain tautology illustrates this. Plainly Wittgenstein has a similar thought in mind in the lecture when he dismisses the suggestion that wonder about the

[9] He was making similar distinctions after the lecture: "It is a fallacy to ask what causes my sense-data: and modern psychology commits a similar fallacy in ethical matters." Wittgenstein, Ludwig, John King, and Desmond Lee. *Wittgenstein's Lectures, Cambridge, 1930-1932*. Totowa, N.J.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1980, p. 115.

[10] The discussion of sense, nonsense and senselessness is complemented by the discussion of saying and showing in part III, §1 (a) of "Early Writings," this volume.

world's existence could be like wondering at a tautology concerning the sky being blue or not-blue (139a: 13, 139b: 13; also 139a: *verso* 15).

It seems mistaken then to think of senseless language as essentially nonsensical, for it uses signs in the symbolism with an application to the world. The signs are not *essentially* bad. It is by their misuse alone that senselessness arises. And senseless language is not useful. We could avoid it.

Nonsensical language then has no application to the world and *a fortiori* cannot be used with sense, i.e. to say something significant. Senseless language applies to the world, but in the wrong way, viz. senselessly. I suggest that language used in the absolute or ethical sense has an application to reality, but not to the natural world, i.e. to the world of facts. By this I mean that the transcendental or metaphysical subject or person is real but is not in the world, at least not the natural world of facts. I suggest this as consonant with Wittgenstein saying that using language with an ethical sense is *essentially* nonsensical, because it has no application to the natural world (139b: 18). It is not accidental, because the language cannot be put right. If it were put right it would cease to be language used with an ethical sense—just as the miracle can be drained out of unexplained facts by regarding them as awaiting scientific explanation (139b: 16). I am suggesting that what makes language used with an ethical sense essentially nonsensical is that its application is to the person, where he is understood as outside the world. Logic, on which having application depends, only concerns the world. So the sense of 'application' for language that has application beyond the world must be non-logical or extra-logical. This is a reason for thinking that there is a deep division between logic and ethics.

3. I shall offer several considerations in favour of my interpretation by exploring and explicating three unusual elements from the lecture: the exploding book, running against our cage and the experiences that tempt us to use language with an ethical sense. Explicating these examples, themes and metaphors will also elaborate what Wittgenstein says in the lecture.

Consider the metaphor of the exploding book. The idea of a book with all the facts in the world, all that "is to be" or "can" be known appears previously (139a: 7, 139b: 7). We know for instance that in the

Tractatus, the world is the totality of facts (1.1). Language in the *Tractatus*, when significant, expresses facts. There seems in principle then no objection to a book containing all the facts, past and present. This book would then contain all that could be known if knowing were limited to the factual.

In his *Notebooks*, when discussing the limits of the world Wittgenstein says he had been conscious that he could write a book, *The World I Found*, that would completely *describe* the world (23.5.15, 139b: 7). And this book would be instrumental in demarcating the world and the subject, "If I wrote a book 'The world as I found it', I should also have therein to report on my body and say which members obey my will and which do not, etc. This then would be a method of isolating the subject [...]" (5.631). Notably, when the book was completed, that is when the method was carried through to its end, it would show "that in an important sense there is no subject: that is to say, of it alone in this book mention could not be made" (5.631). The subject could not be described in the book (23.5.15). It is this *world book*, I suggest, that Wittgenstein is thinking of in the lecture.

What would a book on ethics be then? Following my suggested interpretation, if ethical senses of language were about the subject or person using them, then a book on ethics would, contrary to the world book, include content describing that person. There are several ways in which we can imagine developing Wittgenstein's metaphor to explain how an *ethical book* would destroy all others. The book would destroy all others if its existence overthrew the conditions for other books to be meaningful, to be other than collected marks on collected pages or collections of dead signs. And the difference between the ethical book and the world book that must make the difference is the presence within the ethical book of the person whose book it is. How then can the subject be in the book?

One way in which the subject could be in the book is if the metaphysical subject ceased to exist and all that remained was the phenomenal subject, the person described in the world book by physics and psychology. However, Wittgenstein is doubtful such a person could exist or have life. For Wittgenstein says that life is not "physiological life" or "psychological life" (24.7.16). Presumably, Wittgenstein thinks this because a person wholly described—and therefore determined—under the laws of physics and psychology could not have Will but only

Idea, e.g. he could only perceive. Such a person, he continues, might be possible but only in a world without ethics (21.7.16), not least because ethics concerns what makes life worth living (139b: 4). So a book that described this person would not be a book on ethics, because in it there would be no ethics. This way of including the subject in the ethical book does not then explicate the metaphor, because it is no book on ethics or the subject in it lacks life.[11]

The conclusion to draw is that the sense in which a person is in the ethical book must be one that includes Will, his will. This suggests two related ways in which the explosion metaphor can be explicated. First, the presence of one person in the book precludes the presence of others. Second, an ethical book would have propositions of varying importance or value.

If the subject were in the world he would have to co-exist with facts. The subject could not itself be a fact because it is not composite, nor could it enter into facts because it is not an object (5.5421, 7.8.16). Logic is in the world, but is not an object and therefore not a constituent of facts. Wittgenstein says it is a condition of the world (24.7.16). *Inter alia* this means it is not contingent. Ethics too is a condition of the world (24.7.16). So ethics is not contingent.

The will is the bearer of the ethical (6.423). In this limited sense, it too cannot be contingent.[12] This is important for seeing why the will that is essential to the transcendental subject is not the will connected with human action, since the occurrence of action is contingent. If the will were connected to human action then it would be contingent, since whether an action occurs is contingent. So the activity of the will cannot be action, it must be instead valuing, taking as important or worthy of pursuit in life for these are synonymous with the ethical. And this activity must be non-contingent in that whether something is valued is determined solely by the activity of the will. So the person could be in the world in a way similar to logic.

Now suppose there were more than one person in the world. Each would be in the world capable of willing. Being valuable must not be contingent, just like being in accord with logic. But being valuable would seem to be contingent on both persons valuing the same things. Yet, their so doing is not necessary, logically or any other way. In part, this is a consequence of the freedom of the will that is a condition on its being the bearer of the ethical, which is expressed by its activity being non-contingent.[13] Therefore, it is a condition on a person being in the world that there is no one else in it, for if there were ethics would become contingent, that is, not ethics at all. So again if the book were really a book of ethics, it would preclude the existence of others within it.

A simpler way to see this is to imagine the ethical book bearing the title, *The World I Found and What is Valuable in It*. This book must be mine insofar as it is the expression of the activity of my will. Therefore I must be the sole author and I must be free to write what I like concerning value. If there were another ethical book by another author, then we have a dilemma. On one horn, if the book is not identical to mine then some of what is valuable in my book will not be valuable in his, thereby making value contingent on agreement in willing. On the other horn, if the books are identical, freedom of the will requires that it is not necessary that they be, so their being so is contingent. In which case, value, that is ethics, is contingent. And this Wittgenstein will not countenance.

Still one might ask, why would the existence of an ethical book destroy all non-ethical books? The answer depends on the whole picture of language developed in the *Tractatus*. I shall explain that picture this way, though the subject is controversial. Thoughts and the sentences that express them do not get their meaning by mental acts of association between words, symbols and states of affairs. Thoughts have meaning because they apply to states of affairs. They apply because they share the same *form* as the facts of which they are about and the language by which they are expressed.[14] If some facts or propositions were higher or more valuable than others, then this would part-constitute their form.

[11] The difficulties of a world without ethics or without will in this context are developed in depth in M. Barabas, *Morality and Praxis*, Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1989, chapter 5.

[12] The existence of the will can be contingent, but not the value of its activity.

[13] In part it follows from Wittgenstein's claim in the *Tractatus* that the only necessity is logical necessity (6.37, 6.375).

[14] One of the best short expositions of the Tractatus picture of thought, language and world is Mounce, H. O. "Philosophy, Solipsism and Thought." *The Philosophical Quarterly* 47, no. 186 (1997): 1-18, where the mental projection view is shown deficient.

Being more valuable than another must be an internal relation amongst propositions. If the relations were external they would be contingent on more than just the activity of the will, contrary to the non-contingent nature of the activity of the will in valuing. Therefore, if some propositions were more valuable than others this would be reflected in their form, which would in turn be reflected in logic. Now the form—it is logical form under consideration—of the language in books written prior to the ethical book's existence would be different and therefore so would its logic, because in it all propositions would be on the same level, i.e. of equal value. But the idea of distinct logic is absurd, since logical form is shared by thought, language and the world and two logics would imply two worlds. So a book that was really a book on ethics would, so to speak, alter logic and so alter the world such that the world of which older books purported to speak would not exist. The explosion lends drama to what Wittgenstein says, but I suggest the elaboration above explicates the metaphor by showing how the existence of a book on ethics is immediately incompatible with all other books.

One might suggest that it is the *content* of a book on ethics that is higher. This, however, misses the point. If the book contains all the facts, then all are on the same level—since there is no value in the world—and the book does not concern ethics. If the content were non-factual, such as commands or rules, then these must be issued by *someone*. The author (who could be God) must in this sense be in the book and it is his presence that makes the book incompatible with others.

4. We can turn now to explicating the striking image with which Wittgenstein finishes the lecture on ethics. First he says that the tendency to use language in an ethical sense is running against the boundaries of language. Second he says that in so doing one is "running against the walls of our cage" (139b: 18). Doing so is "absolutely" "hopeless" (139b: 19). At first sight, it seems that Wittgenstein is straightforwardly identifying one running with another. I think this is mistaken. We should distinguish two things that might be what running against the walls of our cage is. One is the *language* used in an absolute sense. The other is the *tendency* to use language in an absolute sense.

In the first case, we have something in mind but language prevents us from expressing it.[15] That is, we have an experience whose object is ineffable or undescribable owing to the boundaries of language. Running up against the walls of our cage is trying to express what is ineffable. Language is the cage.

In the second case, it is the tendency that is characterised as running up against the walls of our cage. I think the second reveals more and is consistent with supposing that Wittgenstein had the idea of the person as a transcendental subject in the background of the lecture.

Wittgenstein described the transcendental subject by analogy with the absence of the eye in the visual field. He said:

> *Where in* the world is a metaphysical subject to be noted?
> You say that this case is altogether like that of the eye and the field of sight.
> But you do *not* really see the eye.
> And from nothing *in the field of sight* can it be concluded that it is seen from an eye (5.633).

There is nothing in the experience of seeing that allows us to see the eye seeing. Looking in a mirror allows us to see the eye as an organ. It is still one step removed from the experience of seeing because what one sees in the mirror is the eye seeing oneself seeing a reflection in the mirror. So the two see different things. The eye in the mirror sees a person, but the eye in the person sees a reflection. There is no perspective from which I see myself seeing myself, for if I were to see my eye seeing, then I would be using yet another (unseen) eye to do so. The point can be made by noting that a scene I paint cannot contain me as I paint it. I cannot paint myself painting the same scene I am painting, for if I were then I should be painting a picture of me painting a picture of me painting a picture and so on.[16]

I think the metaphor has the following meaning on my suggested interpretation. Running against the walls of our cage is part of trying to see ourselves seeing. It is trying to see ourselves from the outside. It is trying to get outside the experience of being a subject. It is the wish for a perspective that is solely phenomenal or factual. That is the perspective

[15] Cf. this line of interpretation in Edwards, *Ethics Without Philosophy*, chapter 3.

[16] This point is a further development of the idea that the subject is outside or the limit of language discussed in part III, §1 (b) of "Early Writings," this volume.

of language not of a subject. But language is incapable of describing the transcendental or metaphysical, it describes solely facts. The effort is absolutely hopeless, for language *can* say nothing of subjectivity.

On this interpretation there is something about our minds that is inexpressible but it is not something that is *in* our mind. It is *being* the subject that experiences and wills. Running up against the walls of my cage is trying to see my own eye, to describe my experiencing or willing themselves, i.e. independent of any particular object experienced or willed. On this interpretation, the condition of being a subject is the cage. We cannot escape being subjects. That is hopeless.

In the first case, there is a putative object of experience that is inexpressible. In the second, there is no object, but rather the *capacity* to have objects of experience or willing, viz. the transcendental subject. Its inexpressibility in language is similar to the inexpressibility of logic in language. In the *Tractatus*, logic is shown by language, by its application, but it is not expressed *in* language (4.121). Similarly the capacity for experience is exhibited *by* having experience not *in* experiences.

In the first case, it is accidental that the object of experience cannot be expressed. What about the putative object of experience makes it essential that it cannot be expressed? If the object is in the world then it is an accident of language that it has no application to that object as yet. That is hardly hopeless. If the object is outside the world, then there must be at least two things beyond the world, the transcendental subject and the object of experience that is ineffable because it is not of the world. But why stop at two things? Once there is a realm of (supernatural) objects beyond the world, there is no reason to stop at two and no reason to suppose that there could not be supernatural thoughts, logic and language that applied to the supernatural world. The concern regarding ineffability and hopelessness begins then to look wan on this picture.

In the second case, it is clear how one is trying to reach beyond the world. One tries to reach the transcendental subject, the one thing that both must exist and must be beyond the world. But the existence of the subject is not in another realm: The subject does not belong to the world but it is "a limit" or "the limit" of the world (5.632, 5.641). The subject is the limit of the world, but the world is also the limit of significant language (5.62). So the boundaries of language *coincide* with the locus of the subject, who is not *in* the world. Therefore, necessarily, any attempt to use language to describe the transcendental subject

will be an attempt to exceed the boundaries of language. This justifies Wittgenstein's strong language in saying that the tendency to make the attempt is not improbable or difficult, but perfectly and absolutely hopeless (139b: 19).

5. The example of the exploding book explains what happens when you put the subject *in* the world. The example of the cage explains what happens if you try to describe the subject *from* the world. In each case, nonsense must result. It is essential to subject and world that each be separate. Language cannot straddle the two. Language extends to the limit and no further.[17]

However, the person must straddle the two in some way, for the relation between the transcendental self and the phenomenal self is not accidental. That is, it is essential to the identity of a person that his transcendental and phenomenal selves are related. I would not be who I was if I were related to a different body by which I have sensory experiences and bodily actions. This is not a claim regarding the conditions on personal identity, nor is it a strong claim. Naturally, most bodily changes have no bearing on my experience as a subject, e.g. getting my hair cut or giving blood. But, as it were, the locus of my experience, the orientation of my perspective in experience, is dependent on my body as opposed to someone else's body.

There are intermediaries of the person, so to speak, that effect a straddling between the subject and world. One is experience, another is the tendency to use language in an ethical sense. They are inter-related as I will suggest below.

We can consider the experiences Wittgenstein describes as tempting him to use language in an absolute or ethical sense. The first experience Wittgenstein offers is wondering at the existence of the world, finding it extraordinary that anything should exist (139b: 11). He considers and rejects several ways of explaining the experience, where by explanation he means focusing on the object of experience to make it "concrete" and "controllable" (139b: 10).

His first difficulty is logical. As noted above, it is a mistake to use 'wonder' regarding what one could not conceive otherwise. One can-

[17] See note immediately above.

not imagine the non-existence of the world. This is a logical remark insofar as the existence of the world is part of the *form* of experience, not its content. The existence of the world is shown by actual experiences—it is present in every experience. Since the existence of the world is not part of the content of experience, *a fortiori* there is no possibility of making it concrete.

The second difficulty is grammatical. Wittgenstein notes that language used in the absolute sense seems to function as a simile or indirect description. One way in which religious language does this is by reference to an elaborate allegory. Wondering about the existence of the world is expressed allegorically by saying, "God created the world" (139b: 14). However, as noted above a proper simile can be replaced by a direct description. If replacement is not possible, the simile must be improper. In which case the putative object expressed by the simile cannot be made concrete by direct description in which case one may reasonably doubt that there is an object to be described.

A third tack shifts the problem, trying to relocate it. Late in the lecture he suggests characterising his experience as "seeing the world as a miracle" (139b: 16). The expression of this by language is, he is tempted to say, not a proposition in language but the existence of language (139b: 17). It is language that is a miracle. Wittgenstein doubts this asking how is it possible to regard language sometimes as a miracle and sometimes not? This demands further explication.

A particular instance of meaningful language, e.g. a sentence (shorn of illocutionary purpose), can be looked on in only two ways.[18] First, its meaning can be understood, that is we can understand the facts or state of affairs it describes. Second, the linguistic signs can be regarded as facts themselves, e.g. marks drawn in ink on paper or a series of sounds characteristic of English. Indeed logical analysis reveals the logical relations between these facts such that signs symbolise what they mean, viz. the state of affairs described. Each way of looking on an instance of language is regarding it as a fact, where their senses are comprehended in or grouped by logical analysis. There is no miracle here then.

[18] Perhaps we could distinguish a third way of regarding an instance of language if we distinguish between *what* is said and the *saying* of it. However, in the latter case, I favour thinking that what one understands—when on does—is the speaker, not the language. A distinction such as this may, notoriously, be operative in 6.54, though the distinction does not depend on it.

This shows, I think, that instances of language we use ordinarily have a sense that precludes seeing them as miracles. Indeed when we *use* some language, we must use it in the non-miraculous sense. Even if we regard the whole of language—all possible sentences—we are still regarding a collection of possibilities or possible facts, whose character is described by logical analysis, not miracles.

Wittgenstein may mean that we can regard language *itself* as miraculous, where this means no particular instance of language. This suggestion suffers from a problem similar to the logical difficulties of wonder. Wondering required two possibilities, the existence and non-existence of the object of wonder. The impossibility of the non-existence of the world makes wonder at its existence nonsensical. Wondering about a part of the world, such as the sky's being cloudy or not, was possible. The problem is that language itself—as opposed to an instance—is not an object whose non-existence we could imagine. Of course, we could imagine the non-existence of English. But language is possible because it has application, because it has a *form* that it shares with thought and world. The existence of that form just is the condition on the possibility of significant thought, i.e. thought that applies to reality because of shared form. But this is a statement of a condition on being a knowing subject, viz. that one have significant thoughts. Therefore, being a subject is a condition on having thoughts, experiences and significant language. In other words, if there is a miracle to the existence of language, it is the miracle of the possibility of significant thought, that is of experience, that is of being a subject. The miracle is not then the existence of language, but the existence of the subject.[19]

That is precisely my suggestion, advertised at the beginning of this part, that in the background of the lecture is the person, who is in reality but not in the world. Three attempts to make an experience concrete and controllable have been attempts to locate the object of experience in the world. Each fails, because the object of experience in those

[19] The locution 'condition on' given above should be glossed as logically, not temporally, prior. That is: for there to be y's, there must be x's, but not vice versa. For example, for there to be language, there must be thought, world and logic, but not vice versa. We can suppose that animals think logically determinate thoughts, without supposing that they have language. Language need not exist at all, but if it does it need not come into existence *after* logic. Therefore, there need not be language to be a subject, but there must be logic.

experiences that prompt ethical language is the subject, who is not in the world. Each experience Wittgenstein gives is not an experience of anything in the world and so cannot be given expression in language, i.e. is essentially nonsensical. Each experience is an experience of oneself.[20]

Wondering at the existence of the world is wondering at one's own existence, though not existence in the phenomenal sense that is explicable by reference to physiology or psychology. Another way to put this might be to think how extraordinary it is that I should experience anything. Still another way to express it might be in noting, as Wittgenstein did, that suicide is the elementary sin: it is self-extinction; rejecting experience and existence as a miracle or an object of wonder (10.1.17).

I suggest that the other two experiences given will admit of similar elaboration in terms of experience of oneself. The experience of feeling absolutely safe is experiencing oneself as in accord with the world, while the experience of feeling guilty is experiencing oneself as out of accord with the world (8.7.16).[21] Any notion of accord will of course have to be transcendent in that it is a relation between the transcendental self and the world. Elaborating this idea further is difficult while staying close to what Wittgenstein said.[22] For present purposes, what is important is that the object of these experiences can be understood as the person who is having them. They are, as it were, inward experiences—though the language of inner and outer is apt to obscure.[23]

[20] A seeming objection to this conclusion is that there can be no ethical experience. The objection seems entailed as follows: there are no experiences of logic; logic and ethics are alike in that each is a condition of the world; therefore there are no experiences of ethics.

The conclusion seems sound, but as an objection it does not apply to the conclusion given. The experiences mooted are of oneself, not of ethics itself or ethical properties. If there could, *per impossibile*, be ethical experience, perhaps it would be of new forms of accord with the world. This is not experience of oneself, but experience of relations involving oneself.

[21] The feeling of b eing out of accord is the same as the anguish and anxiety described in part II, §§1-2 of "Early Writings," this volume. A contrasting example involving misfortune is given in part III, §1 below.

[22] There are clues, e.g. in 6.422 and 29-30.7.16.

[23] It is notable that Wittgenstein criticised Schopenhauer—who was an inspiration for much of Wittgenstein's thought in this area—for failing to look inward. See Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Culture and Value: A Selection From the Posthumous Remains*. Translated by Peter Winch. Edited by G. H. von Wright, Heikki Nyman, and Alois Pichler. Rev. 2nd ed. Oxford: Blackwell, 1998, p. 41, 1939-40.

6. In the elaboration of Wittgenstein's ideas in the three sections above I have developed my suggestion that the best way to make interpretative sense of what is said in the lecture regarding ethics is to suppose that the background idea Wittgenstein is working with is that the subject-matter of ethics is a person, specifically oneself—*contra* the overt definition of ethics given in the lecture. Ethics, on this suggestion, is an activity of enquiry about oneself. We can now meet four constraints in understanding the view of ethics Wittgenstein expressed in the lecture.

First, what is said must not be a matter of science or logic, for Wittgenstein says he is not going to speak of these (139a: 11). Second, what he says should seem useful (139a: 11). Third, the tendency of the human mind to use ethical language must be one that could intelligibly elicit a grave respect (139a: 21).

A fourth constraint that is contemporaneous but not in the lecture itself is that any explanation must not be more chatter about ethics. This is the interpretative concern voiced above at the outset of this reading of the lecture. Wittgenstein thought little of many who spoke about ethics. In an earlier letter describing the ethical purpose of the *Tractatus*, he described talk of ethics as "gassing."[24] In December 1929, a month after the lecture was given, Wittgenstein said in conversation that he regarded it as "very important to put an end to the chatter about ethics," which he described as "whether there is knowledge in ethics, whether there are values, whether the Good can be defined, etc."[25]

Obviously the third and fourth constraints are inter-related. For on the third constraint we have a tendency to use language in an ethical sense, though it be nonsense. That tendency elicits respect. But on the fourth constraint, it must be distinct from a putatively similar use of language that is just gassing or chatter.

I suggest the personal dimension of the ethical I have mooted as Wittgenstein's background idea can meet these constraints. The first constraint can be met directly. Science is concerned solely with the world. Logic is the form of the application of thought and language to the world. The person exists partially or in some sense beyond or at the

[24] Letter to Ludwig von Ficker reprinted in Wright, G. H. von. *Wittgenstein*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982, p. 83.

[25] Waismann, Friedrich. "Notes on Talks With Wittgenstein." *The Philosophical Review* 74, no. 1 (1965), p. 13.

limit of the world. If the subject of ethics is the person, then he is outside the provinces of logic and science.

Immediately this conclusion is *useful* in that it forestalls the use of the methods of scientific enquiry or logical analysis in the consideration of ethical matters. It rules out appeal to either science or logic in the explanation or justification of ethical injunctions or occurrences. If these are the only sources of explanation and justification, then recognising that they are inapplicable to ethics will eliminate any activity toward explanations of the ethical.[26] Ethical claims will be in this sense personal expressions. However, this should not be understood as equivalent to non-cognitivism about ethical matters. For ethical claims, on this view of Wittgenstein's intent, are not expressions of an attitude to the world, but are attempts to speak about oneself as a subject, including *inter alia* one's relation with the world. If these attempts were simply emotive responses to worldly states of affairs, the constitution of those states would be factual and amenable to expression in language. This point is made explicitly on page 8 of both *MSS*, as discussed above in part I, §3. Considerations from the *Tractatus* constitute a further block to this route of explication, as discussed below.

The foregoing suggests a criterion for distinguishing ethical chatter from the use of language with ethical sense that elicits respect. Ethical chatter is the discourse that proceeds as if ethical matters were susceptible of scientific explanation, theories, logical analysis and definition. Wittgenstein's negative results in the lecture are demonstrations of what comes of chatter, viz. nonsense. Among his conclusions are that what ethics says adds nothing to our knowledge (139a: 21). He disparages the idea that values, as entities or properties in the world, might exist when he imagines value made concrete in the form of the absolutely right road or a state of affairs that is absolutely good. For Wittgenstein, it is a chimera to suppose that there is something independent of my will that can coerce me *with necessity*, logical or otherwise (139b: 9-10). Indeed the lecture begins with a definition of good from Moore that Wittgenstein uses. Wittgenstein said in reference to Moore, "It is a priori certain that, whatever definition one may give of the Good, it is always a misunderstanding to suppose that the formulation corresponds to what one really

[26] This conclusion is consonant with the earlier expression of Wittgenstein's resistance to method in the *Tractatus*, discussed in, part III, §3 of "Early Writings," this volume.

means."[27] Wittgenstein uses Moore's definition, extended, to show that whatever the *urge* to use language with ethical sense means, it is not what we wish it to mean by using that instance of language.

If this specification of chatter is right, then on the face of it, it would seem that Wittgenstein's lecture has been more chatter. However, I suggest we can distinguish a positive frame around the negative picture Wittgenstein uses to illustrate the nonsensicality of ethical chatter. The positive frame is an instance of the tendency to speak in the ethical sense that elicits respect. The interpretative structure I am proposing is as follows. The positive frame includes the prefatory marks prior to Wittgenstein saying he will begin (139b: 3) and the concluding remarks following the hopelessness of his running up against our cages, where he had intended to indicate he will sum up (139a: 20). The negative picture is the bulk in between.

The positive frame, in line with the interpretative tack I have been following, is an instance of speaking personally, about oneself. A year after giving the lecture, Wittgenstein explicitly says, "At the end of my lecture on ethics, I spoke in the first person. I believe that is quite essential. Here nothing more can be established, I can only appear as a person speaking for myself."[28] What he said at the end was that he respected the tendency of the human mind to desire to express or say something about the ultimate meaning of life, the absolute good. He would not ridicule the tendency to have this desire.

Moreover the personal nature of Wittgenstein's involvement is evident in his prefatory remarks too. He says he is saying something that comes from his heart (139a: 11). More, he stands before his audience not as a logician, scientist or journalist but as a human being addressing his fellows, his fellow human beings (139a: 11). Figuratively at least, he was naked before them and addressed them person to person, as opposed to within any of the social structures of which social life is composed and which might have lent him authority. What he intended to speak of, and what he could speak of was himself. One could say that the negative picture he illustrated by revealing ethical chatter as nonsense, when thrown away, would reveal only Wittgenstein himself.

I think the distinction I have drawn between chatter and the urge to

[27] Waismann, "Notes on Talks With Wittgenstein," p. 13.
[28] Waismann, "Notes on Talks With Wittgenstein," p. 16.

speak about oneself using language in its ethical sense is sufficient to meet the fourth interpretative constraint. However, one could still ask why speaking about oneself using language in its ethical sense elicits Wittgenstein's respect?

Chatter about ethics is the activity of trying to bring the ethical into the realm of explanation, theory, logical necessity and the teachable.[29] It expresses the hope that if we can find a perspicuous—i.e. accurate—view of the world, we could discern definite answers to the questions of what is important or what is the right life. Put positively, it is a hope that the course of worthy lives can be determined through enquiry into the world. Put negatively, it is the belief that a worthy life could flow from ethical knowledge that some could have, some could lack and some could, perhaps, teach. More generally, chatter presumes the ethical is worldly and that ethical discourse concerns the world.

In contrast to this, the tendency to use language in its ethical sense which elicits respect is personal. It is trying to say something concerning oneself. But what moves one to speak?

An answer is needed, for one might be tempted to think that what Wittgenstein has in mind is a kind of expressivism about ethics. On such a view, the use of ethical language solely expresses one's attitudes toward states of affairs. The problems with this are two. First, it is untrue to Wittgenstein since the subject drops out under logical analysis of attitude attributions. In the *Tractatus*, "A believes that p" has the logical form "'p' says p" with no mention of A (5.542). Dialectically this is sufficient to discard the suggestion, since it shows that language does not apply to the subject. Second, even if it were not, why should the expression of *any* attitude elicit respect? Surely it will depend on the attitude, its object and their relation. The suggestion fails therefore to meet the fourth constraint.

My tentative suggestion is that the tendency to use language with an ethical sense is an attempt at fellowship, broadly conceived. It is an attempt to say something about oneself. Specifically one attempts to say something about what it is like to be a person, that being which is an essential inter-relation of transcendental and phenomenal selves. But

[29] Wittgenstein described the possibility of teaching ethics with scorn in December, 1930. See Waismann, Friedrich. *Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle*. Brian McGuinness (ed.). Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1979, p. 117.

the transcendental self is radically isolated as the limit of the world, and the phenomenal self, while in the world, has of itself no *experience* of life. What is there that is common to be shared in fellowship?

What people share is the world, and we share it through logic and language such that of nothing said is it in principle impossible that one should understand it. People share the world even though each is an individual subject with his own relation to the world, a relation that may be more or less anguished. Nor is seeking fellowship precluded by other, divisive ethical responses such as disagreement or toleration. There remains what is shared and it is to this that one reaches to try to breach the isolations of individuality. It is how we try to be understood by others. For all the reasons developed above the attempt is hopeless. I cannot describe myself to others or even to myself *in* language without speaking nonsense.

Still we have the temptation, tendency or urge to try (139b: 10, 139b: 18).[30] If one were sufficiently austere or resolute, one would refrain from saying what cannot be said clearly, what is nonsense.[31] Yet the temptation to do so recurs. Wittgenstein describes his own response as akin to a temptation when he says he cannot help but respect the tendency I have characterised as desiring fellowship. For his life, he will not ridicule it (139b: 18). The urge to fellowship, the desire to express the nature of being a subject is a plausible candidate for respect. *Prima facie*, the suggestion satisfies the third constraint as well as the other three.

7. Still one could doubt whether essential nonsense could be an object of respect since, after all, it is nonsense. Though one cannot say anything of oneself *in* language, perhaps we can *by* language. I shall sketch two ways in which this might occur. First, Wittgenstein considered that music might be a form of expression whose themes could not occur in science and in this sense that it was beyond language (29.5.15, 27.5.15).[32]

[30] Wittgenstein contemporaneously mentions the urge to thrust against language that is ethics, Waismann, "Notes on Talks With Wittgenstein," p. 12.

[31] Of course nothing about the urge to fellowship ought to imply that ethics depends on the existence of others, for it does not (2.8.16). The austere response is, in this attenuated sense, quite correct.

In a similar way, the use of language with an ethical sense might express themes in being a transcendental self, such as discord with guilt and harmony with accord or resolution; or that the world is a persistent source of misery (13.8.16).[33] This could also be a way in which the ethical and the aesthetic were one, about which more below.

Second, language used to describe the world works by a co-ordination of substantively distinct elements—objects, symbols, "psychical constituents"[34]—that, when compositionally unified, share a common form. People share a common form, it is the human form. That form is part-constituted by the phenomenal qualities of the human animal, part-constituted by the transcendental qualities of the human subject and the qualities of their unifying inter-relation. What people share may afford sufficient co-ordination such that there are occasions when it makes sense to use language in the ethical sense and not others. In other words, our common humanity may open possibilities where what is strictly nonsense yet makes sense to say, i.e. when it is appropriate to speak with an ethical sense.

I suggest Wittgenstein thinks something similar to this because of the confidence he has in what we have in common. This is expressed within the positive frame by his speaking of himself as a human being addressing his fellow human beings. Indeed, the desire to say something about the ultimate meaning of life he characterises as "a document of a tendency of the *human* mind" (139b: 19, my emphasis).

His belief in our common form is further expressed by the confidence with which he believes he can refer to the experiences that tempt us to use language in an ethical sense. While he allows that this is entirely personal, he has confidence that we all have examples we can recognise as akin to those he finds striking (139b: 11). These experiences, he

[32] Wittgenstein's remarks in this regard, which focused on methods of composition and musical notation, were still evident shortly after the lecture. He is reported to have said, "But once a method has been found the opportunities for the expression of personality are correspondingly restricted." Wittgenstein, Ludwig, John King, and Desmond Lee. *Wittgenstein's Lectures, Cambridge, 1930-1932*. Totowa, N.J: Rowman & Littlefield, 1980, p. 21.

[33] A similar example is developed further using an analogy of a musical accompanist in part III, §2 of "Early Writings," this volume.

[34] Wittgenstein called the constituents of thought—whose investigation properly belongs to psychology—'psychical constituents' in a letter to Bertrand Russell of 19.8.19, which is reprinted in Wittgenstein's *Notebooks*, pp. 130-1.

thinks, all provide appropriate occasions for using language with an ethical sense.

Lastly, Wittgenstein gives a concrete example of when the use of language in an ethical sense is appropriate. He contrasts one's response to a tennis player who plays badly but does not care to play better with someone who behaves badly by lying but does not care to behave better. In the first case it would be inappropriate to say that he ought to want to play better. He asks if we could do the same for the liar. He says, "Certainly not" and says that one *would* say, "you ought to want to behave better" (139b: 5-6). This rebuke is given as an example of using language in its ethical sense. But what is the status of Wittgenstein's assertion that one *would* say this? Is it a prediction? Is it necessary?[35] Or is it a claim about what it makes sense to do, when it is appropriate?

If it were a prediction, then the example would be an example of language used in the relative sense, relative to an empirical standard supplied by, e.g., sociology. But then it would not be an example of language used with an ethical sense. If it were necessary, then the necessity must be logical necessity for this is the only sort Wittgenstein allowed in the largely Tractarian framework of the lecture (6.37). But language used in an ethical sense is nonsense and so non-logical and therefore outside logical necessities. I suggest therefore that the tennis/lying contrast is an example of when it makes sense—is appropriate—to use language with an ethical sense.

It makes sense on such an occasion to try to express something of how I bear myself on the matter of lying. But if it is an example, it is also an example that depends on sharing a sense that lying is something that we all confront as beings capable of willing worth in and for our lives.

One of the largest changes between *MSS* 139a and 139b is the substitution of tennis for piano playing in the later manuscript (139a: V-6, 139b: 5-6). This was, I suggest, to sharpen an otherwise blurry contrast. For piano playing is also an aesthetic endeavour and it might be less obvious that one could be indifferent to whether one played well, as one could when playing tennis. In short, the alteration serves to highlight how the ethical and the aesthetic may be one.

The change also eliminated the role of a "connaisseur of piano play-

[35] Note that 'would' is a modal verb.

ing" for making judgements about playing well (139a: 6). There is, by contrast, no such thing as a connoisseur of lying. The judgements or exhortations made about tennis and lying therefore are on the same footing with each other. Each can be made by anyone regardless of authority, knowledge or experience. By this change, Wittgenstein ensured that his example was applicable to anyone in his audience because of commonalities he could safely presume to share with his fellows

III

1. It is a natural thought, in the context of recent moral philosophy, that the central challenge to Wittgenstein's thoughts on ethics are ontological. Naturalism, particularly with a physicalist worldview, has difficulty accommodating subjectivity in a realm beyond the scientific. Moreover, the linguistic background of the lecture on ethics is assuredly Tractarian and one commonly thought to have been surpassed. However, I shall briefly set out the suggestion that the concerns that animate the view of ethics expressed in the lecture, as I have interpreted them, are and should feature centrally in any view of ethics, including contemporary accounts. These concerns are the place of contingency, the personal nature of ethics and the importance of fellowship. If I am right, then Wittgenstein's account has more to offer than may have been thought.

Wittgenstein is right to suppose that the ethical cannot be contingent. There are however limits to this claim. It seems essential to the ideas of punishment, reward and responsibility that each be purified of chance or contingency. For to the extent that one is not responsible, e.g. because of chance, one is undeserving of reward or punishment. It is an idea that correlates with the Will as the bearer of the ethical (6.423). This idea has been exploited to put pressure on consequentialism where the assignment of moral value based on consequences can owe too much to circumstance.

However, one must suppose an extreme harmony of worldly events if one further supposes that contingency, in the form of chance, is not also implicated in ethical responses. For instance, misfortune is integral to the possibility and recognition of some kinds of moral response, such

as pity and compassion. Pity is often a response to hazards any of us is prey to, such as vanity, but which only some have the misfortune to confront. If Wittgenstein cannot acknowledge this place for contingency, then his view looks extreme for it will deny much that seems essentially ethical.

There is evidence that Wittgenstein's view is not extreme in this sense. Wittgenstein seems to acknowledge a place for contingency in a subsequent discussion of ethical problems with Rhees, where they consider a man who must give up his work in cancer research or leave his wife, for he cannot honour both. Here, Wittgenstein allows, are the ingredients of tragedy.[36] Tragedy is in this case and often, I suggest, a morally loaded concept. For it arises when someone confronts a situation in which all options open to him as right will require him also to do wrong. The man can honour the value his work will have for those suffering the disease and wrong his wife, or honour his commitment to his wife and disregard what is valuable in his work.

There is then a tension here between the pressure for ethical response to be purified of chance and the recognition that many ethical challenges arise through chance and cannot in their character be purified of that origin. On the one hand, one acts in fidelity to ethical values, to something indifferent to chance, to what is valuable *simpliciter* now and forever—insofar as anything we can grasp answers to such a description. It is on this basis that one's responsibility is determined, and so just deserts and punishment. On the other, the circumstances that one confronts may arise by chance. Chance may yield tragedy, when one cannot escape doing wrong or, in Wittgenstein's sense, when one cannot avoid willing disharmony or unhappiness despite the best will. It is far from obvious that the tension can be resolved or that if it could what remained would be intelligible as the place ethics has in characterising human life.

[36] Rush Rhees, "Some Developments in Wittgenstein's View of Ethics," in *Discussions of Wittgenstein*, Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1996, p. 99; originally in *The Philosophical Review* 74, no. 1 (1965), pp. 17-26. Compare also the remarks in Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, p. 14e, 1931, "A tragedy might really always start with the words: 'Nothing at all would have happened, had it not been that…'" These suggest an openness to how chance may impinge on the ethical.

2. These considerations, exemplified in tragedy, lead directly to the idea that the ethical is personal. That is, there is no way to escape putting something of oneself in one's ethical responses. The phrase 'putting something of oneself' is bound to seem opaque because on its explication rests the whole of any account of the special concern exerted by the ethical as well as the constitution of the moral subject. However, it is enough to say, in the context of Wittgenstein's lecture, that one's ethical responses must be understood as professions in the first person, as Wittgenstein intended his to be. Each response bears one's imprimatur in a sense sufficiently analogous to explain our holding others personally responsible for their ethical responses. Wittgenstein's emphasis on the personal nature of the ethical characterises the consequences of responding not in terms of correctness or justification, but whether one can live with what one does, what it means for the course of one's life.[37] The consequences are in this sense not worldly, but are realised in the relation—e.g. harmonious or not—of the subject with the world and its movement.

The significance of this conception is its eschewing a *method* for solving or responding to moral problems. These methods will be various, but might include a scales for comparing reasons, a system of proof that applies universal principles to particulars or a re-description of moral considerations as natural facts amenable to the language and methods of science. These methods are of course the substance of much modern moral philosophy. It was just these ideas that Wittgenstein saw as chatter, because they introduce sense (as opposed to nonsense) into ethics and with it claims to correctness—or truth. But sense and truth are not what is at stake, for Wittgenstein, when confronting one's place in the world or the demands properly made on one.

In a similar vein, assertions governed by standards of correctness do not alter their meaning when uttered in the first person or the third.[38] The conditions for an asserted content's correctness do not include the speaker's bearing, e.g. whether he is sincere. An assertion governed by correctness therefore has nothing of the the speaker in it, something shown by the correctness conditions remaining unaltered if the assertion is put in the third person. Method, here conceived as interdependent with correctness, makes ethics impersonal. Method will not, as it

[37] Rhees, "Some Developments in Wittgenstein's View of Ethics," p. 99-100.

[38] Nothing about the analysis of indexicals bears on this point.

were, accomplish for us what we need when we seek resolution of moral problems.[39]

The conception Wittgenstein proposes is then sharply at odds with modern moral philosophy. However, if the considerations adduced in favour of the personal character of the ethical are broadly on track his view should not be ignored.

3. There is again another a risk if the view that the ethical is personal is taken to an extreme. For it might be thought to licence the idea that the focus of ethical concern is solely personal, specifically one's own conduct. For instance, it might be one's integrity that was paramount, without regard to one's bearing on others. This extreme view will tend to ethical self-absorption, exhibited in moral narcissism or egoism, where the whole of one's ethical concerns can seem to revolve around oneself, one's own conduct or one's effects on a cosmos of value. Certainly, Wittgenstein's ethical ideas in the *Tractatus* seem this way in their austerity and lack of inter-personal perspective. The same could be said for much modern moral philosophy.

The point in referring to this kind of view as potentially morally self-absorbed is that any perspective *recognisable* as ethical depends on concepts inter-related to the wrong one does to others. Remorse, an archetypical moral response, concerns the wrong done to another. Guilt, tragedy and vanity, among others, are ethical concepts whose content is oriented around how each is a wrong done to others. The consideration afforded to other people—glossed here as fellowship—is essential to any recognisably ethical perspective.

Fellowship is one form of the consideration of others and the introduction of it in Wittgenstein's lecture is a corrective to his ethical perspective. Two forms of fellowship at least suggest themselves as apposite here. One is the tendency to try to express the experience of being a subject, particularly an ethical subject. It is no less than an effort to reach out to others. It is this I have highlighted in the interpretation of Wittgenstein's lecture.

Another form of fellowship is the respect and sympathy one has for someone who has had to face the ethical challenge of the man caught

[39] These themes are elaborated further in part III, §3 of "Early Writings," this volume.

between his research and his wife. It is again a recognition of the inexpressible solitude in which the subject who confronts such a situation will find himself. Rhees gives Wittgenstein's final exclamation, regarding what one can say to the man who must live with his decision, as, "Well, God help you."[40] That may be, essentially, nonsense, but it is surely worthy of respect for what it says about the man who expresses it, and for what it may mean to the man who understands the saying of it.

[40] Rhees, "Some Developments in Wittgenstein's View of Ethics," p. 99.

II

Lecture on Ethics

edited by

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I

The work known as "A Lecture on Ethics" was first published in the *Philosophical Review* in 1965. The text was a transcription based on the typescript version of the lecture known as *TS* 207 of Wittgenstein's *Nachlass*.[1] Most philosophical literature concerning the lecture has been based on this version and its further reprints.[2] However, *TS* 207 is just the final result of a working process that involved at least two prior handwritten versions. According to the Bergen Electronic Edition of Wittgenstein's writings, they are the two drafts known as *MSS* 139a and 139b of the *Nachlass*. The version published in the *Philosophical Review* is thus the result of a process that involved two handwritten drafts and one typescript, of which *MS* 139a is probably the first draft.

What is striking about *MS* 139a is the clarity with which Wittgenstein jotted down ideas that remain mostly unchanged throughout the three versions of the lecture. It may appear that Wittgenstein wrote down a first draft that was already quite well-defined and developed. This appearance seems even more surprising in the light of what we know about Wittgenstein's way of working. Various sources testify that he usually produced the final version of his work after a complex process of revision in which earlier drafts were substantially transformed and rearranged.[3] However, one should bear in mind that "A Lecture on Ethics" is the text of a public lecture and Wittgenstein did not realise it in

[1] Wittgenstein, Ludwig. "A Lecture on Ethics". *The Philosophical Review* 74 (1965): 3-12, see "Introduction," this volume.

[2] *Philosophical Occasions*, pp. 37-44.

[3] Rosso, Marino "Wittgenstein edito ed inedito" in Marilena Andronico, Diego Marconi and Carlo Penco (eds.). *Capire Wittgenstein.* Genova: Marietti, 1988, pp. 31-61.

the same way as the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* or the *Philosophical Investigations*. The ideas expressed in the lecture were probably matters to which Wittgenstein had already given a lot of thought, though they were not matters to which he believed he had to devote the same intense work he devoted to his contemporary philosophical writings. The lecture is, thus, a different sort of text from most of Wittgenstein's writings.[4]

The present edition puts forward a novel account of the genesis of "A Lecture on Ethics." We believe that *MS* 139a is not actually the first draft. There is another draft, much less defined in quality and clarity, which is included in *MS* 139a itself and that has been overlooked by other editors. This draft is constituted by two deleted pages of apparently random remarks written on the reverse of pages 15 and 16 of *MS* 139a.[5] On the basis of strong textual evidence we present them as prior to, and separate from, *MS* 139a. It is worth noting that, on our conjecture, page 16 of *MS* 139a precedes page 15, i.e. one reads from reverse of page 16 to reverse of page 15.

MS 139a poses a further problem. A drawing in landscape position is sketched on the reverse of page 17. The sentence 'The order of event' is written perhaps as a title, while a word—possibly 'Will'—is written in the lower part of the left half of the page. Another word fragment—'Fu.' or 'Fr.'—is written in the lower part of the right half of the page. The drawing appears to have no connection with the topic of the lecture. Closer consideration, however, gives reasons for speculating that the drawing is related to the lecture. An interpretation of the drawing based on this speculation is proposed in "Speculation on the Content of the Reverse of Page 17 of *MS* 139a," in this volume.

[4] We thank Joachim Schulte for bringing this point to our attention.

[5] Manuscript page numbers refer to the page numbers of the original manuscript in its diplomatic version. In the case of the two deleted pages and the drawing, there were no page numbers written on the reverse of the sheets. We shall always refer to these three pages as the reverse, respectively, of pages 15, 16 or 17. In all other cases, we shall refer to the page number that appears in the upper right corner of the manuscript. Note that the first five pages of *MS* 139a are numbered with Roman numerals. We shall refer to them using Roman numerals and all other pages by Arabic numerals.

In the Bergen Electronic Edition, the reverse of pages 15 and 16 as well as the drawing on the reverse of page 17 are omitted from the normalised version. The drawing receives no attention and is regarded as not pertaining to the lecture. The decision not to give a normalised version of the two deleted pages is justified by the fact that the remarks are deleted and, as such, should not be reported in a normalised version, which is meant as a representation of the author's result after emendations. Less justified is the decision not to reproduce the drawing in the diplomatic version, since diplomatic and normalised versions in the Bergen Electronic Edition reproduce Wittgenstein's original drawings and diagrams.[6] These editorial decisions with regard to the reverse of pages 15, 16 and 17 have the consequence of leaving in shadow what we regard as earlier drafts of the lecture itself.

This introduction describes the process of transcription as well as the editing of the diplomatic and normalised versions. Second, it addresses the issue of the chronological relations between the three versions listed in the catalogue of Wittgenstein's writings and what we regard as the first draft available of "A Lecture on Ethics." More information on the two reverse pages, 15 and 16, is given in section IV below, while speculation on the drawing is presented in a subsequent section.

II

The transcriptions of *MS* 139a and 139b were carried out in three stages. A fourth stage was required for completing the transcription of *MS* 139a. The first two stages were carried out by a transcriber, while the third and fourth stages were carried out by a proof reader whose task was to check the accuracy of the transcriptions obtained in the first two stages. The process can be described as follows.

Stage 1 The two manuscripts were transcribed from the digital facsimiles of the Bergen Electronic Edition and edited in a diplomatic version.

[6] Cf. Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Wittgenstein's* Nachlass. *The Bergen Electronic Edition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, see "Introduction" this volume.

Stage 2 The transcriptions were reviewed by comparing them with the high-definition facsimiles available at the Wittgenstein Archives of the University of Bergen.

Stage 3 The transcriptions obtained at stages 1 and 2 were reviewed by a proof reader who compared them a second time with the digital facsimiles in the Bergen Electronic Edition.

Unfortunately, it was not possible to complete the review by means of the high-quality facsimiles. A satisfactory transcription of *MS* 139b was obtained at Stage 3, and direct acquaintance with the original was not required. Direct acquaintance with the original was required for *MS* 139a.

Stage 4 The transcription of *MS* 139a obtained at Stage 3 was improved and completed by examining the original manuscript held at the Wren Library of Trinity College, Cambridge.

The transcription of the two manuscripts raised the issue of interpreting Wittgenstein's handwriting. Many signs were unclear or ambiguous. In order to transcribe them reliably, we used the following heuristics. First, we tried to obtain clearer digital images by enlarging some details of the pictures up to three times their normal size. In other cases, the images were made into negative images. In a few cases, the context provided hints for interpreting the signs.

The enlargement of the details was frequently helpful, even though it made mistakes due to misperception of the signs more frequent. When enlarging the digital image, the pixels were proportionally expanded thereby creating illusions of fine pencil signs that were not actually on the page. Thus, when a transcription was obtained by enlarging the pictures, the result was then compared with a transcription obtained by looking at the normal-sized pictures and taking into account the linguistic context. This ensured that the transcription was as reliable and accurate as possible. The typescript did not raise serious problems for transcription. Being a typescript, a diplomatic version was not required. However, both versions are given because some corrections were made by hand or typewritten on the typescript.

III

The realisation of the two transcription types—the *diplomatic* and *normalised* versions—required several editorial decisions. The two types of versions differ in virtue of which feature of the manuscripts they represent. The diplomatic version is a representation of the way in which Wittgenstein worked out and expressed his thoughts on paper. It records not just the words, but also as much detail as possible relating to the visual appearance of the text. It reproduces features such as deleted words and letters, orthographic mistakes, rejected formulations and marginal comments. The diplomatic is a representation of the appearance of the writings by means of signs and symbols that make the process of writing and correcting intelligible. To this end, we have used symbols to reproduce most of his handwritten marks and corrections. These symbols are reported and explained in the legend that follows the "Description of the Manuscripts".

The normalised version, by contrast, is a representation of the content at which the working process of each manuscript terminated. Normalised versions convey the content that each manuscript has after corrections and changes. They present the text in its thematic and semantic aspect. The normalised versions have raised some issues. The texts, in particular the manuscripts, contain some incorrect or non-idiomatic expressions as Wittgenstein was expressing himself in a foreign language and, in various passages, was probably writing rather fast. If we had wanted to reproduce an easily readable text, we should have corrected them. However, this would have required so many changes that the text would have turned out very different, so much so that it would have been too distant from what Wittgenstein wrote. Such an operation would have required us to correct not only the orthography, but also grammatical and syntactical mistakes, and to rework the punctuation completely. This would have meant rewriting a large number of sentences, thus altering them at least partially.

Our decision has been to leave the English unmodified, with corrected orthography the only exception. We are aware of the risk that the appearance of the text might seem odd to the reader. However, we preferred this to presenting a text which was too far from the original and which would have presented the even more odd feature of being writ-

ten in fluent English. Wittgenstein opens his lecture with the following remark:[7]

> I feel I shall have great difficulties in communicating my thoughts to you and I think some of them may be diminished by mentioning them to you beforehand. The first one, which almost I need not mention, is, that English is not my native tongue and my expression therefore often lacks that precision and subtlety which would be desirable if one talks about a difficult subject. All I can do is to ask you to make my task easier by trying to get at my meaning in spite of the faults which I will constantly be committing against the English grammar.'
>
> (*MS* 139b: 1, normalised version)

Moreover, not all errors are due to Wittgenstein's incomplete mastery of English. It was typical of his work, even in German, that first drafts had poor quality of language and style.[8] It is worth noting that the idea of a first draft makes sense in the case of the lecture but in most Wittgenstein's works we are given individual remarks. This goes along with the fact that there are no drafts of works in Wittgenstein's writings. The characteristics of his language vary according to the sort of *MS* under consideration. When Wittgenstein jotted down ideas in his notebooks which, as suggested by Joachim Schulte, he may have used outdoors, he did not pay much attention to spelling and none to punctuation. This seems to be a rather common way of taking notes and it has something to do with speed and concentrating on the train of thought.

As for the editing of the normalised versions, we have made the text consistent by inserting quotation marks wherever they were missing and using capital letters and italics according to current use. We have interpreted Wittgenstein's own underlinings as a way of stressing the underlined words and transformed them into italicised text. We have also retained Wittgenstein's dashes and a few indentations and paragraphs without adding any others. In the normalised version of *MS* 139a there were points in which we had to make a choice between two alternative texts. For example, on page III of the diplomatic version of *MS* 139a, the sentence

[7] We thank Walter Cavini for bringing the relevance of this passage to our attention.
[8] "Wittgenstein edito ed inedito," p. 33.

> [...] & the/[E|e]nd ^{goal} to which it leads.
>
> (*MS* 139a: III, diplomatic version)

presents the alternative between 'end' and 'goal'. In *MS* 139b, Wittgenstein rephrases the sentence thus:

> [...] & the // goal which it leeds to.
>
> (*MS* 139b: 2-3, diplomatic version)

The fact that Wittgenstein chose the second alternative in *MS* 139b gave us reason for reporting in the normalised version of 139a only the word that he chose:

> [...] and the goal to which it leads.
>
> (*MS* 139a: 3, normalised version)

We chose 'goal', which Wittgenstein wrote later over the word 'end', which he had initially written and did not strike out even after the addition of 'goal'. We used the criterion of always choosing the alternative which Wittgenstein himself subsequently adopted in *MS* 139b. However, there are a few cases in which this criterion could not be applied, since the relevant part of the text was completely omitted by Wittgenstein in *MS* 139b. In these cases, we have opted for the text which Wittgenstein himself had written later, for two main reasons. First, this makes more sense as a general rule. Second, in all the other cases which we can verify, Wittgenstein himself decided in the same way.

Punctuation is non-standard in many points, often reflecting the German style—e.g. on page 1 line 9, on page 4 line 17, on page 5 line 32, on page 6 line 7—and missing in others—e.g. on page 2 line 29, on page 4 lines 32-34, on page 7 line 4. The original punctuation, however, was retained in the normalised as well as the diplomatic version. In the normalised version, the quotation marks were changed from the German into the English standard style. No indentation was introduced in the normalised version.

IV

Once the process of transcription was complete, we faced the issue of determining the relative chronology of the three versions as well as of the first draft noted on the reverse of pages 16 and 15 of *MS* 139a. It is worth remembering that the page order is inverted because, according to our conjecture, page 16 precedes page 15. In particular, we had to address the following issues:

1. The chronological relationship between *MSS* 139a and 139b, and *TS* 207;
2. The chronology of *MSS* 139a and 139b;
3. The chronological relationship between *MSS* 139a and 139b, and the two deleted texts written on the reverse of pages 16 and 15 of *MS* 139a;
4. The order and the chronological relationship between the two deleted pages;
5. The meaning of the drawing on the reverse of page 17 of *MS* 139a and its relation with the two deleted pages, *MS* 139a and the lecture itself. This issue will be addressed in the "Speculation," this volume.

In this section, we shall address each issue separately by examining the textual evidence that led us to determine the chronology of each manuscript.

1. The chronological order of *MSS* 139a and 139b and of the typescript was decided on the basis of the following evidence. We first considered the normalised version of *MS* 139b, as this is a representation of the content that Wittgenstein obtained after making several corrections and changes to what he first jotted down. We found that this normalised version is identical to the typescript, apart from a few corrections made, by hand, directly on the typescript. The same similarity was not found between the normalised version of *MS* 139a and the diplomatic version of *MS* 139b. Thus, we concluded that *MS* 139b was written immediately prior to *TS* 207.

2. This allowed us to draw the further conclusion that *MS* 139a precedes *MS* 139b, which follows from the fact that *MS* 139a is the only available full draft other than *MS* 139b. Given that the latter has proved to be prior

to the typescript, *MS* 139a must have been written prior to *MS* 139b. However, this does not settle whether an intermediate version between *MSS* 139a and 139b is missing. In our opinion, it is likely that we are not missing anything between the two manuscripts. This is confirmed by a close comparison between the normalised version of *MS* 139a and the diplomatic version of *MS* 139b, which shows that the content and structure of the argument in the two manuscripts is unaltered.

The order of the topics is indeed the same. Moreover, only a few sentences are completely omitted in *MS* 139b. Most changes consist in simply thinning the text—*MS* 139b is two pages shorter than *MS* 139a—and making it more elegant and,[9] of course, improving the English. These changes occur throughout the text of *MS* 139b, but occur more often in the first part of the paper.[10] The central and final parts are much more alike, often identical. The two manuscripts are therefore very close.

On this basis, we believe that Wittgenstein wrote *MS* 139b directly from *MS* 139a, i.e. by looking at it and making changes on the spot. This is supported by the great similarity between the two texts in their central and final parts and the kind of corrections made in those parts. There are also many specific clues in *MS* 139b. For example, at some points in *MS* 139a, Wittgenstein overwrites an alternative for a term or phrase:

[9] For example, "I decided—I say—that I should use this opportunity to speak to you not as a logician, still less as a cross between a scientist and a journalist but as a human being who tries to tell other human beings something which some of them might possibly find useful, I say useful not interesting" (*MS* 139a: 2, normalised version). This paragraph is substituted with the more formal "I rejected these alternatives and decided to talk to you about a subject which seems to me to be of general importance, hoping that it may help to clear up your thoughts about this subject (even if you should entirely disagree with what I will say about it)" (*MS* 139b: 2, normalised version).

[10] For example, "I feel I will have great difficulties in communicating the thoughts which I want to communicate, to you and I want to mention some of these difficulties because I think that this may possibly diminish them" (*MS* 139a: 1, normalised version) is changed into "I feel I shall have great difficulties in communicating my thoughts to you and I think some of them may be diminished by mentioning them to you beforehand" (*MS* 139b: 1, normalised version). Consider also the sentences, "I will just modify this slightly and say: Ethics is the general enquiry into what is valuable. I do this because I want to include in my notion of Ethics also what is commonly understood to belong to the subject-matter of Aesthetics" (*MS* 139a: 3, normalised version) which are changed into, "Now I'm going to use the term Ethics in a slightly wider sense, in a sense in fact which includes what I believe to be the most essential part of what is generally called Aesthetics" (*MS* 139b: 3, normalised version).

p. 3	line 3	end / goal;
p. 4	line 10	by looking at / by shewing to you,
	line 11	you can / I could make you;
p. 10	line 7	irrespective / independent;
p. 15	line 18	is / seems,
	line 19	big / great and elaborate;
p. 17	line 3	a fact / an experience;
p. 19	line 24	is / remains;
p. 20	line 18	explanation / exception.

Wittgenstein then wrote *MS* 139b by making a choice between the two alternatives. Furthermore, many key sentences are repeated in *MS* 139b with exactly the same words as in *MS* 139a. In particular, the sentence, "No state of affairs has the coercive power in itself," which in *MS* 139a is written in the lower margin of page 10, in *MS* 139b is not only repeated with the same wording, but also inserted in the same page at line 6 right after the word 'Chimera'. One imagines that Wittgenstein was so precise because he was working directly from *MS* 139a.

3. The chronological relationship between the two full manuscripts and the two deleted pages is more problematic. The fact that some remarks were written on the reverse of pages 16 and 15 of *MS* 139a does not *per se* provide evidence that they were written prior to the two full manuscripts. Indeed, they could have been written at any stage of the writing or even be totally unrelated to the lecture itself. Only a close analysis of the content of these remarks provides reasons for thinking that they constitute the first draft of the lecture and, in particular, that Wittgenstein wrote them prior to *MS* 139a. This will appear clearer after considering in details some of the evidence that lend support to our conjecture.

On our view, the two deleted pages constitute the first draft or the preparatory work from which Wittgenstein obtained *MS* 139a. The notes written on the reverse of page 16 precede those written on the reverse of page 15. The text written on the reverse of page 15 is thus the continuation of a prior part which is that written on the reverse of page 16. For now, we shall discuss the two deleted pages without yet assuming that they are parts of the same continuous text. We shall consider them in numerical, rather than chronological order. We shall first examine page 15 and then page 16.

The reverse of page 15 of *MS* 139a contains remarks about the expression 'To wonder at (the existence of) *x*', and these are the same remarks as those written on pages 12-13 of *MS* 139a, with one notable exception, the examples of wondering at an unusually dressed man and a strange sound are substituted by that of wondering at the unusually big size of a dog.

The reverse of page 16 of *MS* 139a does not contain a continuous text, but rather what appears to be a collection of notes. However, a careful reading shows that this is nothing less than a sketch of the main contents of a large part of *MS* 139a, roughly down to page 12. Wittgenstein followed the sketch closely when he wrote *MS* 139a. First, we find a list of definitions of Ethics ("Ethics is the inquiry into what is good," "Ethics is the enquiry into what is valuable," "Ethics is if anything the natural science of value"), the first two of which are used by Wittgenstein on page III of *MS* 139a. What Wittgenstein then notes in small handwriting on the left margin of the reverse of page 16—"Galstonsche Photogr.," "Sense of life, what makes life worth living," "Worth. Value, importance"—is expounded on page IV of *MS* 139a.

The next point written down on the reverse of page 16, i.e., the "distinction between statements of relative and absolute value," is addressed on pages 4-7 of *MS* 139a. The examples chosen are of a good piano player, a good golf player, and the right road. This serves the purpose of stating the key point that, "No statement of fact is or implies an absolute judgment" and that "Science & the whole realm of propositions contains no absolute nor ethical judgment." These points are expounded on pages 7-9 of *MS* 139a. In particular, on page 7 at lines 12-15, we find an almost identical sentence: "No statement of fact can ever be or imply what we call an absolute that is ethical judgment."

The last eleven lines of the reverse of page 16 discuss the idea that the expression 'I wonder at the existence of the world' is nonsense, which corresponds to what Wittgenstein writes on pages 10-12 of *MS* 139a. The sentence, "I will describe an experience which I will allways think about when I want to fix on what I mean by absolute importance" (*MS* 139a: 16, lines 24-26 of the reverse of the page, normalised version) is similar to, "Now in this situation I am if I want to fix my mind on what I mean by absolute or ethical value" (*MS* 139a: 10, normalised version).

4. This brief description of the content of the notes written on the reverse of pages 15 and 16 and the comparison with *MS* 139a suggests

that these pages constitute the preparatory work for the lecture. Several conjectures are possible with respect to the chronological relationship between the two deleted pages. The one we regard as the most plausible and also most fascinating is the following.

Conjecture The two deleted pages constitute the first draft or the preparatory work from which Wittgenstein obtained *MS* 139a. The notes written on the reverse of page 16 precede in the order of writing those on the reverse of page 15. There are three versions of the lecture and a preparatory jotting, which is constituted by the two deleted pages on the reverse of *MS* 139a. The three versions are *MS* 139a, *MS* 139b and *TS* 207.

On this view, the part written on the reverse of page 15 is the continuation of a prior and less developed part which is that written on the reverse of page 16. The style of the two pages is certainly different. While the text written on the reverse of page 16 is in the form of notes, the text written on the reverse of page 15 is continuous. This does not refute our conjecture. For it is plausible that having sketched the basic structure of the discussion, Wittgenstein paused to use more care in clearly stating the central themes of the lecture.

The key ground for the truth of our conjecture is seen by comparing the beginnings and ends of pages 16 and 15. We shall label the penultimate line of page 16 (a). We shall label the ultimate line of page 16 (b) and the first line of page 15 (c). We shall now elaborate how these can be combined for a continuous reading. On our conjecture, page 16 precedes page 15 in the order. The first line is:

(c) of scientific expression they are a misuse of language in fact they are nonsense.

(*MS* 139a: reverse of page 15, lines 1-2, normalised version)

This seems to be the continuation of a sentence that Wittgenstein began to write on another page. Next, page 16 ends with the following sentences, which does not seem to be finished and, very likely, continues on another page:

(b) Let us analyse this verbal expression of my experience. It is nonsense.
Expression of existence and possibility

(*MS* 139a: reverse of page 16, lines 18-19, normalised version)

There is no full-stop after 'possibility'. Thus, the last sentence, "Expression of existence and possibility," seems to be incomplete. The sentence contained in (a)—"The experience of wondering at the world at the existence of the world"—is also part of a wider remark concerning one of the main themes of the lecture: the experience of wondering at the existence of the world. This suggests that (a) is likely to be followed by remarks dealing with this theme. This hypothesis is confirmed by the fact that after noting:

(a) The experience of wondering at the world at the existence of the world.

(*MS* 139a: reverse of page 16, lines 17-18, normalised version)

Wittgenstein then goes on to write down (b), at the end of page 16, and (c), at the beginning of page 15, which is followed by the explanation of the difference between the cases in which 'to wonder at the existence of *x*' makes sense and those in which it does not. It seems that Wittgenstein first introduces the topic of a specific type of experience—that of wondering at the existence of the world—and then addresses the problem of analysing the meaning of the verbal expression that one would use to express such an experience. He concludes by claiming that the attempt to express one's wonder at the existence of the world as well as that of finding a scientific manner for expressing this experience is mere nonsense due to the misuse of the language. Thus, the sequence of sentences should be ordered as follows:

(a) The experience of wondering at the world at the existence of the world.

(b) Let us analyse this verbal expression of my experience. It is nonsense.
Expression of existence and possibility

(c) of scientific expression they are a misuse of language in fact they are nonsense.

By combining (a), (b), (c) and the sentence written immediate before (a) and after (c), we obtain a reasonably fluent passage that expresses a precise philosophical view. The normalised text restored would be as follows (the signs [a], [b] and [c] have been introduced in order to indicate where each sentence or sequence of sentences considered in our argument begins):

> [a] The experience of wondering at the world at the existence of the world. [b] Let us analyse this verbal expression of my experience. It is nonsense. Expression of existence and possibility [c] of scientific expression they are a misuse of language in fact they are nonsense.

According to this account, sentence (b) is completed by (c). Although the sentence

> Expression of existence and possibility of scientific expression they are a misuse of language in fact they are nonsense.

is far from being well-formed, it makes sense to see the two pages as a continuation, since this matches the structure of the lecture in the two manuscripts. The fact that the first page is written more schematically than the second can be easily explained by the fact that this first version was written very quickly and not carefully, in accordance with Wittgenstein's habits, which would also explain the ill-formed sentence obtained by combining (b) and (c). It is worth noting that, in the normalised version of pages 16 and 15, we decided to keep the two pages separate without combining them into one continuous and unified text. The idea that the two deleted pages may be part of the same text is simply our conjecture.

We make a further suggestion. Wittgenstein did not continue writing this draft, but deleted the two pages he had written so far, thus leaving the first sketch of his paper unfinished, and started writing *MS* 139a afresh. Although this might appear hazardous, it would account for three features of these pages. The first is that they are deleted. The second is the way in which they are deleted—that is, with large, repeated and strong deletion marks, which extend for the whole length of the pages. The third fact is the rushed appearance of the handwriting.

A different conjecture would be that of considering the two pages not as consecutive, but as independent from each other. Even on this

hypothesis we would still maintain that they belong to the same early stage of the work. The text written on the reverse of page 16 would be a summary sketch on the basis of which Wittgenstein would go on to write a first version of the paper, of which we would possess only the reverse of page 15 and lack all the other pages. The latter would have thus been deleted to start afresh with *MS* 139a.

However, this hypothesis is much less appealing for the following reasons. First, it does not explain why the reverse of page 16 was also deleted: this is not the sort of deletion one would use to signal that an item in a provisional table of contents had been dealt with. Secondly, it does not account for the coincidence of the reverse of page 15 dealing with exactly the same topic with which the text written on the reverse of page 16 ends. The order of topics is indeed the same as in the manuscripts and in the typescript. Third, both pages were revised prior to the deletion. There are grammatical corrections and some insertions—e.g., on the reverse of page 16 the lines written in the upper left margin and at line 25, and on the reverse of page 15 at lines 20 and 23. This might show that Wittgenstein reviewed the text and then decided not to go on with it but to start again.

Nevertheless, whatever the details might be, we believe that the reverse of pages 16 and 15 belong to an earlier stage of the writing process of the lecture, immediately preceding *MS* 139a. On the basis of what has been shown so far, we can now detail this writing process as follows:

1. Reverse of pages 16 and 15: unfinished first version, later corrected and finally deleted;
2. *MS* 139a, later corrected, probably in more than one stage;
3. *MS* 139b, later corrected, probably in more than one stage;
4. *TS* 207.

In the opening remarks above we noted a striking feature of *MS* 139a, viz. of being a well-defined and developed draft, although a very early one. We want to conclude by saying that this impression which one inevitably gets when first reading the manuscript is confirmed by the philological analysis. We found that the deleted pages, the two manuscripts, and the typescript are all very close and that there never was a very significant change in the content or structure of the argument. It seems that Wittgenstein never changed his mind on the central points

he was going to make or on the kind and structure of the argumentation he was going to construct for his theses. A crucial sentence like, "No statement of fact is or implies an absolute judgment," already occurs on the reverse of page 16 and in the same wording as in *MSS* 139a and 139b. Most of his work consisted, then, in simply making as clear as possible his theses, the arguments in support of them, and choosing the most apposite examples.

We may now remark briefly on the chronology of our texts (we have thus far only tried to establish their chronological sequence). We believe that the similarity of the texts and the fact that Wittgenstein had a clear idea from the very first draft of what he intended to say strongly suggest that Wittgenstein wrote this lecture quite abruptly and with great passion. If that is right, then it is plausible that he wrote all the texts in a short span of time, i.e. in the few weeks preceding the date of the conference. This may have been possible because he was dealing with a subject particularly close to his heart and he was free to present it in the way he most preferred, viz. not in a strictly academic format. All this perfectly corresponds to the way von Wright describes Wittgenstein's character, especially in approaching philosophical work, "[his seriousness of character] springs from a passionate heart [...] he put his whole soul into everything he did [...] he could read only what he could wholeheartedly assimilate."[11]

[11] "The Wittgenstein Papers", pp. 542-543.

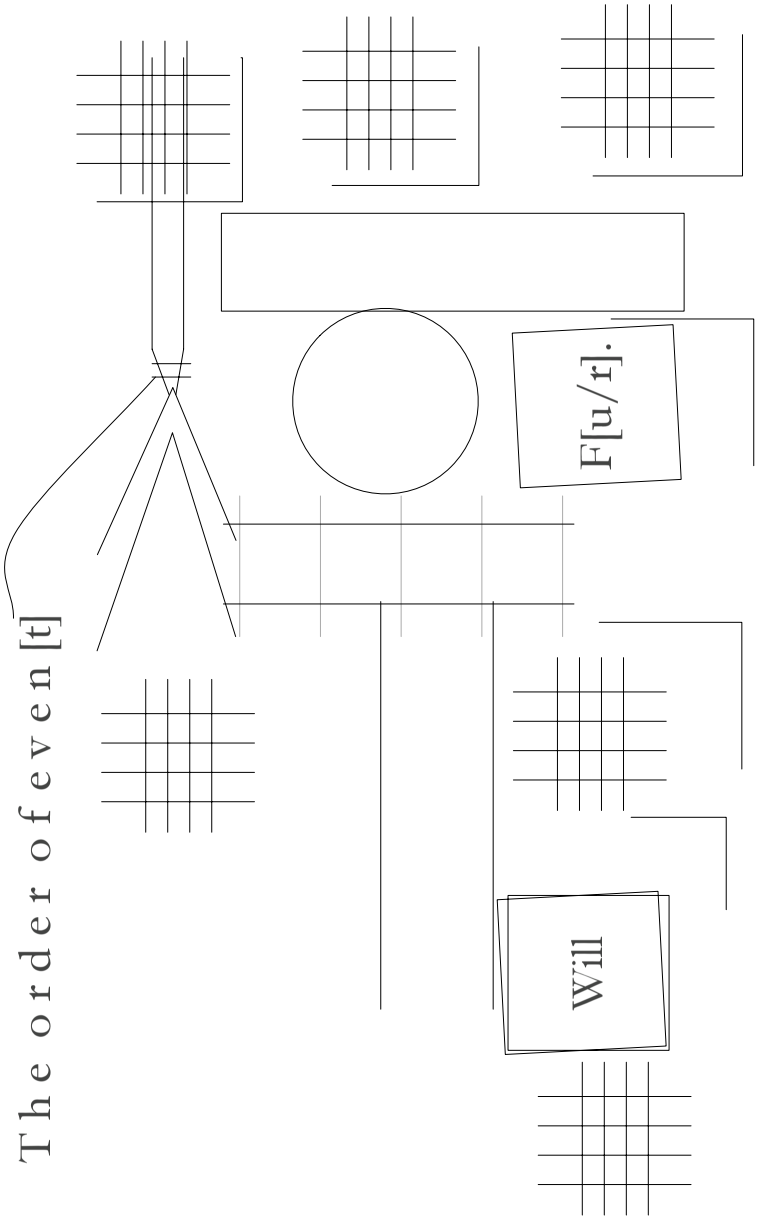
Speculation on the Content of the Reverse of Page 17 of *MS* 139a

1. The reverse of page 17 of *MS* 139a contains a few English words and a few letters, as well as dozens of lines, most of which are straight, positioned parallel to the edges of the page. There are many recognisable shapes including cross-hatched grids, squares, rectangles, circles, pairs of parallel lines and bracket marks that seem to indicate groups. The page, like the others in the *MS*, had been cut from a notebook. The content is oriented in landscape position with the original binding edge at the bottom.

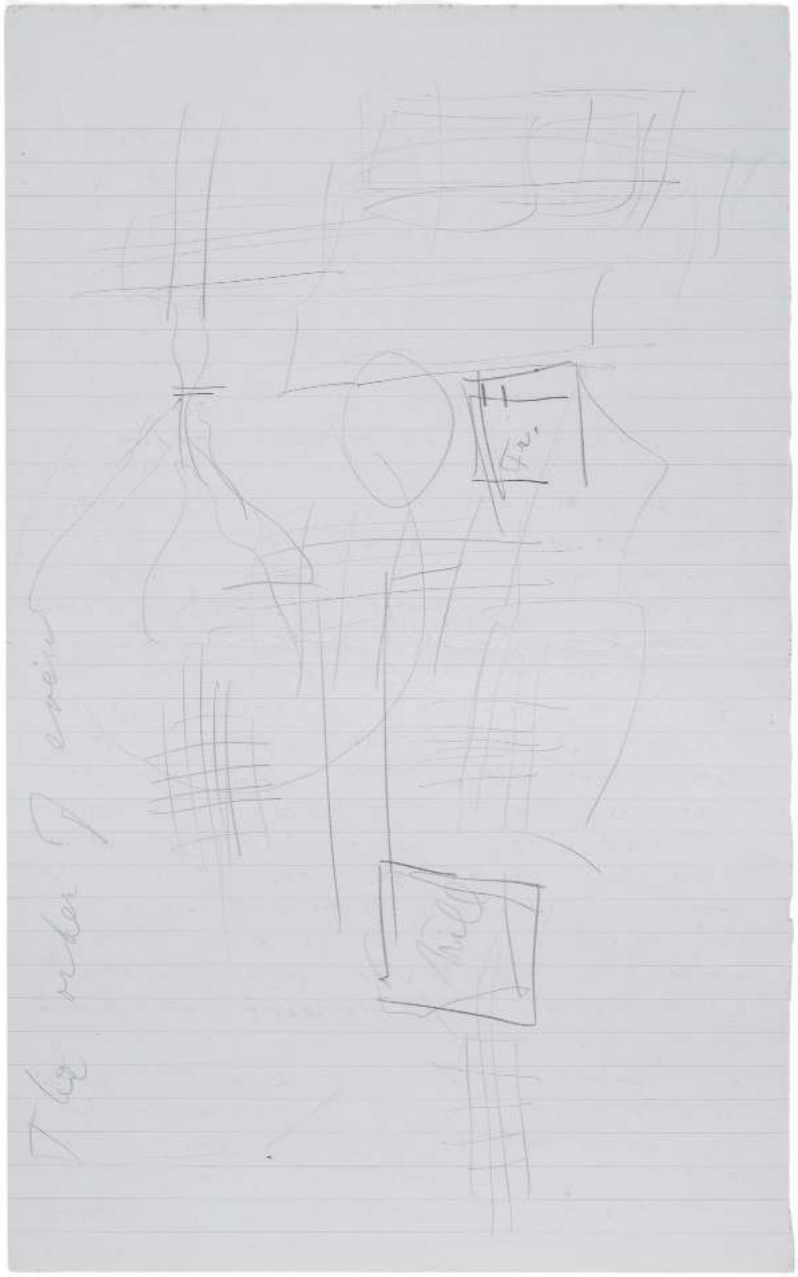
A representation and reproduction are printed overleaf. The representation is a reconstruction of the shapes Wittgenstein may have intended in his sketch. For example, the shapes in the reconstruction are idealised to a regular form from the irregular originals that are produced when sketched quickly. In the original, a polygon's sides may not meet or may not meet at the correct angle for being a regular polygon. In the reconstruction this is corrected. The purpose of the reconstruction is to represent the probable intentions of the originator, viz. Wittgenstein. The technique of reconstructing the intentions of a representative artefact is used, for instance in archaeology, to take advantage of the ordinary human capacity to discern intended patterns in otherwise incomplete or imperfect originals.

2. The speculation on the content of this page proposed is that it was Wittgenstein's attempt to sketch a representation of problems with the active will. The specific problems concern the will's freedom or capacity to act. The further speculation is that this was an earlier attempt at thinking through what Wittgenstein might speak about at his invited lecture. The speculation is that his first thought was to speak about eth-

Reconstruction of the intended drawing on reverse of page 17 of MS *139a*



Reverse of page 17 of MS *139a*



ical matters. For this he turned to the difficulty that had vexed him during his previous serious attempts to write about ethics, viz. the powerlessness of the will.[1]

If the speculation is correct, it suggests that when Wittgenstein was invited to give his public lecture to 'The Heretics' his chosen subject matter was ethics. Moreover, it suggests that Wittgenstein continued to be concerned with problems of the will with regard to ethics.

However, it must be emphasised that what follows is and must be speculation alone. There is insufficient material or context to determine the matter with confidence. The speculation is offered in the spirit of a reconstructive investigation. Establishing the plausibility of the speculation proposed also contributes to establishing that both sides of all the pages of *MS* 139a concern the lecture on ethics, not solely the *recto* pages.

3. Two immediate contextual clues suggest that page 17v is part of the same material addressed in *MS* 139a.[2] First, the words on the page are in English. Wittgenstein, when writing for himself, wrote almost exclusively in German. The exceptions are his notes for lectures or dictation. Certainly, prior to 1929, his principal written works were drafted in German. The invitation from C. K. Ogden was for a lecture given in English. All the previously acknowledged drafts of the lecture—viz. *MSS* 139a and 139b and *TS* 207—are in English. The conjecture regarding the content of pages 15v and 16v as a pre-draft of the lecture, if correct, means that the earliest draft of the lecture as given was in English.[3] This commonality of language amongst manuscripts and pages is among the strongest in favour of the speculation.

The second clue is the location of page 17v. It it is adjacent in sequence to pages 15 and 16. There are no intervening pages and no other *verso* pages of the manuscript have writings or drawings. According to the conjecture regarding pages 15-16v, these are to be read in reverse order,

[1] The difficulties Wittgenstein encountered with the will and the labours he devoted to the problem are described in detail in part II, §7 of " Wittgenstein's Early Writings on Ethics," this volume.

[2] I shall refer to the reverse side of pages by appending a 'v' for *verso* to page numbers, e.g. page 17v is the reverse of page 17.

[3] The conjecture regarding the content of pages 15v and 16v is made and defended in part IV, §4 of " Transcription of the Manuscripts," this volume.

i.e. page 16 before 15. It is therefore plausible that 17v precedes these pages in the order of composition. The location is therefore a clue in support of the speculation that the content of page 17v precedes that of the drafts of the lecture.

The speculated sequence is that page 17v was begun, the idea discarded, and then Wittgenstein began the pre-draft of the lecture described by the conjecture. So page 17v represents Wittgenstein's first idea for what to speak about and because it was vexing he tried to sketch it first.

There is of course a difference in that pages 15-16v are crossed out, while page 17v is not. This is a reason for thinking that page 17 is an abandoned idea and not one, like the pre-draft on pages 15-16v, from which he worked during subsequent composition. Having been crossed out or not is a dissimilarity whose support for the speculation proposed is inconclusive.

4. The content of the page is very difficult to interpret. There is no immediate or obvious interpretation. We can begin with the words and letters on the page. At the top of the page is written clearly 'The order of even'. There is an upswing at the end which encourages the idea that the word intended finishes with a 't' and is 'event'. For reasons of sense, it might even be concluded that the plural is meant, viz. 'The order of events'. This is encouraged by a long trailing tail following from the last clear word 'even[t]'.

In the lower left quadrant of page 17v is a word surrounded by a box. The word seems to be 'Will' but may also be 'hill'. An examination of Wittgenstein's contemporaneous handwriting on the *recto* pages of *MS* 139a suggests that 'Will' is at least equally plausible and perhaps even probable.

In favour of 'hill' is, e.g., the 'h' on 139a: II at "~~his fellow~~" (which was struck through) which does appear similar to that on page 17v. However, on 139a: III at "in his Pricipia Ethica" the 'h' is quite unlike that on page 17v. The evidence is inconclusive.

Against 'Will', the 'W' on 139a: 6 at "Well your playing" does not have the rising start clearly visible on the putative 'W' on page 17v. However the rising start to a 'W' on 139a: I at "W‹h›en your former" is clearly similar to that on page 17v. Most conclusive is a 'W' on 139a: 6

where Wittgenstein substituted 'Would' for 'Could' by writing in a *lone* 'W'. This 'W' is very similar in start and form to that on page 17v. On the speculation proposed, this word should be read as 'Will'.

In the lower right quadrant of page 17v is an abbreviation consisting of two letters followed by a full stop, surrounded by a box. The first letter seems to be a capital 'F'. The second letter may be a 'u' or a 'r'. The evidence to be gleaned from looking at instances of 'r' or 'u' following a capital letter on the *recto* pages of *MS* 139a is inconclusive.

In favour of 'r' are, e.g., 139a: III "Pricipia Ethica" and 139a: 15 "Granchester." Against it are 139a: I "Mr Chairman" and 139a: III "Prof. Moore." In favour of 'u' are 139a: 13 "But it is nonsense" and "But that's not what I mean" as well as 139a: 16 "But a simile" and "But when I say."

In sum, the non-pictorial content of page 17v comprises the words 'The order of even[t][s]', the boxed word 'Will' and the boxed abbreviation 'Fu.' or 'Fr.'.

5. An objection to the speculation proposed might be that page 17v is not a philosophical effort of any sort and is instead a map. There are however many objections to this hypothesis.

If this was a map for Wittgenstein's use, why is it in English? It is in Wittgenstein's hand, so there is no good reason to suppose that it was written in English by another person. If the map was for someone else, how did Wittgenstein retain hold of it? Usually when one makes a map for someone it is to use as a guide en route. The pictorial elements on the page are too complex to commit to memory. That the map was not given to someone else seems the most damning consideration against the hypothesis.

Why are there no place names on the map? If the boxed word 'Will' was actually 'hill', why is the hill represented with a square? The most natural way to represent a hill is with a circle.

The most common pictorial element on the page is a kind of cross-hatched grid. What would this represent on a map? Surely, these are not collections of streets, they are too dense. There is no need to cross-hatch buildings when these can be adequately represented with squares or rectangles.

If it is a map why does it have the seeming legend at the top, 'The order of events'? This could refer to a wedding, but the remainder of

the content seems to have no bearing on a wedding. Perhaps it is a seating plan for a wedding reception with an indication of where people will sit and the direction in which the couple will proceed. It is possible, but difficult to understand why Wittgenstein should have had this sort of subject matter in his notebook.

Perhaps the most charitable way to credit the hypothesis that page 17v is a map is to think of the boxed words as names, e.g. 'Will' for Williams and 'Fr.' for Franks. Wittgenstein, in his correspondence and notebooks, referred to most people by their last names. The longer horizontal lines might be thought of as streets and the cross-hatches as intervening houses or gardens. Notwithstanding the *prima facie* plausibility of this suggestion, the problem remains to account for the content of the legend at the top and the fact that the map remained in Wittgenstein's possession. The suggestion cannot be dismissed but it requires further considerations in favour of its plausibility.

6. The speculation advertised at the outset is that the content of page 17v concerns the problems of the will. The obvious consideration in favour of this idea is the presence of the word 'Will'. It is connected with the legend—'The order of events'—at the top of the page in two ways. First, Wittgenstein had earlier written that every possible world had an order. There could not be a disordered world.[4] Second, Wittgenstein claimed the world continued according to its own order which was logical not physical. The will is independent of that order.[5]

The abbreviated boxed word should, we suggest, be read as one of 'Future' or 'Freedom'.[6] Both are connected with Wittgenstein's remarks on the will and the causal order as follows. First, Wittgenstein denied the causal nexus presumed by physical laws. Second, Wittgenstein denied that the future could be inferred from the present. Third, therefore the freedom of the will consisted in its being impossible to know

[4] Entry dated 19.9.16 in Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Notebooks, 1914-1916*. Edited by G. H. von Wright, and G. E. M Anscombe. 2nd ed. Oxford: Blackwell, 1979.

[5] Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. Translated by C. K. Ogden. International Library of Psychology, Philosophy, and Scientific Method. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981, 6.37ff.

[6] The suggestion to read 'Fr.' as 'Freedom' was made by Alois Pichler.

future actions now.[7] The connections between the legend, will and Wittgenstein's views set out above seem unaltered whether one reads the abbreviated boxed word as 'Future' or 'Freedom'.

The pictorial content of the page should be read, as is most natural, from left to right. The speculation is that this diagram attempts to represent how present events or agencies, such as the will, do not directly influence or determine the future. The thought is that the entities depicted continue from left to right, something partially indicated by the horizontal tube halfway down on the left. The future is located on the right, just beyond the vertical tube in the middle of the page into which the horizontal tube terminates. The vertical tube, perhaps the present moment, is slightly cross-hatched, perhaps to indicate that it is a nexus of events or perhaps to indicate that it is a whole constituted of parts. The other cross-hatched grids along with their grouping brackets are perhaps collections of events or localised instances of agency or power. To the right, beyond the present moment, lie future events or the inscrutable future that, for Wittgenstein, constitutes freedom of the will. The upper right hand quadrant is perhaps an alternative attempt to represent the same general ideas. Again, a collection of events converge into the present in a seemingly ordered transition from past to present to future.

Again, this proposal is speculative. The interpretation of the pictorial elements in combination with the linguistic elements is not irresistible. Indeed, while it is speculatively claimed that the function of the diagram is to illustrate the causal impotence of the will, and various claims about the representational function of elements in the diagram support that claim, it is not at all clear how the diagram is supposed to work. It is likely to have meant more to its author than it could mean to someone looking on it without context or explanation.

The purpose of the speculation is to make sense of what is on the page using the context in which it is located and what is known about the author and the time of composition. If the speculation about the content and order of composition relative to the remainder of *MS* 139a is plausible then it clears the way for further speculation about the significance of this content for the composition of the Lecture on Ethics. First, it would show that the powerlessness of the will was still a concern for Wittgenstein. Second, while it not a necessary inference, it suggests that when Wittgenstein first thought of speaking on ethics, he returned to the problem which had been his own undoing in his earlier treatments of ethics. Perhaps he thought that he could now discuss the difficulty in a way that had not been possible previously, even if any discussion would only show the futility of any such attempts.

[7] Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, 5.136, 5.1361 and 5.1362.

MS 139a

The manuscript is held by the Wren Library of Trinity College, Cambridge.[1] The text bears neither title nor date. It comprises 12 loose sheets written in pencil both *in recto* and *in verso*. There are 24 written pages, of which two—the *verso* of pages 15 and 16—are cancelled. A third page—the *verso* of page 17—contains a drawing. The remaining 21 written pages are numbered with Roman numerals until the fifth page and Arabic numerals from the sixth page on. The *verso* of pages 15, 16 and 17 are not numbered. The 12 loose sheets are ruled and cut out from a notebook, as their jagged margin suggests. The sheets appear to have been used when they were already cut out from the notebook, as the jagged margin sometimes is on the left side in the *recto*, sometimes on the right.

As for the 21 written pages containing the text of the lecture, each of them consists of 34 lines. Exceptions are page 21, which has only 7 lines; pages 2, 10, 14, where a further line is written in the lower margin; page 13, where two lines are written in the lower margin; and page 17, which contains 32 lines, two of which are written in square brackets in the middle of the page, with a different pencil. These two lines consist of an annotation that must fill the gap left on page 8 at line 19, which is a quotation from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* that Wittgenstein probably could not recollect when he wrote this draft. These 21 pages contain a continuous text with no indentation or paragraph (except at

[1] The description is based on direct examination of *MS* 139a. Together with the manuscript there is also a typescript of 9 pages. It contains the inscription, "According to the manuscript which Wittgenstein gave to R. G. Townsend." The text is a typewritten transcription of *MS* 139a and was probably realised after the death of Wittgenstein.

lines 1-2 of page 1), but in three points there is a sign (—) which probably marks a pause, and there are some underlines and many corrections of different kinds, which were produced through more than one revision (as different pencil marks seem to reveal).

As for the two deleted pages, the *verso* of page 15 contains 26 lines, while the *verso* of page 16 contains 30 lines (often not written in full). Some blank space is left at the end of both pages (7 lines on the *verso* of page 15, and 4 on that of page 16). The *verso* of page 16 also includes some added text in the left upper margin. In both pages the text contains some corrections, but subsequently is completely cancelled by deletion marks which extend for the full length of the text. As for the picture on the *verso* of page 17, it is drawn in landscape position. 'The order of event' is the only written sentence in the left upper margin, while a word, possibly 'Will', is written in the lower part of the left half of the page. Another word fragment—'Fu.' or 'Fr.'—is written in the lower part of the right half of the page.

MS 139b

The manuscript is now held at Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna.[2] It was seen by von Wright in 1952 in the house of Margaret Stonborough in Gmunden; later it was apparently lost until 1993 when it was discovered in the literary estate of Rudolf and Elisabeth Koder in Vienna. The text bears neither title nor date, except for the last page which is written solely *in recto*. It comprises 10 loose sheets written in ink both *in recto* and *in verso*. The sheets are ruled and probably cut out from a notebook. The written pages are 19, numbered with Arabic numerals. Each page contains 34 fully written lines, except the last page which has only 12 lines. There are no indentations or paragraphs (except at lines 1-2 of page 1), but in four points there is a sign (—) which probably marks a pause, and there are some underlines and many corrections produced in more than one stage.

[2] The description is based on the facsimiles in the Bergen Electronic Edition and on information kindly provided by Ilse Somavilla.

TS 207

The typescript is held by the Wren Library of Trinity College, Cambridge.[3] It comprises 10 sheets typed only *in recto* numbered with Arabic numerals; some (pages 1-4, 9-10) contain 29 lines and others (pages 5-8) 30 lines. The text bears neither title nor date. It contains a few corrections, some of which are handwritten. There are two indentations (on pages 1 and 2) and, in eight passages, some marks (— and ---), presumably indicating a pause. On the upper margin of the first page the note 'Manuscript von Dr. Ludwig Wittgenstein' is written on the left side, while the note 'Anscombe / 1+3 / no hurry' is written on the right side. The hands are different and neither is Wittgenstein's. The words 'Manuscript von Dr. Ludwig Wittgenstein' are clearly in a German hand, perhaps Waismann's or Schlick's. The other one is clearly an English hand (not Anscombe's, however). We wonder about the circumstances under which these words and numbers were written down—maybe sometime in the 1960s.[4] All pages are also numbered again with Arabic numerals written by hand in the right upper corner.

[3] The description is based on the facsimiles in the Bergen Electronic Edition.
[4] We thank Joachim Schulte for bringing these aspects to our attention.

Legend

Symbols used in the diplomatic versions

Corrections

[so|it]	‘it’ is written over ‘so’
[=|ow]	‘ow’ is written over something which is no longer readable
W‹h›en	‹h› is added
subject ↓proper↓	insertion with a caret mark
subject proper	insertion without a caret mark or alternative text
will ↓ hold ← only	the words must be transposed
do|not	a space must be inserted

Deletion marks

~~There~~	single deletion mark
~~They~~	double deletion mark
[═]	text deleted or erased and not readable
[═]	text deleted and not readable, consisting of one word
[=]	text deleted and not readable, consisting of one single letter
[-able]	text which has been erased and overwritten, of which only part is readable
	deletion of the entire page

Legend

Underlines

Absolute	dash underline
above all other	simple underline
sublime	double underline
apart	dotted underline representing Wittgenstein's wavy underline
acute	double dotted underline representing Wittgenstein's double wavy underline

Other symbols

*	the line is written in the margin of the page
pour	handwritten, and not typewritten, correction
~~when I~~[xxxxxx]	'when I' is deleted by 'xxxxxx'
yet[3] never[2] have[1]	the words must be transposed according to the numbers.

Symbols used in the normalised versions

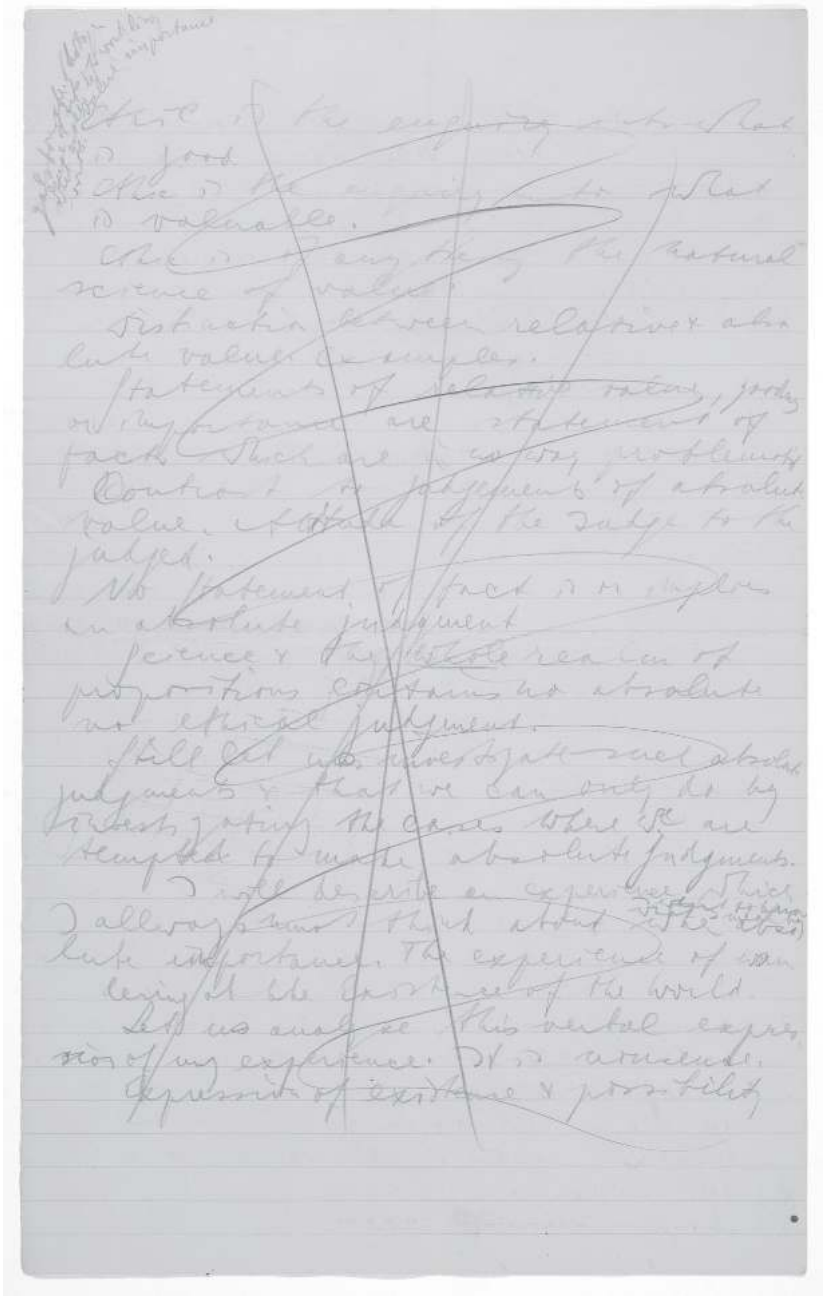
needs	italics are used in the standard way and in place of Wittgenstein's underlines

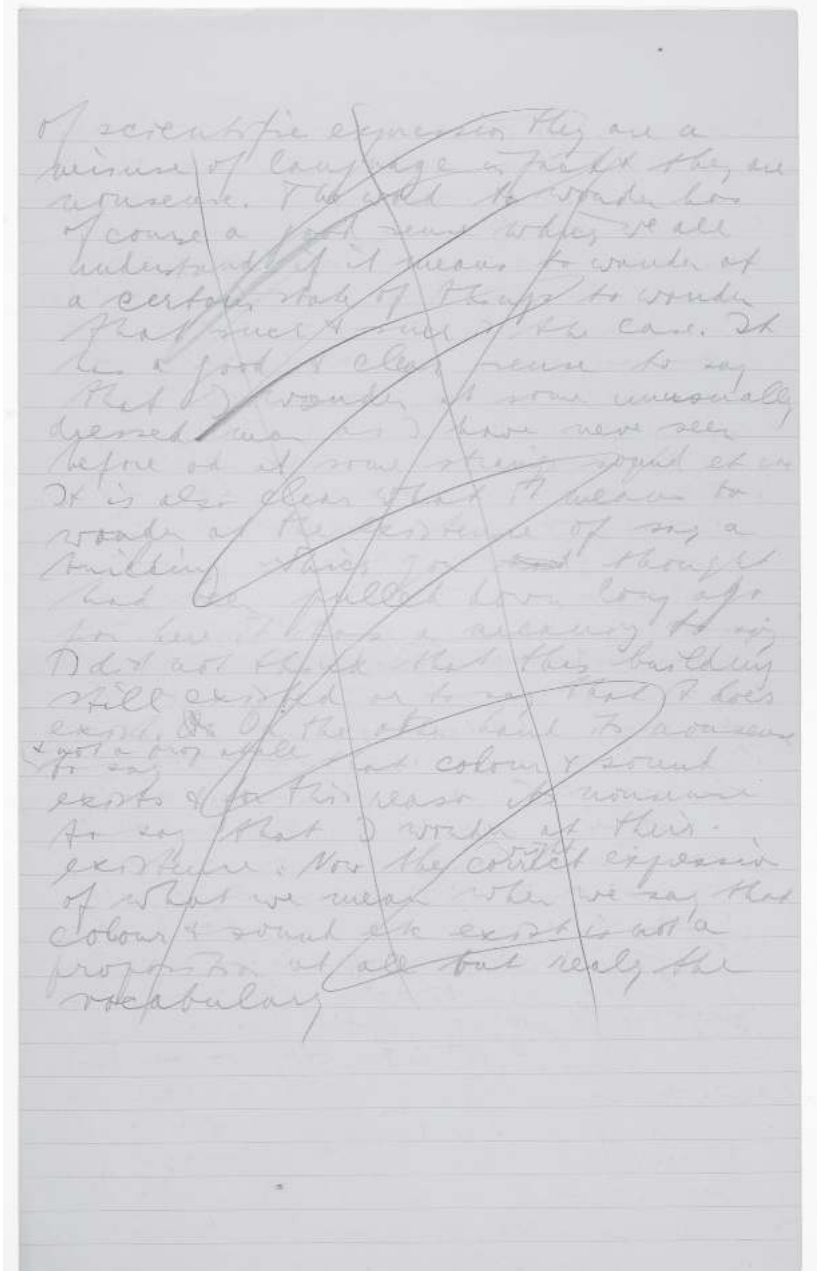
Symbols used in the reconstructed drawing

even[t]	the letter is not completely discernible.
F[u/r]	one of these two letters is legible, but it is indeterminate which one

Remarks Written on the Reverse of Pages 16 and 15 of *MS* 139a

Diplomatic and Normalised Versions





[Reverse of Page 16]

* Galstonsche Photogr.
* Sense of life, what makes life worth living
* Worth. Value, importance
Ethic is the enquiry into what
is good
Ethic is the enquiry into what
is valuable.
Ethic is if anything the natural
science of value.
Distinction between relative & abso
lute value. Examples.
Statements of relat‹i›ve value, goodness
or importance are statement of
facts which are in no way problematic.
[K|C]ontrast to judgements of absolute
value. Att‹i›tude of the Judge to the
judged.
No Statement of fact is or implies
an absolute judgment
Science & the <u>whole</u> realm of
propositions contains no absolute
no ethical judgment.
Still let u[=|s] investigate such absolute
judgments & that we can only do by
investigating the cases where we are
tempted to make absolute judgments.
I will describe an experience which
I allways must think about when I whant to fix on what I mean by abso
lute i[=|m]portance. The experience of wan
dering at the world at the Existence of the World.
Let u[=|s] analyse this verbal expres-
sion of my experience. It is nonsense.
Expression of existence & possibility

[Reverse of Page 16]

Galstonsche Photogr.
Sense of life, what makes life worth living
Worth. Value, importance
Ethic is the enquiry into what is good
Ethic is the enquiry into what is valuable.
Ethic is if anything the natural science of value.
Distinction between relative and absolute value. Examples.
Statements of relative value, goodness or importance are statement of facts which are in no way problematic.
Contrast to judgements of absolute value. Attitude of the judge to the judged.
No statement of fact is or implies an absolute judgement
Science and the *whole* realm of propositions contains no absolute no ethical judgement.
Still let us investigate such absolute judgements and that we can only do by investigating the cases where we are tempted to make absolute judgements.
I will describe an experience which I always must think about when I want to fix on what I mean by absolute importance. The experience of wondering at the world at the existence of the world.
Let us analyse this verbal expression of my experience. It is nonsense.
Expression of existence and possibility

[Reverse of Page 15]

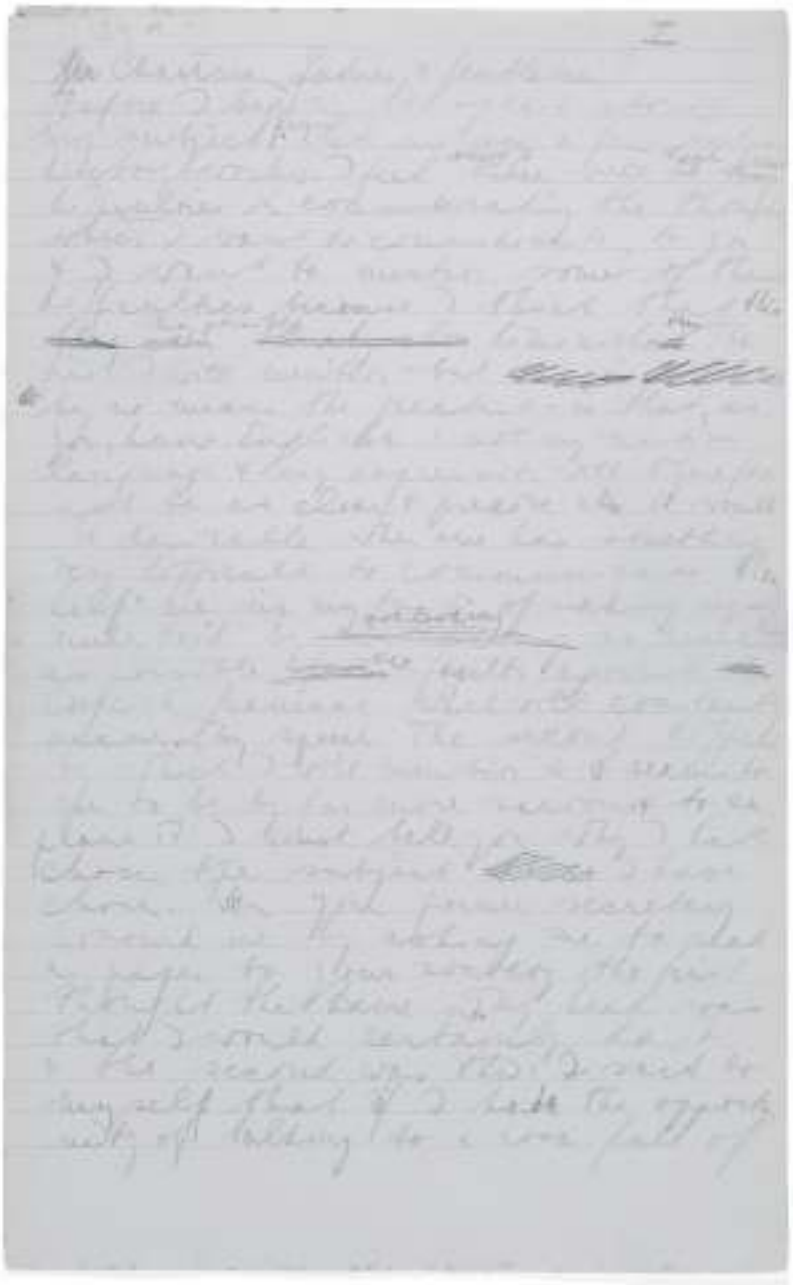
of scientific expression they are a
misuse of language in fackt they are
nonsense. The word to wonder has
of course a good sense which we all
understand if it means to wonder at
a certain state of things to wonder
that such & such is the case. It
has a good & clear sense to say
that I wonder at some un[s|u]sually
dressed man as I have neve seen
before o[n|r] at some strainge sound etc etc
It is also clear what it means to
w[a|o]nder at the existence of say a
building which you ~~had~~ thought
had been pulled down long ago
for here it has a meaning to say
I did not think that this building
still existed or to say that it does
exist. ~~On~~ On the other hand its nonsense
↓& not a prop at all↓ to say that colour & sound
exists & for this reason its nonsense
to say that I wonder at their
existence. Now the correct wright expression
of what we mean when we say that
colour & sound etc exist is not a
proposition at all but realy the
vocabulary

[Reverse of Page 15]

of scientific expression they are a misuse of language in fact they are nonsense. The word ‘to wonder’ has of course a good sense which we all understand if it means to wonder at a certain state of things to wonder that such and such is the case. It has a good and clear sense to say that I wonder at some unusually dressed man as I have never seen before or at some strange sound etc. etc. It is also clear what it means to wonder at the existence of say a building which you thought had been pulled down long ago for here it has a meaning to say ‘I did not think that this building still existed’ or to say that it does exist. On the other hand it is nonsense & not a proposition at all to say that colour and sound exists and for this reason its nonsense to say that I wonder at their existence. Now the right expression of what we mean when we say that colour and sound etc. exist is not a proposition at all but really the vocabulary

MS 139a

Diplomatic and Normalised Versions



I

[Ge|Mr] Chairman Ladies & Gentlemen!
Before I begin to speak about
my subject proper let me say a few intro
ductory words. I feel ↓that I↓ ~~there~~ will ~~be~~ have ~~very~~ great
difficulties in communicating the thoughts
which I want to communicate, to you
& I want to mention some of these
difficulties bec[o|a]use I think that ‹this›
~~they can~~ may possibly ~~thereby be~~ diminish~~ed~~ ↓them↓. The
first I will mention—but ~~which is I believe,~~
~~is~~ by no means the greatest—is that, as
you, know English [=] is not my native
language & my expression will therefore
not be as clear & precise a[=|s] it would
be desirable when one has something
very difficult to communicate. Please
help me in my task of making myself
understood by ~~abstracting~~ overlooking as much
as possible ~~from~~ the faults against ~~the~~
English grammar which will constanty
occur in my speech. The second difficul-
ty which I will mention ~~is t~~ seams to
me to be by far more serious & to ex-
plane it I must tell you why I have
chosen the subject ~~which~~ I have
chosen. W‹h›en your former secretary
honourd me by asking me to read
a paper to your society the first
thought that [k|c]ame in‹to› my head was
that I would certainly do it
& the second was this: I said to
myself that [I|i]f I ha[ve|d] the opportu
nity of talking to a room full of

[1]

Mr. Chairman Ladies and Gentlemen!
Before I begin to speak about my subject proper let me say a few introductory words. I feel I will have great difficulties in communicating the thoughts which I want to communicate, to you and I want to mention some of these difficulties because I think that this may possibly diminish them. The first I will mention—but by no means the greatest—is that, as you, know English is not my native language and my expression will therefore not be as clear and precise as it would be desirable when one has something very difficult to communicate. Please help me in my task of making myself understood by overlooking as much as possible the faults against English grammar which will constantly occur in my speech. The second difficulty which I will mention seems to me to be by far more serious and to explain it I must tell you why I have chosen the subject I have chosen. When your former secretary honoured me by asking me to read a paper to your society the first thought that came into my head was that I would certainly do it and the second was this: I said to myself that if I had the opportunity of talking to a room full of

II

people that I would use this oppor
tunity to say something that comes
from my heart & not to [ill|mis]use
the time that I was given ~~to speak~~
~~to you~~ [to|by] ~~either~~ explan[s|ing] some
scientific matter to you which to
be propperly explained wou‹l›d needs a
course of lectures or an audience
specialy trained in one particular line of
thought. & that I would still less
[ill|mis]use this opportunity of spe‹a›king to you by giving you
a popular lecture, say on logic,
which would serve to make you
believe that you understand a
thing w‹h›ich as a matter of fact
you dont [a|u]nderstand (& which it is
not a bit neceessary that you
should) & to gratifie the very lovest
of modern de[=|sires] viz. the superficial
curiosity about the latest discoveries
of ~~physicists, psychologists & logicians~~ scientists
I decided—I say—that I should
use this opportunity to speak to
you ~~about~~ not as a logician, still
less as a [=|cro]ss between a scientist
& a journalist but as a human
being ~~to human beings~~ who tries to
tell ~~his fellow~~ other human beings something
~~they~~ which [=|so]me of them might possibly find
usefull, I say usefull not interesting.
The third and last difficulty I will
mention is one that ~~applies to~~ adheres
to m[u|o]st philosophical ~~subjects~~
↓explanations↓ & it is this that it ~~is~~ sometimes
* ‹is› almost impossible to explain a

[2]

people that I would use this opportunity to say something that comes from my heart and not to misuse the time that I was given by explaining some scientific matter to you which to be properly explained would need a course of lectures or an audience specially trained in one particular line of thought. And that I would still less misuse this opportunity of speaking to you by giving you a popular lecture, say on logic, which would serve to make you believe that you understand a thing which as a matter of fact you do not understand (and which it is not a bit necessary that you should) and to gratify the very lowest of modern desires viz. the superficial curiosity about the latest discoveries of scientists I decided—I say—that I should use this opportunity to speak to you not as a logician, still less as a cross between a scientist and a journalist but as a human being who tries to tell other human beings something which some of them might possibly find useful, I say useful not interesting. The third and last difficulty I will mention is one that adheres to most philosophical explanations and it is this that it sometimes is almost impossible to explain a

III

matter in such a way that the hearer at
once sees the ~~ways~~ ro[o|a]d~~s~~ he is lead & the
[E|e]nd goal to which it leads. That is to say
it so very often happens that
the hearer thinks ‹”›I understand
perfectly what he ~~is saying~~ sa[i|y]s but
what on earth is he driving at‹”› or
else that he sees what one is
dr‹i›ving at & thinks ‹„›that‹’›s all very well
by how is he going to get there‹”›.
This perhaps is the gratest diffi
cultie & all I [k|c]an do is to ↓ask you to↓ be
patient & to hope [=|t]hat in the end we
will see both the [R|r]o[o|a]d & where
it leeds to.—Now let me begin.
My subject is Ethics & I will
adopt the definition or explanation
which Prof. Moore has given in his
Pricipia Ethica. ~~He says there~~ which is: Ethics
is the General Enquiry into what
is good. I will just modifie this
stlightly & say, Ethics is the general
enquiry into what is valuable. I do
this because I want to include in my
Notion of Ethic[=|s]~~s~~ also what is common
ly understood to belong to the sub
ject matter of [Ae|E]sthetics. The reason
for this will perhaps get cl‹e›ar
later on. Now let me point [a|o]ut first
of all that in our Definition of Ethics
I might have substitutet many
other words for the word valuable.
And I will enumerate some of
them which seem to me to be

[3]

matter in such a way that the hearer at once sees the road he is led and the goal to which it leads. That is to say it so very often happens that the hearer thinks ‘I understand perfectly what he says but what on earth is he driving at’ or else that he sees what one is driving at and thinks ‘That is all very well but how is he going to get there’ This perhaps is the greatest difficulty and all I can do is to ask you to be patient and to hope that in the end we will see both the road and where it leads to.—Now let me begin. My subject is Ethics and I will adopt the definition or explanation which Prof. Moore has given in his *Principia Ethica* which is: ‘Ethics is the general enquiry into what is good’. I will just modify this slightly and say, ‘Ethics is the general enquiry into what is valuable’. I do this because I want to include in my notion of ethics also what is commonly understood to belong to the subject matter of Aesthetics. The reason for this will perhaps get clear later on. Now let me point out first of all that in our definition of Ethics I might have substituted many other words for the word ‘valuable’. And I will enumerate some of them which seem to me to be

IV

synonyms so far ↓[at any rate]↓ as their~~s~~ meaning is
important to us and by enumerating
them I want to produce the same
sort of effect that Gallstone pro-
duced when he copied a n[o|u]mber of
different faces on the same photo
graphic plate in order to get the
picture of the typical features
they all have in comon. And
[=|as by looking at [shewing to you] such a photo
you can [I could make you] see what is the typical,]
say, chinese face so if you look
as it where through all the
synonyms [=|whi]ch I will place
one behind the other ~~before~~ [in front of] you
you will see which feature common
to them all I want you to look
at in each of them. ~~Now there is the word~~
~~valuable or value or the word good~~
~~taken in a slightly wider sense perhaps~~
Now instead of saying Ethics is the
Enquiry into what is valuable I
might have said it is the Enquiry into
what is of absolute importance or into
what is the meaning of life or ~~into~~ what
makes life worth living. ~~And now you~~
And if you hold all th[os|es]e Expressions
together ~~is~~ value, good, great, ↓[Right,]↓ [w=|sense] of
life, [that] what makes life worth living,
worth etc. you will I believe see
what it is [=|Iam] concerned with.
Now the first thing I want you to
notice about all these expressions
is that they can all be used in t[=|wo]

[4]

synonyms so far at any rate as their meaning is important to us and by enumerating them I want to produce the same sort of effect that Galton produced when he copied a number of different faces on the same photographic plate in order to get the picture of the typical features they all have in common. And as by showing to you such a photo I could make you see what is the typical, say, Chinese face so if you look as it were through all the synonyms which I will place one behind the other in front of you you will see which feature common to them all I want you to look at in each of them. Now instead of saying ‘Ethics is the enquiry into what is valuable’ I might have said ‘It is the enquiry into what is of absolute importance or into what is the meaning of life or what makes life worth living’. And if you hold all these expressions together ‘value’, ‘good’, ‘great’, ‘right’, ‘sense of life’, ‘what makes life worth living’, ‘worth’ etc. you will I believe see what it is I am concerned with. Now the first thing I want you to notice about all these expressions is that they can all be used in two

V.

~~very~~ different senses. I will call them
the relat‹i›ve & the absolute ↓or ethical↓ ~~meaning~~ use
The relative use of these words is their
use relative to some predetermined
end. When I say this is a good piano
I mean it comes up to a certain
standart ↓of tone etc↓ which I have fixed & which
I conceive as its purpose. It has
only sense to say that a piano
is good if you have previously
fixed what sort of qualities a
piano must have to deserve that
name. And the same a‹p›plies when
I say that a man is a good
piano player or a good golf player
or that a r[=|oad] is good etc. In[=] all such
[C|c]ases good simply means: coming
up to a certain standard which
I have previously fixed. The same
applies to the word important in ~~the~~
~~ordinary~~ ~~relative~~ ~~sense which is~~
the relative sense. In this sense
we say something is important for
a certain purpose. The same ap‹p›lies
to ~~w~~right. The right r[od|oad] is that
which leeds to the place I want
to go to it is right relativly
to the desired End. In this relative
sense the words value, good,
importance etc. are easily understood
& present no gerat problems. Now in Ethics
these same words are used aparently
in a~~n entirely~~ different sense. S[op|upp]osing
I could play the piano & one of you

[5]

different senses. I will call them the relative and the *absolute* or ethical use. The relative use of these words is their use relative to some predetermined end. When I say 'This is a good piano' I mean it comes up to a certain standard of tone etc. which I have fixed and which I conceive as its purpose. It has only sense to say that a piano is good if you have previously fixed what sort of qualities a piano must have to deserve that name. And the same applies when I say that a man is a good piano player or a good golf player or that a road is good etc. In all such cases 'good' simply means: coming up to a certain standard which I have previously fixed. The same applies to the word 'important' in the relative sense. In this sense we say something is important for a certain purpose. The same applies to 'right'. The right road is that which leads to the place I want to go to it is right relatively to the desired end. In this relative sense the words 'value', 'good', 'importance' etc. are easily understood and present no great problems. Now in Ethics these same words are used apparently in a different sense. Supposing I could play the piano and one of you

a great conn[e|a]isseur of pianoplaying
heard me & said: Well your playing
pretty badly & s[o|u]ppose I answerd
him: I know I'm playing badly
but I dont want to play any
better. All the connaisseur could
say would be well then thats all
right. & there would be an end [to|of]
the discussion. The connaisseur would
have judged me by certain stan
darts which he could ↓[if neccessary]↓ explain & I
would aggree that he had ranked
me ~~w~~rightly. Now take another case
sup‹p›ose I had told one of you a
p[er|re]reposterous ly & this man came to
me & said look here you have
behaved like a beast. & now I
were to answer [I|Y]es I know [=|I beh]aved
badly but then I d[ont|idnt] want
to behave ↓[any]↓ better. [C|W]ould he then say
~~th~~ then thats all right? ~~Obviously~~
~~not~~. He would say well you ought
to want to behave better. The
difference was that this man was making
an ~~absolute~~ [ethical] judgment whereas the
~~other~~ connaisseur made a relative
judgment. Now the essence of this
difference seems to me to be obviously
this: Every [st|jud]gment of relative value,
goodnes, importance etc. ~~can be~~ is a
simple statement of facts & can be
put in such a form that it looses all
appearance of a judgment of value.
Instead of saying this is the right

a great connoisseur of piano playing heard me and said: 'Well you are playing pretty badly' and suppose I answered him: 'I know I am playing badly but I do not want to play any better'. All the connoisseur could say would be 'Well then that is all right'. And there would be an end of the discussion. The connoisseur would have judged me by certain standards which he could if necessary explain and I would agree that he had ranked me rightly. Now take another case suppose I had told one of you a preposterous lie and this man came to me and said 'Look here you have behaved like a beast'. And now I were to answer 'Yes I know I behaved badly but then I did not want to behave any better'. Would he then say 'Then that is all right'? He would say 'Well you ought to want to behave better'. The difference was that this man was making an ethical judgement whereas the connoisseur made a relative judgement. Now the essence of this difference seems to me to be obviously this: every judgement of relative value, goodness, importance etc. is a simple statement of facts and can be put in such a form that it loses all appearance of a judgement of value. Instead of saying 'This is the right

[R|r]o[o|a]d I can say [a|e]qualy well this is
the rood that leeds me to where
I want to go, this is a good piano
player simly means that he can
play peaces of a certain degree of
complicatedness in a certain definable
way. T[w|o] say the [V|v]iolin has a good
voice means it has a tone agreable
to the ear & so on. Now [=|what] I
wish to contend is this that although
all relative judgments can be shewn
to be statements of facts [N|n]o
statement of fact can ever be or
imply what we call an absolute
that is ethical judgment. Let
me explain this ~~with this~~: Su‹p›pose
that one of you was an omnicient
person who therefore knew all the
movements of all the bodies in the Wo‹r›ld,
dead or alive who further knew & could describe all
the states of minds of all human
beings that ever were & suppose that
this omnicient person wrote all
he knew, that is everything that
is to be known, in a big book. Then
this book would contain the whole
description of the world. And what
I want to say is that this book
would ↓~~then~~↓ <u>not</u> contain anything that
we [c|w]ould call an ~~absolute~~ ethical
judgment ~~of a value.~~ or anything that
would ↓directly↓ imply such a judgment. It
would of course contain all
relat‹i›ve judgments of value as for

road' I can say equally well 'This is the road that leads me to where I want to go', 'This is a good piano player' simply means that he can play pieces of a certain degree of complicatedness in a certain definable way. To say 'The violin has a good voice' means it has a tone agreeable to the ear and so on. Now what I wish to contend is this that although all relative judgements can be shown to be statements of facts no statement of fact can ever be or imply what we call an absolute that is ethical judgement. Let me explain this: suppose that one of you was an omniscient person who therefore knew all the movements of all the bodies in the world, dead or alive who further knew and could describe all the states of minds of all human beings that ever were and suppose that this omniscient person wrote all he knew, that is everything that is to be known, in a big book. Then this book would contain the whole description of the world. And what I want to say is that this book would *not* contain anything that we would call an ethical judgement or anything that would directly imply such a judgement. It would of course contain all relative judgements of value as for

8 ~~IV~~

instance that so & so is a good ↓or a bad↓ runner
for it would contain the fact
that he ran ~~so many yards~~ the distance of 1 mile
in so many ~~seconds~~ minutes & seconds.
The book would ↓of course↓ contain all ~~possible~~
true scientific propositions & in fact~~s~~
all ᵗ significant ↓& true↓ propositions that
can be made. Now what I wish to
say is that all facts are as it
where on the same level that there
is no such thing as absolute impor
tance or unimportance in them & that
~~therefore~~ in the same way all propositions
are on the same level that there
are no propositions which [w|ar]e in any
absolute sense sublime, important or ↓on the other hand↓
trivial. Now perhaps some of you will
agree to that & be reminded of
Hamlets words… But this again
could lead to misunderstanding. What
Hamlet says seems to imply that good
& bad are not qualities of the world
[a|o]utside us but a‹t›tributes of our states
of mind. But what I mean is that
the state of mind ~~to~~ so far as we mean
by that a fact which we can~~n~~ describe
is in no ethical sense good or bad.
If for instance in our world book ↓we read the description of↓ an
apalling murder ~~is described~~ in all the
details physical & ~~psychological~~ psychical that is
with all the pains & anguish the victim
had to endure with all the studied cruelty
of the murderer the ↓mere↓ description of
facts ↓physical & psychical↓ will contain nothing of

[8]

instance that so and so is a good or a bad runner for it would contain the fact that he ran the distance of 1 mile in so many minutes and seconds. The book would of course contain all true scientific propositions and in fact *all* significant and true propositions that can be made. Now what I wish to say is that all facts are as it were on the same level that there is no such thing as absolute importance or unimportance in them and that in the same way all propositions are on the same level that there are no propositions which are in any absolute sense sublime, important or on the other hand trivial. Now perhaps some of you will agree to that and be reminded of Hamlet's words: 'There is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so'. But this again could lead to misunderstanding. What Hamlet says seems to imply that good and bad are not qualities of the world outside us but attributes of our states of mind. But what I mean is that the state of mind so far as we mean by that a fact which we can describe is in no ethical sense good or bad. If for instance in our world book we read the description of an appalling murder in all the details physical and psychical that is with all the pains and anguish the victim had to endure with all the studied cruelty of the murderer the mere description of facts physical and psychical will contain nothing of

~~what~~ which we [w|c]ould say that it is an
ethical proposition. The ~~event~~ murder
will be on exactly the same level
as any other event for instance the
falling of a stone. Certainly the
reading of this description might
cause us pain~~s~~ or rage or any other
emotions or we mig[t|ht] read about
the pain or rage caused by this
murder in other people when they
got to know it but there will simply
be facts facts & fa‹c›ts but no
Ethics.—And now I must say
that if I contemplate what
Ethics realy would have to be if
there were such a science ↓this↓ seems to
me quite obvious. It seems to me
quite obvious that nothing we c[an|ould]
ever think or~~s~~ say should be the
thing. That we can‹n›‹'›t write a ↓scientific↓ book
the subject matter of which ~~was~~ ‹is›
intrinsically sublime, above all other
suj[e|i][c|e]‹c›t~~s~~ matte‹r›s. I can only describe
my feeling by the metaphor that
if a man [w|c]ould write a book about
Ethics which realy was a book
on Ethics this would with an
explosion destroy all the other
books in the world. Our words used
as we use them in science are vesels
capable only to contain & convey
meaning & sense, natural meaning
& sense, Ethics if it is anything
~~must be~~ is supernatural & our words

which we could say that it is an *ethical* proposition. The murder will be on exactly the same level as any other event for instance the falling of a stone. Certainly the reading of this description might cause us pain or rage or any other emotions or we might read about the pain or rage caused by this murder in other people when they got to know it but there will simply be facts facts and facts but no Ethics. — And now I must say that if I contemplate what Ethics really would have to be if there were such a science this seems to me quite obvious. It seems to me quite obvious that nothing we could ever think or say should be *the* thing. That we can not write a scientific book the subject matter of which is intrinsically sublime, *above all other subject matters*. I can only describe my feeling by the metaphor that if a man could write a book about Ethics which really was a book on Ethics this would with an explosion destroy all the other books in the world. Our words used as we use them in science are vessels capable only to contain and convey meaning and sense, natural meaning and sense, Ethics if it is anything is supernatural and our words

will only express facts as a teacup
will only hold a teacup full
of water & if I was to ~~empty~~ pour out a gallon
over it. I said that so far as
facts & propositions are concerned
there is only relative value &
relative good, right etc. And let
me, before I g[=|o] on, illustrate this
by a rather obvious example: The
right r[oo|oa]d is the r[oo|oa]d which leads
to an ↓abitrarily↓ predetermined end & it is
quite clear to us all that ~~a ro[o|a]d~~
~~apart from such a predetermined~~
~~goal~~ it has no sense in ordinary
life to talk about the a right
r[oo|oa]d apart from such a predetermined
end, that there is no such thing as the
right ~~w~~r[ood|oad]. Now let us see what
we could possibly mean by ~~such~~ the
~~an~~ expression the ↓absolutely↓ wright r[ood|oad]. I think
it would be the ro[od|ad] which everybody
if he sees it would with logical
necessity have to go or be ashamed
~~for~~ of not going. Generaly speaking‹,› the
Absolute good‹,› if it is a describable
state of affairs‹,› would be one that
everybody irrespective independent of his tasts
and inclinations would necessarily
~~go or feel guilty for not~~ bring about
or feel guilty for not bringing about.
And I want to say that such a state
of afairs is a Chimera.—Then what do
all of us who are‹,› like myself‹,› still
tempted to use such phrases Expressions as

* No state of affairs contains has the coercive power in itself

will only express facts as a teacup will only hold a teacup full of water and if I was to pour out a gallon over it. I said that so far as facts and propositions are concerned there is only relative value and relative good, right etc. And let me, before I go on, illustrate this by a rather obvious example: the right road is the road which leads to an arbitrarily predetermined end and it is quite clear to us all that it has no sense in ordinary life to talk about *the* right road *apart* from such a predetermined end, that there is no such thing as *the* right road. Now let us see what we could possibly mean by the expression '*the* absolutely right road'. I think it would be the road which everybody if he sees it would with logical necessity have to go or be ashamed of not going. Generally speaking, the absolute good, if it is a describable state of affairs, would be one that everybody independent of his tastes and inclinations would necessarily bring about or feel guilty for not bringing about. And I want to say that such a state of affairs is a chimera. No state of affairs has the coercive power in itself.—Then what do all of us who are, like myself, still tempted to use such expressions as

absolute good, absolute value etc. what
have they in mind & what do we try
to express? Now whenever I try
to make this clear to m[e|y][self] it is
natural that I should try to
recall ~~what use I~~ in which cases
I would ~~particularly~~ certainly use
these expressions & I am then in
the situation in which you would
be if for instance I were to
give you a lecture‹,› say‹,› on the psyco
logy of pleasure. What you would
do then [c|w]ould be to try and recall
some typical situation in which you
al~~l~~ways felt pleasure‹,› for‹,› bearing
this situation in mind‹,› ~~you~~ all which
I would have to say to you about
pleasure would become concrete &‹,›
as it w~~h~~ere‹,› controlab[le|el]. [A|O]ne man
would for instance ch[=|use] as his stock
example of pleasure the sensation which
he has when taking a walk on a fine
summers morning & on ~~any~~ ↓[some such]↓ occasion. Now
in this situation I am if I want to
fix my mind on what I mean by absolute
or ethical value. And there in my case
it al~~l~~ways happens that the idea of one
particular experience presents itself
to m[e|y] ↓[mind]↓ which therefore is for me in a
sense the experience par excelence &
this is the reason why in talking to you [now]
~~{I (will always) referr to this experience particulary~~ I am using ~~this~~ [it] as my first
& foremost example (As I have said this

'absolute good', 'absolute value' etc. what have they in mind and what do we try to express? Now whenever I try to make this clear to myself it is natural that I should try to recall in which cases I would *certainly* use these expressions and I am then in the situation in which you would be if for instance I were to give you a lecture, say, on the psychology of pleasure. What you would do then would be to try and recall some typical situation in which you always felt pleasure, for, bearing this situation in mind, all which I would have to say to you about pleasure would become concrete and, as it were, controllable. One man would for instance choose as his stock example of pleasure the sensation which he has when taking a walk on a fine summer morning and on some such occasion. Now in this situation I am if I want to fix my mind on what I mean by absolute or ethical value. And there in my case it always happens that the idea of one particular experience presents itself to my mind which therefore is for me in a sense the experience *par excellence* and this is the reason why in talking to you now I am using it as my first and foremost example (As I have said this

is realy a personal matter & others
would find then examples more
striking) ~~The experience the which~~
~~I'm talking about~~ I will describe
this experience in order if possible
to make you recall to your minds
the same or similar experiences
so that we may have a common
ground for our investigation. Now the
best way of describing ~~this~~ my experience
is to say that when I have it I
wonder at the existence of the
world. And I am then inclined to use
such a p[r|h]rase ~~like~~ as "how extraordinary
that anything should exist", or, „how extra
ordinary that the world should exist".
I will mention an other experience strait
away which I also know & which others
of you might be aquainted with & this
is what one might call the experience
of feeling absolutely safe. I mean
the state in which one says to onesself
I am safe nothing can ~~happen to~~ injure me
whatever happens. Now let me consider
these experiences becouse they exhibit
I believe the very characteristics we
want to get clear about. Now there the
first thing I have to say is that the
verbal expression which we give to
these experiences is nonsense! If
I say I wonder at the existence of
the world I am misusing language.
Let me explain this: It has a perfectly
good and and inteligible sense to say

is really a personal matter and others would find then other examples more striking) I will describe this experience in order if possible to make you recall to your minds the same or similar experiences so that we may have a common ground for our investigation. Now the best way of describing my experience is to say that when I have it I wonder at the existence of the world. And I am then inclined to use such a phrase as 'How extraordinary that anything should exist', or, 'How extraordinary that the world should exist'. I will mention another experience straight away which I also know and which others of you might be acquainted with and this is what one might call the experience of feeling absolutely safe. I mean the state in which one says to oneself 'I am safe nothing can injure me whatever happens'. Now let me consider these experiences because they exhibit I believe the very characteristics we want to get clear about. Now there the first thing I have to say is that the verbal expression which we give to these experiences is nonsense! If I say 'I wonder at the existence of the world' I am misusing language. Let me explain this: it has a perfectly good and intelligible sense to say

that I wonder at something being the
case. ~~I~~ We all understand what
it means when I say that I wonder
at a dog which is big~~g~~er than any dog ~~one~~
I have ever seen before or at any
other thing which in the common sense
of the word is „extraordinary." In every
such case I wonder at something being
the case which I could conceive not
to be the case. I wonder at the size
of t‹h›is dog because I could conceive
of a dog of another namely the ordinary
size at which I would not wonder.
To [I |say] I wonder at such & such
being the case has only sense if
I can immagine it not to be the case.
In this sense one can wonder at the
existence of say a house when one sees it &
hasnt ~~seen~~ visited it for many years & has
immagined that it had been pulled down
in the meantime. But it is nonsense
to say that I wonder at the exis-
tence of the world because I cannot
immagine it not existing. I could
of course wonder at the world round me
being as it is. For instance if I
had th[is|e] experience ↓of wonder↓ while looking
into the blue sky I could wonder
at the sky being blue as opposed
to the case where its clouded. But
that's not what I mean. I [w|am] wonde-
ring at the sky being whatever it
is. One might be tempted to say
that what I am wondering at is a
* tautologie namely at the sky being blue
* or [=|not] being blue. Bat then its just

that I wonder at something being the case. We all understand what it means when I say that I wonder at a dog which is bigger than any dog I have ever seen before or at any other thing which in the common sense of the word is 'extraordinary'. In every such case I wonder at something being the case which I could conceive not to be the case. I wonder at the size of this dog because I could conceive of a dog of another namely the ordinary size at which I would not wonder. To say 'I wonder at such and such being the case' has only sense if I can imagine it not to be the case. In this sense one can wonder at the existence of say a house when one sees it and has not visited it for many years and has imagined that it had been pulled down in the meantime. But it is nonsense to say that I wonder at the existence of the world because I cannot imagine it not existing. I could of course wonder at the world round me being as it is. For instance if I had the experience of wonder while looking into the blue sky I could wonder at the sky being blue as opposed to the case where it is clouded. But that is not what I mean. I am wondering at the sky being whatever it is. One might be tempted to say that what I am wondering at is a tautology namely at the sky being blue or not being blue. But then it is just

that its nonsense to say that one
wonders at a tautolog[ie|y]. The verbal
expression do with it what I may
remains nonsense & I think it
is essential that it should do
so. Now the same applies to that
other experience which I have mentioned
the experience of ~~being safe~~ absolute
safety. We all know what it means
in ordinary life to be safe. I am
sa~~i~~fe in my rooms when I cannt be
run over by an Omnibus. I am safe
if I have had whooping cough once
& [k|c]annt [therefore] have it again. That is to be
safe essentialy means that it is
physically impossible [improbable] that certain
things should happen to me, & therefore
its nonsense to say that I am safe
whatever happens. Again it is a
misuse of the wor~~l~~d safe as the other ↓[example]↓
was a misuse of the word existence.
Now I want to impress on you that
a certain characteristic misuse
of language runs through <u>all</u>
ethical & religious expressions. I can
perhaps best describe it in this way:
When it has become clear to one that
there is amongst significant propositions
no such thing as a judgment of
absolute value the first thought I
believe is that all ethical & religious
propositions are realy [si|on]ly similes &
that['s|is] what they ~~realy~~ seem to be. It
seems that when we are using the
* word right in an ethical sense although

that it is nonsense to say that one wonders at a tautology. The verbal expression do with it what I may remains nonsense and I think it is essential that it should do so. Now the same applies to that other experience which I have mentioned the experience of absolute safety. We all know what it means in ordinary life to be safe. I am safe in my rooms when I can not be run over by an omnibus. I am safe if I have had whooping cough once and can not therefore have it again. That is 'to be safe' essentially means that it is physically impossible that certain things should happen to me, and therefore it is nonsense to say that I am safe whatever happens. Again it is a misuse of the word 'safe' as the other example was a misuse of the word 'existence'. Now I want to impress on you that a certain characteristic misuse of language runs through *all* ethical and religious expressions. I can perhaps best describe it in this way: when it has become clear to one that there is amongst significant propositions no such thing as a judgement of absolute value the first thought I believe is that all ethical and religious propositions are really only similes and that is what they seem to be. It seems that when we are using the word 'right' in an ethical sense although

what we mean is not what we mean ↓by right↓ when
we say this is the right road to
Granchester its something <u>similar</u> &
when we say this is a good fellow
we dont mean it in the same sense
as when we say he is a good football-
player but there is some similar[y|s]
And when we say th[is|e] life of this
man was valuable we dont mean
it in the same sense as when we say
this p[ei|ie]ce of ju[w|v]elery is valuable but
there se[a|e]ms to be some sort of
connection. Now all religious terms ~~& notions~~
seem in this sense to be used as
simil[ies|es] or alegorical. For when we
speak of God & that he sees & hears
everything & when we ~~pra~~ kneel & pray to
him it is seems ob[w|v]ious that all our terms
& actions are part of a <u>big</u> great & elaborate alegory
which represents him as a human being
of great power whose grace we try to
win etc etc. Now this simile also
extends over the two experiences which
I have described abo[w|v]e in fa[ckt|ct] the
first of them wondering at the existence
of the world is I believe exactly what
~~we are ref~~ people were referring to when
they s[~~ei~~|aid] that God had created the
world & the ~~the~~ experience of absolute
safety is described by saying that
we are safe under Gods protektion.
A third experience which belongs
to this realm is the experience of
feeling guilty & again that was described

what we mean is not what we mean by 'right' when we say 'This is the right road to Granchester' it is something *similar* and when we say 'This is a good fellow' we do not mean it in the same sense as when we say 'He is a good football player' but there is some similarity. And when we say 'The life of this man was valuable' we do not mean it in the same sense as when we say 'This piece of jewellery is valuable' but there seems to be some sort of connection. Now all religious terms seem in this sense to be used as similes or allegorical. For when we speak of God and that he sees and hears everything and when we kneel and pray to him it seems obvious that all our terms and actions are part of a great and elaborate allegory which represents him as a human being of great power whose grace we try to win etc. etc. Now this simile also extends over the two experiences which I have described above in fact the first of them wondering at the existence of the world is I believe exactly what people were referring to when they said that God had created the world and the experience of absolute safety is described by saying that we are safe under God's protection. A third experience which belongs to this realm is the experience of feeling guilty and again that was described

by the p[r|h]rase that God disaprooves of our
conduct. ~~Now the three experiences
which I have mentioned~~ I have said
that whenever we describe ethical
or religious experiences we seem to
use language only to make up similes.
~~N~~ But a simile must be the simile
for something & if I can express a
fact by means of a simile I must
also be able to drop the simile and
to explain the facts without it. Now
what happens to us in this [=|c]ase is
that as soon as we try to drop the
simile & try to state simply the facts
that stand behind them we find
that there are no such facts. And so
what at first appeard to be similes
now seems to be mere nonsense.
Now the three experiences which I
mentioned before (and I could have
added ~~many~~ some more) seem to those
who have experienced them ↓for instance to me↓ to
have ~~some~~ in some sense an intrinsic
‹an› absolute value. But when I say
they are experiences surely the[=|y] are
facts, they have taken place then &
there, lasted a certain definit[ie|e] time
& consequently are describable. And so, from
what I said some minutes ago I must
admit it is nonsense to say that
they have absolute value. And here
I [am| ha]ve ~~at~~ arrived at the main point of
this paper & it is the paradox ~~for
I know not how to call it~~ that an experience

by the phrase that God disapproves of our conduct. I have said that whenever we describe ethical or religious experiences we seem to use language only to make up similes. But a simile must be the simile for something and if I can express a fact by means of a simile I must also be able to drop the simile and to explain the facts without it. Now what happens to us in this case is that as soon as we try to drop the simile and try to state simply the facts that stand behind them we find that there are no such facts. And so what at first appeared to be similes now seems to be mere nonsense. Now the three experiences which I mentioned before (and I could have added some more) seem to those who have experienced them for instance to me to have in some sense an intrinsic an absolute value. But when I say they are experiences surely they are facts, they have taken place then and there, lasted a certain definite time and consequently are describable. And so, from what I said some minutes ago I must admit it is nonsense to say that they have absolute value. And here I have arrived at the main point of this paper and it is the paradox that an experience

a fact should have an absolute value.
And I will make the point still more
acute by saying, that ↓[an experience]↓ a fact ~~s~~hould
have a supernatural [w|v]alue. Now the
way I would be tempted at first
to meet this paradox is this: Let
me consider again the Experience of
wondering at existence & let me des
cribe it in a slighly different way: We all
know what in ordinary life would
be called a mira[kel|cle]: It obviously is
simply an event ~~which~~ the like of which
we have never yet seen. Now suppose
such an event happened. Take the case
that one of you suddenly grew a lions
head & began [to] roar~~ing~~ certainly thats
as extraordinary a thing as I can

[There is nothing either good or bad but
thinking makes it so]

immagine. Now whenever we would have
recovered from our surprise what
I would suggest is to fech a physiolo-
gist & have the case scienti[c|f]ically
investigated & if it were not for being afraid
of h[a|u]rting him I'ld have him vivisected.
And where would the miracle have
gone to, for it is clear that looking
at it in this way everything miraculous
has disappeared unless what we
mean by miraculous is merely that
a fac[kt|t] has not jet been explained
by science wh‹i›ch again means [merely] th[t|a]t

a fact should have an absolute value. And I will make the point still more *acute* by saying, that an experience a fact should have a supernatural value. Now the way I would be tempted at first to meet this paradox is this: let me consider again the experience of wondering at existence and let me describe it in a slightly different way: we all know what in ordinary life would be called a miracle: it obviously is simply an event the like of which we have never yet seen. Now suppose such an event happened. Take the case that one of you suddenly grew a lion's head and began to roar certainly that is as extraordinary a thing as I can imagine. Now whenever we would have recovered from our surprise what I would suggest is to fetch a physiologist and have the case scientifically investigated and if it were not for being afraid of hurting him I would have him vivisected. And where would the miracle have gone to, for it is clear that looking at it in this way everything miraculous has disappeared unless what we mean by miraculous is merely that a fact has not yet been explained by science which again means merely that

we have [t|h]itherto failed to group this
fact with others in a scientific
system. ~~But~~ [t|T]his means that it
has no sense to say „scien[s|c]e has
prooved that there are no mira[k|c]les"
No: the scientific way of looking
at a fact is not the way to look at
it as a miracle. For immagine whatever
fact you may, it is not in itself a
miracle in the absolute sense & ~~there~~
one is in itself not ~~not~~ more or less
mira[k|c]uleus than the other. I ↓ heard ← once
a preacher in a Cambridge Church say
that of course there were still mira[kls|cles]
happening only look at the tiny little
seed from which a tree~~s~~ grows. But
~~is~~ this ~~more~~ is wrong for is this more
mira[k|c]ul[e|o]us than that a stone falls
or in fact any thing which happens
<u>whatever happens!</u> Again we see that
we have used the term miracle in
a relative & an absolute sense. In
the rolative sense it simply meant
a hitherto unknown kind of event.
Well that's a trivial meaning. But
when we are tempted to use it in
what I would like to [k|c]all a deep
~~meaning~~ sense then ~~it means~~ we want it to mean
that we wonder at it not becouse of
~~its~~ the ra[=|r]ity of what has happened the event but
because what has happened has happened
whatever has happened. And here we have
the misuse of the word „ to wonder" which
we talked about previously.—In fact

we have hitherto failed to group this fact with others in a scientific system. This means that it has no sense to say 'Science has proved that there are no miracles'. No: the scientific way of looking at a fact is not the way to look at it as a miracle. For imagine whatever fact you may, it is not in itself a miracle in the absolute sense and one is in itself not more or less miraculous than the other. I once heard a preacher in a Cambridge Church say that of course there were still miracles happening only look at the tiny little seed from which a tree grows. But this is wrong for is this more miraculous than that a stone falls or in fact anything which happens *whatever happens*! Again we see that we have used the term 'miracle' in a relative and an absolute sense. In the relative sense it simply meant a hitherto unknown kind of event. Well that is a trivial meaning. But when we are tempted to use it in what I would like to call a deep sense then we want it to mean that we wonder at it not because of the rarity of the event but because what has happened has happened whatever has happened. And here we have the misuse of the word 'to wonder' which we talked about previously. — In fact

what I then called to wonder at
the existence of the world I
might have equaly well described
~~by saying~~ ~~to regard to~~ as the experience of look‹ing› ~~ing~~ at
existens as a mira[k|c]le. Now I am
tempted to say that the ↓right↓ expres-
sion in language for the miracle
of the existence of the world is the
miracle of the existence of language
~~but this would not account for~~
~~a fact being important the absolute~~
~~importance of~~ but what ~~the~~
does it mean to notice ~~that~~ this
miracle some times & not at other times?
~~For of course the expression „miracle~~
~~of the~~ For all I have said by
shifting the expression of the miraculous
from an expression [=|by] means of
language to the expression by
the existence of language, all
I have said is again that w[=|e]
can not express what we want to
express & that all we say about it
is remaines nonsense. Now the answer
to all this will seam ↓perfectly↓ clear to
many of you. You will say: Well if certain
experiences constantly tempt us to
attribute a quality to them which we
call absolute or[=] ethical value &
imp[t|or]tance this simply shows that
by these words we do|n‹o›t mean nonsense
~~& &~~ that after all what we mean by
saying that an experience has absolute
value is just a fact [&|l]ike other facts

what I then called ‘to wonder at the existence of the world’ I might have equally well described as the experience of looking at existence as a miracle. Now I am tempted to say that the right expression in language for the miracle of the existence of the world is the miracle of the existence of language but what does it mean to notice this miracle some times and not at other times? For all I have said by shifting the expression of the miraculous from an expression by means of language to the expression by the existence of language, all I have said is again that we can not express what we want to express and that all we say about it remains nonsense. Now the answer to all this will seem perfectly clear to many of you. You will say: well if certain experiences constantly tempt us to attribute a quality to them which we call absolute or ethical value and importance this simply shows that by these words we *do not* mean nonsense that after all what we mean by saying that an experience has absolute value is just a fact like other facts

& that is to say that my contention
in the beginning of this paper [t|w]hen I
said that no describable fact
could ↓ever↓ be or imply an abs[u|o]lute judgment
was wrong. Now when this is urged
against me I ~~say~~ (immediately) see ~~perfectly~~
~~clearly~~ as it where in a flash of light,
not only that no description that
~~could~~ I can think of would do
to describe significantly these
experiences, but that I would
reject every explaination that
anybody could possibly suggest ↓ab initio↓
on the ground of its significance.
That is to say: I see now that
these nonsensical expressions were
not nonsensical bec[o|a]use I had not
jet found the significant explana- ↓expression↓
tion but that there nonsense-
cality was there very essence
for all I wanted to do with them was just
to go beyond the world & that
is to say beyond language. But
this is just impossible My ‹w›hole
& as I believe the tendency of all those who have tried
to talk or write about ethics & religion
tendency was to run against the
boundar[y|ie]s of language. This running
against the walls of our cage is
perfectly, absolutely, hopeless. ~~& still~~
~~I feel respect for it & would not~~ ↓~~for my life~~↓
~~ridicul it~~. ~~I will sum up~~: I therefore believe
that so far as Ethics springs from the
desire to ~~sa~~ express say something about the ~~ultimat~~
ultimate meaning of life, the absolute good,
the absolute important it can be no

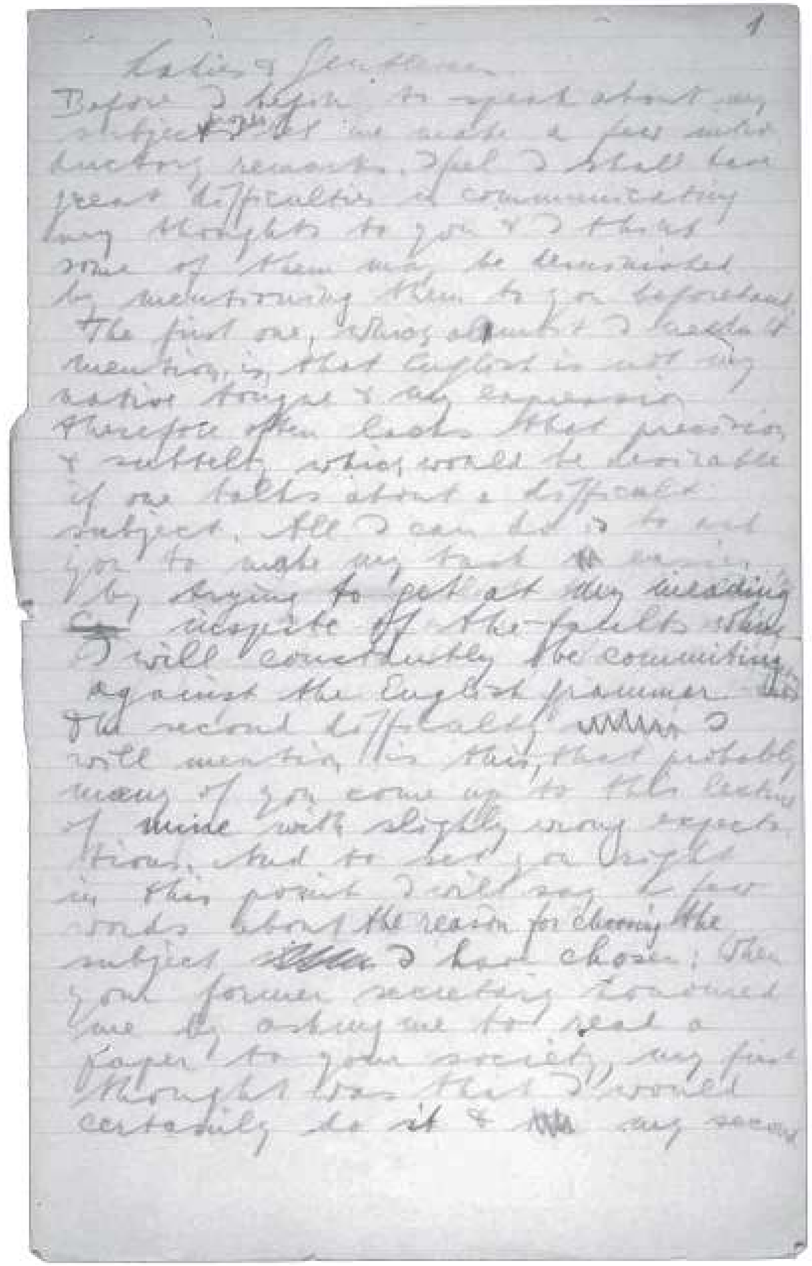
and that is to say that my contention in the beginning of this paper when I said that no describable fact could ever be or imply an absolute judgement was wrong. Now when this is urged against me I (immediately) see as it were in a flash of light, not only that no description that I can think of would do to describe significantly these experiences, but that I would reject every explanation that anybody could possibly suggest *ab initio on the ground of its significance*. That is to say: I see now that these nonsensical expressions were not nonsensical because I had not yet found the significant expression but that their nonsensicality was their very essence for all I wanted to do with them was just to go *beyond the world* and that is to say beyond language. But this is just impossible. My whole tendency and as I believe the tendency of all those who have tried to talk or write about Ethics and Religion was to run against the boundaries of language. This running against the walls of our cage is perfectly, absolutely, hopeless. I therefore believe that so far as Ethics springs from the desire to say something about the ultimate meaning of life, the absolute good, the absolute important it can be no

science, ~~that is to say~~ what it
sa[i|y]s does not add to our knowledge
in any sense. But it is [e|a] document
~~which I~~ of [t|a] tendency in the human
mind which I person‹a›ly can not help
respecting deeply & I would not
for my life ridicul it.

science, what it says does not add to our knowledge in any sense. But it is document of a tendency in the human mind which I personally can not help respecting deeply and I would not for my life ridicule it.

MS 139b

Diplomatic and Normalised Versions



1

Ladies & Gentlemen.
Before I begin to speak about my subject proper let me make a few intro-ductory remarks. I feel I shall have great difficulties in communicating my thoughts to you & I think some of them may be diminished by mentioning them to you beforehand. The first one, which almost I needn't mention, is that English is not my native tongue & my expression therefore often lacks that precision & subtlety which would be desirable if one talks about a difficult subject. All I can do is to ask you to make my task ~~a~~ easier by trying to get at my meaning ~~in~~ inspite of the faults which I will constantly be committing against the English grammar. The second difficulty ~~which~~ I will mention is this, that probably many of you come up to this lecture of mine with slightly wrong expectations. And to set you right in this point I will say a few words about the reason for choosing the subject ~~which~~ I had chosen: When your former secretary honoured me by asking me to read a paper to your society my first thought was that I would certainly do it & ~~my~~ my second

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~~can~~ inspite of the faults which
I will constantly be commiting
against the English grammar.]
The second difficulty ~~which~~ I
will mention is this, that probably
many of you come up to this lecture
of [=|mine] with slighly wrong expecta-
tions. And to set you right
in this po‹i›nt I will say a few
words about [=|the reason for choosing the]
subject ~~which~~ I have chosen: When
your former secretary honoured
me by asking me to read a
paper to your society, my first
thought was that I would
certainly do [so|it] & ~~the~~ my second

[1]

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thought was that if I ~~should~~ was to 2
have ~~an~~ the opportunity to speak
~~to a room full of~~ you I should
speak about something ↓which↓ I am keen
on communicating [f|t]o you & that I
should not misuse th‹i›s opportunity
to give you a lecture about, say, logic.
~~I say~~ I call this a misuse ~~you think~~ for to
explain a scientific matter to you ~~I~~ it
would ~~want~~ need a cours[=|e] of lectures &
not an hour's paper. ~~Of course~~ [=|An] other
alternative would have been to give
you what's called a popular-
scientific lecture, that is a lecture
intended to make you believe that
you understand a thing which
actually you don't understand, &
to gratify ↓what I believe to be↓ one of the lowest desires
of modern people, namely the ~~eur~~
superficial curiosity about the
latest discover[y|ie]s [in|of] science. I
rejected these alternatives & decided
to talk to you about a subject
which seems to me to be of general
importance, hoping that ~~this~~ it m[=|a]y
help to clear up your thoughts
about th[=|i]s subject (even if you
should ent[y|i]rely disagree with what
I will say about it). My third &
last difficulty is one which, in fact,
adheres to most lengthy philosophi
cal lectures & it is this, that
the hearer is uncapable of seeing
both the ~~way~~ road he is lead & the

[2]

thought was that if I was to have the opportunity to speak you I should speak about something which I am *keen* on communicating to you and that I should not misuse this opportunity to give you a lecture about, say, logic. I call this a misuse for to explain a scientific matter to you it would need a course of lectures and not an hour's paper. Another alternative would have been to give you what is called a popular-scientific lecture, that is a lecture intended to make you believe that you understand a thing which actually you do not understand, and to gratify what I believe to be one of the lowest desires of modern people, namely the superficial curiosity about the latest discoveries of science. I rejected these alternatives and decided to talk to you about a subject which seems to me to be of general importance, hoping that it may help to clear up your thoughts about this subject (even if you should entirely disagree with what I will say about it). My third and last difficulty is one which, in fact, adheres to most lengthy philosophical lectures and it is this, that the hearer is incapable of seeing both the road he is lead and the

goal which it leeds to. That's to |3
say: he either thinks „I understand
all he says, but what on earth
is he dr[y|i]ving at" or else he ~~sees~~
~~what~~ thinks „ I see what he's
driving at, but how on earth is
he going to get there". All I c[=|an]
do is, again, to ask you to be
patient & to hope that in the
end you may see both the ~~road~~[way]
& where it leads to.—I will now
begin. My subject, as you know, is
Ethics & I will adopt the expla
nation of that term which Prof. Moore
has given in his ↓[book]↓ Principia Ethica.
He says : „Ethics is the general
~~E~~ enquiry into what is good".
Now I'm going to use the term ‹Ethics›
in a slightly wider sense, in a
sense ↓[in fact]↓ ~~in~~ which includes what I
believe to be the most essential
part of what is generally called
Aesthetics. And to make you
see as clearly as possible what
I take to be the subject matter
of Ethics I will put before you
a number of more or less syno
nymous ~~terms~~ ↓[expressions]↓ each of which could
be substituted for ~~Prof Moores~~ [the above]
definition, & by enumerating them
I want to produce the same sort
of effect ~~t~~ which Gallstone produced
when he ~~p~~ ~~copied a number of~~ took
a number of photos of different

[3]

goal which it leads to. That is to say: he either thinks 'I understand all he says, but what on earth is he driving at' or else he thinks 'I see what he is driving at, but how on earth is he going to get there'. All I can do is, again, to ask you to be patient and to hope that in the end you may see both the way and where it leads to.—I will now begin. My subject, as you know, is Ethics and I will adopt the explanation of that term which Prof. Moore has given in his book *Principia Ethica*. He says: 'Ethics is the general enquiry into what is good'. Now I am going to use the term 'Ethics' in a slightly wider sense, in a sense in fact which includes what I believe to be the most essential part of what is generally called Aesthetics. And to make you see as clearly as possible what I take to be the subject matter of Ethics I will put before you a number of more or less synonymous expressions each of which could be substituted for the above definition, and by enumerating them I want to produce the same sort of effect which Galton produced when he took a number of photos of different

faces on the same photographic plate |4
in order to get the picture of the
typical features they all ha[ve|d] in comon.
And as by shewing to you such
a collective photo I could make
you see what is the typical—say—
chinese face so if you look through
the row of synonyms which I will
~~place~~ put before you, you will, I hope,
be able to see the characterictic
feature‹s› they all have in com~~m~~on
& th[=|ese] are the characteristic features
of Ethics[: |.] Now instead of saying
Ethics is the enquiry into what is
~~of~~ good I could have said ~~it is~~ Ethics
is the enquiry into what is
valuable, or, into what is
realy important, or I could have
said Ethics is the enquiry into
the meaning of life, or into what
makes life worth living, or
into ~~the r~~ ~~what is~~ the right ‹way›
‹of› li[fe|ving]. ~~And~~ I believe ~~I~~ if you look
at all these p‹h›rases you will get
a rough idea as to what it is
that Ethics is concerned with.
Now the first thing that strikes
one about all these expressions
is that each of them is actually
used in two very different senses.
I will call them the trivial or
relative sense on the one
hand & the [≡] ethical or absolute
sense on the other. If for instance

[4]

faces on the same photographic plate in order to get the picture of the typical features they all had in common. And as by showing to you such a collective photo I could make you see what is the typical—say—Chinese face so if you look through the row of synonyms which I will put before you, you will, I hope, be able to see the characteristic features they all have in common and these are the characteristic features of Ethics. Now instead of saying Ethics is the enquiry into what is good I could have said Ethics is the enquiry into what is valuable, or, into what is really important, or I could have said Ethics is the enquiry into the meaning of life, or into what makes life worth living, or into the right way of living. I believe if you look at all these phrases you will get a rough idea as to what it is that Ethics is concerned with. Now the first thing that strikes one about all these expressions is that each of them is actually used in two very different senses. I will call them the trivial or relative sense on the one hand and the ethical or absolute sense on the other. If for instance

I say that this is a <u>good</u> chair 5
this means that the chair
serves a certain predetermined pur
pose & the word good here has only
meaning so far as this purpose
has been previously fixed [=|upon]. In fact
the word good in the ↓relative↓ sense simply
me[=|a]ns coming up to a certain
predetermined standard. ~~So~~ ↓Thus↓ when
we say that this man is a good
pianist we mean that he [=|can]
~~can~~ play p[e|i]eces of a certain degree
of difficulty [in|with] a certain [=|degree] [-*able*]
[=|of dexterity]. And similarly if I say
that it's <u>important</u> for me not
to cach cold I mean that caching
a cold produces certain describable
disturbances in my life & if I
say that this is the <u>right</u>
road I mean that it's the
right road relative to a certain
goal. Used in this way these ex
pressions dont present any ~~very~~
difficult or deep problems. But
this is not how Ethics uses them.
Sup[o|p]osing that I could play Te‹n›nis
& one of you saw me playing &
said „well you play pretty badly"
& suppose I answered „I know,
~~know~~ I'm playing badly but I
don't want to play any better"
All, the other man could say [is|would be]
„Ah then that's all right". But
suppose I had told one of you

[5]

I say that this is a *good* chair this means that the chair serves a certain predetermined purpose and the word 'good' here has only meaning so far as this purpose has been previously fixed upon. In fact the word 'good' in the relative sense simply means coming up to a certain predetermined standard. Thus when we say that this man is a good pianist we mean that he can play pieces of a certain degree of difficulty with a certain degree of dexterity. And similarly if I say that it is *important* for me not to catch cold I mean that catching a cold produces certain describable disturbances in my life and if I say that this is the *right* road I mean that it is the right road relative to a certain goal. Used in this way these expressions do not present any difficult or deep problems. But this is not how Ethics uses them. Supposing that I could play tennis and one of you saw me playing and said 'Well you play pretty badly' and suppose I answered 'I know, I am playing badly but I do not want to play any better' all, the other man could say would be 'Ah then that is all right'. But suppose I had told one of you

6

a preposterous lie & he came up to
me & said „You're behaving like
a beast" & then I were to say
„I kn[=|ow] I behave badly, but then
I don't want to behave any better".
Would ~~then the man~~ he then say „Ah, then
that's all right"? Certainly not;
he would say „well, you o[=|u]ght
to want to behave better". Here
you have an absolute judgement of
value, whereas the first instance was
one of a relative judgment. The essence
of this difference seems ~~to me~~ to
be obviously this: [=] Every judgment
of relative value ~~can~~ is a mere
statement of facts & can therefore
be put in such a form that it
looses all the appearance of a
judgment of value: Instead of saying
„this is the right way to Granchester
I could equaly well have said
„this is the way you have to go~~t~~
if you want to get to Granchester
in the shortest time"; this man
is a good runner simply means
that he ru[=|n]s [=] a certain number
of miles in a certain number of
minutes, & so forth. Now what
I wish to contend is, that
although all judgments of
relative value can be shewn to
be ~~st~~ mere statements of facts,
no statement of fact can ever
be, or imply, a judgment of absolute
* value. Let me explain this:

[6]

a preposterous lie and he came up to me and said 'You are behaving like a beast' and then I were to say 'I know I behave badly, but then I do not want to behave any better'. Would he then say 'Ah, then that is all right'? Certainly not; he would say 'Well, you *ought* to want to behave better'. Here you have an absolute judgement of value, whereas the first instance was one of a relative judgement. The essence of this difference seems to be obviously this: every judgement of relative value is a mere statement of facts and can therefore be put in such a form that it loses all the appearance of a judgement of value: instead of saying 'This is the right way to *Granchester*' I could equally well have said 'This is the way you have to go if you want to get to Granchester in the shortest time'; 'This man is a good runner' simply means that he runs a certain number of miles in a certain number of minutes, and so forth. Now what I wish to contend is, that although all judgements of relative value can be shown to be mere statements of facts, no statement of fact can ever be, or imply, a judgement of *absolute* value. Let me explain this:

7

Suppose one of you w[as|ere] an omniciant
person & therefore knew all the
movements of all the bodies in
the world dead or alive & that
he also knew all the states of
mind of all human beings that
ever lived. And suppose th‹i›s man
wrote all he knew ~~& that is all
that can be known~~ in~~t~~ a big book.
Then th‹i›s book would contain the
whole description of the wo‹r›ld; and
what I want to say is, that this
book would contain nothing that
we would call an ethical judgment
or anything that would logicaly
imply such a judgment. It would
of course contain all relative judg-
ments of value & all true scientific
propositions & in fact all true
propositions that can be made‹.› [=]
But all the facts described ~~in
this book~~ would, as it were, stand
on the same level & in the same
[=|way] all propositions sta[oo|nd] on the
same level. There are no propositions
which, in any absolute sense, are
sublime, important, or trivial.
Now perhaps some of you will agree
to that & be reminded of Hamlets
words: nothing is either good or
bad, but thinking makes it so!
But this again could lead to a
misunderstanding. What Hamlet
says seems to imply that good

[7]

suppose one of you were an omniscient person and therefore knew all the movements of all the bodies in the world dead or alive and that he also knew all the states of mind of all human beings that ever lived. And suppose this man wrote all he knew in a big book. Then this book would contain the whole description of the world; and what I want to say is, that this book would contain nothing that we would call an *ethical* judgement or anything that would logically imply such a judgement. It would of course contain all relative judgements of value and *all* true scientific propositions and in fact all true propositions that can be made. But all the facts described would, as it were, stand on the same level and in the same way all propositions stand on the same level. There are no propositions which, in any absolute sense, are sublime, important, or trivial. Now perhaps some of you will agree to that and be reminded of Hamlet's words: 'Nothing is either good or bad, but thinking makes it so!' But this again could lead to a misunderstanding. What Hamlet says seems to imply that good

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& bad, [are|though] not qualities of the
world outside us, are atributes of
our states of mind. But what I
~~w~~ mean is that a state of mind, so
far as we mean by that a fact which
we can~~n~~ describe, is in no ethical sense
good or bad. If for instance in our
world-book we read[=] the description
of a murder with all its detai[=|ls]
physical & psychological the mere
descr[e|i]ption of these facts will contain
nothing which we could call an
ethical ~~judgment~~ proposition. The
murder will be on exactly the
same level as any other event, for
instance the falling of a stone. Certain-
ly the reading of this description
might cause us pain or rage or
any other emotion, or we might read
about the pain or rage caused by
this murder in other people when
they heard of it, but there
will simply be facts, facts,
& facts but no Ethics.—And now
I must say that if I contemplate
what Ethics realy would have
to be if there were such a science,
this ↓result↓ seems to me quite obvious.
It seems to~~o~~ me obvious that
nothing we could ever think or
say should be the thing. That
we cannot write a scientific
book, the subject matter of which
~~was~~ could be intrinsically sublime,
* & above all other subject matters.

[8]

and bad, though not qualities of the world outside us, are attributes of our states of mind. But what I mean is that a state of mind, so far as we mean by that a fact which we can describe, is in no ethical sense good or bad. If for instance in our world-book we read the description of a murder with all its details physical and psychological the mere description of these facts will contain nothing which we could call an *ethical* proposition. The murder will be on exactly the same level as any other event, for instance the falling of a stone. Certainly the reading of this description might cause us pain or rage or any other emotion, or we might read about the pain or rage caused by this murder in other people when they heard of it, but there will simply be facts, facts, and facts but no Ethics.—And now I must say that if I contemplate what Ethics really would have to be if there were such a science, this result seems to me quite obvious. It seems to me obvious that nothing we could ever think or say should be *the* thing. That we cannot write a scientific book, the subject matter of which could be intrinsically sublime, and above all other subject matters.

I can only describe my feeling 9
by the metaphor, that, if a man
could write a book on Ethics which
realy was a book on Ethics, this
book would‹,› with an explosion,
destroy all the other books in the
world.—Our words, used, as we use them
in science, are vesels capable only of
containing and conveying meaning
& sense, natural meaning & sense.
~~And~~ Ethics, if it is a‹n›ything, is super-
natural & [O|o]ur words will only express
facts; as a teacup will ↓ hold ← only
a teacup full of water & if I were
to pour out a gallon over it.—I said
that so far as facts & propositions
are concerned there is only relative
value & relative good, right etc. And
let me, before I go on, illustrate
this by a rather obvious example.
The right road is the road which leads
to an arbitrarily prede[d|t]ermined end
& it is quite clear to us all that there
is no sense in talking about the
right ro[o|a]d apart from such a
predetermined goal. Now let us
see what we could possibly
mean by the expression „the, absolu
tely, right road" [~~+~~|.] I think it would
be the r[=|o]ad which everyb[a|o]dy on
seeing it would, with logical necessity,
have to go, or be ashamed ~~for~~ ᵒᶠ not
going. And similarly the absolute
good, if it is a describable state of
* affa‹i›rs would be one which everybody,

[9]

I can only describe my feeling by the metaphor, that, if a man could write a book on Ethics which really was a book on Ethics, this book would, with an explosion, destroy all the other books in the world.—Our words, used, as we use them in science, are vessels capable only of containing and conveying meaning and sense, *natural* meaning and sense. Ethics, if it is anything, is supernatural and our words will only express facts; as a teacup will only hold a teacup full of water and if I were to pour out a gallon over it.—I said that so far as facts and propositions are concerned there is only relative value and relative good, right etc. And let me, before I go on, illustrate this by a rather obvious example. The right road is the road which leads to an arbitrarily predetermined end and it is quite clear to us all that there is no sense in talking about the right road apart from such a predetermined goal. Now let us see what we could possibly mean by the expression '*The*, absolutely, right road'. I think it would be the road which *everybody* on seeing it would, *with logical necessity*, have to go, or be ashamed for not going. And similarly the *absolute good*, if it is a describable state of affairs would be one which everybody,

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independent of his ta[=|s]te[=|s] and inclina-
tions, would, necessarily, bring
about or ~~be ashamed~~ feel guilty
for not bringing about. And I
want to say that such a state
of affai[=|rs] is a chimera.—No state
of affai[=|rs] has ↓in itself↓ ~~the~~, what I would like
to call, the coercive power of an absolute
judge.—Then what ~~do~~ have all of us
who, like myself, are still tempted
to use such expressions as „absolute
good", „absolute value" etc, ↓[=]↓ what have we
~~then~~ in mind & what do we try to
express? Now whenever I try to make
this clear to myself it is natural
that I should recall ↓[=====]↓ cases in which
I would certainly use these expressions
& I am then in the situation & which
you would be if, for instance, I were
to give you a lecture on the psycholo
gy of pleasure. W[a|h]at you would do
then would be to try and recall
some typical situation in which you
allways felt pleasure. For, bearing
this situation in mind, all I should
say to you ~~about pleasure~~ would
become concrete &, as it w[a|h]ere, contro-
lable. One man would perhaps ch[=|oo]se
as his stock example the sensation
when ~~walking~~ taking a walk on a
fine summers day. Now in this situation
I am if I want to fix my mind
on what I mean by absolute or ethical
value. And there, in my case, it allways
* happens that the idea of one particular

[10]

independent of his tastes and inclinations, would, *necessarily*, bring about or feel guilty for not bringing about. And I want to say that such a state of affairs is a chimera. No state of affairs has in itself, what I would like to call, the coercive power of an absolute judge.—Then what have all of us who, like myself, are still tempted to use such expressions as 'absolute good', 'absolute value' etc., what have we in mind and what do we try to express? Now whenever I try to make this clear to myself it is natural that I should recall cases in which I would certainly use these expressions and I am then in the situation and which you would be if, for instance, I were to give you a lecture on the psychology of pleasure. What you would do then would be to try and recall some typical situation in which you always felt pleasure. For, bearing this situation in mind, all I should say to you would become concrete and, as it were, controllable. One man would perhaps choose as his stock example the sensation when taking a walk on a fine summer day. Now in this situation I am if I want to fix my mind on what I mean by absolute or ethical value. And there, in my case, it always happens that the idea of one particular

experience presents itself to me 11
which therefore is, in a ~~n~~ sense, my
experience par excelence & this is
the reason why, in talking to you
now, I will use this experience as
my first & foremost example. (As
I have said before, this is an enti-
rely personal matter & others would
find other examples more s‹t›riking)
I will describe this experience in
order, if possible, to make you re-
call ~~to your minds~~ the same or similar
experiences, so that we may have
a comon ground for our investigation.
↓I believe↓ [T|t]he best way of describing ~~this experience~~ ~~it~~ ‹it› is to
say that when I have it I wonder
at the existence of the world. And
I am then inclined to use such
phrases as „how extraordinary that
anything should exist" or „how extra-
ordinary that the world should
exist". I will mention an other
experience strait away which I also
know & which others of you might be
aquainted with: it is, what one might
call, the experience of feeling absolutely
safe. I mean the state of mind in
which one [=|is] inclined to say „I am safe,
nothing can injure me whatever
happens". Now let [=|me] [ɪ] [=|co]nsider these
experiences, [because|for, I believe,] they exhibit~~, I believe,~~
the ve‹r›y characteristics we try to get
clear about. And there the first thing
I have to say is, that the verbal
* expression which we give to these experiences

[11]

experience presents itself to me which therefore is, in a sense, my experience *par excellence* and this is the reason why, in talking to you now, I will use this experience as my first and foremost example. (As I have said before, this is an entirely personal matter and others would find other examples more striking) I will describe this experience in order, if possible, to make you recall the same or similar experiences, so that we may have a common ground for our investigation. I believe the best way of describing it is to say that when I have it *I wonder at the existence of the world*. And I am then inclined to use such phrases as 'How extraordinary that anything should exist' or 'How extraordinary that the world should exist'. I will mention another experience straight away which I also know and which others of you might be acquainted with: it is, what one might call, the experience of feeling *absolutely* safe. I mean the state of mind in which one is inclined to say 'I am safe, nothing can injure me whatever happens'. Now let me consider these experiences, for, I believe, they exhibit the very characteristics we try to get clear about. And there the first thing I have to say is, that the verbal expression which we give to these experiences

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is nonsense! If I say „I wonder at the
existence of the world I am misusing
language. Let me explain this: It has
a perfectly good & clear sense to
~~sa~~ say that I wonder at some-
thing being the case, we all under-
stand what it means to say that
I wonder at the size of a dog which
is bigger than anyone I have ever seen
before, or at any thing which, in the
~~ordinary~~ comon sense of the word, is extraor-
dinary. In every such case I wonder
at something being the case which I
could conceive not to be the case. I
wonder at the size of this dog bec[=|aus]e
I could conceive of a dog of another,
namely the ordinary, size, at which
I should not wonder. To say „I
wonder at such & such being the case
has only sense if I can immagine it
not to be the case. In this sense one
can wonder at the existence of, say, a
house when one sees it & hasn't visited
it for a long time & has immagined
that it had been pulled down
in the meantime. But it is nonsense
to say that I wonder at the existence
of the world, because I cannot
immagine it not existing. I could,
of course, wonder at the world round
me being as it is. If for instance
I had this experience while looking
~~up~~ into the blue sky, I could wonder
at the sky being blue as opposed
* to the case when it's clouded. But

[12]

is nonsense! If I say 'I wonder at the existence of the world' I am misusing language. Let me explain this: it has a perfectly good and clear sense to say that I wonder at something being the case, we all understand what it means to say that I wonder at the size of a dog which is bigger than anyone I have ever seen before, or at any thing which, in the common sense of the word, is extraordinary. In every such case I wonder at something being the case which I *could* conceive *not* to be the case. I wonder at the size of this dog because I could conceive of a dog of another, namely the ordinary, size, at which I should not wonder. To say 'I wonder at such and such being the case' has only sense if I can imagine it not to be the case. In this sense one can wonder at the existence of, say, a house when one sees it and has not visited it for a long time and has imagined that it had been pulled down in the meantime. But it is nonsense to say that I wonder at the existence of the world, because I cannot imagine it not existing. I could, of course, wonder at the world round me being as it is. If for instance I had this experience while looking into the blue sky, I could wonder at the sky being blue as opposed to the case when it is clouded. But

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that's not what I mean. I am wondering at the sky being, <u>whatever it is</u>. One might be tempted to say that what I am wondering at is a tautology, namely at the sky being blue or not blue. But then it's just nonsense to say that one is wondering at a tautology. Now the same applies to the other experience which I have mentioned, the experience of absolute safety. We all know what ~~it~~ it means in ordinary life to be safe. I am safe in my room, when I cann't be run o[=|v]er by an Omnibus. I am safe if I have had whooping cough & cann't therefore get it again. To be safe essentially means that it is physically impossible that certain things should happen to me, & therefore it's nonsense to say that I am safe <u>whatever</u> happens. Again this is a misuse of the word „safe" as the other example was a misuse of the word „existence" or „wondering". Now I want to impress on you that a certain characteristic misuse of our language runs through <u>all</u> ethical & religious expressions. All these expressions <u>seem</u>, prima facie, to be ↓[just]↓ <u>similes</u>. ↓[Thus]↓ [I|i]t seems that when we are using the word <u>right</u> in an ethical sense, although, what we mean, is not ~~what we mean~~ right in its trivial sense, it's something similar, and [if| when]

[13]

that is not what I mean. I am wondering at the sky being, *whatever it is*. One might be tempted to say that what I am wondering at is a tautology, namely at the sky being blue or not blue. But then it is just nonsense to say that one is wondering at a tautology. Now the same applies to the other experience which I have mentioned, the experience of absolute safety. We all know what it means in ordinary life to be safe. I am safe in my room, when I can not be run over by an omnibus. I am safe if I have had whooping cough and can not therefore get it again. 'To be safe' essentially means that it is physically impossible that certain things should happen to me, and therefore it is nonsense to say that I am safe *whatever* happens. Again this is a misuse of the word 'safe' as the other example was a misuse of the word 'existence' or 'wondering'. Now I want to impress on you that a certain characteristic misuse of our language runs through *all* ethical and religious expressions. All these expressions *seem*, prima facie, to be just *similes*. Thus it seems that when we are using the word *'right'* in an ethical sense, although, what we mean, is not right in its trivial sense, it is something similar, and when

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we say „this is a good fellow", although
the word good ~~here is not~~ here does‹n't›
mean what it means in the sentence
„this is a good football player" there ~~is~~
a ~~seems to be~~ seems to be some ~~analogy~~ similarity. And when
we say „this man's life was valuable"
we dont mean it in the same sense
in which we would speak of some
valuable ~~ju[ve|we]lr~~ juvelry but there
seems to be some sort of ~~connection~~ analogy.
Now all religious terms seem in
this sense to be used as similes,
or alegoricaly. For when we speak of
God & that he sees everything & when
we ~~p~~ kneel & pray to him all our
terms & actions seem to be parts
of a great & elaborate alegory
which represents him as a human
being of great power whose grace we
try to win etc‹.› etc‹.› But this ~~simile~~ alegory
also ~~extends to~~ ~~over~~ ~~the descriptions of~~ describes
the experiences which I have just
referred to. For, the first of them is,
I believe, exactly what people were
referring to when they said that
God had created the world; & the
experience of absolute safety has
~~de~~ been described by saying that
we feel safe in the hands of God.
A third experience of the same
kind is that of feeling guilty
& again this was described by
the phrase that God disaprooves
of our conduct. Thus in ethical
* & religious language we seem ~~to~~

[14]

we say 'This is a good fellow', although the word 'good' here does not mean what it means in the sentence 'This is a good football player' there seems to be some similarity. And when we say 'This man's life was valuable' we do not mean it in the same sense in which we would speak of some valuable jewellery but there seems to be some sort of analogy. Now all religious terms seem in this sense to be used as similes, or allegorically. For when we speak of God and that he sees everything and when we kneel and pray to him all our terms and actions seem to be parts of a great and elaborate allegory which represents him as a human being of great power whose grace we try to win etc. etc. But this allegory also describes the experiences which I have just referred to. For, the first of them is, I believe, exactly what people were referring to when they said that God had created the world; and the experience of absolute safety has been described by saying that we feel safe in the hands of God. A third experience of the same kind is that of feeling guilty and again this was described by the phrase that God disapproves of our conduct. Thus in ethical and religious language we seem

constantly to be using similes. But
a simil[y|e] must be the simile for
something. And if I can ~~express~~ describe a
fact by means of a simile I must
also be able to drop the simile &
to ~~express~~ describe the facts without it.
Now in ~~this~~ our case as soon as we
try to drop the simil[y|e] & ↓simply to↓ state
the facts ~~behind it~~ which stand
behind it, we find that there
are no such facts. And so, what
‹at› first appeared to be ↓a↓ simile, now
seems to be mere nonsense.—Now
the three experiences which I have
mentioned to you (and I could have
added ~~some more~~ others) seem to those
who have experienced them, for
instance to me, to have in some
sense an intrinsic, absolute, value.
But when I say they are experiences,
surely, they are facts; the‹y› have taken
place then & there, lasted a certain
definite time & consequently are
describable. And so from what
I have said some minutes ago
I must admit it is nonsense to
say that they have absolute
value. And here I have arrived at
the main point of this paper [. |:] it is
the paradox that an experience,
a fact should ↓seem to↓ have absolute
value. And I will make my point
still more acute by saying „it is
the paradox that an experience, a fact,

constantly to be using similes. But a simile must be the simile for *something*. And if I can describe a fact by means of a simile I must also be able to drop the simile and to describe the facts without it. Now in our case as soon as we try to drop the simile and simply to state the facts which stand behind it, we find that there are no such facts. And so, what at first appeared to be a simile, now seems to be mere nonsense.—Now the three experiences which I have mentioned to you (and I could have added others) seem to those who have experienced them, for instance to me, to have in some sense an intrinsic, absolute, value. But when I say they are experiences, surely, they are facts; they have taken place then and there, lasted a certain definite time and consequently are describable. And so from what I have said some minutes ago I must admit it is nonsense to say that they have absolute value. And here I have arrived at the main point of this paper: it is the paradox that an experience, a fact should seem to have absolute value. And I will make my point still more acute by saying ‘it is the paradox that an experience, a fact,

should ↓seem to↓ have supernatural value.
Now there is a way in which I would be
tempted to meet this paradox: Let
me first consider again our first expe-
rience of wondering at the existence
of the world & let me describe it in a
slightly different way: We all know, what
in ordinary life would be called a
miracle. It obviously is simply an
event the like of which we have never
yet seen. Now suppose such an
event happened. Take the case that
one of you suddenly gre[=|w] a lions head
& began ↓to↓ roar~~ing~~. Certainly that would
be as extraordinary a thing as I
can~~n~~ immagine. Now whenever we ~~would~~
should have recovered from our
surprise, what I would suggest
would be to fech a Doctor & have the
case scientifically investigated & if
it were not for hurting him I would
have him vivisected. And where would
the miracle have got to [,|?] for it is
clear that when we look at it in
this way everything miracul[u|ous] ‹has›
~~would have~~ disappeared; unless
what we mean by this term
is merely that a fact has not
yet been explained by science,
which ↓again↓ means that we have hitherto
failed to group this fact[=] with
others in a scientific system.
This shews that it is absurd to
say ~~then~~ „science has proved[=] that

should seem to have supernatural value'. Now there is a way in which I would be tempted to meet this paradox: let me first consider again our first experience of wondering at the existence of the world and let me describe it in a slightly different way: we all know, what in ordinary life would be called a miracle. It obviously is simply an event the like of which we have never yet seen. Now suppose such an event happened. Take the case that one of you suddenly grew a lion's head and began to roar. Certainly that would be as extraordinary a thing as I can imagine. Now whenever we should have recovered from our surprise, what I would suggest would be to fetch a doctor and have the case scientifically investigated and if it were not for hurting him I would have him vivisected. And where would the miracle have got to? For it is clear that when we look at it in this way everything miraculous has disappeared; unless what we mean by this term is merely that a fact has not yet been explained by science, which again means that we have hitherto failed to group this fact with others in a scientific system. This shows that it is absurd to say 'Science has proved that

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there are no miracles". [No, |↓The truth is that↓] the scientific
way of looking at a fact is not the
way to look at it as a miracle.
For, immagine whatever fact you may,
it is not in itself miracul[u|ous] in the
the absolute sense of that term. For we
see now that ~~again~~ we have been using
the word „miracle" in a relative & an
absolute sense. And I will now describe
the experience of wondering at the existence
of the world by saying‹:› it is the experience
of seeing the world as a miracle. Now
I am tempted to say that the right
expression in language for the miracle
of the existence of the world, though
it is not any proposition <u>in</u> language,
is the existence of language itself.
But what then d‹o›es it mean to [≡] be
aware of this miracle at some times
& not at other times. For all I have
said by shifting the expression of
the miraculous from an expression
<u>by means of</u> language to the expression
<u>by the ex‹i›stence</u> of language, all
I have said is again that we
cannot express what we want
to express & that all we <u>say</u> about
the ↓absolute↓ miraculous remains nonsense.—
Now the answer to all this will
seem perfectly clear to many of
you. You will say: Well, if certain
experiences constantly tempt us
to atribute a quality to them
which we call absolute or ethical
* value & importance, this simply

[17]

there are no miracles'. The truth is that the scientific way of looking at a fact is not the way to look at it as a miracle. For, imagine whatever fact you may, it is not in itself miraculous in the absolute sense of that term. For we see now that we have been using the word 'miracle' in a relative and an absolute sense. And I will now describe the experience of wondering at the existence of the world by saying: it is the experience of seeing the world as a miracle. Now I am tempted to say that the right expression in language for the miracle of the existence of the world, though it is not any proposition *in* language, is the existence of language itself. But what then does it mean to be aware of this miracle at some times and not at other times. For all I have said by shifting the expression of the miraculous from an expression *by means of* language to the expression *by the existence* of language, all I have said is again that we cannot express what we want to express and that all we *say* about the absolute miraculous remains nonsense.—Now the answer to all this will seem perfectly clear to many of you. You will say: well, if certain experiences constantly tempt us to attribute a quality to them which we call absolute or ethical value and importance, this simply

shews that ~~after~~ ~~all~~ by these 18
words we don't mean nonsense,
that after all what we mean by
saying that an experience has
absolute value is just a fact like
other facts & that all ~~our difficulties~~
‹it› comes to is, that we have not yet succee-
ded in finding the correct logical analy-
sis of what we mean by our ethical
& religious expressions.—Now when
this is urged against me I at once
see clearly, as it were in a flash of
light, not only that no description
that I can~~n~~ think of would do
to describe what I mean by absolute
value, but that I would reject every
significant description ~~or explanation~~
that anybody could possibly
suggest, ab initio, on the ground
of its significance. That is to say:
I see now that these nonsensical
expressions were not nonsensical
because I had not jet found the
correct expression‹s›, but that there
n[=|o]nsensicality was their very essence.
For all I wanted to do with them
was just to go beyond the world
& that is to say beyond significant
language. My whole tendency & I
believe the tendency of all men
who ever tried to write or talk
Ethics or Religion was to run [=] against
the boundaries of language. This
running against the walls of our cage

[18]

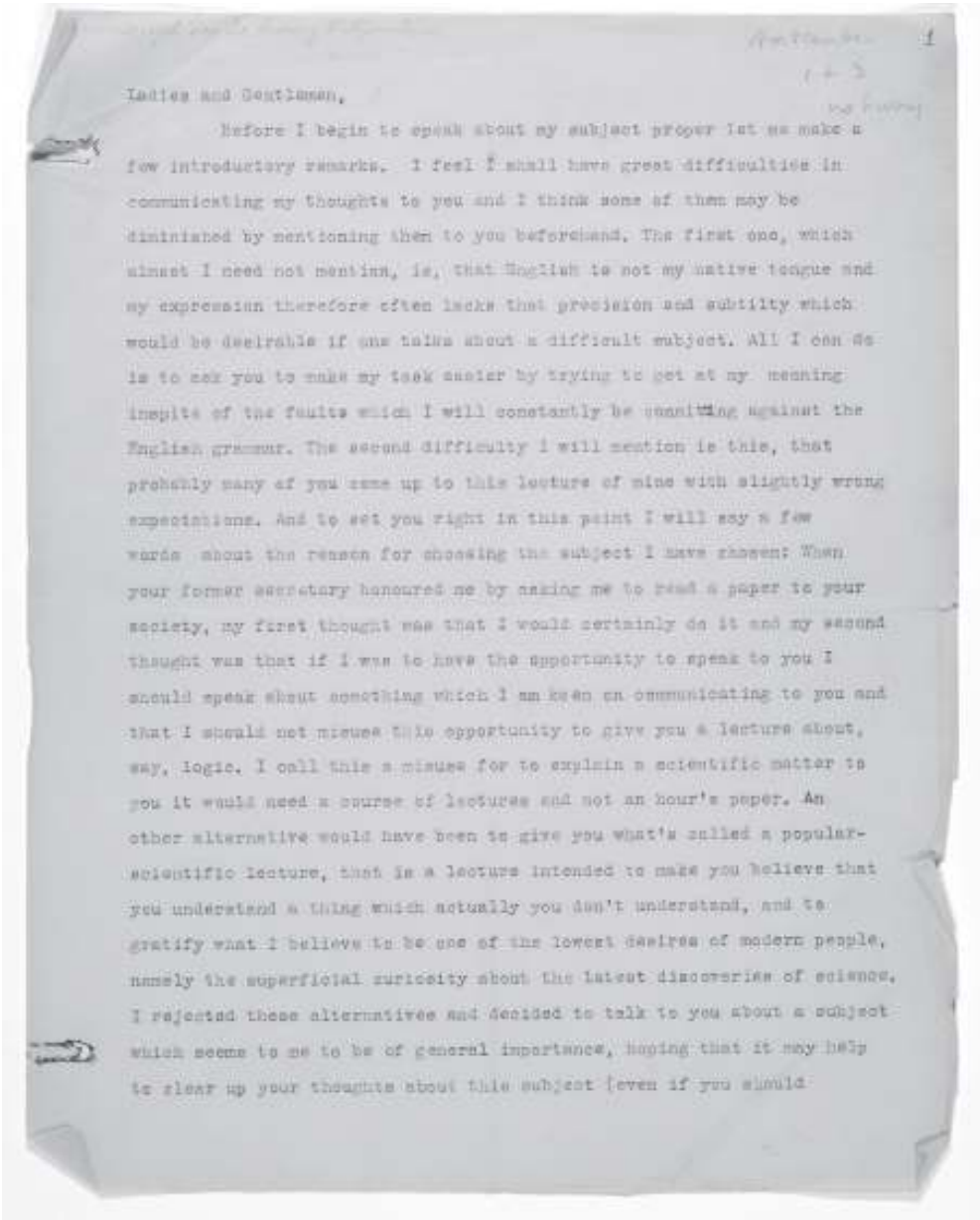
shows that by these words we *do not* mean nonsense, that after all what we mean by saying that an experience has absolute value *is just a fact like other facts* and that all it comes to is, that we have not yet succeeded in finding the correct logical analysis of what we mean by our ethical and religious expressions.—Now when this is urged against me I at once see clearly, as it were in a flash of light, not only that no description that I can think of would do to describe what I mean by 'absolute value', but that I would reject every significant description that anybody could possibly suggest, *ab initio*, on the ground of its significance. That is to say: I see now that these nonsensical expressions were not nonsensical because I had not yet found the correct expressions, but that their nonsensicality was their very essence. For all I wanted to do with them was just *to go beyond* the world and that is to say beyond significant language. My whole tendency and I believe the tendency of all men who ever tried to write or talk Ethics or Religion was to run against the boundaries of language. This running against the walls of our cage

is perfectly, absolutely, hopeless.—
Ethics, so far as it springs from the
desire to say something about the
ultimate meaning of life, the absolute
good, the absolute valuable can be no
science. What it says does not add
to our knowledge in any sense.
But it is a document of a tendency
in the human mind which I perso-
naly cannot [p|h]elp respecting
deeply & I would not for my life
ridicule it.

is perfectly, absolutely, hopeless.—Ethics, so far as it springs from the desire to say something about the ultimate meaning of life, the absolute good, the absolute valuable can be no science. What it says does not add to our knowledge in any sense. But it is a document of a tendency in the human mind which I personally cannot help respecting deeply and I would not for my life ridicule it.

TS 207

Diplomatic and Normalised Versions



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Ladies and Gentlemen,

Before I begin to speak about my subject proper let me make a few introductory remarks. I feel I shall have great difficulties in communicating my thoughts to you and I think some of them may be diminished by mentioning them to you beforehand. The first one, which almost I need not mention, is, that English is not my native tongue and my expression therefore often lacks that precision and subtilty which would be desirable if one talks about a difficult subject. All I can do is to ask you to make my task easier by trying to get at my meaning inspite of the faults which I will constantly be committing against the English grammar. The second difficulty I will mention is this, that probably many of you come up to this lecture of mine with slightly wrong expectations. And to set you right in this point I will say a few words about the reason for choosing the subject I have chosen: When your former secretary honoured me by asking me to read a paper to your society, my first thought was that I would certainly do it and my second thought was that if I was to have the opportunity to speak to you I should speak about something which I am keen on communicating to you and that I should not misuse this opportunity to give you a lecture about, say, logic. I call this a misuse for to explain a scientific matter to you it would need a course of lectures and not an hour's paper. An other alternative would have been to give you what's called a popular-scientific lecture, that is a lecture intended to make you believe that you understand a thing which actually you don't understand, and to gratify what I believe to be one of the lowest desires of modern people, namely the superficial curiosity about the latest discoveries of science. I rejected these alternatives and decided to talk to you about a subject which seems to me to be of general importance, hoping that it may help to clear up your thoughts about this subject [even if you should

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entirely disagree with what I will say about it). My third and last difficulty is one which, in fact, adheres to most lengthy philosophical lectures and it is this, that the hearer is uncapable of seeing both the road he is lead and the goal which it leads to. That is to say: he either thinks:"I understand all he says, but what on earth is he driving at" or else he thinks "I see what he's driving at, but how on earth is he going to get there". All I can do is again to ask you to be patient and to hope that in the end you may see both the way and where it leads to. ---

I will now begin. My subject, as you know, is Ethics and I will adopt the explanation of that term which Prof.Moore has given in his book "Principia Ethica". He says:"Ethics is the general enquiry into what is good". Now I am going to use the term Ethics in a slightly wider sense, in a sense in fact which includes what I believe to be the most essential part of what is generally called Aesthetics. And to make you see as clearly as possible what I take to be the subject matter of Ethics I will put before you a number of more or less synonymous expressions each of which could be substituted for the above definition, and by enumerating them I want to produce the same sort of effect which Gal~~l~~ston~~e~~ produced when he took a number of photos of different faces on the same photographic plate in order to get the p[e|i]cture of the typical features they all had in common. And as by showing to you such a collective photo I could make you see what is the typical—s[y|a]y—chinese face; so if you look through the row of synonyms which I will put bef[r|o]re you, you will, I hope, be able to see the characteristic features they all have in common and these are the characteristic features of Ethics. Now instead of saying "E~~s~~thics is the enquiry into what is good" I could have said Ethics is the enquiry into what is valuable, or, into what is really important, or I could have said Ethics is

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the enquiry into the meaning of life, or into what makes life worth living‹,› or into the right way of living. I believe if you look at all these phrases you will get a rough idea as to what it is that Ethics is concerned with. Now the first thing that strikes one about all these expressions is that each of them is actually used in two very different senses. I will call them the trivial or relative sense on the one hand and the ethical or absolute sense on the other. If for instance I say that this is a <u>good</u> chair this means that the chair serves a certain predetermined purpose and the word good here has only meaning so far as this purpose has been previously fixed upon. In fact the word good in the relative sense simply means coming up to a certain predetermined standard. Thus when we say that this man is a good pianist we mean that he can play pie[e|c]es of a certain degree of difficulty with a certain degree of dexterity. And similarly if I say that is ↓ it ← <u>important</u> for me not to catch cold I mean that catching a cold produces certain describable disturbances in my life and if I say that this is the <u>right</u> road ~~that it~~ xxxxxxx I mean that it's the right road relative to a certain goal. Used in this way these expressions don't present any difficult or deep problems. But this is not how Ethics uses them. Supposing that I could play tennis and one of you saw me playing and said "well you play pretty badly" and suppose I answered "I know, I'm playing badly but I don't want to play any better", all the other man could say would be "Ah then that's all right". But suppose I had told one of you a preposterous lie and he came up to me and said "You're behaving like a beast" and then I were to say "I know I behave badly, but then I don't want to behave any better", could he then say "Ah, then that's all right"? Certainly not; he would say "Well, you <u>ought</u> to want to behave better". Here you have an absolute judgment of value, whereas the first instance was one of a relative judgment. The essence of this difference seems to be obviously this: Every judgment of relative value is a mere statement of

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facts and can therefore be put in such a form that it looses all the appearance of a judgment of value: Instead of saying "this is the right way to Granchester I could equally well have said "this is the right way you have to go if you want to get to Granchester in the shortest time", this man is a good runner simply means that he runs a certain number of miles in a certain number of minutes, a.s.f. Now what I wish to contend is, that although all judgments of relative value can be shown to be mere statements of facts, no statement of fact can ever be, or imply, a judgment of absolute value. Let me explain this: Suppose one of you were an omniscient person and therefore knew all the movements of all the bodies in the world dead or alive and that he also knew all the states of mind of all human beings that ever lived, and suppose this man wrote all he knew in a big book, then this book would contain the whole description of the world; and what I want to say is, that this book would contain nothing that we would call an ethical judgment or anything that would logically imply such a judgment. It would of course contain all relative judgments of value and all true scientific propositions and in fact all true propositions that can be made. But all the facts described would, as it were, stand on the same level and in the same way all propositions stand on the same level. There are no propositions which, in any absolute sense, are sublime, important, or trivial. Now perhaps some of you will agree to that and be reminded of Hamlet's words: Nothing is either good or bad, but thinking makes it so". But this again could lead to a misunderstanding. What Hamlet says seems to imply that good and bad, though not qualities of the world outside us, are attributes of our states of mind. But what I mean is that a state of mind, so far as we mean by that a fact which we can describe, is in no ethical sense good or bad. If for instance in our world-book we read the description of a murder with all its details physical and psychological the mere description of these facts will contain nothing which we could call an

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ethical proposition. The murder will be on exactly the same level as any other event, for instance the falling of a stone. Certainly the reading of this description might cause us pain or rage or any other emotion, or we might read about the pain or rage caused by th[e|i]smurder in other people when they heard of it, but there will simply be facts, facts and facts but no Ethics.—And now I must say that if I contemplate what Ethics really would have to be if there were such a science, this result seems to me quite obvious. It seems to me obvious that nothing we could ever think or say should be the thing. That we cannot write a scientific book, the subject matter of which could be intrinsically sublime and above all other subject matters. I can only describe my feeling by the metaphor, that, if a man could write a book on Ethics which really was a book on Ethics, this book would, with an explosion, destroy all the other books in the world.—Our words used as we use the[j|m] in science, are vessels capable only of containing and conveying meaning and sense, natural meaning an[=|d] sense. Ethics, if it is anything, is supernatural and our words will only express facts; as a teacup will only hold a teacup full of water and if I were to ~~put~~ pour out a gallon over it. --- I said that so far~~s~~ as facts and prop‹o›sitions are concerned there is only relative value and relative good, right etc. And let me, before I go [–|o]n, illustrate this by a rather obvious example. The right road is the road which leads to an arbitrarily predetermined end and it is quite clear to us all that there is no sense in talking about the right road apart from such a predetermined goal. Now let us see what we could possibly mean by the expression "the absolutely right road". I think it would be the road which everybody on seeing it would, with logical necessity have to go, or be ashamed for not going. And similarly the absolute good, if it is a describable state of affairs would be one which everybody, independent of his tastes and inclinations, would, necessarily bring about or feel guilty for not bringing about. And I want to say that such a state of affairs is a chimera. No state of affairs has in itself,

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what I would like to call, the coercive power of an absolute judge.—
Then what have all of us who, like myself, are still tempted to use such expressions as "absolute good", "absolute value" etc, what have we in mind and what do we try to express ? Now whenever I try to make this clear to myself it is natural that I should recall cases in which I would certainly use these expressions and I am then in the situation and in which you would be if, for instance, I were to give you a lecture on the psychology of pleasure. What you would do then would be to try and recall some typical situation in which you always felt pleasure. For, bearing this situation in mind, all I should say to you would become concrete and, as it were, controlable. One man would perhaps choose as his stock example the sensation when taking a walk on a fine summer's day. Now in this situation I am if I want to fix my mind on what I mean by absolute or ethical value. And there, in my case, it always happens that the idea of one particular experience presents itself to me which therefore is, in a sense, my experience for excellence and this is the reason why, in talking to you now, I will use this experience as my first and foremost example. (As I have said before, this is an entirely personal matter and others would find other examples more striking) I will describe this experience in order, if possible, to make you recall the same or similar experiences, so that we may have a common ground for our investigation. I believe the best way of describing it is to say that when I have it <u>I wonder at the existence of the world</u>. And I am then inclined to use such phrases as "how extraordinary that anything should exist" or "how extraordinary that the world should exist". I will mention another experience [d|s]traight away which I also know and which others of you might be acquainted with: it is, what one might call, the experience of feeling <u>absolutely</u> safe. I mean the state of mind in which one is inclined to say "I am safe, nothing can injure me whatever happens". Now let me consider these experiences, for, I believe, they exhibit the very characteristics we try to get clear about. And there

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the first thing I have [z|t]o say is, that the verbal expression which we give to these experiences is nonsense ! If I say "I wonder at the existence of the world‹"› I am misusing language. Let me explain this: It has a perfectly good and clear sense to say that I wonder at something being the case, we all understand what it means to say that I wonder at the size of a dog which is bigger than anyone I have ever seen before or at any thing which, in the common sense of the word, is extraordinary. In every such case I wonder at something being the case which I could conceive not to be the case. I wonder at the size of this dog because I could conceive of a dog of another, namely the ordinary size, at which I should not wonder. To say "I wonder at such and such being the case‹"› has only sense if I can imagine it not to be the case. In this sense one can wonder at the existence of, say, a house when one sees it and has not visited it for a long time and has imagined that it had been pulled down in the meantime. But it is nonsense to say that I wonder at the existence of the world, because I cannot imagine it not existing. I could of course wonder at the world round me being as it is. If for instance I had this experience while looking into the blue sky, I could wonder at the sky being blue as opposed to the case when it's clouded. But that's not what I mean. I am wondering at the sky being whatever it is. One might be tempted to say that what I am wondering at is a ~~ton~~ au tology, namely at the sky being blue or not blue. But then it's just nonsense to say that one is wondering at a ~~ton~~tology. Now the same applies to the other experience which I have mentioned, the experience of absolute safety. We all know what it means in ordinary life to be safe. I am safe in my ro[r|o]m, when I cannot be run over by an omnibus. I am safe ~~when I~~ xxxxxx if I have had whooping cough and cannot therefore get it again. To be ↓safe↓ essentially means that it is physically impossible that certain things should happen to me and therefore it's nonsense to say that I am safe whatever happens. Again this is a misuse of the word "safe" as the other example was a misuse of the word "existence" or "wondering". Now I want to impress on you that a certain characteristic misuse of our language runs

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through <u>all</u> ethical and religious expressions. All these expressions <u>seem</u> , prima facie, to be just <u>similes</u>. Thus it seems that when we are using the word <u>right</u> in an ethical sense, although, what we mean, is not right in its trivial sense, it's something similar, and when we say "this is a good fellow", although the word good here doesn't mean what it means in the sentence "this is a good football player" there seems to be some similarity. And when we say "this man's life was valuable" we don't mean it in the same sense in which we would speak of some valuable jewelry but there seems to be some sort of analogy. Now all religious terms seem in this sense to be used as similes or allegorically. For when we speak of God and that he sees everything and when we kneel and pray to him all our terms and actions seem to be parts of a great and elaborate allegory which represents him as a human being of great power whose grace we try to win etc. etc. But this allegory also describes the experience which I have just referred to. For, the first of them is, I believe, exactly what people were referring to when they said that God had created the world; and the experience of absolute safety has been described by saying that we feel safe in the hands of God. A third experience of the same kind is that of feeling guilty and again this was described by the phrase that God disapproves of our conduct. Thus in ethical and religious language we seem constantly to be using similes. But a simile must be the simile for <u>something</u>. And if I can describe a fact by means of a simile I must also be able to drop the simile and to describe the facts without it. Now in our case as soon as we try to drop the simile and simply to state the facts which stand behind it, we find, that there are no such facts. And so, what at first appeared to be a~~s~~ simile, now seems to be mere nonsense .—Now the three experiences which I have mentioned to you (and I could have added others) seem to those who have experienced them, for instance to me, to have in some sense an intrinsic, absolute value. But when I say they are experiences, surely, they are facts; they have taken place then and there, lasted a certain

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through *all* ethical and religious expressions. All these expressions *seem*, *prima facie*, to be just *similes*. Thus it seems that when we are using the word '*right*' in an ethical sense, although, what we mean, is not right in its trivial sense, it is something similar, and when we say 'This is a good fellow', although the word 'good' here does not mean what it means in the sentence 'This is a good football player' there seems to be some similarity. And when we say 'This man's life was valuable' we do not mean it in the same sense in which we would speak of some valuable jewellery but there seems to be some sort of analogy. Now all religious terms seem in this sense to be used as similes or allegorically. For when we speak of God and that he sees everything and when we kneel and pray to him all our terms and actions seem to be parts of a great and elaborate allegory which represents him as a human being of great power whose grace we try to win etc. etc. But this allegory also describes the experience which I have just referred to. For, the first of them is, I believe, exactly what people were referring to when they said that God had created the world; and the experience of absolute safety has been described by saying that we feel safe in the hands of God. A third experience of the same kind is that of feeling guilty and again this was described by the phrase that God disapproves of our conduct. Thus in ethical and religious language we seem constantly to be using similes. But a simile must be the simile for *something*. And if I can describe a fact by means of a simile I must also be able to drop the simile and to describe the facts without it. Now in our case as soon as we try to drop the simile and simply to state the facts which stand behind it, we find, that there are no such facts. And so, what at first appeared to be a simile, now seems to be mere nonsense.—Now the three experiences which I have mentioned to you (and I could have added others) seem to those who have experienced them, for instance to me, to have in some sense an intrinsic, absolute value. But when I say they are experiences, surely, they are facts; they have taken place then and there, lasted a certain

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definite time and consequently are describable. And so from what I have said some minutes ago I must admit it is nonsense to say that they have absolute value. And I will make my point still more acute by saying "it is the paradox that an experience, a fact, should seem to have supernatural value. Now there is a way in which I would be tempted to meet this paradox. Let me first consider, again, our first experience of wondering at the existence of the world and let me describe it in a slightly different way; **:** We all know what in ordinary life would be called a miracle. It obviously is simply an event the like of which we ~~never have seen~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxx yet[3] never[2] [have[1] seen. Now suppose such an event happened. Take the case that one of you suddenly grew a lions head and began to roar. Certainly that would be as extraordinary a thing as I can imagine. Now whenever we should have recovered from our surprise, what I would suggest would be to fetch a doctor and have the case scientifically investigated and if it were not for hurting him I would have him vivisected. And where would the miracle have got to? For it is clear that when we look at it in this way everything miraculous has disappeared; unless what we mean by this term is merely that a fact has not yet been explained by science which again means that we have hitherto failed to group this fact with others in a scientific system. This shows that it is absurd to say "science has proved that there a[=|r]e no miracles". The truth is that the scientific way of looking at a fact is not the way to look at it as a miracle. For imagine whatever fact you may, it is not in itself miraculous in the absolute sense of that term. For we see now that we have been using the word "miracle" in a relative and an absolute sense. And I will now describe the experience of wondering at the existence of the world by saying: it is the experience of seeing the world as a miracle. Now I am tempted to say that the right expression in language for the miracle of the existence of the world, though it is not any proposition <u>in</u> language, is the existence of language itself. But what then does it mean

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to be aware of this miracle at some times and not at other times[.|?] For all I have said by shifting the expression of the miraculous from an expression by means of language to the expression by the existence of language, all I have said is again that we cannot express what we want to express and that all we say about the absolute miraculous remains nonsense.—Now the answer to all this will seem perfectly clear to many of you. You will say: Well, if certain experiences constantly tempt us to attribute a quality to them which we call absolute or ethical value and importance, this simply shows that by these words we don't mean nonsense, that after all what we mean by saying that an experience has absolute value is just a fact like other facts and that all it comes to is that we have not yet succeeded in finding the correct logical analysis of what we mean by our ethical and religious expressions.—Now when this is urged against me I at once see clearly, as it were in a flash of light, not only that no description that I can think of would do to describe what I mean by absolute value, but that I would reject every significant description that anybody could possibly suggest, ab initio, on the ground of its significance. That is to say: I see now that these nonsensical expressions were not nonsensical because I had not yet found the correct expressions, but that their nonsensicality was their very essence. For all I wanted to do with them was just to go beyond the world and that is to say beyond significant language. My whole tendency and I believe the tendency of all men who ever tried to write or talk Ethics or Religion was to run against the boundaries of language. This running against the walls of our cage is perfectly, absolutely hopeless.—Ethics so far as it springs from the desire to say something about the ultimate meaning of life, the absolute good, the absolute valuable, can be no science. What it says does not add to our knowledge in any sense. But it is a document of a tendency in the human mind which I personally cannot help respecting deeply and I would not f[r|o]r my life ridicule it.

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III

Notes

by Ilse Somavilla

Historical and Stylistic Notes

In 1929 Wittgenstein was asked to give a lecture to a Cambridge society, the 'Heretics'. As Wittgenstein expected a broader public to listen to his speech, he decided to choose a subject that should neither be too scientific nor "popular-scientific", but rather a subject of "general importance". There are three versions[1] of his lecture known so far: two manuscripts and a typescript, designated as *MS* 139a, *MS* 139b and *TS* 207, according to the catalogue compiled by G.H. von Wright.

Several hints in the notes taken by Friedrich Waismann concerning the lecture show that at least one version of the lecture was finished by 1929. According to Rush Rhees, Wittgenstein held his lecture between September 1929 and December 1930, yet today it is widely believed that Wittgenstein held his lecture on 17 November 1929. This is supported by an entry in his Cambridge Pocket Diary 1929-1930[2], where, on Sunday 17 November, he notes as a reminder 'Heretics'. In a letter written to Rudolf Koder, a friend of Wittgenstein from the time when he worked as an elementary school teacher in Puchberg in Lower Austria, Wittgenstein mentions giving a lecture "next Sunday":

> Ich selbst soll diesen Sonntag einen Vortrag halten & er liegt mir gründlich im Magen, weil ich sicher bin, daß mich so gut wie niemand verstehen wird & doch versprochen habe ihn zu halten. Ich fühle mich recht mies.[3]

[1] The editors of this volume conjecture that there are three versions and a sketchy draft of the lecture.

[2] Official calendar for members of the University of Cambridge. Wittgenstein's calendars from 1929 to 1946 still exist and are kept in the Wittgenstein Archive, Cambridge.

[3] Translation: "I myself shall have to give a lecture this Sunday & it lies heavily on my stomach, because I am sure that more or less no one will understand me & yet I have promised to give the lecture. I am feeling rather miserable." Wittgenstein to Rudolf Koder, [between 11.11. and 15.11.1929], Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Briefwechsel: Innsbrucker elektronische Ausgabe*. Monika Seekircher, Brian McGuinness and Anton Unterkircher (eds.). Innsbruck, 2004.

We do not know which version of the lecture Wittgenstein read, but one may assume that he had written the two manuscripts—*MSS* 139a and 139b—before giving his lecture. This assumption is supported by a letter that his sister Margaret Stonborough wrote to him, saying that she was looking forward to his lecture and how delighted she was to have received his manuscript:

> Dein Brief hat mich sehr gefreut. Und auf den Vortrag freu ich mich erst recht. Something to look forward to. Eine große Freude. […]—Und ich danke Dir sehr für das Manuskript, eine grössere Freude konnte ich mir nicht leicht vorstellen.[4]

This letter suggests that Margaret received a handwritten version before Wittgenstein read his lecture—most probably *MS* 139b, as this manuscript was seen by G.H. von Wright in 1952 in the house of Margaret Stonborough in Gmunden. It was this manuscript that was later lost until 1993 when it was uncovered in the literary estate of Rudolf and Elisabeth Koder in Vienna. Rudolf Koder[5] had been given the manuscript as a present by Wittgenstein's sister Margaret Stonborough. In addition, Koder had received a typescript of the *Tractatus*, a manuscript of the *Philosophical Investigations* and a manuscript of a diary written by Wittgenstein in the thirties.[6] All of these papers had been in the possession of Margaret Stonborough, who, after Wittgenstein's death, gave them to

[4] Translation: "I was very pleased about your letter. And I am in particular looking forward to your lecture. Something to look forward to. A great joy. […] And I thank you very much for the manuscript, I couldn't easily imagine a greater joy," Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Briefwechsel. Innsbrucker elektronische Ausgabe.*

[5] Rudolf Julius Koder (1902-1977) was born in Vienna and worked as an elementary school-teacher in various villages in Lower Austria, where he taught music, German and mathematics. Koder lived and died in Vienna. His letters to and from Ludwig Wittgenstein are published in Wittgenstein, Ludwig and Rudolf Koder, *Wittgenstein und die Musik. Briefwechsel Ludwig Wittgenstein—Rudolf Koder*. Edited by Martin Alber in collaboration with Brian McGuinness and Monika Seekircher. Innsbruck: Haymon, 2000.

[6] Wittgenstein, Ludwig, *Denkbewegungen. Tagebücher 1930-1932/1936-1937*. Ilse Somavilla (ed.). Innsbruck: Haymon, 1997. Quoted according to the English translation by Alfred Nordmann: "Movements of Thought: Diaries 1930-1932, 1936-1937" in Ludwig Wittgenstein. *Public and Private Occasions.* James C. Klagge and Alfred Nordmann (eds.). Rowman & Littlefield, 2003.

Rudolf and Elisabeth Koder,[7] probably because of the close friendship Koder had with Wittgenstein and his family and the deep interest in music they shared. After the death of Elisabeth Koder in 1992 the documents were found in her literary estate, and, according to her last will, given to her son Johannes Koder in order to decide how to dispose upon them. This explains why the documents were missing from 1952 to 1993.

Wittgenstein's attitude toward ethics

Wittgenstein's above mentioned remark to Koder that no one would understand his lecture reveals the difficulty he was aware of in having chosen to talk about ethics. Basically he was convinced that nothing at all can be said about ethics and ethical problems. He was against any definition of ethics in the sense of a theory or science. Equally he rejected attempts to give rules on good, i.e. ethical behaviour, because the explanation of concepts like good or evil seemed highly problematic to him and efforts toward a solution questionable. Above all, Wittgenstein was against any attempt at justifying ethics. On 6 May 1931 he writes: "'It is good because God commanded it' is the right expression for the lack of reason."[8]

On this matter Wittgenstein had disagreed with Moritz Schlick when discussing the nature of good in theological ethics. Schlick considered the view that God wants the good because it is good as the deeper interpretation, whereas Wittgenstein considered this the "shallow, rationalist" interpretation. For him the proposition, 'What God commands, that is good,' was the profounder interpretation, as it cuts off any attempt at explaining why it is good.[9] In his refusal to counte-

[7] Cp. a note (dating from 1 March 1972) by Elisabeth Koder in which she writes that she and her husband had received these papers as a present of memory from Margaret Stonborough after the death of Ludwig Wittgenstein. Koder, Johannes. "Verzeichnis der Schriften Ludwig Wittgensteins im Nachlaß Rudolf und Elisabeth Koder." *Mitteilungen aus dem Brenner-Archiv, 12/1993,* pp. 52-54.

[8] *Movements of Thought*, p. 75.

[9] Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Ludwig Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle: Conversations recorded by Friedrich Waismann*. Brian McGuinness (ed.). Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1979, p. 115, "Wednesday, 17 December 1930 (Neuwaldegg). 'On Schlick's Ethics'."

nance explanation or justification in ethics, Wittgenstein contrasts decisively with most philosophical positions on ethics. These characteristically seek to explain ethical values or actions. However much they vary in their aims and answers—e.g. the good with the aim of reward, immanent or transcendent, the good for its own sake, the good for social well-being and peace (thus considering religious, social, political or utilitarian grounds)—they all are concerned to give explanations. For Wittgenstein, however, ethical propositions, i.e. orders or commands, are rooted in a superior—a divine—authority which is unassailable in its superiority and therefore beyond any explanation or justification.

Various notes taken by Wittgenstein on ethics reveal that to his mind ethics comprises more than just the definition of a moral code and questions of values, orders and laws as discussed in traditional moral philosophy. For him, ethics concerns above all the sphere beyond the world of facts. The problems of ethics transcend the phenomenal world and touch the unexplainable, the mystical, the divine. On 10 November in 1929—one week before his lecture—he wrote into his manuscript: "What is good is also divine. Queer as it sounds, that sums up my ethics. Only something supernatural can express the Supernatural."[10] And on 15 November 1929—two days before his lecture—he noted: "You cannot lead people to what is good; you can only lead them to some place or other. The good is outside the space of facts."[11]

Wittgenstein's refusal to discuss ethics in philosophy, however, has often led to an incorrect interpretation of his position on ethics. Members of the Vienna Circle interpreted Wittgenstein's position as a negation of metaphysics similar to their own and thus thought that he shared their position in accepting only the phenomenal word. This led to the still widely-held opinion that Wittgenstein was a logical-positivist who shared the views of the Vienna Circle. In fact, however, Wittgenstein, while renouncing expressions about metaphysics, only tried to protect what he considered most important and respected most: ethics and religion. This renunciation—this "ethical demand", as Drury put it—is deci-

[10] Wittgenstein, Ludwig.*Vermischte Bemerkungen*. Edited by G. H. von Wright in collaboration with Heikki Nyman. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977. English translation by Peter Winch published as *Culture and Value*. G. H. von Wright and Heikki Nyman (eds.). Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980, p. 3e.

[11] *Culture and Value*, p. 3e.

sive for the understanding of Wittgenstein's attitude toward ethics and his philosophising.[12] As he remarked in *The Blue Book*: "The difficulty in philosophy is to say no more than we know."[13]

Even if Wittgenstein reflected on ethical questions throughout his life, he seems to have been aware of the impossibility of expressing them satisfactorily in words. As he already said in the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*:

> And so it is impossible for there to be propositions of ethics.
> Propositions can express nothing that is higher (6.42).

And in 6.421:

> It is clear that ethics cannot be put into words.
> Ethics is transcendental.
> (Ethics and aesthetics are one and the same.)[14]

Thus, from the beginnings of his philosophising, Wittgenstein vehemently refused an analytical investigation of ethical words, concepts or propositions, even and precisely in the *Tractatus*, where his method is an analytical one, though only insofar as regards to what can be said clearly. As concerns what cannot be said clearly, he chose to remain silent instead of "babbling", as he wrote in a letter to Ludwig von Ficker in which he also described the sense of his book as an ethical one.[15]

In his conversations with members of the Vienna Circle he insisted on rejecting any explanation of ethical values, not because "the explanation was false, but because it was an *explanation*[...]", thus alluding to his lecture where he equally rejected any meaningful description of

[12] Drury, M., "Some Notes on Conversations with Wittgenstein" in Rush Rhees (ed.) *Ludwig Wittgenstein. Personal Recollections*. Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Littelfield, 1981, pp. 90-111, p. 99.

[13] *The Blue and Brown Books*, p. 45.

[14] Wittgenstein, Ludwig, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. Translated by D. F. Pears and Brian McGuinness. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963.

[15] Wittgenstein, Ludwig, *Briefe an Ludwig von Ficker*. Edited by G. H. von Wright in collaboration with Walter Methlagl. Salzburg: Otto Müller Verlag, 1969, p. 35. See also the English translation of Bruce Gillette and Allan Janik, "Wittgenstein, Ficker, and *Der Brenner*" in Luckhardt, C.G. (ed.), *Wittgenstein. Sources and Perspectives.* Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1979, p. 161-189.

what he would understand by ethical value.[16] "What is ethical cannot be taught. If I could explain the essence of the ethical only by means of a theory, then what is ethical would be of no value whatsoever."[17] And he emphasised the importance of speaking in the first person, as he stated he did at the end of his lecture on ethics.[18] For Wittgenstein a theory was without value, as it requires objectivity and ignores the aspect of subjectivity which he regarded as decisive as concerns ethics. Therefore, from the beginning of his entries in his notebooks, his reflections on ethics are dealt with in connection with his personal situation. This point is highly important for understanding his philosophising. As he remarked himself: "The movement of thought in my philosophising should be discernible in the history of my mind, of its moral concepts & in the understanding of my situation."[19]

In his later method of describing words in their concrete uses in language—and thereby come to an understanding of the word or expression under investigation—words or propositions which in traditional or in analytical ethics are subject to philosophical discussion do not occur. Even if in his lecture on ethics he ventured to speak about ethics, this was in a way unlike usual philosophical discussions on ethics. He aimed solely at illuminating the problems involved in any utterance about ethics—on God, the sense of life or on values like good or evil. Although he talks about descriptions, this happens in a quite different way from the descriptions of situations in every-day life used to analyse the meaning of a specific word. In the Lecture on Ethics, Wittgenstein talks solely of personal experiences during which he had a kind of feeling for what might make up the essence of ethics.

The meaning of ethics for Wittgenstein's life and philosophy

Despite his conviction that we cannot say anything about ethical questions, Wittgenstein's life and philosophising were shot through with

[16] *Ludwig Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle*, p. 116.
[17] *Ludwig Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle*, p. 117.
[18] *Ludwig Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle*, p. 117.
[19] *Movements of Thought*, p. 125.

ethical problems. In his first philosophical entries—his notebooks written from 1914-1916—his thoughts were concerned with logic, language, ethics, God and the sense of the world. At the same time, he was preoccupied with moral questions on which he wrote using a secret code.[20] These entries had their roots in his personal experience and thus show a different tone, a different style of writing. In the tenuous situation of the first World War he was confronted daily with death which led to a feeling of being abandoned in the face of death while at the same time being in the hands of God. The concise sentences in which he reports about his moral state, give testimony to his longing for the spiritual, for inner purification, for a spiritual rebirth. In all of his later personal entries—in his diaries, letters or in remarks scattered throughout his papers—we can find self-reproaches of a similar kind: a continuous moral dissatisfaction with himself and a wish to become a better, different person. Thus, the feeling of guilt mentioned as one of his three examples for the experience of ethics, appears as a decisive factor in his life, before and after his lecture on ethics.

The style in which Wittgenstein's personal entries are written, however, differs from the style of his philosophical remarks. Here we have the voice of a man in conflict, there of a philosopher arguing in a sober and detached way. Yet there are similarities to some extent. In Wittgenstein's philosophical manuscripts there is the same tendency toward change, toward perfection. One can observe a continuous struggle with every sentence, every word—actually a struggle with himself. The wish for personal change is transferred to his writing, his inner struggle turns into a struggle with language, a struggle with every word: "We are struggling with language./ We are engaged in a struggle with language."[21]

Wittgenstein's approach toward language shows itself as an ethical one insofar as he deliberately renounces every superfluous word mak-

[20] As is widely known, there are passages in Wittgenstein's writings written in code which basically consists in a reversal of the alphabet ('z' instead of 'a', 'y' instead of 'b', etc.). In his early notebooks the text written in code is found mostly on the left pages and contains principally moral and religious reflections concerning his personal situation, whereas his philosophical entries are written in normal writing on the right pages. Later, coded remarks are scattered throughout his *Nachlass* amidst his philosophical writings. However, the division between personal and philosophical entries by correlation with using a code does not apply to all his notes.
[21] *Culture and Value*, p. 11e.

ing use of linguistic means as sparingly as possible. His economic use of words results in sentences of utmost intensity and clarity of form. He only hints at—'shows'—what cannot be said clearly or would be distorted by the attempt to express it. Thus his underlying demand for refraining from logical analysis as concerns ethical questions is revealed not only in regard to content, thus resulting in his silence on ethics, but also in regard to style, i.e. the aesthetic aspect. His utterance 'Ethics and Aesthetics are One' is testimony to this connection. Sometimes, Wittgenstein's style almost appears lyrical. His preference for vivid pictures—for metaphors, images, similes—and for fictitious examples shows parallels to texts of literature or to the Bible. It also confirms his remark that philosophy should only be written as a poem.[22]

Despite a basic continuity of essential thoughts in Wittgenstein's philosophy there are changes, "movements of thoughts," to be observed in his writings: the biggest change appears between the *Tractatus* and the *Philosophical Investigations*—i.e. after a period of time when Wittgenstein in some way tried to retreat from active philosophical occupation.[23] After this hiatus in the twenties, when he worked as an elementary school teacher and then as an architect, he no longer saw language under the idea of an abstract 'ideal language', but in all its variety and everyday use. Yet he resolutely preserved his distinction between the sayable and the unsayable until the end of his philosophising. This meant being aware of and respecting the limits of language and, as a consequence, looking at it from an ethical point of view.

[22] *Culture and Value*, p. 24e: "I think I summed up my attitude to philosophy when I said: philosophy ought really to be written only as a *poetic composition* […]."

[23] In his foreword to the *Philosophical Investigations* he refers to this change in his way of thinking. Looking backward, he notes: "Two years ago I had occasion to re-read my first book (the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*) and to explain its ideas to someone. It suddenly seemed to me that I should publish those old thoughts and the new ones together: that the latter could be seen in the right light only by contrast with and against the background of my old way of thinking. For since beginning to occupy myself with philosophy again, sixteen years ago, I have been forced to recognise grave mistakes in what I wrote in that first book […]."

Lecture on Ethics

Wittgenstein gave his lecture on ethics at the beginnings of this new phase in his philosophising. It is one of his texts that show in particular the close connection between his personal life and his philosophising, especially his way of thinking on ethics, religion and aesthetics. The Lecture is also one of the rare texts Wittgenstein wrote himself for an oral confrontation with a live audience. This is to say, there exist some notes for other lectures, such as those for 'Private Experience', for 'Sense Data', or his notes for the 'Philosophical Lecture', but those notes were written for a philosophical audience, thus for a restricted and elevated group of people,[24] whereas the Lecture on Ethics was conceived for a broader audience.

As a consequence, Wittgenstein's choice of words—his language in the Lecture—differs strongly from that of his philosophical manuscripts and also from his personal diaries. By means of a narrative tone in his Lecture he tries to present philosophical problems of ethics by vivid examples taken from his personal experience. As he later said to members of the Vienna Circle, it was important to step forth as an individual and to speak at the end in the first person.[25] In his conviction that one cannot establish any theory of ethics, he attempts at conveying his great concern—ethics—hermeneutically by the use of examples, by applying ordinary language which he thought crucial for showing problems to others. This was only possible by presenting his personal situation frankly. Wittgenstein confronts the audience as a human being and confesses so-to-speak one of his main personal and philosophical dilemmas—his awareness of the limits of language.

Problems of ethics are treated in connection with problems of language, i.e. with our incorrect use of it, our misuse of words. In order to illuminate these problems, Wittgenstein refers to examples from everyday life and to similes with the purpose of addressing his audience in a direct way. In his search for an answer to the question of what constitutes ethics, he mentions three examples of his personal experience in which he

[24] Besides, most of the texts concerning his lectures—such as those on aesthetics, psychology and religious belief—have been made available to us only via his audience or students. The same applies to the notes about his discussions with members of the Vienna Circle which are known to us merely from the notes taken by Friedrich Waismann.

[25] *Ludwig Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle*, p. 117.

had the feeling of what ethics and absolute value might be. These were the experience of wonder at the existence of the world, the feeling of absolute safety in God and the feeling of guilt. He declares the feeling of wonder as his 'experience par excellence' for the understanding of the ethical.

Wittgenstein's description of the experience of absolute safety goes back to the impression a play by Ludwig Anzengruber had made upon him when he was about 21 years old. In this play, "Die Kreuzelschreiber," the protagonist had a mystical experience in the surroundings of nature, a feeling of absolute safety in the hands of God. Wittgenstein had been deeply touched by this play. For the first time in his life he realised the importance of religion, as he later reported to Norman Malcolm.[26] The feeling of absolute safety in God is also related to the two other examples Wittgenstein gives in his lecture: to the feeling of guilt insofar as expressing man's abandonment at God's mercy, and to the experience of wonder at the existence of the world as bearing a mystical attitude toward the world as God's creation. Both the experience of absolute safety and that of wonder at the existence of the world suggest the positive aspect in Wittgenstein's religious belief—his feelings of confidence, safety and worship in view of God. The feeling of guilt, on the other hand, seems to originate in Wittgenstein's conviction of God as a fearful judge.[27]

In the feeling of absolute safety—"whatever happens"—the word 'safety' is used in an entirely different sense than it is used in everyday language, where it can occur in contexts subject to relativity in interpretation. By the experience of absolute safety, though, the absolute or ethical meaning of the word 'safe' reveals its nonsensical character. In normal speech it would be nonsense to say that one feels safe no matter what happens. Here we come to the border between 'meaningful' and 'nonsensical' expressions, to the border between the sayable and the unsayable or ethical: beyond this border any attempt at expression

[26] Malcolm, Norman. *Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Memoir.* Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1984, p. 58f.

[27] Cp. also G. H. von Wright, who describes Wittgenstein's notion of God as that of a "fearful judge," von Wright, G. H. *Wittgenstein*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell. 1982, p. 32.

Paul Engelmann, too, remembers that Wittgenstein often talked about the "Great Judgement." As a consequence, throughout his lifetime, Wittgenstein tortured himself with self-reproaches rooted in feelings of guilt for not satisfying God's orders. Wittgenstein, Ludwig and Paul Engelmann. *Briefe, Begegnungen, Erinnerungen.* Edited by Ilse Somavilla in collaboration with Brian McGuinness. Innsbruck: Haymon, 2006, p. 97.

is nonsensical. Not nonsensical, however, Wittgenstein emphasises, because we cannot find the correct expression, but because the nonsensical is essential to all ethical and religious expressions. The same applies to the experience of wonder: If we say "I wonder at the existence of the world", this is a different kind of wonder than the wonder at something extraordinary, something sensational that—in ordinary language—would make us wonder. Here, too, the ethical meaning of the word 'wonder' lies in the nonsense involved in its use. Therefore we can conclude that the nature of ethics is displayed by the nonsense of all ethical and religious expressions put into language. These expressions differ sharply from all expressions referring to facts.

To say we wonder at the existence of the world proves nonsensical, as 'wondering' is normally used in connection with something extraordinary, as mentioned above. However, for the absolute or ethical meaning of the word 'wonder' it is decisive to wonder at something that among the majority of people and in everyday speech appears as something self-evident and nothing special to wonder about. To wonder at the existence of the world in an absolute sense requires a different kind of view than the normal one—i.e. a view similar to what Spinoza understands as the view *sub specie aeternitatis*—a view in the light of eternity and not in time. This view Wittgenstein regards as an ethical one. It lies on a different level than the kind of wonder that is understood in everyday language and which refers to facts. The view *sub specie aeternitatis* originates in a perception that might also be compared to what Thomas Aquinas describes as a kind of supernatural perception ("*non proprie humana, sed superhumana*"), as it transcends normal human capacity to perceive things:

> Consequently, although the knowledge proper to the human soul takes place through the process of reasoning, nevertheless, it participates to some extent in that simple knowledge which exists in higher substances, and because of which they are said to have intellective power. This is in keeping with the rule which Dionysius gives, that divine wisdom, "always joins the limits of higher things to the beginnings of the lower things". [*De divinis nominibus*, VII] This is to say that the lower nature at its highest point reaches something of that which is lowest in the higher nature.[28]

[28] St. Thomas Aquinas. *Disputed Questions on Truth.* Translated from the definitive Leonine text by Robert W. Mulligan, S.J. Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1952, Q 15 A 1/Vol. 2, p. 273.

The fact that for the understanding of ethics Wittgenstein has chosen as examples the experience of wonder, safety and guilt, illuminates how important these aspects must have been to him, as they seem to have taken him closer to an understanding of ethics and ethical values. Others might have chosen other examples, yet for Wittgenstein these three were decisive. They seem to have touched him in his very being to an extent that what had been dark or mysterious about ethics before, suddenly became clearer to him, somehow lightened and became transparent.

It is only by seeing the things independent of time and space, by facing the limits of science and culture that one might come closer to realize something beyond—something like a light surpassing everything else: the "pure, untinted light," as Wittgenstein had put it in a letter-fragment to his sister Hermine, a few years before his lecture on ethics.[29] This 'light' Wittgenstein identifies with 'spirit' and 'religiosity'—aspects that for him are dependent on each other; they are used as synonymous expressions, both represented by the metaphor of light. The majority of people, Wittgenstein complains, remain captured in their culture and don't surpass its limits in order to realize the importance of religion which he esteems decisive for seeing the world right.

Similarly to Spinoza, who in his ethics writes about how the view *sub specie aeternitatis* finally leads to the knowledge of God, Wittgenstein, in his attitude of wonder, became aware of the ethical which at that time he tended to put on the same level as the divine. In this sense his thoughts on ethics and religion of the thirties might be seen as a continuation of the early *Notebooks*[30] and of the *Tractatus* where he spoke of God as lying outside the world of facts and thus outside the limits of language.[31] The aspect of wonder at the existence of the world is especially revealed in a section of the *Tractatus*: "It is not *how* things are in the world that is mystical, but *that* it exists" (6.44).

[29] Somavilla, Ilse (ed.), *Ludwig Wittgenstein. Licht und Schatten. Ein nächtliches (Traum-)Erlebnis und ein Brief-Fragment*. Innsbruck: Haymon, 2004.

[30] This does not apply to the whole of his early notebooks: at the beginning he tends to see God in a panentheistic view, identifying him with the will, which, like the will of Schopenhauer's philosophy, is immanent and transcendent.

[31] Even if in the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein speaks of the sense of the world as lying outside the word, this can also be applied to God, whom in the *Notebooks* he identifies with the sense of the world. Besides, he explicitly states that God does not himself reveal in the world, which suggests that he is to be seen outside the world, see *Tractatus* 6.41 and 6.432.

Looking at Wittgenstein's manuscripts, the three aspects mentioned in his Lecture, can be discerned like red threads going through his writings. Not only his personal life, but also his philosophising seems to be carried by an attitude of wonder, feelings of guilt and a search for safety, for certainty. These aspects are not only expressions of ethics, but are directly connected with God, which hints at the meaning religion held for Wittgenstein. Thus, on the one hand, we have the connection between ethics and religion, on the other, as mentioned before, the connection between ethics and aesthetics. To that extent the lecture seems to confirm Wittgenstein's remark 'Ethics and Aesthetics are One,' by illustrating the importance of an ethical dimension in language, precisely with regard to the so-called 'higher sphere'. The decisive point concerning all three examples is the aspect of nonsense that is revealed by trying to express what can only be shown. This ultimately leads to silence, as indicated as early as in the *Tractatus.*

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Verbarium
Associazione culturale Michele Ranchetti
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Verbarium

Il carattere distintivo di questi libri non è l'appartenenza a una disciplina o a un genere letterario ma un nesso invisibile eppure presente che si può ascrivere ad una loro nesessità primaria: come l'acqua che un amico porta ogni giorno allo stilita.

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