

The Criticism of Solipsism by Wittgenstein in the *Logisch-philosophische Abhandlung*

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This article presents a study of the criticism of solipsism by Wittgenstein in and with the *Tractatus*. Etymologically, solipsism consists in the supposition that a person can attempt affirming the identity of the *only* reality there would be, with the *only* person there would be. Could such supposition be realized, then solipsism, and eventually “a private language”, could be construed, claimed, and argued for (as supposed Hacker, according to whom the *Tractatus* consists in a transcendental defense of solipsism, 1986), or against (as Diamond argued, 1981). To elucidate a way to elucidate this controversy, I argue that with the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein rendered *seeable* not only that a proof of the existence of other minds does not exist and is superfluous, but also, that such proof could not have existed and lacked, and is, to this extent, unrestrictively *inconceivable*.

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1. The issue of solipsism

How to understand in what does solipsism, as understood by Wittgenstein, consists ? And how to understand the criticism made by Wittgenstein of solipsism in the *Tractatus* ? This article¹ answers these two questions by bringing out and unfolding the conceptual difficulties that belong to the philosophical tradition that Wittgenstein criticizes and then proposing a resolute reading of the section of the *Tractatus* dedicated to solipsism, against the background of central debates in researches dedicated to the works of Wittgenstein, and peculiarly to his early works. In that, this article seeks to achieve a deepening both of our historical and philosophical understandings of the problematic of solipsism at the beginning of the XXth century, and of Wittgenstein's radical contribution to the philosophical criticisms of solipsism.²

Solipsism, etymologically understood, consists in the idea that it could be the case that someone could be the only one there could be. As such an idea would engage that some of us are persons while some others are not, it is as easy to understand that such a claim is, in one way or another, to criticize, as difficult to understand that such an idea has been produced at all and that the task has been assumed in philosophy to carry out its criticism. Yet, the idea of which solipsism would imply the truthfulness, if it could ultimately be an idea, supposes a contrast between a person who is one and others who are not persons. We thus can realize that the real problem involved by solipsism is the problem of the negation of the reality of the existence of others involved by conceptions, actions and practices. The philosophical problem that we thus owe to ourselves to address is accordingly the question of the intelligibility of solipsism: is solipsism intelligible? And if this problem is one that we owe to ourselves to address, it is that effectively, as we can unproblematically and truthfully think that some persons do not exist, it can seem *required* to have previously thought that it is not impossible that no one else exists. But is it the case that in order to think that some persons do not exist, we should have thought that it is not impossible that no one else exists? Wittgenstein proposes

1 I would like to thank Donald Cornell for his help on earlier versions of this article.

2 Thereby, this article presents an elucidation of the superfluity and misleadingness of meliorative conceptions of solipsism to understand and account for Wittgenstein's criticism of solipsism with the *Tractatus*. Indeed, *secondary* attributions of solipsism, and peculiarly attributions according to which solipsism could somehow turn or have turned out desirable (as when Christine Ladd Franklin attributed solipsism to herself in a letter she wrote to Bertrand Russell (See Klagge 2022: 217), or as when John Niemeyer Findlay attributed (practical) solipsism to Wittgenstein (See Klagge 2022: 218), or, to provide a relatively external example, as when Fruteau de Laelos attributes to Sartre solipsism (See Fruteau de Laelos 2023: 14), by claiming that Deleuze inherited from Sartre the solipsism he – Deleuze – explicitly claimed to be, in a sense, *necessary* to a thinker (Deleuze 1993: 361)), such attributions tend to obfuscate the debates and advances made by philosophical researches dedicated to solipsism. Such attributions are indeed secondary with respect to the criticisms made by philosophers (as notably Wittgenstein, but also as Sartre) of solipsism. Attempting to pose and understand the problem posed by solipsism on the basis of such secondary ascription unfortunately cannot be lead to misunderstand and misconstrue both the way in which this problem historically presented itself to, and the way in which this problem was addressed by Wittgenstein.

with and since the *Tractatus* a philosophical dissolution of this problem by rendering visible that the requirement of a proof that the idea of solipsism thusly conceived seems to make weigh on philosophy is not only superfluous, but also, necessarily misleading, that such proof is strictly speaking *inconceivable*, that there is no such proof and that there could not be such proof.

A first remark that we can make when we consider, if it is one, the idea of solipsism, is that its formulation strictly implies that a language, whose very existence is not compatible with the truth of the formulated idea, is available to us. If, at least one language is available to us, then other persons than the one who supposes the eventuality of the truth of solipsism exist. But then, it is not the case that solipsism is truthful, as it is not the case that a person is the only one there could be. But if – at least one – language is available to us, and that someone can at least *suppose* thusly using such language, it can seem to be the case that exists a person who could be the only there could be, that is to say, that there would exist only one person.

2. The historical and philosophical background of the problem of solipsism in the *Tractatus*

Is it the case that someone can isolate oneself by one's uses of language is involved by *language*? A historically central aspect to address the problem of solipsism in its form and formulation which is its own in the *Tractatus*, is that this problem rises from a model of analysis in terms of subject and predicate. According to such model, we can distinguish in all our propositions and all our thoughts, the subject, that is to say, *that about* we say, from the predicate, *that we say* about³. This model of analysis, peculiarly developed by Kant (2007: 48, A 6-7, B 10-11), is philosophically and historically very important and robust in many respects, for this model suffices to determine as much *if* we learn or clarify, as *that* we learn or clarify, when we exercise our judgment by a proposition, a statement, or sentence, in the grammatical sense. Retrospectively, the elaboration of such model can seem to be grounded upon a too simple model of language according to which language could be in principle reducible to a totality of propositions; and thus, would be assimilable to a totality of elements that necessarily are either true or false. For, it is not the case that all the parts of language consist in elements which are either true or false, as testify some of our linguistic uses, as exclamations, orders, promises, and bets. But this reducibility was, to an extent, involved by the elaboration of a model of analysis which had to render possible the delineation, if there could be any, of the totality of the a priori groundings of knowledge, implicitly contained in the understanding. The criticism of solipsism in the *Tractatus* should first be understood on this background⁴.

The requirement that underlies the production and the refinement by Kant of this model of analysis to delineate the a priori groundings of knowledge, is indeed as much a certain way to think skepticism as one to think the way in which philosophy *should* respond to skepticism. Against the would-be skeptical threat according to which we could be wrong even in optimal cases of perception, that it could be the case that we systematically delude ourselves about what is perceived

³ For a criticism of the traditional notion of subject in philosophy, see *Le complément du sujet* (Descombes 2018).

⁴ On this, see « *Universals* » (Ramsey 1925). As I shall attempt to show, Peter Sullivan is one of the philosophers who took the full measure of the criticism made by Wittgenstein of this model of analysis in the *Tractatus*.

by us, the traditional epistemological project opposes the production of a proof that can establish the falsity of the would-be skeptical threat. To achieve such proof, such project starts from the supposed fact of the necessity of a representational mediation. In this sense, the traditional epistemological project replicates an aspect of the skepticism it criticizes as this project wishes to preserve the *necessity* of a representational mediation of perception. To perceive, on reflexion, could and would amount to perceive *a representation* of which we could *guarantee* that it is a representation of what we perceive of the world, that is to say, strictly speaking, a representation *of* the world, to the exact extent as the world would unveil to us by the mediation of our senses. This conception, uninterrogated as such within the traditional epistemological project, and that can be called *representationalism*, can be defined as the conception according to which a perception necessarily implies the mediation by a representation. In a correlated way, the traditional epistemological project consists in the inchoate attempt to guarantee that our perceptions and representations are about the world, that strictly speaking, perceptions and representations *are* of the world.

A central difficulty posed by this approach, the one which traditional philosophy proposes in response to the (would-be) skeptical threat, is that in the absence of a philosophical guarantee, we could have been in the impossibility to make sure that we perceive whatever is perceived by us, for example, a chair, or a face, or a smile. And we could only make sure that a *representation* of a chair, of a face, of a smile is accessible to us. To some extent, such approach supposes the possibility of a confinement to our representations that we could have been in the impossibility to make cease. This difficulty, internal to the traditional epistemological project, especially matters as much to understand the difficulty in which solipsism consists as the recusal of its intelligibility by Wittgenstein with the *Tractatus*⁵.

One of the most refined versions of the traditional and philosophical representationalist reply to the would-be skeptical threat is the one that Schopenhauer presents in *The world as will and representation*. Schopenhauer there expresses one of the central difficulties generated by representationalism and resolved by Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus*. According to Schopenhauer, we *should* be able to differentiate between the objects of intuition and the body, between the representation that a person makes of one's own body and the other representations that a person makes to oneself. Schopenhauer writes after Descartes and Locke and not only grants but also endorses the notion of the knowing subject isolated by thought: if a unique knowing subject rendered available by thought to conscious beings did not exist, then knowledge could have remained ungrounded, face, peculiarly to the would-be skeptical threat. But once accepted the requirement of the acknowledgement of the existence of a unique knowing subject, an inverse difficulty rises, as we must have acknowledged that it is intelligible to be deprived of body *to* distinguish the knowing subject from the incarnated human person. This is explicit in the *Discourse of Method* (Descartes 2006: 28-29; 1973: 127-129, Fourth part, §§1-3): we should admit that we could feign not to have a body, to be situated nowhere, to show that it is absurd to consider that we do not exist while we think, as I cannot even feign that I do not think. A difficulty then rises from the unicity clause that should apply to the knowing subject. For it is unclear that a *unique* knowing subject could be common to several individual and incarnated human persons. The philosophical

5 To this extent, the approach of Wittgenstein with the *Tractatus* is nearest to the criticism of the traditional philosophical conception of solipsism also made by Sartre in *Being and Nothingness* (2003).

problem that is posed can be understood as the one of the *assurance* of the special character of the relation of the knowing subject to one's body:

Whereas in the first book we were reluctantly forced to declare our own body to be mere representation of the knowing subject, like all the other objects of this world of perception, it has now become clear to us that something in the consciousness of everyone distinguishes the representation of his own body from all others that are in other respects quite like it. This is that the body occurs in consciousness in quite another way, *toto genere* different, that is denoted by the word *will*. (Schopenhauer 1958: 103)

If we grant that the relation between a person and one's body is reducible to a relation between a person and a representation, then we can suppose that not only the internal relation between the notion of knowing subject and each of its instances, but also the internal relation between an individual and a specie could have been put at risk by the supposed skeptical threat in absence of an philosophical assurance. To resolve this difficulty, we should, according to Schopenhauer mark the radical difference between the representation that a person makes of one's body and the other representations a person makes to oneself:

It is just this double-knowledge of our own body which gives us information about that body itself, about its action and movement following on motives, as well as about its suffering through outside impressions, in a word, about what it is, not as representation, but as something over and above this, and hence what it is *in itself*. We do not have such immediate information about the nature, action, and suffering of any other real objects. (Schopenhauer 1958: 103).

The philosophical solution proposed by Schopenhauer in order to guarantee the special character of the relation of the knowing subject with one's body is to affirm that, contrarily to other objects of intuition, the knowledge that the knowing subject takes of one's body is double. The knowing subject not only represents to oneself one's body but also knows what one's body wants (by contrast with what one wants). Yet the solution proposed by Schopenhauer generates a new problem that – as I shall attempt to show – is resolved by Wittgenstein with the *Tractatus*. For, let us remark from the beginning that the question of individuation, the question of the way or ways in which an individual becomes one, is not entirely distinguished in this passage from the question of subsumption, the question of the way in which we determine that whatsoever counts as an instance of a concept. And the question posed by Schopenhauer is utterly disconcerting as it is equivalent with raising the question whether there is, and if it is the case, which is, the philosophical guarantee that we could know that our body is ours, that each person's body is one's own. The central stake of this question is, according to Schopenhauer, who agrees with Kant in this respect, that of "orientation" (Schopenhauer 2011: 103): how can "orientation" be thought⁶? How can we think our exercises of our capacities to situate ourselves? For, according to him, if nothing guarantees situation, if no philosophical explanation could guarantee either the special character of the relation between the knowing subject and one's body or the knowledge we take of our bodies, then it would become to us at least difficult, if not impossible, to think the fact that we can situate ourselves in space geographically, mathematically, and then, intellectually (if we recall the way in which Kant resolves this problem (2014: 7-9)). In order to situate oneself, the knowing subject should have to choose between two mutually incompatible hypotheses: either the representation that a person

⁶ By "orientation" was strictly, and is sometimes still meant, our capacities to situate ourselves relatively to one cardinal direction, the East. To this extent, at stake in the reflexions of Kant and Schopenhauer are our conceptualizations of our capacities to situate ourselves, with available means, provided some place of arrival.

makes to oneself of one's body is distinct from others due to the fact that it is the only one known by the person under a double relation, as representation and as will, and that is the solution proposed by Schopenhauer. Or the representation that someone makes to oneself of one's body is distinct due to the fact of an essential difference of the object of this representation. This object would be the only one that would both be will and representation and the others would only be "mere representations", "mere phantoms" (Schopenhauer 2011: 104), that is to say, spirits or souls deprived of bodies, condemned to wander (and supposedly by contrast with "phantoms"). But if anyone, thusly conceived as an instance of the knowing subject should admit the truth of this hypothesis, then that one should also admit that one's body should be the only real individual of the world, the only phenomenon of will, the only immediate object of the subject. That is to say, someone should admit that etymologically understood solipsism is true. Thus Schopenhauer rejects solipsism that he characterizes as theoretical egoism. Let's recall, to explain the criticism made of solipsism by Wittgenstein, four aspects of the rejection of theoretical egoism by Schopenhauer:

- (1) the problem of the reality of the external world would be identical with the question of the existence of others.
- (2) that we can resent the need to refute theoretical egoism comes from its assimilation to skepticism.
- (3) the refutation of theoretical egoism by means of a proof is impossible.
- (4) the subject consists in a limit common to individuals involved in the struggle for the totality of knowledge.

Let's consider each of these aspects:

(1) The problem posed by Schopenhauer, it is that one should account for the very possibility of the incarnation of the individual, as accounting for incarnation would authorize us to acknowledge that we are members of one single and same specie. To this extent, Schopenhauer's thought according to which the problem of the reality of the external world would be equivalent with the question of the existence of others is very *apropos*. However, both the representationalism that underlies the approach he argues for and the excluding idea of humanity as it is involved by such pseudo-thought is misleading.

(2) According to Schopenhauer, if we resent the need to refute theoretical egoism, that is to say to establish the falsity of theoretical egoism, it is that we assimilate it to skepticism. The advance, the progress realized by Schopenhauer is that he criticizes the possibility of refuting theoretical egoism. The idea that we have to establish that theoretical egoism is false is one that we owe to ourselves to criticize.

(3) We cannot refute theoretical egoism. Strictly speaking, according to Schopenhauer, the production of such proof is *impossible* to us. This point, we shall see, is quite important to understand the ways in which Wittgenstein's approach, but also the ones of Sartre and other philosophers are innovative. For the affirmation of the impossibility of the production of a proof by means of which we could refute, that is to say, establish the falsity of theoretical egoism, implies not only the conceivability of such proof, but also the relevance of its would-be nonexistence. Each person should thus unavoidably have to choose between one of the two mutually incompatible

hypotheses we previously considered. And it would thus be *without* such proof that we should have owed to ourselves to *choose* the answer that we would find to be just.

(4) The knowing subject would be to be understood as a limit common to individuals involved in a war for the totality of knowledge and which would emerge as a counterpart of this war. And we could understand this war on the basis of an analogy: the visual field would be to the eye what knowledge would be to spirit or consciousness, a space to conquer.

Thus in this section we have proposed an account of the philosophical background against which Wittgenstein addresses the problem of solipsism in and with the *Tractatus*, independently from supplementary historical considerations concerning the origin of the notion of solipsism and of the first approaches of this problem by Wittgenstein in the 1914-1916 notebooks (Wittgenstein 2005)⁷. We thus owe to ourselves to provide a reading of the manner in which *in* and *with* the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein proposes a philosophical resolution of this problem which, strictly speaking, consists in a dissolution of this problem, that is to say, in the establishment that this problem could not have been a problem at all. To realize this, we shall first consider a central debate concerning this problem in contemporary approaches of the *Tractatus*. The consideration of this debate matters to understand the way in which the *Tractatus* proposes a dissolution of this problem, a problem that is eminent, as its stake is nothing less than our idea of humanity, our humanities, our humanity, considered dependently and independently of relations of members of this specie with the members of others species, supposedly put at risk by the stumbling block in which representationalism consists.

3. A debate concerning the supposed ineffabilism of the *Tractatus*

To study Wittgenstein's criticism of solipsism with the *Tractatus*, we thus owe to ourselves to address the question whether Wittgenstein has claimed solipsism in this work or whether he could have argued in favor of solipsism in this work. Did Wittgenstein defend solipsism? To answer such question involves that we distinguish between solipsism and its core of truth, distinction involved by the beginning of the following section:

Diese Bemerkung gibt den Schlüssel zur Entscheidung der Frage, inwieweit der Solipsismus eine Wahrheit ist. Was der Solipsismus nämlich *meint*, ist ganz richtig, nur lässt es sich nicht *sagen*, sondern es zeigt sich. Dass die Welt *meine* Welt ist, das zeigt sich darin, dass die Grenzen *der* Sprache (der Sprache, die allein ich verstehe) die Grenzen *meiner* Welt bedeuten. (TLP, 5.62)⁸

In this passage, by means of the question of the extent in which solipsism consists in a truth, Wittgenstein does invite us to distinguish solipsism from its core of truth. For we owe to ourselves to distinguish at least transitorily between the extent to which solipsism can eventually turn out to be true, and the truth of solipsism, if, ultimately we can pose the question to determine the extent in

⁷ For a reading of these passages in their relations to the *Tractatus*, see Sullivan (1996: 201) and Uçan (2016: 33–38).

⁸ “This remark provides the (*den*) key to the question, to what extent (*inwieweit*) solipsism is a truth. In fact what solipsism *means* is quite correct, only it cannot be said, but it shows itself (*zeigt sich*). That the world is *my* world, shows itself in, that the limits of language (the language which only I understand) mean the limits of my world.” (TLP: 5.62, Pears/McGuinness translation modified)

which solipsism consists, effectively, in a truth, or, at least if such a question ultimately could be one. In this sense, and against the background of the results of the previous section, we can realize that it is not the case that Wittgenstein had presented a defense of solipsism understood in its own terms, for the supposed distinction between a person who is not a person or the persons who are not persons, and a person who is a person or the persons who are persons, will not turn out to be *less* misleading than the supposed distinction between the truth that is not a truth or the truths that are not truths, and the truth that is a truth or the truths that are truths.

Thus, if to argue that solipsism contains and presents some core of truth could have been equivalent with arguing in favor of solipsism, with presenting a defense of solipsism, then we should affirm that Wittgenstein has presented with the *Tractatus* a defense of solipsism. But precisely, this is not the case, that is to say, arguing that solipsism contains and presents a core of truth is not equivalent with defending or presenting a defense of solipsism⁹. If a task to realize is invited by this interrogation about the extent to which solipsism is a truth, this task is thus critical inasmuch as it consists to appropriate transitorily the requirement of an evaluation, that of the extent in which solipsism is a truth.

We thus can bring out at least two reasons for which the section dedicated by Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus* is so important to understand the achievements realized in and with this work. First, inasmuch as according to the text, this section contains elements central to the understanding of the sense of the book and that Wittgenstein proposes to summarize right from its preface:

Vorwort – [...] Man könnte den ganzen Sinn des Buches etwa in die Worte fassen : Was sich überhaupt sagen lässt, lässt sich klar sagen ; und wovon man nicht reden kann, darüber muss man schweigen. (TLP: 5.62)¹⁰

This interrogation about the limits of the sayable, the expressible, the effable can be found at the heart of the section dedicated to solipsism:

[...] Was wir nicht denken können, das können wir nicht denken ; wir können also auch nicht sagen, was wir nicht denken können. (TLP: 5.61)¹¹

To the exact extent that (i) it is at the occasion of a reflexion about solipsism that the eventual reconception of the relations between the sayable, the expressible, the effable and the thinkable is to happen, and, (ii) that the sense of the book is to provide us with the occasion to realize that the clarity of the expression could not have been an obstacle to its realization, the critical evaluation of the truth of solipsism consists in a central step to the realization of the task to which the *Tractatus* invites us. In a correlated way, we can also understand that the interpretation of the section concerning solipsism has provoked numerous and important debates. One central debate in order to produce an interpretation of this section is the debate between ineffabilist readings of the *Tractatus*, defended for example by Peter Hacker and, at the beginning, by Gordon Baker and other readings. According to such interpretations Wittgenstein could have attempted to show that cannot be said, and, also that what could not be said would consist in truths, thoughts, expressions such that these

9 As did Hacker (1986: 134) and McGuinness (2002: 136). By contrast, the proposed reading does not imply a conception which makes of appropriation a relation that is external between a person, the world, and language.

10 “[...] The whole sense of the book might be summed up in the following words: what can be said at all can be said clearly, and what we cannot talk about we must pass over in silence.” (TLP: Preface, Pears/McGuinness translation)

11 “We cannot think what we cannot think; so what we cannot think we cannot *say* either.” (TLP: 5.61, Pears/McGuinness translation)

would be inherently ineffable, inexpressible, that is to say that we could not say these, express these true thoughts, even if we wish, and thus that we could suppose ourselves capable or incapable of trying. Other readings of the *Tractatus* defended and provided us with the means to realize that there is no such thing as a notion of truth, thought, expression that one could not say or express, and that this realization is one of the tasks, if not the central task that Wittgenstein provided us with means to achieve in and with the *Tractatus*. Among these interpretations, some are claimed to be *resolute* by their authors, as the ones inaugurated by Cora Diamond (1981) and James Conant (2002), while others are not claimed to be such by their authors, such as the one of Peter Sullivan (1996).

More precisely, and, inasmuch as with the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein proposes a reflexion concerning meaning in its relation to the notion of proposition, sentence in the grammatical sense, the interpretations which are not resolute and ineffabilist can be characterized as interpretations which suppose that we would have had to find the linguistic motives of nonsense. Or, that we should not only explain the origin but also distinguish sorts of nonsense that would result from violations of syntactical rules resulting from the linking of mutually incompatible semantical and propositional elements. By contrast, according to resolute readings, we do not have, we could not have had to grant that there is anything as such sorts of nonsense according to the *Tractatus*. That is to say, either what we talk about, what we say, what we express, is meaningful, or it is not the case that we speak, that we say, that we express. So that the disjunction between saying, speaking, expressing and not saying, not speaking, not expressing could not have been correlated to a disjunction between sense and non-sense; we do mark this disjunction, if any, quite *from* sense, without having or having had to oppose such disjunction to anything. Although a redundancy is involved by this formulation of our relations with the limits of sense, as it is written above that what we talk about, what we say, what we express is meaningful, as if we could have talked, said, expressed about what could have been deprived of sense, this redundancy is not problematic as it does not consist in the undue affirmation of an extension of our knowledges but in a reminder of an ordinary aspect of our relations to our knowledges. It is to the exact extent that the significance of some expressions of some of our knowledges is involved by our ordinary linguistic practices, by our uses, that we dedicate ourselves to these practices.

In this respect, the exegetical debate about the *Tractatus* that is entirely central to address the problem of solipsism is the debate between interpretations according to which the *Tractatus* consists in a defense of ineffabilism and the interpretations according to which it is, at best, not the case, rather than the debate between readings of the *Tractatus* which are resolute and those which are not. Among supposedly ineffable thoughts that ineffabilism would want itself to be able to indicate, that of solipsism could have had to present some paradigmatic aspect. Indeed the passages used by ineffabilist readers of the *Tractatus* that we peculiarly find in sections 6.4x, are after the section dedicated to solipsism, which is often invoked as a prelude to ineffabilism. And thus, we first owe to ourselves to produce an interpretation of the section of solipsism which both accounts for the distinction and the relative independence of this problem from other problems addressed and dissolved in the ulterior sections of the *Tractatus*, in order to bring out the advances made by Wittgenstein with the approach he proposes of solipsism. And that is also required inasmuch as, some of the philosophers who interpret the works of Wittgenstein agree about the criticism made by Wittgenstein of solipsism in and with the *Tractatus*, independently from their disagreements about

other questions, as the one whether we should make a resolute reading of the *Tractatus*. In this respect, we shall remark that Juliet Floyd who proposes one of the most resolute readings of the *Tractatus* (2006: 181), proposes an interpretation that agrees with that of Peter Sullivan (1996), who yet is often critical of the resolute readings of the *Tractatus*. According to both, one of the central philosophical stakes of the section on solipsism is the criticism that is made of the a priori, of the criticism of the recourse to the a priori in philosophy, and peculiarly, of traditional conceptions of the a priori. This stake is the one of the extent to which the traditional conception of philosophy, not as an activity of clarification, but as an activity of obtention of philosophical truths, generates or replicates partially the problem in which solipsism consists.

The importance of exegetical debate between interpretations of the *Tractatus* which are ineffabilist and those which are not ineffabilist matters to understand the radical novelty of the approach of Wittgenstein to solipsism against the background of the alternative that we would necessarily have to address if we want to situate ourselves according to Schopenhauer. For, let's recall that according to Schopenhauer, either we could have a double-knowledge of the body as representation or as will, or this representation that we have of the body is essentially different from others, due to its object. But, we can obviously object to such an affirmation that it can be made about the objects of any representation whatsoever. Such that the contrast involved by the alternative that Schopenhauer wanted to consider is not clear, or in any case, not as clear as he could have eventually wished it to be. The problem is thus simple: can we, and strictly speaking, could we have succeeded in thinking anything at all by means of such distinction? For, if that is the case, then in some sense we could succeed in thinking without contrast, without even the possibility of a clarification, we could have succeeded to think what we cannot think and say what we cannot say. But, is not it already to delude ourselves with respect to sense to suppose that we can thusly do¹²? It is about this question that the debates between the interpretations which are ineffabilist and the ones which are not ineffabilist happened and sometimes happen again.

4. Reading the section of the *Tractatus* about solipsism

Die Grenzen meiner Sprache bedeuten die Grenzen meiner Welt (TLP: 5.6)¹³

The affirmation, in 'the first person', of the identity of the limits of language and the limits of the world, may eventually seem surprising. It is indeed *unusual*, for and according to the philosophical tradition criticized by Wittgenstein to identify the elements of the *world* with the elements of *language*. What involves such conception of the internal relations of language with world is an *activity* of appropriation (by contrast with possession or ownership (Uçan 2023; 2016: 157-158)). Such affirmation calls into question, and could not have been compatible with, the conception according to which it could be the case that *ineluctably* language could not be in a conceivable agreement with the world, that the linguistic resources that are available to us are necessarily and inherently limited.

12 For an approach of this problem in the ulterior works of Wittgenstein see *L'illusion de sens* (Raïd 2006).

13 "The limits of my language mean the limits of my world". (TLP: 5.6, Pears/McGuinness translation)

Die Logik erfüllt die Welt ; die Grenzen der Welt sind auch ihre Grenzen. Wir können also in der Logik nicht sagen : Das und das gibt es in der Welt, jenes nicht. Das würde nämlich scheinbar voraussetzen, dass wir gewisse Möglichkeiten ausschließen, und dies kann nicht der Fall sein, da sonst die Logik über die Grenzen der Welt hinaus müsste ; wenn sie nämlich diese Grenzen auch von der anderen Seite betrachten könnte. Was wir nicht denken können, das können wir nicht denken ; wir können also auch nicht sagen, was wir nicht denken können. (TLP: 5.61)¹⁴

Wittgenstein proceeds to the philosophical dissolution of the restrictive conception of language by the criticism of the restrictive conception of the limits of logic and of the world that is critically brought expressed at 5.61. A restrictive conception of the limits of logic and of the world indeed implies that we could have *applied* the distinction of restrictive limits (boundaries) and nonrestrictive limits (limit) to the world thought as a whole. If the alleged applicability of this distinction to the world should be criticized, it is because the supposition that we can apply that distinction to the world implies that we *treat* the totality of the world that is formally exhaustive and unique as an empirical totality, that is to say as a totality that, although materially unique, is formally not exhaustive. To proceed to such clarification, that ultimately can be thought as a reconception of logical space, of the space of possibilities, *our* possibilities, what is required is to clarify that it is absurd to suppose excluding from a possibility that it consists in a possibility. That is to say, although we effectively can think and effectively think in some circumstances, in some contexts, that a possibility is excluded, it is in no sense obvious that we could have said *from a possibility* that it is *not*. *Saying* of a possibility that it is excluded could not have been equivalent with saying *of* a possibility that it is not, and, logic could not have been an instance supposed to hereabout legislate.

Diese Bemerkung gibt den Schlüssel zur Entscheidung der Frage, inwieweit der Solipsismus eine Wahrheit ist. Was der Solipsismus nämlich meint, ist ganz richtig, nur lässt es sich nicht sagen, sondern es zeigt sich. Dass die Welt meine Welt ist, das zeigt sich darin, dass die Grenzen der Sprache (der Sprache, die allein ich verstehe) die Grenzen meiner Welt bedeuten. (TLP: 5.62)¹⁵

Die Welt und das Leben sind Eins. (TLP: 5.621)¹⁶

Once this clarification is done, Wittgenstein raises the question of the extent to which solipsism is a truth. Let us recall that contextually, Wittgenstein, addresses the problem raised by the reducibility of the world to a representation (the presupposition of classical or traditional representationalisms, among which that of Schopenhauer, who have affirmed that it should be possible and thus intelligible). Wittgenstein has attempted to render visible that such presupposition is *senseless*.

“The world is my representation”: this is a truth valid with reference to every living and knowing being, although man alone can bring it into reflective, abstract consciousness. If he really does so, philosophical discernment has dawned on him. It then becomes clear and certain to him that he does not know a sun and an earth, but only an eye that sees a sun, a hand that feels an earth; that the world around him is there only as representation, in other words, only in reference to another thing, namely that which represents, and this is himself. If any truth can be expressed *a priori*, it is this; for it is the

14 “Logic pervades the world: the limits of the world are also its limits. So we cannot say in logic, ‘The world has this in it, and this, but not that’. For that would appear to presuppose that we were excluding certain possibilities, and this cannot be the case, since it would require that logic should go beyond the limits of the world; for only in that way could it view those limits from the other side as well. We cannot think what we cannot think; so what we cannot think we cannot say either.” (TLP: 5.61, Pears/McGuinness translation)

15 For the translation of 5.62, see footnote 7.

16 “The world and life are one.” (TLP: 5.621, Pears/McGuinness translation)

statement of that form of all possible and conceivable experience, a form that is more general than all others, than time, space, and causality, for all these presuppose it. (Schopenhauer 1958: 3).

Let us remark, from the beginning, that by contrast with the approach of Schopenhauer, Wittgenstein first affirms the impossibility of a certain *diction* and then the autonomy of a certain *showing*. According to classical or traditional representationalisms, representations could be and are to be conceived as private entities that guarantee the mediation with what the representations are of, and are contained in one and only mind that is also the only one to accede to these representations. Every attempt to affirm in “the first-person” the truth of solipsism, that the world is mine, that the world is that of a person, that the world is one’s, had to lead to a *failure*, that of the realization by a person to a *confinement* to one’s representations. Representationalism purported to sublimate this failure into some sort of achievement. If only to be coherent, representationalism required to presuppose the reducibility of the world to a representation. But this requirement of coherence had also in this case to be equivalent with the ratification of its own falsity, as the autonomy of the intelligibility of the world, of the visible, of the sensible, had at best to remain inaccessible and probably, illusory. During the writing of the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein was entirely conscious of this problem and invited us to realize to its full extent the *facticity* (the contingent necessity) of the sentence in the grammatical sense: “that the world is my world”. By means of this sentence in the grammatical sense, can be seen in the necessarily non-exclusive sense of the term, and thus, non-representationalist, that the world is mine, without this meaning that the world could not have been one’s, could not have been ours. Contrarily to the traditional approach, Wittgenstein does not presuppose that the relation or the relations of the individual, of the person, of the member, to the world is or are awaiting to be established or reestablished by the mediation of a totality of true statements, as not only Schopenhauer, but also Russell claimed (2009). His approach, as explained from the introduction of the *Tractatus*, is not doctrinal. The supposed transformation of the impossibility into restriction, or rather, the confusion of the impossibility with a restriction is realizable as such if we integrate that the intelligibility of the visible is *autonomous*, and peculiarly, that the proposition – the sentence, in the grammatical sense – as Wittgenstein let it be previously seen, is a fact.¹⁷ For, in 5.61 is not negated or affirmed that the activities in which saying and showing consist are indistinct. There is affirmed that in case it is assumed that what solipsism means can be said, one can recall that what solipsism wants to mean can be shown to be entirely correct by a showing.

The autonomy of what lets itself be seen by the proposition, the meaning or sense of the sentence in the grammatical sense, rendered clear earlier in the *Tractatus* by Wittgenstein, is a *fact*, manifest to us as such, and does suppose neither the truth nor the falsity of classical or traditional representationalism.

Intelligibility could not have had to be reconstituted, inasmuch as the inquiry and its conditions cannot be relevantly confused: enquiries involve the intelligible availability of their intelligible means. This autonomy, manifest to us as such, renders visible what shall turn out to be at best the *superfluity*, and at worst the *incoherence* of the classical or traditional representationalism that put a strain on philosophy. The affirmation in 5.62 of the internal character of the relation between life

17 On this, see “*Négation et totalité dans le Tractatus de Wittgenstein*” (Narboux 2009).

and word, of the mutual incorporation of life and world, its peaceful urgency, manifests the fact that some living beings think the world.

Ich bin meine Welt. (Der Mikrokosmos.) (TLP: 5.63)

Das denkende, vorstellende, Subjekt gibt es nicht. Wenn ich ein Buch schriebe „Die Welt, wie ich sie vorfand“, so wäre darin auch über meinen Leib zu berichten und zu sagen, welche Glieder meinem Willen unterstehen und welche nicht, etc., dies ist nämlich eine Methode, das Subjekt zu isolieren, oder vielmehr zu zeigen, dass es in einem wichtigen Sinne kein Subjekt gibt: Von ihm allein nämlich könnte in diesem Buche nicht die Rede sein. (TLP: 5.631)¹⁸

The affirmation of the autonomy of the world conceived as microcosm, thereby necessarily situated in a macrocosm to which the individual or person identifies oneself and that is presented by 5.63 is eventually surprising. That this affirmation can *at least* seem such is understandable if one supposes the eventuality of a tension between the unicity of the world and the unicity of the person who thinks the world. Let's recall that the eventuality of such tension was a central presupposition of the representationalism claimed by Schopenhauer. Wittgenstein resolves this problem by letting the possibility of its philosophical and liberatory dissolution be seen with this proposition, or sentence in the grammatical sense: neither the unicity of the person nor the unicity of the world could have had anyway been put into question by the fact of the uninformative “first-personal” affirmation of the internal relation between the world and the person. If it could have seemed that one should learn that one could have had the only person there could be, it is that *the supposition that the world which exists could have had to be the only one there could be to be a world at all, is misleading*. But if it is not the case that the world which exists has had to be the only which exists in order to be a world at all, it is no more the case that a person has had to be the only one there could be in order to be a person at all. In this respect, that the world (that a tradition has thought as macrocosm) exists and that one can be ours (what a tradition has thought as microcosms), that each person can be one's own in this world that exists, and that, in this sense, the unicities of the world (all that exists), of the person (the one who lives and thinks one's existence), of the relation (that of “to be in”) or of relations (the ones established by some of our actions) of the person are necessarily all compatible lets itself be realized if we wish¹⁹. Thus this affirmation, which seemed incongruous for classical representationalism prefigures a radical criticism and a rupture from the philosophies said to be that of “the subject”, that Wittgenstein realizes by the production of the negation of the existence of a (substantial) subject of the thought of the representation. Let's indeed recall a claim made by Kant and which inspired a whole intellectual tradition:

It must be possible for the I think to accompany all my representations (Kant 2007: 246; B 131)

Some of our uses testify that we distinguish some of our representations, that each can distinguish the representation that one makes to oneself from the representation that someone else makes to oneself. Does this amount to say that the unity of our representational activity presupposes the existence, or, at least, implies the requirement of the existence of a subject whose representational activity would underlie each of its exercises, even when these exercises are not thought as such by the person who dedicate oneself to making these? Should we have had to suppose that we can

¹⁸ “I am my world. (The microcosm.)” (TLP: 5.63, Pears/McGuinness translation)

“There is no such thing as the subject that think or entertains ideas.” (TLP: 5.631, Pears/McGuinness translation)

¹⁹ An ocean can effectively and equally be the one of a hermit crab, but could not have been one's property.

provide some guarantee that our representations *are* ours even when we do not think the fact that these representations are ours? That such requirement is, at best uncertain is rendered clear as soon as we think the fact that if each person does sometimes distinguish the representation made to oneself from the representation that another person made to oneself, each person does sometimes realize that the representation made to oneself is identical with the representation made to oneself by another person. However, according to the traditional and representationalist philosophical dispositive, this should be, strictly speaking, impossible. This problem is also entirely remarked, shown as such and criticized by Sartre in *Being and Nothingness*. For if it proves to be impossible that is impossible *that* which was thought to be possible, it is not that the world was not at the scale of our thought, but that our thought was not at the scale of the world. The criticism and the rupture made by Wittgenstein with respect to the tradition by the *production* of the negation of the existence of a (substantial) subject of the representation (by contrast with a grammatical notion of subject) is entirely peremptory as liberated from the supposed requirements that this tradition had internalized in its attempts to answer to skepticism. But that this negation is peremptory is not incompatible with, and on the contrary renders visible its significance: it was, and is, all the less simply possible to negate that there exists a subject of the thought of the representation, without supposing in any sense that this negation could have been equivalent with the denegation of the existence of anyone whatsoever. The fiction of the book *The world as I found it* suffices in this respect to criticize the intelligibility of a pre- or ante- linguistic development of the individual thought in its relation to the world or of the person who thinks one's relation to the world, as world. The idea of a method to isolate "the subject", to think the individual or the person independently from any previously established relation with the world is as misleading as the notion of the subject of the thought of the representation. Such a peremptory and radical negation, cannot but raise doubts with respect to what was meant by the philosophical tradition criticized by Wittgenstein and its uses of the notion of subject.

Das Subjekt gehört nicht zur Welt, sondern es ist eine Grenze der Welt. (TLP: 5.632)²⁰

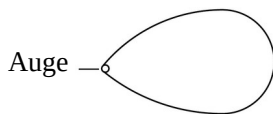
Wittgenstein invites us with this passage to the realization that the difficulty results before anything to the inchoative assimilation of the subject to a part of the world. The criticism of the conception of the subject as part of the world can seem surprising. Indeed, as the person conceived as microcosm *necessarily* is within a macrocosm, one can suppose that this conception is equivalent to the affirmation that the person or the microcosm as part *pertains* to the world. But, Wittgenstein brings out that the supposition of this equivalence is misleading, for the microcosm or the person, as the macrocosm or the world can be thought as a totality, as a whole, and even, should be thought as a totality, as a whole, if the microcosm can in some secondary or derivative sense, confusedly, supposedly be thought as a part of a whole. However, the establishment of the misleading character of the conception of the subject as a part of the world implies to be made against the background the production of an alternative to render manifest the misleading character of the earlier conception. Wittgenstein proposes an alternative conception of the subject as a limit of world which transitorily suffices to resolve this difficulty. The difficulty to which Wittgenstein provides us the means to address is the difficulty that is opposite to the one to which the means to address with respect to the world were previously provided: the very way in which it matters to account for the independence

²⁰ The subject does not belong to the world: rather, it is a limit of the world." (TLP: 5.632, Pears/McGuinness translation)

of the world with respect to the person who thinks the world, matters also to account for the independence of the person with respect to the person who thinks oneself in one's relation to the world. In other words, to think that the perceived, whatever is perceived, could *not* have *resulted* from someone's perception is not sufficient, if thereby we do exclude that one can think the way or the ways in which the world is perceived by someone is dependent of the existence of that person *only*. On the contrary, it is to the exact extent that the fact that we can think *about* whatever is perceived by us implies strictly that whatever one perceives is perceptible by others, that we can as much realize that neither the world could have been reducible to our perceptions nor the person to the thought of the communicable or expressible character of one's perceptions. It might seem obvious, maybe too obvious, that necessarily contingently the fact that one perceives strictly implies that whatever is perceived of the world is perceived by at least one person whose nonexistence is not inconceivable. Yet the consideration of this triviality is not equivalent with and implies the fact that contingently necessarily whatever is perceived of the world is communicable or expressible, without anything such as a restriction to what can be communicated or expressed of the world by a person.

Wo in der Welt ist ein metaphysisches Subjekt zu merken? Du sagst, es verhält sich hier ganz wie mit Auge und Gesichtsfeld. Aber das Auge siehst du wirklich nicht. Und nichts a m Gesichtsfeld lässt darauf schließen, dass es von einem Auge gesehen wird. (TLP: 5.633)

Das Gesichtsfeld hat nämlich nicht etwa eine solche Form. (TLP: 6331)²¹



The superfluousness of the supposition of the necessity of the existence of a metaphysical subject conceived as a part of the world, in order to guarantee that our perceptions and representations *are* perceptions and representations *of* the world can thus be brought out: from the existence of the world we anyway could not have inferred the existence of “metaphysical subject”. Thereby, Wittgenstein brings out and criticize the role, the place, the play, and the function that an analogy with the visual field or space has in the background of the philosophical tradition that he criticizes. If one supposes that *must* exist a metaphysical subject that is a part of the world, as someone or an individual is visible, and that the fact that someone sees could not have implied that the person sees the totality of that could be seen, all that could be seen, the visible, it is that one supposes that the visual field or space is limited. Thus visual field or space would have, eventually restrictive, limits. The relation between the “world” and a “metaphysical subject” would be analogous to the relation between a “visual field” and an “eye”. The metaphysical subject would be part of the world as the eye would be part of the world. However, and this is a stake of this passage of the *Tractatus*, which presents a confrontation, a debate, this analogy does not present the significance that the philosophical tradition that Wittgenstein criticizes lent to it. Would we have had to proceed by the absurd, eventually by a *reductio*, we would have recalled that the significance of the use of this analogy would be necessarily dependent of the possibility for the eye to have been part of the visual

21 “Where *in* the world is a metaphysical subject to be found? You will say that this is exactly like the case of the eye and the visual field. But really you do not see the eye. And nothing in the visual field allows you to infer that it is seen by an eye.” (TLP: 5.633, Pears/McGuinness translation)

“For the form of the visual field is surely not like this.” (TLP: 5.6331, Pears/McGuinness translation).

field. For effectively, if that could have been the case, then we would have had also to grant that the visible exceeds itself. But Wittgenstein underlines that such could not have been the case. What is of philosophical importance for us at this stage, is to claim that we do not *see* the eye or the eyes by means of which we see. As except aberration, to affirm that we see a reflection or an image of the eye or the eyes is not equivalent with affirming or claiming that we *cannot* or *could not* see the eye or the eyes. To this extent, there is no such thing as an inference upon which the internalization of the requirement of the supposition of the existence of a metaphysical subject could be grounded. And more generally, Wittgenstein thusly criticizes the intelligibility of the confusion of the assimilation of visual perception to an inference or a reasoning. Obviously, such claim could not have involved that we do not think on the basis of, or *about* what we see. But the criticism of Wittgenstein renders clear, similarly to Sartre (2003: 245-256), that perception and reflexion could not have been mixed, could not have been indistinct. The supposition that allegedly could be made by us, as Mach assumed when he produced a drawing of the visual field or space (1959: 19) is equivalent with a misunderstanding about the internal relation between the person and one's visual space or field: no more than a person sees the visual space or field, the visual space or field is seen by someone. Sullivan formulates as follows the double difficulty generated and involved by the supposed schema of the visual field, which ultimately amounts to a single mistake:

There are two mistakes in Wittgenstein's drawing: it gives the eye a place; and it has a boundary. The simple-minded thought I've been trying to press is that these two are the same mistake. The same simple thought, translated in the terms of the current discussion, is that emptiness and formality go together. (Sullivan 1996: 211)

The criticism of the intelligibility of the role and the place that classical or traditional representationalism wished the analogy of "the metaphysical subject" with "the visual field" to have does leave intact neither traditional skepticism nor the traditional response that philosophers wanted to provide. It is the coextensive and supposedly corresponding reduplication or doubling of the space of thought and the visible space (and modalities taken into account, of sensible space) which is put into question by Wittgenstein, what he does as follows:

Das hängt damit zusammen, dass kein Teil unserer Erfahrung auch a priori ist. Alles, was wir sehen, könnte auch anders sein. Alles, was wir überhaupt beschreiben können, könnte auch anders sein. Es gibt keine Ordnung der Dinge a priori. (TLP: 5.634)²²

The stake of this passage is immense. It first presents a criticism of the intelligibility of the traditional project or conception of the a priori. It also presents an interrogation with respect to the felicity of the promises of a phenomenology, of the intelligibility or at least of the conditions in which the promises of a phenomenology would be realizable. This tension, as we know, runs through Wittgenstein's ulterior thoughts and attempts to envisage a phenomenology (on this see Baz 2018; Engelmann 2018). But this tension also runs through the phenomenologies elaborated in other traditions, peculiarly during the twentieth century (as in the ones of Husserl 1983, Sartre 2003, Merleau-Ponty 2012). What is certain, is that traditional conceptions of the a priori presupposed there could be a disconnexion of logical space, our possibilities, from sensible space, our perceptions, that could have implied the need for their reconnexion. But the eventuality of such

²² "This is connected with the fact that no part of our experience is at the same time *a priori*. Whatever we see could be other than it is. Whatever we can describe at all could be other than it is. There is no *a priori* order of things." (TLP: 5.634, Pears/McGuinness translation)

disconnexion followed by an ulterior reconnexion of what might have seemed two distinct spaces that not only could be disjoined, but also could be separated, criticized by phenomenologists²³, turns out at best to be untenable if not entirely incoherent and obscure to itself. The contingent existence of all that exists is not, and could not have been, in opposition to anything whatsoever.

By contrast and in opposition to readings which attribute solipsism as much to the work as to the author of the *Tractatus*, the use of the possessive adjective “our” lets be seen an aspect of the relations of persons and experience. Wittgenstein thereby renders clear that experience necessarily can be shared, that its significance is common. This passage is disconcerting in that traditional conceptions of the a priori and solipsism often reciprocally involve each other although not necessarily. That is to say solipsism does not strictly imply a conception of the a priori, and a conception of the a priori does not strictly imply solipsism. Yet, Floyd vigorously underlined that solipsism often provided to the a priori a refuge and diagnoses the solipsistic impulse and its criticism by Wittgenstein as follows:

The *Tractatus* is a deeply reflective rejection of the traditional *a priori*, every one of philosophy’s attempts to lay down necessary conditions for thinking and for speaking. But Wittgenstein does not pursue the self-undermining project of trying to frame *a priori* arguments against the possibility of *a priori* knowledge; thinking and understanding are not to be pinned down by any investigation of logic, meaning, or the world, even Wittgenstein’s own. His procedure in the *Tractatus* is thoroughly self-reflexive; he lays down no conditions on meaning or on reality. Nothing is more fundamental to his philosophy, early, middle and late. (...) Solipsism is one of the most persistent refuges of the *a priori*, a limiting attempt to impose a limit upon thinking and living. The impulse to metaphysical solipsism arises naturally from the surrender of traditional ideas of necessity and reason, including traditional ideas of logic as a necessary framework governing thought and reality. (...) The *Tractatus* depicts this as one route into solipsism, and the shows how this idea of a mental limit is just another way to see with a captive eye. (Floyd 1998: 81-82)

5.634 manifests that the negation of the existence of an a priori order of things leaves itself be seen as the means for the realization of the senselessness as much of the requirement as of the establishment of such an harmony. Peter Sullivan expresses this point as follows:

An a priori order would be an assurance of the harmony through which thinking genuinely engages with the world. But if the very notions of what it is for there to be a world – for logical space to be determined in such and such a way – and of what it is to think – to present a determination of logical space through its coordinates – are already intrinsically tied, then the need for any such assurance falls away. (Sullivan 1996: 211)

This notion of harmony, it matters to remark that it quasi-paradoxically consists in a supposition that is, after stoics, common as much to the philosophy of Leibniz as to the one of Hume. Leibniz indeed presupposes that one could in an incompletely unfoldable way *access* to the point of view of the complete unfolding (1991: 77), whereas Hume supposes that we are *deprived* from the access to such point of view (2006: 44). The fact that our representations *are* of the world could be guaranteed *only* by means of the hypothesis of a harmony between our ideas and representations and that *about* and *of* which our ideas and representations are. And this hypothesis could have consisted in a philosophical guarantee. But Kant had realized that this could not be the case, inasmuch as one supposes in both cases that some sort of overhanging point of view over the world could conceivably have been occupiable by us. And that in the impossibility of reaching such point of view, we would owe to ourselves to deduce the totality of our concepts to *establish* such

²³ On this see Uçan (2023: 400-401; 404-405).

harmony, to guarantee knowledge conceived as an extensible totality. This point matters peculiarly to think that although Kant's conception of the a priori can seem to us, and effectively retrospectively counts as an instance of a traditional conception of the a priori, it matters to consider that Kant himself proceeded to a criticism of traditional conceptions of the a priori, although his alternative conception of the a priori replicated parts of their difficulties, as it was meant to render possible to *ward* these *off*. For, as any attempt to guarantee that our representations are ours and of the world presuppose that these could have failed to be such representations, both the skeptical calling into question and its traditional philosophical response are criticized by Wittgenstein. The idea of a harmony between thought and world amounts to a fantasy, a chimera, a myth. Strictly speaking such a harmony could not have existed. But then, we can pose to ourselves the question whether anything as such as a *rest* is conceivable, what we can think of solipsism once its philosophical dissolution is achieved by Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus*.

Hier sieht man, dass der Solipsismus, streng durchgeführt, mit dem reinen Realismus zusammenfällt. Das Ich des Solipsismus schrumpft zum ausdehnungslosen Punkt zusammen, und es bleibt die ihm koordinierte Realität. (TLP: 5.64)

Es gibt also wirklich einen Sinn, in welchem in der Philosophie nicht psychologisch vom Ich die Rede sein kann. Das Ich tritt in die Philosophie dadurch ein, dass „die Welt meine Welt ist“. Das philosophische Ich ist nicht der Mensch, nicht der menschliche Körper, oder die menschliche Seele, von der die Psychologie handelt, sondern das metaphysische Subjekt, die Grenze – nicht ein Teil– der Welt. (TLP: 5.641)²⁴

While one could have expected for solipsism to turn out to consist in the negation of realism, the first consisting in the affirmation of the dependence of reality to a single person, and the second consisting in the affirmation of the independence of reality with respect to anyone, Wittgenstein renders visible that the rigorous unfolding of solipsism *coincides* with *pure* realism. That is to say, the supposedly rigorous unfolding of solipsism would consist in the inchoate attempt of claiming the identity of the only person and the only reality there would be on the basis of the affirmation of the necessity of the existence of a single reality; and we could supposedly comprehend this supposed point as, if *only* one reality *should* exist, then that reality should *contain* the only person there would be. And we can comprehend that to this supposed point reality remains coordinated in that if the *only* reality there would be *should* contain the only person there would be, then it supposedly could have had to be impossible for the only person there would be to differentiate oneself from the only reality there would be. As this could not have been possible, we can realize that the manner in which reality presents itself to a person is both singular and general. Singular, as we can think that reality presents itself to us, to each person, to each of us. And general, as we can think that whichever is the way in which reality presents itself to us, to each person, reality can be rendered intelligible to us, to each person, to each of us. What could have seemed strange, is that it is a single and same thing to affirm that reality presents itself to each and to every person. Does this

24 “Here it can be seen that solipsism, when its implications are followed out strictly, coincides with pure realism. The I (*das Ich*) of solipsism shrinks to a point without extension, and there remains the reality co-ordinated with it. Thus there really is a sense in which philosophy can talk of the I (*vom Ich*) in a non-psychological way.” (TLP: 5.64, Pears/McGuinness translation modified)

“What brings the I (*das Ich*) into philosophy is the fact that “the world is my world”. The philosophical I (*das philosophische Ich*) is not the human being, nor the human body, or the human soul, with which psychology deals, but rather the metaphysical subject, the limit of the world – not a part of it.” (TLP: 5.641, Pears/McGuinness translation modified)

amount to say that Wittgenstein abandons, or at least, could have abandoned the philosophy he criticized to desolation? Rather, Wittgenstein brought out that to conceive the way in which reality presents itself to us independently from the manner in which it presents itself to the person one is, is to philosophize.

Conclusion

With the criticism he made of solipsism, Wittgenstein realized several things at the same time. First, he criticized the intelligibility of representationalism, at least under its classical or traditional form. For, inasmuch as such conception purports to guarantee that our thoughts and representations are about the world, are *of* the world, representationalism generates the problem of the access of mind or consciousness to the world. Whenever we conceive the relation between mind or consciousness and the world in spatial terms, is raised the double-problem of the access and the success of the access of mind or consciousness to the world. As in such case, the supposed solution consisted in the other of the problem, its dissolution implied to bring it out its condensed. This condensed is nothing else than the requirement of the harmony of mind or consciousness and world, that Wittgenstein criticized, so as to think their relations: ultimately, we could not guarantee, and could not have guaranteed that our thoughts and representations are *about* the world. While such criticisms of such relatively classical or traditional philosophical stances could have made us uneasy, Wittgenstein's criticisms of such stances are liberatory as we can realize once read the *Tractatus* that some supposed requirements concerning thought, language, expression, could not be. The limits of language neither consist in nor could have consisted in restrictions.

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