In Defense of Sass: On Approaching Schizophrenia Through the Lens of Wittgensteinian Solipsism

by

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements

for the degree of Master of Arts

at

Dalhousie University
Halifax, Nova Scotia
December 2023

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Abstract

In this work, I defend Louis Sass's use of Wittgensteinian treatments of solipsism as the basis for an interpretive framework for schizophrenia. I first offer further evidence in support of Sass's project from the writings of Wittgenstein and from the autobiographical writings of the schizophrenic jurist Daniel Paul Schreber. I also argue for additional connections between Wittgensteinian solipsism and experiences characteristic of schizophrenia. In part two, I undertake a refutation of Rupert Read's critique of Sass's project. I argue that Read's appropriation of Peter Winch's philosophical writings in this critique is misguided, and that Winch's notion of extending one's own perspective towards a target culture aligns well with Sass's project. I then analyze Read's critique's use of the 'austere' interpretation of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*. I argue that the 'austere' interpretation itself is untenable, due to its dependence upon implicit equivocation. I conclude that even if this were not the case, however, the 'austere' account of Tractarian methodology should be understood as *aligning with*, rather than opposing, Sass's project – even as this project is portrayed my Read. In light of these considerations, I conclude that Read's critique of Sass fails.

List of Abbreviations Used

M	*Memoirs of my nervous illness,* Daniel P. Schreber, 2000/1903
MM	*Madness and Modernism: Insanity in the light of modern art, literature, and thought*, Louis A. Sass, 1992
PD	*The Paradoxes of Delusion: Wittgenstein, Schreber, and the schizophrenic mind*, Louis A. Sass, 1994
CV	*Culture and value: A selection from the posthumous remains,* Ludwig Wittgenstein, 1998/1977
BBB	*The Blue and Brown Books*, Ludwig Wittgenstein, 1998/1958
TLP	*Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Ludwig Wittgenstein, 1974/1921
NB	*Notebooks 1914-16*, Ludwig Wittgenstein, 1961
Z	*Zettel,* Ludwig Wittgenstein, 1998/1967

Acknowledgements

I owe a large debt of gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Michael Hymers, for his generous insights and guidance over many months. If I have attained anything approaching a 'perspicuous view' of the Tractarian landscape over the course of this work, it will only have been by standing on the shoulders of his expertise.

I would also like to thank Dr. Lynette Reid for her comments on the arguments found below, and for the insightful writing on the *Tractatus* which informed my thinking. I would also like to thank Dr. Letitia Meynell, whose support and advice facilitated my journey through the Dalhousie MA in Philosophy program. I am also extremely grateful to Dr. Steven Burns for his encouragement, and for allowing me to call on his formidable expertise. Finally, I would like to extend my gratitude to the Dalhousie Philosophy Department in its entirety, including not only the faculty and administrators but also the community of graduate and undergraduate students all of whom have been uncommonly generous and supportive.

Lastly, I would like to thank my wonderful and loving partner Uma, who has endured more talk of Wittgenstein and schizophrenia over the past year than anyone should have to put up with, and whose fortifying presence has been instrumental in my health, happiness, and sanity over the past years. I would also like to thank the rest of my wonderfully loving and supportive family, without whom I would be quite lost. In particular, I would like to thank my mom, the singularly kind and sage Adrienne, who nurtured my passion for philosophy, psychology, and much else that I love most in this world.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This text is concerned with defending the interpretive project found in Louis Sass's *The Paradoxes of Delusion* (1994). Part one attempts to explore and support Sass's use of Wittgensteinian discussions of solipsism to interpret certain experiences characteristic of schizophrenia. I will begin with a general overview, paying attention to the project's scope and intended application, followed by a closer analysis of Sass's comparison. This more detailed analysis will focus on two phenomena characteristic of schizophrenia, 'uncanny particularity' and 'phantom concreteness', which Sass describes and unpacks using his interpretive framework. Here, I will delve deeper into the conceptions of the subject and the self which arise in Wittgenstein's articulation of solipsism, using the problems and contradictions surrounding Wittgenstein's notion of the 'transcendental subject' to further ground Sass's discussion of 'uncanny particularity' and 'phantom concreteness' along with some other phenomena characteristic of schizophrenia. I will further unpack Wittgensteinian notions of a first-personal, 'phenomenal language', and connect these with Sass's remarks. I conclude part one by arguing that, regardless of the success of Sass's interpretive framework for schizophrenia, *The Paradoxes of Delusion* represents an invaluable demonstration of the *possibility* of understanding the lived-worlds of individuals with schizophrenia. I further argue that Sass's project is important in that it encourages us to view schizophrenic experiences as inherently relevant and valuable to society more generally.

Part two of this work concerns itself with the critiques of Sass's project forwarded by Rupert Read in the article, "On approaching schizophrenia through Wittgenstein" (2001). This section first discusses the Winchian wing of Read's critique of Sass. Here, I will unpack Read's view that Sass's effort to 'successfully interpret' schizophrenia amounts to the hermeneutical imposition of over-intellectualizing over-interpretation of something that is fundamentally incomprehensible.

I will then attempt to refute Read's Winchian critique on the basis that Winch's own methodology prohibits the kind of attributions of unintelligibility that Read seeks to make with regards to the 'severe' schizophrenic. Further, I will argue that the 'limiting notions' that Winch views as central to all life actually offer compelling reasons to believe that schizophrenia is indeed interpretable. Further, I conclude that this aspect of Winch's approach aligns well with the kind of exploration undertaken in Sass's work.

From here, I will move on to consider the second wing of Read's critique of Sass, which takes up elements from the 'austere' interpretation of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* to argue that, in fact, "*there can be no such thing as understanding schizophrenia*" (Read, 2001, p. 467; emphasis original). In order to understand this claim, I will undertake a detailed discussion of the 'austere' interpretation, including an exposition of what this interpretation takes itself to be reacting to, and how the interpretation formulates its own account of the *Tractatus*. This discussion will lead us through an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the 'austere' interpretation, exploring in detail the writings of the interpretation's two greatest proponents, Cora Diamond and James Conant. Here I will give an in-depth background on the exegetical writings on notions of nonsense and ineffability in the *Tractatus*; in particular, as these notions are dealt with by the 'austere' interpretation.

I will go on to argue that the 'austere' interpretation is problematic in that it bifurcates its language into 1) explicitly endorsed third-personal, objective (i.e., logical) definitions for its terms, and 2) implicitly relied upon associations of these same terms with phenomenal, experiential aspects characteristic of their use in ordinary language. I will argue that this bifurcation of language masks the 'austere' interpretation's reliance upon precisely the notions of ineffability that the interpretation claims to do away with. I will evidence this 'definitional bifurcation' reading of the 'austere' interpreters by appealing to the interpretation's use of the notion of 'illusion of sense' and the role

that the interpreters give to 'imagination'. This problem, among others, provides reasons to doubt that the 'austere' interpretation is a consistent or otherwise viable reading of the *Tractatus*, and raises further questions about what 'austere' interpreters really mean when they argue that, in the case of nonsense, there is nothing 'there' to understand – a point which Read depends upon in his adoption of the 'austere' critique.

I conclude part two by arguing that the second wing of Read's critique of Sass depends upon a misreading of the 'austere' interpretation. Read appears to believe that the 'nonsense'-speaker – in this case, the individual with schizophrenia – is unworthy of attempts at understanding or interpretation, "because there is in the end no thing there for us to understand, not even a 'world'" (Read, 2001, 469). However, as I will argue, the 'austere' interpretation's account of the *Tractatus* itself is entirely dependent on the possibility of 'imaginatively entering into the taking of nonsense for sense', and actively asserts the therapeutic value of performing such imaginative exercises to help those attracted to nonsense. Thus, as in the case of Winch, I will argue that the 'austere' interpretation aligns better to Sass's project in *The Paradoxes of Delusion* than to Read's critique of said project.

Chapter 2: Support for Sass's Interpretive Framework

2.1 Introduction

In *The Paradoxes of Delusion* (1994; *Paradoxes* hereafter), Sass uses excerpts from Wittgenstein's writings, and from the solipsism sections of the *Tractatus* in particular, to guide his interpretation of the self-reported experiences of various schizophrenic individuals, though he focuses primarily on those found in the book *Memoirs of My Nervous Illness* (1903/2000) by Daniel Paul Schreber. Sass notes that his project goes against the historically dominant mode of viewing schizophrenia as an inherently unintelligible illness (*PD,* p. 6). As he notes; "In this book I attempt to do what, according to Jaspers, cannot be done: to comprehend both empathetically and conceptually some of the most bizarre and mysterious symptoms of schizophrenia" (*PD*, p. 6). Stated in this way, this seems like a towering task indeed. Elsewhere, however, Sass identifies his goal more modestly:

> [M]y main purpose here is an eminently Wittgensteinian one: to unravel, with as much care and simplicity as the subject allows, the self-deluding involutions of the schizophrenic 'form of life' – *and thus to dissipate the atmosphere of unutterable mystery and profundity that surrounds such patients, often confusing them as much as those who seek to know them.* […] I must also underscore the phenomenological or hermeneutic nature of my task: *the goal is to understand rather than to explain*, and I am not concerned here with the important, but quite different, questions of the possible neurobiological underpinnings, etiological origins, or developmental precursors of this condition. (*PD,* pp. 9-10; emphasis mine)

Here, we get closer to the true ethos of Sass's text, hinted at most closely in his discussion of aiming for *understanding* rather than *explanation*: Taken in tandem with his goals to attempt to 'dissipate the atmosphere of unutterable mystery' surrounding schizophrenia, we can expose the humanitarian, rather than strictly academic, heart of the text. By working through a number of compelling examples, Sass attempts to show his reader that the schizophrenic experience is not so alien as we might be lead to believe. In his text, Sass places what he calls the 'lived-world' of the schizophrenic next to that of the philosopher, showing that the two are not so different; not so

alien. He thereby asks his readers to suspend disbelief and to consider the ways in which, as he writes, "[a] comparison of these two intractable domains – the thought of Wittgenstein and the phenomenology of the schizophrenic world – may allow each to illuminate the other" (*PD*, p. 13). In so doing, Sass's account seeks to reengage our desire to understand the phenomenology of the lived world(s) of schizophrenia[1] by showing us that understanding is indeed possible in these cases, and inviting us to engage in an attempt to understand. Sass engages us first in conceptual, philosophical analyses, through which it allows us to begin a kind of empathetic rapprochement with the experience of the schizophrenic: In granting us the possibility of connecting with such experiences, the text allows us to view these experiences as valuable and relevant to our own.

The sense of *understanding* Sass ultimately seeks to instill in his readers is not necessarily clinical, nor even philosophical; for, as Sass acknowledges, the philosophical practices exhibited in his account of schizophrenic experience fall short of consistency in much the same way that certain philosophical positions do (see Sass, 2003, p. 127). Neither is Sass attempting to develop a new diagnostic category, nor forward a new comprehensive analysis applicable to all manifestations of schizophrenia.[2] Rather, the understanding that *Paradoxes* drives at is *empathetic* in nature; for, if we believe that the experiences characteristic of schizophrenic lived worlds are relevant to us, psychologically or philosophically speaking, we will be more likely to want to understand and learn

[1] I use the term 'lived world(s)' to refer to the experiences of *each* person with schizophrenia, rather than attempting to subsume the totality of 'schizophrenic experience' under a single label. I am disinclined to view schizophrenia as denoting a singular experience, and the term attempts to bring to the readers' attention the vast array of human experience which the diagnostic category of 'schizophrenia' encompasses – even when considering only the experiences relevant to clinical interests. Further, it should be noted that any person diagnosed with schizophrenia (obviously) enjoys a vast plurality of experiences, presumably only some few of which are relevant to their diagnosis. Any reference which I make to 'schizophrenic experience' in this work should be taken to be similarly reflective of these complexities and caveats.

[2] One articulation of the goal of Sass's project does go against my narrative here. In his previous work, *Madness and Modernism*, Sass writes; "the thesis I am proposing is by no means a modest one. […] I would argue, in fact, that hyperreflexivity is a kind of master theme, able to subsume many specific aspects of schizophrenic consciousness and to organize our overall picture of the syndrome" (1992, p. 11). However, he does go on to say that his account is not meant to capture *all* aspects of the disorder, and that a variety of other symptoms of schizophrenia might, "best be approached from other standpoints" (p. 11).

from them. As Sass himself writes; "my main concern is not nosological or diagnostic in nature. I am primarily seeking a better understanding of particular forms of consciousness or modes of experience" (*PD*, p. 15).

Crucial to this process of understanding is the 'principle of charity', which Sass describes in a later paper as, "the assumption that (other things being equal) one should consider the perspective one is attempting to understand to be as rational and coherent as possible, and, indeed, that the finding of coherence actually functions as one criterion (not an absolute criterion, of course) that argues for the likely validity of one's interpretation" (2003, pp. 126-127). This means that *any* attempt to understand schizophrenia 'from the inside', so to speak, must assume axiomatically that the experience itself 'hangs together', cohering in such a way that it *means something* to the individual who experiences it. What Sass calls an 'assumption' I refer to as an 'axiom', because such a claim is not a plausible target for empirical study: It is only by *accepting* the truth of this axiom – the internal coherence of the schizophrenic worldview – that one can even formulate the question of commensurability with a schizophrenic lived world (i.e., we must assume that the lived world *exists* before we ask whether or not we can possibly *understand* it). I will spend a portion of section two of this work discussing this idea and its treatment in Read's (2001) critique of Sass, as well as in James Conant's "The Search for Logically Alien Thought" (1992); I will thus suspend further consideration of the point until then.

Sass notes that previous discussions of schizophrenia tend to characterize the condition according to the 'regression hypothesis', positing a return to childlike or otherwise 'primitive' modes of thinking accompanied by a lack of self-awareness. According to this hypothesis, such regressive states are typified by an underdeveloped sense of self, a difficulty discerning between fantasy and reality, and a diminished capacity for reflexive awareness (*PD,* p. 11). Contrary to such readings, Sass

sees in schizophrenia evidence of the opposite qualities, including trends of hyper-reflexivity in thought, a heightened preoccupation with notions of 'self' and 'world' (see *PD*, pp. 59-67), and a tendency towards 'meta-phenomenal' modes of experience ('meta-phenomenal' is my own term, denoting an attitude wherein experience is interpreted *as* experience, rather than as representative of an external world). In Sass's view, far from demonstrating a *lack* of rational capacities, schizophrenic experience tends toward a kind of *hyper*-rationality, unmoored from its usual grounding in practical, social traditions and habitual, everyday existence (see *PD*, pp. 12-13, 34-40, 116-117). Sass describes this as a "tendency to overvalue and reify abstract, contemplative thought and to lose contact with the true sources of wisdom that are to be found in a life of engagement and activity" (*PD*, p. 117); this possibility leads Sass to muse that, "schizophrenia may be less a Dionysian than an Apollonian, or perhaps a Socratic, illness: a matter of the mind's perverse triumph over the body, the emotions, and the external world" (*PD*, p. 117).

Sass's *Paradoxes* analyzes certain phenomena which he views as commonly encountered in autobiographical accounts of individuals diagnosed with schizophrenia (along with occasional accounts of these individuals' experiences given by doctors of schizophrenic patients). The text compares these experiences with various philosophical problems and themes which arise in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*, along with other of Wittgenstein's writings: In particular, it compares schizophrenic lived worlds with Wittgenstein's discussion of solipsism in the *Tractatus* and elsewhere. While a comprehensive overview of the points which Sass makes in connecting these two seemingly disparate domains (i.e., that of schizophrenic experience, and that of Wittgenstein's 'solipsist') is beyond the scope of this essay, I will discuss the more central axes of comparison which Sass brings out in his book in order to give a clearer picture of Sass's project. Where possible, I will also attempt to bolster Sass's interpretation using evidence drawn largely from the same sources which Sass

himself uses to construct his argument in *Paradoxes*– namely, various of Wittgenstein's writings, and Schreber's *Memoirs*, along with some of the accounts of schizophrenia supplied by Sass himself.

2.2 Phantom Concreteness and Uncanny Particularity

To illustrate Sass's method, we will explore two of the phenomena which Sass argues are characteristic of schizophrenic experience, and the connections he draws between these phenomena and Wittgenstein's reflections on solipsism. The first of these phenomena, what Sass calls 'phantom concreteness', refers to a tendency within the experience of some people with schizophrenia for certain mental phenomena to take on a quality of reality on a level with that of what we might ordinarily call the 'external world'. Sass describes this phenomenon as emerging from a tendency to reify sensations and experiences, resulting in a conflation of the phenomenal and the 'objective' external world. As Sass puts it, "[a]lthough these pseudo-entities are still, in one sense, mental and inner, they also come to have a certain felt externality, with the experiencing subject no longer dwelling in them but instead encountering them almost like independent objects" (*PD*, p. 91). These experiences can present real challenges for those who experience them, entailing new needs and difficulties in navigating a 'phantom-ly concrete'-kind of world; Sass finds examples of this in the *Memoirs*, wherein Schreber describes perceiving his eyelids to be operated by 'little men' who opened and closed his eyes using microscopic strings (see *PD*, p. 92). Regardless of the fact that, as Sass makes clear, these phenomena are rarely mistaken by their perceivers as *real* – at least in the sense in which we ordinarily talk of 'reality' – one can still imagine the way in which perceiving tiny men controlling the movements of one's eyelids would, at the very least, be rather discomfiting, if not disturbing to the point of inhibiting one's usual routines, etc.

The more illustrative and compelling example Sass gives of phantom concreteness lies in his discussion of Schreber's experience of 'nerves' and 'rays'. In *Memoirs*, Schreber (articulately) describes experiencing what he calls 'rays'; these Sass identifies as a kind of concretization of Schreber's own self-awareness. Schreber contrasts these with what he calls 'nerves', which Sass identifies with Schreber's sensory world – his more immediate, pre-reflexive thoughts and sensations – here taken as the objects of perception (by the rays; see pp. 125-128 for a particularly fascinating point in Sass's discussion of these phenomena). This transformation of the experience of self-awareness into an interplay of 'nerves' and 'rays', if that is indeed what is happening in Schreber's account, serves to demonstrate the ways in which the abstract world of schizophrenic experience is concretized, sharing qualities of externality or independence from the self more typically associated with the domain of 'objects' (though remaining differentiable from those objects, according to Sass; see *PD*, pp. 42-43).

Sass later turns his discussion to a second key experience characteristic of schizophrenia; a phenomenon which he dubs 'uncanny particularity'. In a lived mode characterized by uncanny particularity, Sass states that, "[w]hatever is perceived may seem tremendously specific and meaningful, but without the patient being able to explain why; unfamiliar events and objects may appear to be copies or repetitions of themselves" (*PD*, p. 97). One version of this manifests itself quite clearly in the *Memoirs*, in what Schreber calls 'the wasp miracle'. Schreber describes this experience in the following way: "These animals always appear on definite occasions and in definite order around me; … [therefore] they cannot possibly have existed before and only been driven into my company accidentally" (*Memoirs*, p. 186; quoted from *PD*, p. 99). Sass reproduces this quote in his analysis of 'uncanny particularity' to demonstrate the ways in which Schreber's attention is drawn to the 'wasp miracle' due, in some sense, to this experience appearing somehow to be *particular* to himself. The wasps arising, as phenomena within Schreber's experience, appear to demonstrate to

Schreber their having somehow arisen *for the purposes of* his experiencing them; thus, the uncanny particularity exemplified in the appearance of these insects appears to consist in Schreber's belief that they are being 'miracled up', somehow, for his sake.

A different, but perhaps related, dimension of 'uncanny particularity' is an attitude towards one's own perceptual sphere as demonstrating a special kind of significance – due, perhaps, to that percept standing in for, or somehow itself *meaning*, something else. Sass gives some examples of this kind of 'uncanny particularity':

> It may be that the people passing by on the street assume an uncanny aspect, as if there were something too precise, too 'just so' about them. Some aspect of the fact or demeanor of every passer-by may seem an example or instance *of* something. Individual people may seem reminiscent of someone already known – as if, in some uncanny way, they had exactly the same nose or mouth, or exactly the same way of clutching their coat. And yet the feeling cannot be described for there is no specific person of whom one is reminded. The feeling of familiarity, of 'just-so-ness,' has no reference outside itself; the passers-by are exemplary only of themselves. (*PD,* p. 100)

Sass relates this attitude to Wittgenstein's notes on the different meanings of the word 'particular', and the tendency to become confused between these different meanings. In the one sense, Wittgenstein argues, 'particular' can mean that there is a quality of further depth which has not yet been worked out, or not yet fully communicated, about an object or event (Sass cites *BBB*, pp. 158, 176 over the course of this discussion). Such a sense is communicated when I say, for example, the sentence, 'Her voice contained such a particular lilt that I was drawn to ask where she came from'; this statement implies that there is a deeper quality to this woman's voice which might be described further – 'her speech was characterised by softened vowels, and a tendency to emphasize the last words in a sentence', etc. In the above sense, then, the word 'particular' implies a further depth than the speaker is currently articulating.

There is, however, a further sense of 'particular' which Wittgenstein notes: a sense of the word in which there actually is no further detail to be remarked upon, but which merely points out the specificity of a percept or situation *to itself* – its uniqueness. In this sense, there is nothing (else) to which a percept is being compared when it is referred to as 'particular'; instead, it is its self-contained existence that is being noted as significant. This is the case, for example, when I take in 'this particular sunset', or when I hear 'that particular note'. In such examples, I am not trying to express that the sunset or the note contain qualities to which I have yet alluded; rather, these things are 'particular', like all other percepts, in that they are *unique*. As Sass describes of this notion of particularity, "[o]ne is, admittedly, in *some* particular position; the room does have *some* particular lighting – but neither the position nor the light is necessarily representative of anything other than itself. Neither the face whose expression one notices nor the bodily position nor the lighting is a token of a type more general than this particular instantiation itself" (*PD,* p. 103).

The first of these uses of 'particular', what Wittgenstein calls the 'transitive' use, holds implications for further speech: For example, it may mark a topic for further elaboration in future sentences, such as in the above case of the 'particular lilt' to the woman's voice. The latter usage is what Wittgenstein denotes as the 'intransitive' use, and primarily functions as a kind of emphasis in a statement rather than serving as a cue for further elaboration (see *BBB*, p. 158). Thus, 'this particular sunset,' is a locution which emphasizes *this* sunset – *this* sunset 'in particular', rather than any others; the effect is perhaps even more clear in statements like, 'this sunset is quite particular!'

Because *all* percepts are unique and capable of being emphasized as such, the second meaning of the word 'particular' is equally apt for any situation or percept; *every* sunset is particular, in the second sense. The confusing double-usage of the word 'particular' might, however, lead us to associate *uniqueness* with the existence of hidden depths as of yet unspoken, and infer such hidden

depths from the 'particularity' of a percept. In Sass's view, the 'hidden depths' which a 'particular' percept might be taken to represent in such a case can only refer to the percept's own 'particular' existence; the hidden depths *are* its uniqueness. Seeing percepts in this light is, according to Sass, "rather like comparing something with itself" (*PD,* p. 103); such a mode thus arbitrarily takes a percept to be in some way *signifying itself* (albeit ineffably).

Wittgenstein's treatment of 'particularity' can thus give us new tools in our understanding of this aspect of what Sass calls 'uncanny particularity', as it manifests itself in the experience of people living with schizophrenia. Sass holds a still more powerful comparative tool, however, to unpack what is happening in the case of the 'wasp miracle', and the feeling of special, private significance accompanying this aspect of the phenomena. In the next section, I will explore Wittgenstein's discussion of solipsism – which Sass calls 'quasi-solipsism', for its failure to commit itself totally to the (non)position or (non)perspective of a "solipsism, when its implications are followed out strictly" (*TLP* 5.64). This solipsistic, or 'quasi-solipsistic' worldview will prove key to understanding the confusions manifested in the phenomena of 'phantom concreteness' as well as the more complex aspects of 'uncanny particularity'.

2.3 Solipsism, Quasi-Solipsism

In the 5.6's of the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein discusses the ways in which a solipsistic perspective actually excludes what it purports to limit itself *to* – i.e., the 'experiencing subject', or the 'subject of experience'. This idea is most clearly put in *TLP* 5.631-5.633:

> 5.631 There is no such thing as the subject that thinks or entertains ideas.
>
> If I wrote a book called *The World as I found it*, I should have to include a report on my body, and should have to say which parts were subordinate to my will, and which were not, etc., this being a method of isolating the subject, or rather of showing that

> in an important sense there is no subject; for it alone could *not* be mentioned in that book. –
>
> 5.632 The subject does not belong to the world: rather, it is a limit of the world.
>
> 5.633 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* 5.631-5633; emphasis original)

Here, Wittgenstein is making the point that, despite the presence of an apparent locus of experience (which Wittgenstein compares with the eye and the visual field), within the world-as-representation there is no *experiencer;* no 'thinking, presenting subject'. If all that is permitted in a strictly experiential language – represented in the above quote by the book 'The world as I found it' – is talk of what presents itself *in* or *as* experience, then any 'I' in the sense of *that which experiences* would necessarily lie outside of the domain of what can be spoken of sensibly. At its most basic, this point merely comes down to the observation that the subject of experience is not something which is *itself* experienced, but (at best) is something merely implied by experience itself. (I write 'at best' because experience *need not* imply anything outside of itself: However, viewing experience through a *representational* framework does presuppose the bifurcation of 'subject' and 'object' *of* experience such that experience itself can no longer be thought of as 'total'.) This representational view of experience – and of 'world' in general – leads to Wittgenstein's preservation of the metaphysical 'I' as a transcendental 'limit of language' rather than his abandoning the concept entirely. As Stern puts it, "[i]f the exoteric doctrine of the *Tractatus* is that there is no such thing as the subject of experience, the esoteric doctrine is that there is" (1995, p. 77). Unfortunately, finer discussion of this point goes beyond the scope of this paper. For now it is enough to say that experience, in and of itself, can never contain the subject *of* experience; the 'thinking and presenting subject'. Another way to

articulate the nonexistence of the 'I' in a solipsistic framework is to note that, in thinking of meaning as consisting of representation (as the Tractarian Wittgenstein does; see *TLP*, 3.2s) we render impossible any meaningful representation of the subject; nothing can simultaneously be the *object represented* to the subject, and the *subject to which* the object is represented. Nothing can simultaneously play the role of subject *and* object in a representational relationship.

The discussion of the absence of the subject in the world of objects is concisely stated in remark 5.641 of the Tractatus:

> 5.641 Thus there really is a sense in which philosophy can talk about the self in a non-psychological way.
>
> What brings the self into philosophy is the fact that 'the world is my world'.
>
> The philosophical self is not the human being, not 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)

More explicitly still, in the *Notebooks* Wittgenstein writes:

> The I is not an object.
>
> I objectively confront every object. But not the I. (*NB*, p. 80e)

In these remarks, Wittgenstein makes clear that the metaphysical subject is not something to be discarded altogether; after all, the 'I' does in fact 'occur in philosophy'. Nevertheless, it remains untouchable within a framework of language as representation. It is, rather, "a presupposition of [the world's] existence" (*NB*, p. 79e).

My point in reproducing these comments is to show the immense difficulty associated with Wittgenstein's discussion of the 'I' – both as a presupposition of the world, and as something which cannot possibly be said to exist *within* the world. It is my view that the topic of the *metaphysical* 'I', the transcendental subject, represents one of the most fundamental difficulties found not only within

Wittgenstein's pre-Tractarian *Notebooks,* but in the *Tractatus* as well. This confusion manifests itself in the concurrence of Wittgenstein's centring the 'I' as the locus of experience, while maintaining that such a thing cannot be coherently asserted without falling into tautology of the form, 'my experience is my experience', or, 'I only experience *my* experiences'. As Sass succinctly puts this point:

> [Wittgenstein] points out that if the solipsist referred with absolute consistency and self-insight only to the experienced world – the 'visual room' or 'visual stove' are Wittgenstein's examples – such a person would have to recognize the emptiness of the claim that 'the world is my world'. […] Only because we imagine (mistakenly) that things might have been different – that the 'visual room,' that is, *my* visual room, might, like a physical room, *not* have belonged to me – is the tautology able to masquerade as a statement. (*PD*, p. 56)

Yet, in the *Tractatus* at least, it does seem as though Wittgenstein himself wants to say that such a position does bear truth: He wants to say that there *is*, in fact, a locus of experience that we want to call the 'subject', though this locus is not an object to be encountered in the world and thus we cannot 'say' it (i.e., cannot represent it in language). This point is presented in a remark in the *Notebooks*, which reads:

> The thinking subject is surely mere illusion. But the willing subject exists.
>
> If the will did not exist, neither would there be that centre of the world, which we call the I, and which is the bearer of ethics.
>
> What is good and evil is essentially the I, not the world.
>
> The I, the I is what is deeply mysterious! (*NB*, p. 80e)

The notes on the 'ethical' go beyond our purview in this paper: So too is the question of whether Wittgenstein would come, after the *Tractatus*, to work out a more internally consistent notion of the metaphysical subject and its relation to the idea of the 'locus of experience'. For Sass, however, it is not the *solution* to this problem that is of interest, but Wittgenstein's elucidation of the problem itself, and the way that this problem can manifest itself in thought and expression.

Sass writes of Wittgenstein's awareness of the strange nature of these problems, and the emptiness of what it is the solipsist wants to assert; assertions like, to use Sass's examples, "the center of the universe is *here,*" or "this room is *my* room" (*PD*, p. 56). He compares these statements to Wittgenstein's discussions of a person who, "tries to measure his own height not by using an independent reference system but by placing his hand on top of his head" (*PD*, p. 56; example taken from *PI*, §279), or "a man who thinks he can make an automobile move faster by pushing against its dashboard from within" (*PD*, p. 72; example drawn from *BBB*, p. 71). The problem in each of these cases mirrors that of the solipsist: Each of these actions represents the individual's confusion as to whether they stand inside or outside of the totality which they seek to describe/affect. The solipsist must simultaneously place themself *inside* the totality, if the totality is to be a totality at all; yet in attempting to illustrate something *about* this totality, the solipsist in some way assumes that they occupy a perspective *external* to the system. This is because such a description implies the existence of a possibility which the 'totality' excludes. The *knower* of such an excluded possibility would thus have knowledge *beyond the domain* of the so-called 'totality'. We might further explicate this notion with reference to remark 4.12 of the *Tractatus*:

> 4.12 Propositions can represent the whole of reality, but they cannot represent what they must have in common with reality in order to be able to represent it – logical form.
>
> In order to be able to represent logical form, we should have to be able to station ourselves with propositions somewhere outside logic, that is to say outside the world. (*TLP* 4.12; emphasis mine)

Any attempt to describe the totality of the 'world', just like any attempt to move a car by pushing its dashboard, is made from *within* said totality. To push the dashboard when sitting in the driver's seat merely changes the state of tension between the dashboard, the seat, etc. One's feet must instead find purchase on the ground *outside* of the automobile to push the car to move faster. Similarly, statements, if they are to be meaningful, must have traction through asserting *what is*, in

contrast to *what might be*. Efforts to instead postulate what *must be* (such as in the case of 'the room is *my* room') fail to assert a meaningful comparison; instead, such statements imply a contingency to what they simultaneously claim is necessarily the case (Stern, 1995, pp. 44-46). The grammar of such statements requires that the speaker delimit the realm of possibilities from a place *beyond* that realm of possibilities, thereby forcing any such position to collapse into paradox. In this way, no statement made from *within* a totality can qualify anything *about* that totality (as a whole, or in its entirety).

According to Sass, a characteristic symptom of many of those diagnosed with schizophrenia is the confusion between ordinary domains of the 'subjective' and 'objective'. This confusion can be stated in similar terms to the problems forwarded in Wittgenstein's articulation of the above tensions in the world of the solipsist – as equivocating between a stance which simultaneously takes itself to be internal *and* external to the world-as-representation. Sass describes the ways in which such confusion might lead Schreber, among others, to think of *his* world of experience as something 'objective'; carrying the weight of, and existing on a level with, what most people might consider the world of *shared* experience.[3] It is this confusion – this conflation of the 'subjective' and 'objective' – which Sass will go on to use as a lens through which to interpret 'phantom concreteness' and 'uncanny particularity'. Before turning to these phenomena, however, I will attempt to further unpack the relevance of Wittgenstein's work on the transcendental subject for Sass's discussion of Schreber's confusion between the 'subjective' and 'objective'.

[3] Note that the notion of 'objectivity' as denoting a realm of shared experience is problematically simplistic. For our purposes, it is enough to note that traditional conceptions of 'objective' versus 'subjective' have the former being a public domain, while the latter denotes something private to the individual experiencer (*their* experience).

2.4 Paradox in the Quasi-Solipsistic World

Sass writes of Schreber's confusion between subjective and objective worlds, that:

> […] Schreber seems to be writhing in the coils of an epistemic/ontological paradox – endlessly shifting between two interdependent yet incompatible visions, the experience of his own consciousness as both a constituted object and the ultimate, constituting subject. The enigmatic, vexed nature of the *Memoirs* testifies to Schreber's inability either to solve these dilemmas or to ignore them. (*PD,* p. 77)

This 'epistemic/ontological paradox' can be seen within Wittgenstein's discussions of the simultaneous *absence* and ineffable *existence* of the 'I', the transcendental subject. Recall Wittgenstein's remark: "There is no such thing as the subject that thinks or entertains ideas" (*TLP*, 5.631). For Wittgenstein, the 'I' as subject of experience is not some 'thing' which exists in the world; and, thus, the 'I' of the metaphysical subject is not to be found anywhere in the world. However, as we have also seen, Wittgenstein insists on preserving the notion of this 'I' as metaphysical subject, above and beyond the 'I' of psychology (which *is* an object in the world; an individual, with a variety of observable properties, from whose position an indexical statement is made; see *TLP*, 5.641; Hymers, 2017, pp. 37, 83). Wittgenstein's desire to simultaneously eliminate and preserve this metaphysical 'I' exposes the paradox at the heart of his discussion of solipsism in the *Tractatus*.

One aspect of the paradoxical status of Wittgenstein's transcendental subject finds an intriguing reflection in Schreber's perception of his 'centrality' to his own phenomenal world. Throughout his *Memoirs*, Schreber appeals to this apparent centrality as evidence of his *importance* within the world as constituted by, or within, his own perception. Fascinatingly, however, this sense of centrality/importance is often described by Schreber in a passive, externalizing manner, as in the following quote:

> … [*E*]*verything that happens is in reference to me*. […] Since God entered into nerve-contact with me exclusively, I became in a way for God the only human being, or simply the human being

> around whom everything turns, to whom everything that happens must be related *and who therefore, from his own point of view, must also relate all things to himself.* (*M*, p. 233; emphasis mine)

Here, Schreber tacitly acknowledges that his centrality to experience seems somehow bound to 'his own point of view': At other points throughout his *Memoirs*, however, this centrality does not appear to be thus confined. An example can be found in Schreber's discussion of the 'wasp-miracle' – in which Schreber views the wasps which enter his perceptual bubble as having been spontaneously generated *for his perception* by 'divine miracles'. Consider the following quote:

> These animals always appear on *definite* occasions and in *definite* order around me; they appear so frequently that there is no doubt of their being each time newly created; they cannot possibly have existed before and only been driven into my company accidentally. […] One will probably object that there is nothing very extraordinary in flies being about the room or wasps about in the open at *certain* times, etc., and that only my morbid imagination makes me believe they are divine miracles somehow related to my own person. I will therefore proceed to give some of the important items which led me to the opposite opinion. As often as an insect of the mentioned species appears, a miracle simultaneously affects the direction of my gaze […]. My eye-muscles are therefore influenced to move in a *certain* direction so that my glance must fall on things just created. (*Memoirs*, pp. 218-219; emphasis mine)

And, further,

> In any case miracles occur only on my person or in my immediate vicinity. I have again received striking proof of this in the last few days which I think is worth mentioning here. … The following afternoon several gambolling mosquitos were similarly produced by miracle in front of my face while I sat in the garden of the inn of the neighbouring village of Ebenheit during an excursion; and again they appeared *only* in my immediate vicinity. (*Memoirs*, pp. 281-282; as quoted in PD, p. 57)

Of the variety of fascinating thoughts expressed in the above passages, particular attention might first be drawn to Schreber's use of the words 'certain' and 'definite' (the original German text uses *gewissen* and *bestimmten/bestimmter* respectively; see Schreber, 1903, Ch. 18). Recall Sass's use of Wittgenstein's discussion of the term 'particular' as producing a confusion resulting from its popular usage both: a) to signify a further depth to a topic as of yet undisclosed (as, for example, in the

statement, 'the particular way that she spoke', etc.) and, b) to indicate the uniqueness of a thing or an event (for example; 'on that particular occasion…', or, 'the sound particular to that instrument…', etc.). In Wittgenstein's view, when 'particular' is used in the latter sense – to denote the uniqueness of an object or event – the term might evoke its former sense of some further specificity which has yet to be described or articulated. This, in turn, might lead a person to believe that the uniqueness, or 'self-suchness' of some object or event might somehow signify something beyond itself: Yet all that the object is 'signifying' in its uniqueness is itself – its own *existence*.

With this in mind, we can return to the above quotation: Here, when Schreber seeks to express the *significance* of an incident by virtue of its *uniqueness* (conflating the two uses of the term 'particular'), he uses the term 'definite'. By contrast, he uses the word 'certain' to express the latter sense of particularity, absent a sense of significance. Significantly, we can see above that Schreber takes up the word 'certain' when considering the position of an external observer, while the term 'definite' describes his own experience of the significance of the 'wasp-miracle'. For Schreber, it is the alignment of 'certain' events in recurring co-incidences that produces his sense of their being 'definite' (in the above quotation, the co-occurrence of Schreber's gaze being drawn to the insects at the same time as they are generated into his experiential world is taken as evidence for their 'definite' character; i.e., demonstrating to Schreber that, "they cannot possibly have existed before and only been driven into [his] company accidentally" (*Memoirs*, p. 218; quoted above).

More importantly to the present discussion, in the above quote Schreber appears to be drawing conclusions from the tautological insight that 'he' is at the centre of ('his') experience. The 'wasp-miracle', in which the insects appear to Schreber to be *generated* into his experiential bubble in some 'definite' way, is taken by Schreber to be evidence of his centrality to his own experience. In other words, the 'wasp-miracle' is taken by Schreber as evidence that, "*everything that happens is in*

reference to me" (*M*, p. 233; quoted above). As discussed previously, the 'me' in this quotation might merely be taken as an acknowledgement of there *being* a centre of experience; ownership of Schreber's phenomenal bubble cannot be sensibly claimed (or denied) *from a first-person perspective*. Absent an identity for this centre, however, Schreber's 'striking proof' amounts to his taking the centrality of the centre of 'his' experience to be evidence for the centre's centrality: That this holds the flavour of a revelation, for Schreber, should alert us to the existence of some confusion (and, indeed, we must sympathize that the problem really *is* confusing).

That experience resides within its own limits is not some additional fact which we discover through encounters with the world. Similarly, after stipulating the totality of experience – with *its* (experience's) boundaries coinciding with the boundaries of the world – it does not then make sense to go on to somehow 'discover' that it is so. A desire to make statements like 'the world is *my* world,' should be understood not as a revelation of the truth of such a statement; for, in Wittgensteinian terms, a tautology of this kind cannot be meaningfully said to be 'true', as it excludes the possibility of any real-world comparison (tautologies, like contradictions, manifest themselves as limits on what can be said in the world; they are 'degenerate' statements which *show* that they *say nothing*; see *TLP* 4.46-4.4661, 6.1-6.127 for more). Instead, we might take such a desire to be indicative of the way we have defined our terms: That 'the world is *my* world' comes down to my stipulation that the term 'world' is to coincide with what I normally refer to as 'my experience', such that the domains of each are coterminous (they share the same limits, or describe the same logical 'space', so to speak). To assert the solipsistic statement 'the world is *my* world' in the tone of revelation, then, is equivalent to stipulating that, 'From now on I shall use the term 'world' to refer only to my experience', and then exclaiming, 'Wow!' Again, the perception that something new has been learned, as in the case of Schreber, should serve to alert us to the presence of an equivocation in our terminology.

In his discussion of the 'wasp-miracle', among others, Schreber appears to be acknowledging that these insects are introduced into his experience in the moment of his experience of them. He seems to be discovering that these insects are *only* present in his experience of them – yet the word 'present' here simply means 'present in the world of experience'; the tautologous nature of these sentiments is masked, for Schreber, by an accompanying feeling of revelation. That the mosquitos "appeared *only* in [Schreber's] immediate vicinity" (*Memoirs*, p. 233; quoted above), seems to Schreber to indicate something beyond his having implicitly defined his experience as total; they seem to demonstrate to Schreber that, in *fact*, his experience *is* total. Yet, as mentioned before, such a move mistakes a definitional tautology for an empirical discovery. Once we have defined experience as 'total' – that 'the world is *my* world' – it no longer makes sense to *discover* this to be the case. This is related to the fact that, if a thing is truly *necessary*, in that it *must be the case*, then it makes no sense to say that it *is* in fact the case. According to Wittgenstein's *Tractarian* account, language can only meaningfully assert what *is* by comparison with alternative possibilities of what *might be*. Necessities, with which we can compare no alternative possibilities, cannot therefore be meaningfully *said* (though they may *show* themselves in our language in the form of tautologies and contradictions; see *TLP* 6.12, 6.1202).

Similarly, the tautological statement 'my experience is total', or 'the world is *my* world', cannot be used to conclude (as Schreber seems to do) that the objects of my experience 'enter' my experience from nothing: For it does not make sense to speak of that which is truly 'beyond' experience, even to postulate some void out of which the objects of experience may somehow emerge *ex-nihilo*. A strictly correct solipsism might instead state that experience consists of its objects – perhaps, adding that experience is characterised by temporality and therefore by change, or that experience consists simultaneously of objects encountered physically and those encountered in the memory or imagination. (A certain fluidity of this boundary might be maintained here, such that the

identified objects, now instantiated in memory or imagination, might be instantiated in physical form in some other moment, and vice versa.) Even an acknowledgement such as this, however, may perhaps violate the strictly presentist doctrine of the 'here' and 'now' of a rigorous experiential solipsism. In the end, it is difficult to know what to make of the end-stage of a solipsism 'rigorously worked out'; or to know how to articulate the aspects, qualities, and dimensions of the experience which the solipsist, through their infuriatingly paradoxical statements, attempts (perhaps in vain) to describe.

2.5 The 'World' as a Limited Whole

Schreber's 'miracles' seem to simultaneously uphold a notion of experience as total *and*, in some ways, limited. This, I argue, corresponds to the inferences which Schreber draws from the strictly correct (albeit tautological) observation that 'the world is *my* world', wherein the term 'world' corresponds to one's 'phenomenal bubble' (this term comes from Pears, 1987, p. 36; see Pears, 1987 for an insightful discussion of the concept, and its entailed 'subject' and 'objects'). Here, Schreber's position seems to imply a perspective in which experience is truly total (i.e., excluding no actualities or possibilities) and one in which it is limited (i.e., failing to encapsulate *all* possibilities), due to the tautological status of the statement 'the world is *my* world' in the first-person grammar of a phenomenal language – i.e., a language whose domain is restricted to the experiential world of the speaker. Drawing an inference from this tautological statement involves imagining that things could have been otherwise; that '*this* experience' is, only as a matter of contingency, '*my* experience'. Yet, imagining that the 'totality' we purport to be describing is somehow contingent shows us that our purported 'totality' has actually excluded certain possibilities; and, thus, that it cannot be truly total.

Any contingency found in the statement 'the world is *my* world' would exist only in our definitions of the terms in question. In a system which defines '*this* experience' as *my* experience – '*this* world' as *my* world – there is no sense in seeking to *discover* whether this is the case. Yet, should we have defined our terms differently, we might have used 'experience' to mean something else; or, for example, we might have used 'world' to denote a metaphysical plenum of which our own limited phenomenal bubble is only one constituent part. However, as Wittgenstein himself notes, while these definitions might be seen as arbitrary, our *uses* of these terms once we have stipulated their meanings are not:

> 3.342 Although there is something arbitrary in our notations, *this* much is not arbitrary – that *when* we have determined one thing arbitrarily, something else is necessarily the case. (This derives from the *essence* of notation.) (*TLP*, 3.342; emphasis original)

Though Wittgenstein likely had a more formal, logical language in mind here, the insights of this remark can be applied analogously to the case of Schreber's 'quasi-solipsism'. From the perspective of a phenomenal language whose referential capacity is limited to the phenomenal bubble of the speaker, it is *definitionally* true that 'the world is *my* world': This amounts to a mere restatement of the commitments implicit in a phenomenal language, whose domain is coterminous with the speaker's phenomenal bubble. In this way, such a statement should be taken as a discovery about one's grammar, rather than of empirical facts in, or about, 'the world' – else, the 'totality' we purport to describe fails to be total. As we saw above, the grammar of our language can only express contingencies, and thus in stating 'the world is *my* world' we have implicitly designated as contingent that which we seek to assert as necessary. As before, we can relate this to a confusion between a perspective simultaneously *within* and somehow *beyond* the totality purportedly described in such statements. Our confusion could thus be said to emerge from a view of our perspective as

simultaneously encapsulated by, and simultaneously external to and independent of, the purported totality in question.

Here, it is interesting to compare the equivocations between the 'inner' and 'outer' found in Sass's analysis of Schreber, and the notion of a 'limited totality' presented in the *Tractatus*:

> 6.45 To view the world sub specie aeterni is to view it as a whole – a limited whole. Feeling the world as a limited whole – it is this that is mystical. (*TLP*, 6.45)

As Sass himself makes clear, this is hardly the only place in which Wittgenstein's thoughts can be used to elucidate some of the phenomena described within Schreber's *Memoirs*. However, it is this core statement that most formidably seems to bound the 'paradoxes of delusion', so-called: This perception of the world as a limited whole – related to the apparent occupying of a perspective internal *and* external to that same totality – will serve as one of the core features of Schreber's 'quasi-solipsism', recurring throughout the variety of the phenomena he describes in his *Memoirs*.

2.6 The Shrinking of the Self of Solipsism

As with the confusion between 'inner' and 'outer', other phenomena characteristic of schizophrenia might be similarly illuminated by comparison with the paradoxes manifested in the figure of the Tractarian solipsist. Consider the following two remarks the *Tractatus* makes regarding the solipsist's world:

> 5.631 There is no such thing as the subject that thinks or entertains ideas.
>
> If I wrote a book called *The World* as I found it, I should have to include a report on my body, and should have to include a report on my body, and should have to say which parts were subordinate to my will, and which were not, etc., this being a method of isolating the subject, or rather of showing that in an important sense there is no subject; for it alone could *not* be mentioned in that book. –

> 5.64 Here it can be seen that solipsism, when its implications are followed out strictly, coincides with pure realism. The self of solipsism shrinks to a point without extension, and there remains the reality co-ordinated with it. (*TLP,* 5.631, 5.64)

Both of these remarks contain tantalizing imagery in the form of the diminishing of the subject; in the first case through a process of making a kind of bodily inventory. The crucial point here is one which Sass makes repeatedly: Despite our inability to *locate* the subject anywhere within (or without) the world of experience, the 'I-sense' (Sass's term) or the *feeling* that we associate with the ego-subject is not correspondingly diminished.[4] We have seen this process play out, as mentioned earlier, in Wittgenstein's preservation of the notion of the (transcendental) subject despite his open acknowledgement that any attempt to *assert* the self reduces to incoherence.

Further, it does not seem to be a matter of *contingency* that the 'self' of the solipsist cannot be located. In the *Blue and Brown Books,* Wittgenstein writes the following:

> For admittedly [the statement, 'this body is now the seat of that which really lives'], is not to state anything which in the ordinary sense is a matter of experience. (And don't think that it is an experiential proposition which only I can know because only I am in the position to have the particular experience). (*BBB*, p. 66)

Wittgenstein's point here is comparable to that made by Hume, wherein the idea of an 'experience' that could be used to confirm the existence of a *personalized* locus of experience, is

[4] Note that this might simply mean that what we assumed was the origin of the 'I-sense' (i.e., an existing 'ego' or metaphysical subject) is not, in fact, its origin. What this does *not* imply is that the 'I-sense' is somehow *illusory*. I say this because, firstly, it is not immediately apparent what it would mean to call an *experience* 'illusory'; for what is an 'illusion' if not an *experience*? In claiming that it the 'I-sense' is an illusion, we affirm the existence of a *perception* of an 'ego', which is all that the 'I-sense' itself amounts to. It is true that if the 'I-sense' necessarily referred to some 'object', we might therefore call the 'I-sense' *misleading* – that is, if we hold that the perception of an 'ego' must lead us to posit such an object in the world: However, it is unclear whether the 'I-sense' actually *demands* that we postulate some 'ego-object'. Perhaps, we might say that the 'I-sense' merely speaks for itself, and demands no additional postulation. In this case, the persistence of the 'I-sense' beyond a realisation of the impossibility of an 'ego-object', might be better interpreted as *signal* rather than noise. It might, for example, lead us to guess at *other* origins for the 'I-sense' – such as our perception, as subjects, as occupying some 'centre' of phenomena. Describing the 'I-sense' as *illusory*, however, might lead to our somehow feeling that the *experience* is somehow illegitimate, or that the *experience* itself doesn't really exist. For the above reasons, I think such a move creates more confusion than it resolves.

actually absurd. As Sass concisely puts it; "[t]he undeniable reality of the experience one *has* turns out not to affirm the existence of the self one *is*" (*PD,* pp. 68-69). As we have seen, any *object* of experience cannot simultaneously occupy the role of the *subject*. Not only is it impossible to find such an object in the phenomenal world, but we cannot even imagine any necessary criteria for something to be *considered* for the role of subject (this argument is taken from Pears, 1987, pp. 158-160). In this way, the psychological 'I' that *does* occupy a place in the world cannot meaningfully be correlated to the transcendental subject; the 'centre of experience' that forms the (phenomenal) world's limit. Thus, Wittgenstein's statement:

> When I said, from my heart, that only I see, I was also inclined to say that by 'I' I didn't really mean L.W. […] I could almost say that by 'I' I mean something which just now inhabits L.W., something which the others can't see. (I meant my mind, but could only point to it via my body). (*BBB*, p. 66)

What Wittgenstein is here referring to as the 'mind', I have been calling the 'subject'; in either case, it is crucial that this 'mind'/'subject' is not to be identified with any ordinary notion of personhood (hence, Wittgenstein's dissociation of the 'I' of his phenomenal bubble with L.W., the psychological 'I'). As I have alluded to above, this results in the Tractarian divide between the notion of the self of empirical psychology, and the transcendental self as subject of experience: While the former is something which exists as a fact in the world and thus can be represented in language (i.e., can be *said*) the latter represents a limit to what language can represent (see TLP, 5.641; Stern, 1995, p. 76; Hymers, 2010, pp. 45-47; 2017, §4.4). The implied subject of representation in language – the metaphysical subject to which an object is represented – cannot take *itself* as its object, and thus can never be represented within language. The metaphysical subject can therefore never be *said*, though it may *show itself* in the way in which language implies or presupposes its 'existence'. What makes the metaphysical subject 'transcendental', then, is its simultaneous presupposition in language, and nonexistence in the world of experience.

G. E. Moore records Wittgenstein articulating a similar point in Moore's collection of notes on Wittgenstein's lectures:

> "[W]hat characterizes 'primary experience'" is that in its case "'I' does not denote a possessor". […] In this connexion, that in "I have toothache" "I" does not "denote a possessor", he pointed out that, when I talk of "*my* body", the fact that the body in question is "mine" or "belongs to me", cannot be verified by reference to that body itself, thus seeming to imply that when I say "This body belongs to me", "me" is used in the second of the senses which he distinguished for "I", *viz.* that in which, according to him, it does not "denote a possessor". (Moore, 1955, pp. 13-14; the quotation marks and emphases included are Moore's)

Here, Moore's description of Wittgenstein's two senses of the term 'I' appears to correlate to Wittgenstein's distinction between the empirical and transcendental subjects (as described above). As we have already seen elsewhere, the lecture here recorded by Moore demonstrates Wittgenstein's contention that the transcendental subject of 'primary' experience (what I have elsewhere described as the 'phenomenal world') cannot be related to the body. This marks a distinction between two grammatical modes; one which is 'primary', referring to one's own experience of the world, and another which is third-personal, and deals in empirical and objective statements. For Wittgenstein, the differences between the statements, 'I have toothache,' and 'He has toothache,' are manifest in the former locutions not referring to any *person* while the latter does in fact do so: In this way, while *his* toothache has an owner (an empirical, psychological 'subject'), '*my* toothache' merely describes a phenomenal world. For this reason, Wittgenstein suggests that locutions in the first-personal, phenomenal mode take on a depersonalized grammar, so as to make the distinction between the former and latter statements more clear: 'I have toothache,' becomes 'There is toothache,' and thus the confusion regarding the 'owner' of such an experience dissipates (see Moore, 1955, pp. 10-16,

for more discussion of toothaches and linguistic modes).[5] We will return to the significance of this depersonalized grammar for our purposes in a future section.

So far, we have seen that the search for the transcendental subject in the world is doomed to failure. We have also seen that this fact does not do anything to diminish the sense of the presence of the 'ego'-consciousness; the 'I-sense'. Thus, the story of the process of searching for the 'ego' in the world of experience might go something like this: I have the strong sense that 'I' exist, as a kind of perceiving subject. To attempt to locate *where* in my experiential world 'I', as perceiving subject, might be, I invest myself in a process of 'isolating the subject' through a process of elimination, i.e., finding and excluding all of the (logical) places where 'I' am *not*. However, my continual failure to come up with anything that might even be a *candidate* for the role of constituting-subject might eventually lead me to suspect that there is no such thing to be found in my perceptual world at all. Yet the *sense of presence* of the 'I' as constituting subject of experience is not at all diminished by my failure to locate the 'I' within my phenomenal world.

The end result of this process is, as Sass puts it, "the vanishing of the I-sense into its objects. […] [T]he phenomenological argument shows that, from within, the solipsist's consciousness dissolves into its world since it has no existence apart from its objects" (*PD*, pp. 70-71). To paraphrase: My failure to find any isolable object of experience to serve as a home for my sense of self, leads me to ground my 'I-sense' *with experience itself* (i.e., with the *totality* of my phenomenal world) rather than in any of the individual objects found within my experiential world. In this way,

[5] In Ambrose and MacDonald's summary of Wittgenstein's lectures on the same topic, Ambrose writes: "It might be argued that *my* having toothache is the same wherever the tooth is that is aching, and whoever's mouth it is in. The locality of pain is not given by naming a possessor" (Wittgenstein, L., Ambrose, A., & Macdonald, M., 1979, p. 17). As above, the point here is that the 'possessor' of the toothache is the possessor of the pain, not the tooth: The experience, not the *body*. There is no 'body' that has pain, and pain thus does not occur in my *body*; rather, it is characteristic of 'my' (the) *world*. The depersonalized grammar of 'there is toothache,' allows us to avoid all of these confusions, as it does not purport to be about any 'body' at all, but refers to *the* phenomenal world.

as any preferential treatment of certain objects over others – including the parts of my body – would be wholly arbitrary, my 'I-sense' thus moves to inhabit *all* the objects of 'my' experience equally.

The investment of the 'ego'-consciousness into the objects of awareness serves as one possible origin for the confusion expressed by individuals with schizophrenia regarding the subjective and objective, the 'inner' and the 'outer'. As Sass notes, it is rarely the case that schizophrenic individuals are incapable of differentiating between what is ordinarily thought of as 'subjective' vs. 'objective' (see Sass's discussion of this point in *PD*, pp. 20-28); rather, schizophrenia often seems to involve a kind of levelling of the subjective and objective such that both domains exhibit a similar level of reality for the individual (or unreality, depending on the case; see *PD*, pp. 24-25). This may not be surprising in light of the above process of the equal investment of the 'ego' across the entire domain of experience. In such a case it would not be so different to ask the meaning of, for example, the introduction of the phenomenon of a wasp into my perceptual field (*the* world), as it would be to ask the introduction of the phenomenon of an intrusive thought or of an upsurge of a particular emotion. The 'I', now occupying the entirety of the experiential world, might *also* naturally struggle to differentiate between objects 'willed' and 'non-willed' by the constituting subject: For, if I have the power to include the wasp in my world by moving towards it or by shifting the direction of my gaze, then *when* can it be reasonably said that the wasp's existence in my world is *not* the result of my action? If I sit upon a bench and a 'definite' number of wasps enters my perceptual sphere, could it be that they have done so *because* of the seat I chose? Did I, in some way, create these wasp-percepts through my choice of seat? It might seem as though I could *uncreate* the wasp-percepts by leaving the bench and entering a nearby shop; in this way, are they not then somehow dependent upon me for their existence?[6]

[6] That it is the wasps, and not the bench, etc., that appear 'miracled up' for Schreber might seem anomalous to the radical-presentism of the 'quasi-solipsism' account as I have articulated it. After all, we might ask, why does Schreber

Just as my perceptual world and the objects located therein are dependent upon 'me' for their existence, so too am 'I' dependent upon them for 'my' existence. I can totally change the world (*my* world) by changing the direction of my gaze, or by covering my ears, etc.: Yet, so too, every time I make such a decision, the 'I-sense' invested in my perceptual world will also undergo radical alteration. We might relate this former sense of the loss of *the world*, through the alteration of experience, to what Sass describes as the "climactic experience of the most severe schizophrenic psychosis: the world catastrophe feared by the subject who cannot forget that the world must be represented or the world will disappear" (PD, p. 97): Conversely, we might relate the apparent fragility of the sense of the 'I' in schizophrenia as stemming from the same radically present-oriented phenomenalism.

2.7 The Truth-Taking Stare

The terrifying prospect of the self and world hinging upon the consistency of representation may be able to make sense of the characteristic schizophrenic symptom of staring fixedly. Sass calls this the 'truth-taking stare' and describes it as a "sign of encroaching schizophrenia […] characterized in German psychiatry as a stiffness or rigidity of perception – *die Wahrnehmungsstarre* (*PD*, p. 99)[7]. For Sass, such a stare is marked by the infusion of meaning and significance into the objects of perception, lending these objects their sense of 'uncanny particularity'. I would add that this infusion of meaning into the objects of perception may be related to the imposition of the

not perceive the *entirety* of experience as 'miracled up' for his benefit? I believe that the answer to this question might lie in the association of this meta-phenomenal attitude to *stillness* and the act of staring fixedly (see section 2.7 of the present work), and related interactions of the perception of agency on the occurrence of such phenomena. These interactions would benefit from further investigation, though I do not have the space to address them here.

[7] This is perhaps an odd translation of the original: The German *Wahrheit* is translated 'truth', but *Wahrnehmung* simply means 'perception'. The result is that the 'truth-taking stare' might be better articulated as the 'perceptive stare', or something of the like. I owe this insight to Professor Michael Hymers.

quasi-solipsist's 'I-sense', along with a corresponding sense of existential dependence and attachment, into their perceptual environs (as discussed above). Sass gives an account of one patient's experience of this kind of loss of self:

> I feel my body breaking up into bits. I get all mixed up so that I don't know myself. I feel like more than one person when this happens. I'm falling apart into bits. … *I'm frightened to say a word in case everything goes fleeing from me so that there's nothing in my mind.* It puts me in a trance worse than death. There's a kind of hypnotism going on. (Chapman, 1966, p. 232; quoted in *PD,* p. 70)

Here, the individual is not directly referring to the phenomena of staring. However, this quotation illustrates quite nicely the association between a sense of the fragility of the self (the 'I-sense') and the need for stillness in the perceptual environment. It is plausible that this individual's experience of this kind of trance might emerge from a desire to preserve an 'I-sense' which, as it cannot root itself in any 'personhood', is instead invested into the objects of experience.

As Sass notes, Wittgenstein also associates the phenomenon of staring – the "taking in the appearance" (*NFL*, p. 311) gaze – with the notion of solipsism (see *PD*, p. 35, for Sass's full list of examples). Among the quotations which Sass relies upon in making his case are the following:

> To get clear about philosophical problems, it is useful to become conscious of the apparently unimportant details of the particular situation in which we are inclined to make a certain metaphysical assertion. Thus we may be tempted to say 'Only *this* is really seen' when we stare at unchanging surroundings, whereas we may not at all be tempted to say this when we look about us while walking. (BBB, p. 66; emphasis original)

> The phenomenon of *staring* is closely bound up with the whole puzzle of solipsism. (*NFL*, p. 309; emphasis original)

Wittgenstein explains elsewhere that passive staring might incline us to take ourselves to be somehow experiencing our *experience*, rather than seeing ourselves as experiencing *the world* around us;

what I will refer to as a 'meta-phenomenal attitude'. Wittgenstein further relates this notion to the previously discussed dual meaning of 'particular', as drawn out in the following passage:

> What is it that happened? *You concentrated on, as it were stared at, your sensations*. And this is exactly what you did when you said that 'red' came in a particular way. […] What is particular about the way 'red' comes is that it comes while you're philosophizing about it, as *what is particular about the position of your body when you concentrated on it was concentration*. We appear to ourselves to be on the verge of describing the way, whereas we aren't really opposing it to any other way. We are emphasizing, not comparing, but we express ourselves as though this emphasis was really a comparison of the object with itself; there seems to be a reflexive comparison. (*BBB*, pp. 159-160; emphasis mine)

Sass draws upon a further quote from the *Philosophical Investigations* to elaborate upon this meta-phenomenal attitude:

> But what can it mean to speak of 'turning my attention on to my own consciousness'? This is surely the queerest thing there could be! It was a particular act of gazing that I called doing this. I stared fixedly in front of me – but *not* at any particular point or object. My eyes were wide open, the brows not contracted (as they mostly are when I am interested in a particular object). No such interest preceded this gazing. My glance was vacant; or again *like* that of someone admiring the illumination of the sky and drinking in the light. (*PI*, §412, emphasis original; quoted in *PD*, pp. 36-37)

It is of some controversy the extent to which the later Wittgenstein, as it is manifested in the work of the *Philosophical Investigations*, can be used to elucidate his thinking in earlier years (exemplified by the *Tractatus*). Further, Wittgenstein's largely procedural accounts of staring as facilitating a certain kind of focus upon phenomena *qua* phenomena may not be spelled out in enough detail to associate them directly with the phenomena of staring as a preservation of 'self-world' as I have described above. Regardless, the shared prominence of the phenomenon of staring in Wittgenstein's solipsist's worldview and in certain experiences characteristic of schizophrenia, does lend further credence to Sass's project. As I have argued above, my own view is that Sass's discussion of the dissolution of the 'I-sense' into the phenomenal world might also provide a basis

for understanding the relevance of the 'truth-taking stare' for the fragility of self and world characteristic of schizophrenia.

2.8 Approximating a Coherent Picture

To summarize what we have seen so far, let us draw out the connections between solipsism, the adoption and grammar of the phenomenal language, the phenomenon of the 'truth-taking' stare, and the dual notion of 'particularity'. We have thus far seen that certain modes of passive concentration (manifested in staring behaviour) can draw our attention to phenomena *qua* phenomena, thus detaching us from our usual mode of interpreting our percepts (as when these percepts are used directly in engaging with our environment). An apparent 'doubling' of phenomena results when the passive starer confuses the meta-phenomenal attitude with usual, object-representational modes of experience. In the object-representational mode, we take our experiences to correspond to objects in the world. By contrast, in the meta-phenomenal attitude we interpret our phenomena *as* phenomena. We confuse the latter attitude with the former when we interpret our phenomenal world as somehow representing *itself*, in the way that objects are represented in the traditional schema. The resulting 'doubling' of our phenomenal world can give us the sense that there is something *underlying* our experience; that our experience is somehow ineffably representative of *itself*. In other words, the self-suchness or *intransitive* 'particularity' of certain experiences might appear meaningful in the *transitive* sense of signifying something beyond the experiences themselves (as discussed above, the terms 'transitive' and 'intransitive' are used to distinguish between the two uses of 'particularity'; see *BBB*, pp. 158-159). The resulting appearance of underlying or hidden meaning might be used to account for some of the compulsive aspects of thinking which

characterize (and frequently terrorize) schizophrenic experience, as such 'hints' of a deeper meaning might elicit compulsive intellectual investigating and ruminating behaviours.

In the meta-world of phenomena *qua* phenomena, we are met with a number of experiences which betray our usual, first-order experiences of the world. The meta-phenomenal attitude disrupts, among other things, ordinary subject-object relations as well as ordinary conceptions of self and personhood. The latter difficulties are spelled out in the depersonalization of the grammar of the phenomenal language (as in Wittgenstein's 'it thinks' – see Moore, 1955, pp. 13-14; see also, Stern, 1995, pp. 79-85), due to the inability of a phenomenal language to identify any object in one's perceptual world with the 'centre of experience', the transcendental subject, which manifests itself as a limit of the perceptual world rather than as any particular object within it. Subject-object relationships are similarly disrupted due to the inability to differentiate between *the* world ('*my* world') and the 'self', the latter of which, due to the inability to identify itself with any particular objects of perception, is instead invested in the world of experience as a whole. In this mode, the world can indeed take on the aspect of a 'limited whole', wherein one appears to be a component *part* of the totality of experience, while simultaneously seeming to occupy an epistemological position beyond/transcendent of said totality. This aspect of the meta-phenomenal attitude might be able to further account for the sensation, described often among individuals with schizophrenia, of swelling up to occupy the whole of the world itself, and (sometimes simultaneously) the sense of diminishing to nonexistence. The parallel difficulties in making sense of the will/intentionality in a 'quasi-solipsistic' worldview might similarly account for the experiences individuals with schizophrenia report of being all-powerful and, (again, sometimes simultaneously) totally passive and impotent (see *PD*, pp. 65-66, for discussion of these experiences). This 'swelling' of the self and sense of agency might, following this rather loose framework, corresponds to the subjugation of the totality of phenomenal experience into the 'I-sense', thereby attributing all events and percepts to

the motions of the 'self'; the latter experience of the diminishing of self and agency might similarly emerge from the corresponding subsuming of the 'I-sense' into its phenomenal world seen through the lens of objects. In the latter view, the 'I-sense' is, so to speak, 'imprisoned' in a realm of mechanistic interaction independent of its (the 'I-sense's') intent or desires; here, the totality of one's percepts – including thoughts, emotions, inner monologues, etc. – operate independently of any 'willing' on the part of the transcendental subject.

The above articulation contains my own emphases on components of Sass's interpretation, coordinating these ideas in ways that, at times, may go beyond Sass's original formulation. My goal here, as in the rest of my summary and defense of Sass's project, is to help situate the reader in the lived-world of the 'quasi-solipsistic' perspectives treated by Sass, and by Wittgenstein before him, illustrating the interrelatedness of these ideas, showing how they 'hang together', and thereby demonstrating the strength of the 'quasi-solipsist' as one compelling allegory for schizophrenia. It is not my view, however, that this formalization must be an exact or entirely 'correct interpretation' of schizophrenia. Indeed, I think it would be naïve to take *any* single interpretive account as perfectly representative of a lived-world, schizophrenic or otherwise. The *utility* of interpretation is, in my view, not limited to that interpretation's *accuracy*; interpretation – in effect, storytelling – has impacts for the beliefs and practices of a group which go far beyond mere accuracy. When I tell a story, for example, about the 'unintelligibility' of a schizophrenic lived-world, or argue that a person with schizophrenia is necessarily excluded from human community, my words have effects beyond their utility as *descriptions*. To see these effects, we need only look at the treatment of those with schizophrenia throughout history, up to and including the present day. Similarly, I hold that much of the value of Sass's interpretation lies in its respect for the individuals it seeks to understand, its

demonstration of the *possibility* of understanding these individuals, and its affirmation of the value of attempting such an understanding.[8]

2.9 The Objectifying Gaze

The 'Truth-Taking Stare' has a further dimension, beyond inclining one towards a 'meta-phenomenal' mode; such a gaze also *objectifies* its phenomenal world and thus alienates its targets from the observer (the subject). Additionally, this kind of passive awareness disrupts the viewer's ordinary hermeneutical habits, with regards to these objects. Just as gazing at a fork for too long, for example, can lead one to a rather surreal impression of that object *beyond* its ordinary functions, or the way in which repeating a single word to oneself for long enough can cause it to lose its meaning, the 'stare' associated with schizophrenia can be framed as a method of detaching oneself from the habitual world in favour of another, inchoately meaningful world of *existence* absent interpretation. Sass describes an example of this in his book *Madness and Modernism* (1992), wherein he writes of a patient he once treated:

> A similar pattern was described by one schizophrenic I treated, who said that he knew he would not have become ill if he had not made the mistake, at the onset of his psychotic break, of sitting back and watching his friends at a party instead of joining in their activities; only then, he explained, had things begun to look 'weird'. (*MM*, p. 72)

[8] This is, of course, not to say it is the *only* value in Sass's project. It is my conviction that there are many parts of Sass's interpretation which effectively capture aspects of the experiences that characterise schizophrenia – I am convinced of this because these manage to capture aspects of my *own* lived experience, as a self-identified schizotypal personality. Obviously, this should not be taken to imply the universal applicability of Sass's interpretative project to the experience of *all* individuals on the schizophreniform spectrum; but the 'universality' of such an interpretation might not even be particularly desirable in this case. Considering the vast heterogeneity of experience in schizophrenia, any 'correct' interpretation which purported to encompass *all* schizophrenic experience would likely be so general as to be as useless for diagnosis as it would be for treatment.

Still more tellingly, Sass describes the ways in which reengaging with the world can, at times, help to alleviate the sort of symptoms which staring can bring on:

> The perceiver might, for instance, make the *Stimmung* diminish or disappear by stepping *out* of his contemplative stance and taking up some familiar activity. Roquentin does this when he stops staring at the chestnut tree, gets up, and walks out of the park. Similarly, to rid herself of the Unreality vision, Renée would sometimes throw herself into familiar activities, such as making a meal, therefore managing, at least partially, to restore a less strange universe – to 'make things as they usually were'. (*MM*, p. 73)

While the disrupting effects of 'staring' can serve to alienate an observer from their usual modes of interpretation, there may be still more to the alienating qualities of the gaze. As alluded to previously, Wittgenstein not only describes the 'shrinking' of the self of solipsism, but also describes the process of 'isolating the subject' by attending to various parts of the body in turn, etc. (see *TLP* 5.64, 5.631). As we saw earlier, in these passages we find a use of directed awareness that culminates in the elimination of the subject from the experiential world. Such a process takes place when, for instance, an individual takes a bodily inventory, checking each 'object' or body part for its potential candidacy as a home for the transcendental subject – the constituting centre of the phenomenal world. As we have seen, success is an *impossibility* in such a search, due to the methodological constraint that anything playing the role of *object* of experience cannot simultaneously occupy the role of *subject* to which that object is presented; the 'gaze' of representation might then be seen as naturally bifurcating experience into the categories of 'objects' and the singular 'subject', into the former of which all things observed (the totality of the phenomenal world) must fall. In this way, representational awareness of a 'thing' naturally implies that 'thing's' objecthood (as *opposed* to subjecthood).

This objectifying feature of awareness is mirrored throughout Schreber's *Memoirs*, finding one of its most vivid articulations in Schreber's account of God and his characterisation of rays:

> A *fundamental misunderstanding* obtained however, which has since run like a red thread through my entire life. It is based upon the fact *that, within the Order of the World, God did not really understand the living human being* and had no need to understand him, because, according to the Order of the World, he only dealt with corpses. (*M*, p. 62; emphasis original)

For Schreber, 'God' is intimately bound up with the entities which he calls 'rays', and he sometimes appears to use the terms interchangeably. For example:

> [T]he ray's (God's) intent towards me has become less unfriendly (more about this later) owing to my constantly increasing soul-voluptuousness. (*M*, p. 159)
>
> Because of the irresistible attraction of my nerves I had become an embarrassing human being for the rays (for God), in whatever position or circumstance I might be or whatever occupation I undertook. (*M,* p. 151)

The connection between God and rays is made most explicit in the following passages:

> [I]t is by no means impossible that seeing, which is a faculty of rays (that is the totality of God's nerves) is confined to my person and immediate surroundings… (*M*, p. 281)
>
> One can of course assume that minimal parts of God's nerves (rays) were transformed through the act of creation into the shape of *animal* souls which, however low, would still have the *one* quality of *self-awareness* in common with divine rays. (*M,* p. 227; emphasis original)

Of the many interesting points in the above excerpts, the notion of the rays as possessing the quality of 'self-awareness' is especially important to our discussion here. That God (the 'Upper God' and 'Lower God', when individuated; 'God' more generally, or when referring to the subsuming of the Upper and Lower Gods under a single 'awareness') appears in Schreber's account so closely identified with the rays can allow us to relate the effects of the awareness of 'God' and the 'rays' on Schreber himself. Specifically, it appears that the presences of *both* 'God' and the 'rays' essentially require (or entail) Schreber's objectification, thus explaining Schreber's contention that 'God only deals with corpses', and that God 'does not understand the living human being' (see *M*, pp. 62, 124-125, 135, etc.). At another point, Schreber remarks that:

> God, as already mentioned, saw living human beings *only from without*; as a rule His omnipresence and omniscience did not extend within *living* man. (*M*, p. 40)

In these comments, Schreber appears to be undergoing a process of de-personalization or alienation from what would ordinarily be thought of as *his own* awareness, wherein the qualities of his introspective, *subjective* awareness are externalized into the figures of 'God' and/or the 'rays', while Schreber continues to identify his 'self' with the objects of this awareness (at times, Schreber identifies the object of awareness as belonging to, rather than *being*, himself – as in the case of his 'nerves'). Schreber thus appears to identify with the objects of (his) alienated awareness, while identifying the subject (the 'transcendental', or 'metaphysical' subject, in Tractarian terms) not as himself but as 'God'; interestingly, he thus *externalizes* and alienates not the role of *object* but that of *subject* of awareness.

This observation might be taken to contradict our interpretive framework as described thus far – for, according to our discussion above, the natural position for our 'I' (as in the case of the physical 'eye') is at the *centre* of experience (see *TLP*, 5.633-5.6331). At least, with regards to the alienating gaze of self-awareness, we might therefore be taken by surprise that Schreber identifies his 'self' not with the 'centre' of such a gaze, but with its *object* of awareness – in Tractarian terms, Schreber is here identifying as empirical, rather than transcendental, subject.

A possible resolution of this apparent anomaly lies in the fact that, as we have seen before, the 'I-sense' of the solipsist cannot ground itself anywhere *within* the world of experience, as the transcendental subject only manifests as a limit of experience. Neither can the 'I-sense' of the solipsist be grounded in the transcendental subject, as the solipsist cannot locate such a thing (as it lies 'beyond' experience). Because of this, as we have seen, the 'I-sense' of solipsism cannot identify with any particular object(s) of its perception but is instead forced to identify itself with the

phenomenal world as a whole. As Sass puts this point; "[T]he phenomenological argument shows that, from within, the solipsist's consciousness dissolves into its world since it has no existence apart from its objects" (*PD,* pp. 70-71; quoted earlier). As such, the 'I-sense' might perceive itself to somehow be the *target* of awareness of an alienated subjectivity – a subjectivity with which it *cannot identify* (when, in our ordinary sense of reality, this subjectivity would be thought of as its *own*; as somehow *belonging* to itself). In this way, inscribing the 'I-sense' onto the phenomenal world – the objects of awareness – might encourage the quasi-solipsist to perceive the subject *behind* the gaze, so to speak, as detached and alien.

Another possible reason Schreber appears to identify himself with the objects of his awareness – rather than with the 'metaphysical' subject – might originate from a grammatical anomaly rooted in the radical presentism of quasi-solipsism. In a world composed only of the present 'phenomenal bubble', the past is reduced to memory – as 'remembering'-phenomena *presently experienced*. As such there is, in an important sense, no past which can serve as a temporal grounding for the sense of self. This is related to the way in which the commitment that 'the world is *my* world' manifests itself in a radical presentism of experience, which we might describe as dominated by the indexical 'shifter' words like 'I', 'my', 'this', 'here', 'now', etc. In a rigorous solipsistic language, just as *the* world is to be identified with *my* world, *my* world is to be identified as 'this', 'here', 'now': all considerations of past, future, and that which lies beyond my present experience reduce to, and thus must exist within, my present experience. My impressions of that which lies *beyond* my experience all ultimately reduce to *my present experience of those impressions*; thus, any such impressions are ultimately and paradoxically located *within* the experience which they purport to transcend.

In both a rigorous solipsism and the schizophrenic phenomenal world, phenomenal memories of the temporal 'self' can no more function as candidates for 'self-hood' than any other

phenomena *presently experienced*; and thus, we might expect that discussions of the past actions or experiences of the 'self' would be rendered into a grammar of detachment and passivity. In other words, according to this view, it may be that Schreber's 'I-sense' still occupies the centre of his experience, but his *discussion* of his experience is consistently rendered in a passive, 'objective' grammar, as such discussion always concerns the 'past' (here experienced as memory-phenomenal objects in *present* awareness, rather than as the temporal experiences of a continuous subject). Ordinary experiences of a *temporal* self, by contrast, are capable of alternating between the role of interrogator and interrogatee across time: Such an ability might thereby explain the immunity that more usual (i.e., non-quasi-solipsistic) experiences of selfhood or 'I-sense' have from the kind of bifurcation which Schreber experiences. However, this account only functions as an explanation as to why Schreber uses an alienated, objectified language to describe phenomena we might ordinarily expect him to associate with his 'self' – it does not explain the *exceptions* to this rule. And there are indeed exceptions, as Schreber *does* use first person pronouns throughout his *Memoirs*, and he does so with a curious consistency: Schreber doesn't appear to identify his 'I-sense' with any of the perspectives we might ordinarily think of as alienated parts of himself, and the attribution of his 'I-sense' does not alternate as he describes these perspectives. Instead, he appears to remain consistently in the role of the object of *their* awareness ('they' denoting the 'rays', 'God', the 'souls', etc.).

Conclusively resolving the problem of Schreber's self-identification as object of awareness, and his corresponding alienation of the subjectivity behind the gaze, is beyond my scope here – though the potential challenge this poses to the 'quasi-solipsism' interpretive framework is certainly worth investigating further. Beyond this, questions should also be raised as to why Schreber is so consistent in what he identifies as 'himself', and what he identifies as 'God' (or 'rays', 'nerves', 'souls', etc.). In the quasi-solipsism framework, with an 'I-sense' somehow free floating in the

experiential *umwelt*, it would be intuitive to think of the 'I' as taking the subject-place with regards to whatever object it took as its focus. In such a consideration, then, we might expect Schreber to at times occupy the place of 'God', ascribing his sense of self to *that* perspective and correspondingly alienating the object of *that* gaze (i.e., in other words we might expect Schreber to, at times, describe what the 'God's eye view' looks like from a first-personal perspective, and thereby objectify the perspective with which he ordinarily identifies in the process). Yet Schreber does not do this – at least, not obviously (though it might be argued that Schreber's discussion of his 'nerves' *does* represent a form of objectification of what he otherwise embodies as his 'self'). To find further evidence for or against the 'quasi-solipsism' framework, these discrepancies and complications should be explored in more detail.

2.10 Depersonalization: Schizophrenia and the Phenomenal Language

Related to, and building upon, all that we have discussed thus far, we can now turn to the topic of depersonalization in both schizophrenia and the phenomenal language. It is of great interest for the present purposes that Wittgenstein spent some time actively developing a consistent 'phenomenal language'; one whose origin and domain was the phenomenal world of its speaker, and yet which would be able to perform the functions of the third-personal, objective grammar of physical space.

For reasons we have already explored in detail, phenomenal language is characterised by a fundamental confusion around the notion of the subject, which appears as a sort of prerequisite of experience, but is not itself located within the phenomenal world. As we have seen, the subject is thus out of bounds, so to speak, of the possibility of representation in such a language. For this reason, Wittgenstein's phenomenal language gives up the use of the term 'I' in favour of a

depersonalized, third-personal 'it' (Stern, 1995, pp. 79-82); a grammatical shift meant to resolve the myriad ambiguities associated with the notion of the 'I' in the phenomenal view.

Wittgenstein's phenomenal language (what he calls 'primary', or, later, 'phenomenological' language) is, as Stern writes, a language characterized by "the principle of epistemological asymmetry" (1995, p. 81), which renders one's first-person experience into a grammar totally distinct from that dealing with the reported experiences of others. Yet, a phenomenal language does not permit one to ascribe the 'first-personal' experience to oneself *as subject* (for the same reasons we keep encountering; the transcendental subject is not a 'thing' in the world, and can be neither evidenced nor encountered). For this reason, the grammar of the phenomenal language is depersonalized, emphasizing that the 'experience' which it describes in no way implies an 'owner' (my discussion here comes from Stern, 1995, pp. 79-81, whose insightful rendering of this point I would highly recommend).

Instead of referring to the 'self' in relating first-personal experience such as we see in a statement like, 'I see a butterfly', Wittgenstein's phenomenal language's depersonalized mode renders, 'A butterfly is seen.' Both statements identify the phenomenon in question and the specific occurrence of the utterance of the latter statement even allows us to identify the phenomenal 'umwelt' in which the event occurred (although talk of *other* umwelts quickly becomes problematic here, as the phenomenal language views the 'phenomenal bubble' of the experiencing subject as total; these details are insightfully treated in *Tractatus*, 5.6-5.641). The phenomenal account, however, clears up the grammatical asymmetry implicit in our language by dispensing with the notion of the 'I', which creates confusions by appearing to function as an empirical subject comparable to those found in statements like, 'Ludwig sees a butterfly'. As we have seen, the 'I' of the phenomenal world is *not* an empirical subject (rather, it is the *transcendental* subject, which cannot be encountered in the

world), and a variety of linguistic confusions can emerge from mistaking it for an empirical subject. (Here, we can appeal to the confusions associated with certain forms of psychology, which mistake the object of their study to be the centre of experience, rather than merely the empirical subject; see *PD*, pp. 89-91.)

Unfortunately, the real picture is a little more complicated than the one I have drawn above: Firstly, Wittgenstein uses the terms 'primary language', and 'phenomenological language', rather than 'phenomenal language': I adopt the latter term in order to distance the concept from the phenomenological tradition embodied by figures like Husserl or Heidegger, and bring it closer to Pear's notion of the 'phenomenal bubble' (see Pears, 1987, Ch.7). Secondly, it is important to note that at the time that Wittgenstein is writing on the topic of depersonalization in the 'first-personal language', he had already given up on his project of formalizing a 'phenomenological language'. His change of mind is reported in a manuscript from November 25, 1929:

> I do not now have phenomenological language, or 'primary language' as I used to call it, in mind as my goal. I no longer hold it to be [possible]. All that is possible and necessary is to separate what is essential from what is inessential in our language. (MS 107 205; as quoted in Hymers, 2017, p. 43)[9]

This quotation shows that Wittgenstein had given up work on a phenomenological language, and given up on the idea that such a language is necessary to implement in order to achieve clarity in philosophy: However, the topic of first-personal grammar lives on in Wittgenstein's discussions of the differences between phenomenal and physical space (Hymers, 2017; in particular, see §§2.4-2.5, 3, of this work for an in-depth look at the development of Wittgenstein's thought on this topic. See also, Stern, 1995, Ch. 3).

[9] This quotation comes directly from Hymers, 2017, p. 43, where more information and background are provided.

While these developments are of interest, they do not threaten our project here. Wittgenstein's lack of dedication to the possibility of a phenomenal language, for example, is incidental to our goal of identifying themes in his treatment of this and related topics and exploring potential parallels in autobiographical accounts of schizophrenia. With this goal in mind, we continue.

As we have seen, Schreber's lived-world appears to be characterised by a sense of alienation from what we would normally see as elements of Schreber's own mind, such that these elements are externalized and depersonalised (See, for example, the above discussion of Schreber's articulation of 'God', 'rays', etc.): This results in a corresponding third-person stance towards much of what would ordinarily be considered first-personal accounts. However, there is another sense in which Schreber's writing is depersonalised; one which has the appearance of following Wittgenstein's suggestions regarding the 'phenomenal language'. Consider, for example, the following quotations:

> Unfortunately one could not decide to adopt this course for the reason mentioned previously. (*M,* p. 122)
>
> But as one wanted neither the one nor the other, but always started from the mistaken notion that it would soon be possible to free oneself from the power of attraction to my nerves by 'forsaking me'… (*M*, p. 134)
>
> Because of the irresistible attraction of my nerves I had become an embarrassing human being for the rays (for God), in whatever position or circumstance I might be or whatever occupation I undertook. One did not want to admit that what had happened was not my fault, but one always tended to reverse the blame by way of 'representing'. (*M*, p. 151)

In each of these cases, the impersonal pronoun 'one' is taking the place of a kind of agency, experiencer, or perspective. Contrasting Wittgenstein's phenomenal language, however, the pronoun 'one' does not appear to be replacing the pronoun 'I' for Schreber, but is instead more plausibly interpreted as serving as a pronoun for 'God'. This may be related to the fact that Schreber is self-identifying only with some small subset of what might ordinarily be considered the totality of

himself, such that the self-reflexive functions of awareness are experienced as alien and thereby are ascribed to an alien consciousness (i.e., that of 'God', among others). In this case, the perspective of 'God' being denoted by the pronoun 'one' might give evidence that 'God' is a representing an ontologically 'higher' position than Schreber: In other words, while Schreber's phenomenal bubble may be experienced as *total*, it nevertheless appears to be the case that the 'transcendental subject' that is the centre of Schreber's world-as-phenomenal-bubble is not Schreber himself, but 'God'. In this way, while Schreber *does* appear to view the experiential world as total, such that insects are spontaneously generated into his world in the moment of his experience of them, the *totality* of experience is not Schreber's, but 'God's' (or the still more impersonal 'one's'; the nonentity 'one' receives insightful attention in Sass, *PD*, pp. 60-61). When Schreber speaks of 'one' as an agentic centre with desires, motivations, etc., he might plausibly be speaking of what *we* might call Schreber himself – the 'centre' of Schreber's experience, a sort of gravitational locus around which the complex totality of Schreber's various alienated selves swirl and writhe. If this is the case, then we might conclude that Schreber's 'God' is depersonalized in his quasi-solipsism in the same way that Wittgenstein's speaker is depersonalized in the phenomenal language: For, as we have seen, there is no *personal* centre of experience to accommodate one's feelings of selfhood, one's 'I-sense'; instead, there is only an *impersonal* locus which is invisible to experience, and which can thus never be identified with the 'empirical subject' that is the carrier of our personal histories, our personalities, dreams, fears, etc. Similarly, it often appears as though 'God's' domain of awareness coincides with Schreber's (as when Schreber says, "[I]t is by no means impossible that [God's] seeing, which is a faculty of rays (that is the totality of God's nerves) is confined to my person and immediate surroundings…"; *M*, p. 281, quoted above).

The interpretation that 'God' is to be equated with the transcendental subject in Schreber's experiential world is further strengthened by the acknowledgement that 'God', in Schreber's *Memoirs*,

is characterised entirely through His relationship to Schreber. Apart from His (seemingly entirely mechanical) attraction to Schreber's nerves, and occasional mentions of His interactions with 'souls' of various kinds, 'God' appears to be a figure defined primarily in opposition to Schreber's view of himself as the object of an alien awareness. (In the cases where 'God' is interacting with souls, He is primarily depicted as *reacting* to these souls, rather than expressing His own intentions; see *M*, pp. 41, 62, 67, 231-232, for examples. Further, when 'God' *is* depicted in an agentic role, even with regards to Schreber, He is often quickly thereafter qualified into what we might call more 'compartmentalized' roles – such as Upper or Lower 'God', Flechsig's or von W.'s soul, etc. – rather than expressing 'God' as a phenomenal or psychic whole; see *M,* pp. 55, 90-91, 141-142, 193-194, for examples.) As much as Schreber is the *object* of a gaze, 'God' is the subject *behind* the gaze. The two roles wax and wane together – as indeed they must, as each can only exist in relation to the other. Relatedly, Schreber often observes that the 'withdrawal' of 'God' occurs simultaneously with what Schreber calls the 'not-thinking-of-anything-thought', corresponding to a lapse in Schreber's active thinking: Yet, while *we* might take this as evidence that Schreber is actively constituting 'God' through self-reflective thinking, Schreber experiences this phenomenon, too, in a passive, depersonalized manner (thus, Schreber describes the way that 'God', "attempts to withdraw […] when the not-thinking-of-anything-thought starts" (*M*, p. 171), rather than stating, 'I stop thinking, and God goes away').

2.11 Respecting the Schizophrenic Lived-World

In the above section I have attempted to describe Sass's project of interpreting the experiences of Schreber, and of other autobiographical accounts of schizophrenic individuals, according to the framework of solipsism given to us by Wittgenstein in his *Tractatus,* and later books.

I have also attempted to fortify Sass's position by drawing some additional connections between the phenomena which Sass describes in *Paradoxes of Delusion* and various of Wittgenstein's comments on solipsism. Some of the connections I have made above existed implicitly (or perhaps even *explicitly*) in sections of Sass's own works (including both *Paradoxes of Delusion* and *Madness and Modernism*), while others I have possibly added to Sass's framework: I remain agnostic as to which of the ideas that I have not directly linked to Sass above are owed in their entirety to his own writing, which of my connections are original, and which Sass would find himself sympathetic to.

I have undertaken this overview, and perhaps occasional elaboration[10], of Sass's project in order to give the reader a sense of the products of, and purposes underlying *The Paradoxes of Delusion*. I have tried to show that Sass's project serves primarily to demonstrate that the experience of people diagnosed with schizophrenia is plausibly within our capacity to understand, both conceptually and empathetically. Rather than being intended as a conclusive system that explains *all* aspects of schizophrenic experience, I believe Sass's work is best taken as a demonstration of the value in *attempting to understand* how certain delusions characteristic of schizophrenia might come about: Further, as seen above, Sass's own comments at least give the impression that he views his own project along these same humanistic lines.

As Sass notes, his approach breaks with traditional views, such as those of Jaspers, which hold that schizophrenia is fundamentally uninterpretable; views which hold that neither empathetic attention nor philosophical analysis should be wasted upon individuals experiencing schizophrenia,

[10] This work has thus far maintained a rather blurry boundary between Sass's thinking and my own. This is, firstly, because the evocative nature of Sass's writing (perhaps ironically; see Read's critique in Chapter 3 of the present work) raises the risk of my overinterpreting Sass's interpretive schemas. Secondly, this is because the 'originality' of the ideas presented here is not my primary concern. Where I have drawn directly from *Paradoxes*, I have noted as much. I have also noted where I feel confident that I have gone beyond Sass's original conceptions or argumentation. Those arguments which I have *not* marked represent an uncertainty on my part as to whether these should count as my own philosophical contributions, or merely as elaborations upon themes presented in Sass's works. While I am prepared to renounce claims to originality in these sections, I of course acknowledge my full responsibility for the ideas found therein, and for any faults they might have.

who (according to such views) represent a sort of alien event horizon of experience wherein all attempts at understanding fail. The value of *The Paradoxes of Delusion* lies in its ability to span the seemingly vast hermeneutical gaps between the so-called schizophrenic and the equally deceptive notion of 'neurotypical' experience (deceptive in that the existence of the neurotypical *in essence* is as much a figment of the psychiatric imagination as the *essential* schizophrenic). Yet perhaps even more valuable than this is the respect which Sass's approach pays to schizophrenic experience. In identifying Schreber's 'so-called delusions' with the notoriously difficult philosophical paradoxes exhibited in Wittgenstein's remarks on solipsism, Sass's account views schizophrenic experience as holding insights valuable to philosophy; it dignifies the traditionally derided struggles of schizophrenia by presenting its experiences as resulting from a process of grappling (at times, quite painfully) with real problems and paradoxes within philosophy.

Besides being a highly creative and stimulating work, the value of Sass's text thus lies in its ability to offer the reader a sense of the 'lived-world' of Schreber's *Memoirs*, along with those of other autobiographical accounts of schizophrenia. His approach allows us to enter into the mental, phenomenal, and hermeneutical landscapes described in these articulations, and to thus begin to see the ways in which these lived-worlds are relevant and valuable to our own. It is not my wish to argue that Sass's project represents the *only* way of accomplishing such a task. It is, however, quite unique in that it treats individuals with schizophrenia not merely as objects of a clinical science, but as human beings with lived experience from which we might learn, and to which we might relate. The fact that this dignifying approach contrasts so strongly to our 'usual' view of people with schizophrenia should, in my view, give us pause for critical reflection.

I want to end this section with an excerpt from Wittgenstein's *Zettel* which can explicate the value of 'entering into' the lived-world of the schizophrenic experiencer.

231 […] Think of a sign language, an 'abstract' one, I mean one that is strange to us, in which we do not feel at home, in which, as we should say, we do not *think*: and let us imagine this language interpreted by a translation into – as we should like to say – an unambiguous picture-language, a language consisting of pictures painted in perspective. It is quite clear that it is much easer to imagine different *interpretations* of the written language than of a picture painted in the usual way. Here we shall also be inclined to think that there is no further possibility of interpretation.

232 Here we might also say we didn't enter into the sign-language, but did enter into the painted picture.

233 'Only the intended picture reaches up to reality like a yardstick. Looked at from outside, there it is, lifeless and isolated.' – It is as if at first we looked at a picture so as to enter into it and the objects in it surrounded us like real ones; and then we stepped back, and were now outside it; we saw the frame, and the picture was a painted surface. In this way, when we intend, we are surrounded by our intention's pictures, and we are inside them. But when we step outside intention, they are mere patches on a canvas, without life and of no interest to us. When we intend, we exist in the space of intention, among the pictures (shadows) of intention, as well as with real things. Let us imagine we are sitting in a darkened cinema and entering into the film. Now the lights are turned on, though the film continues on the screen. But suddenly we are outside it and see it as movements of light and dark patches on a screen. (*Z*, §§ 231-233; this excerpt is reproduced also in Ogilvie, 1998, p. 3, accompanied by a more compelling and nuanced account of its relevance for this topic than I can provide here.)

When we enter into an 'abstract language' – one in which "we do not feel at home" (*Z*, § 231) – we invest it with meaning and intention; this is what transforms such an abstract language from something 'dead' and 'processual' to something that 'moves' (*Z*, §§ 236-237). If we are seeking to understand such a language, as in the case of schizophrenic experience, we must give ourselves permission to enter into this kind of relationship with the phenomena we observe: We must be willing to turn the lights off, so to speak, and allow the, "movements of light and dark patches on a screen," (*Z*, § 233; quoted above) to transform themselves into the lived world of the film.

Chapter 3: Read's Critique of Sass

3.1 The Winchian Critique

The critiques which Read levels against Sass in his paper "On approaching schizophrenia through Wittgenstein" (2001) are various. Firstly, Read argues against what he takes to be Sass's contention that schizophrenia can be 'successfully interpreted' (Read, 2001, p. 451) through the lens of Wittgensteinian solipsism. Such a project leans towards the imperial, Read argues, compromising the nuances and complexities of the phenomena described by individuals with schizophrenia so as to fit said experience into a hermeneutical structure acceptable to the viewer. As an alternative to this, Read suggests a kind of descriptive 'non-interpretivism':

> [T]he approach I am recommending maintains that there is what we typically call description (which is not best assimilated to interpretation), but does *not* fantasize that such description prescinds from one's grasp, *as of a participant-observer in a practice*, of that practice as a lived activity. (2001, p. 456)

Read infers this 'non-interpretive' approach from Peter Winch's writings on anthropological methodologies, and Winch's interpretations of Wittgenstein's philosophical works. Such a position, in Read's view, avoids hermeneutic interpretation so as to preserve the original meaning of the lived-worlds and practices of the individuals and cultures observed from intellectualizing over-interpretation by the observer (in the text Read refers to, Winch's targets of observation are different cultures; in our case, the target is the perhaps more heterogeneous group consisting of those individuals diagnosed with schizophrenia). Read compares Sass's project of interpreting the lived-world of schizophrenics to that of Evans-Pritchard with regards to the magical traditions of the Azande people. Read argues that both of these attempts at understanding the 'alien' cultures or worldviews which they take as their objects impose too much of the worldview of the *observer* upon the practices of the observed.

The points which Read takes up in the Winchian wing of his critique of Sass are derived primarily from Winch's seminal article "Understanding a primitive society" (1964), wherein Winch critiques Evans-Pritchard's account of 'magical thinking' among the Azande people. From this article, and its interpretation in the book *Peter Winch* (Lyas, 1999), Read takes up the notion of 'description' as opposed to 'interpretation', with the former referring to a practice of objective (though not 'positivistic'; see Read, 2001, p. 456) observation of the targets of analysis, intended to capture the target population's way of understanding themselves. Read maintains that the latter, 'interpretation', contrastingly demands that the observations of the target population conform to our structures of understanding as observers. For Read, 'interpretation' is simply the process of fitting observations into the existing schemas and structures of our own hermeneutics, and thus failing to do justice to the inherent difference of some cultures (or lived experiences of individuals, in the case of schizophrenia) from our own.

Throughout his paper "On approaching schizophrenia through Wittgenstein" (2001), Read implies that Sass's project takes itself to have 'successfully interpreted' the experience of schizophrenics. (I have addressed Sass's perception of his own project earlier on; see page 2 above. Suffice it to say that while some comments made by Sass in earlier years could be taken as supporting Read's view, Sass's *Paradoxes* frames the project more modestly.) Read argues that such a view endangers our ability to make room for the true strangeness, and perhaps total incoherence, found in the expressions of schizophrenic individuals. In Read's view, Sass's comparison of schizophrenia with Wittgensteinian solipsism thus amounts to a false representation of the expressions of the 'severely mentally ill', who represent a kind of event-horizon for the possibility of comprehensibility, whether intellectual or empathetic in nature, by others not similarly afflicted (and, perhaps, represent such an 'event-horizon' of comprehensibility for other schizophrenic individuals, and even *themselves*; see Read, 2001, pp. 467, 472, nt. 37). In Read's words:

> If there is some distinction between better and worse interpretations, some criterion for establishing that one's interpretation has sent one happily 'homeward bound' … But what if these conditionals are not fulfilled? If there is no chance of getting home, nor any clear sense of being closer [or] farther from home? Then interpretation will be pointless and hopeless.
>
> Though that something (e.g. much schizophrenic discourse) is *in significant part uninterpretable*, or nonsensical, must always, again, be adjudged only provisionally, nevertheless, that it *is* is sometimes the wisest judgement to make… (2001, p. 468)

Read's position here is not without precedent in the schizophrenic literature. In fact, such conclusions regarding the 'incomprehensibility' of severe schizophrenic experience are addressed directly by Sass not only in *Paradoxes of Delusion* (1994), but also in his earlier work *Madness and Modernism* (1992). In these texts, Sass's critique of these views targets the figure of Jaspers, who found his own way to similar conclusions as Read (*MM*, pp. 16-19; *PD*, pp. 4-6). Indeed, Read acknowledges Jaspers directly in his own summary, stating that, "Jaspers was after all half-right on the language of mental illness. 'Full-blown' schizophrenic discourse is *not* best regarded as *interpretable* – though for slightly different grounds from those that Jaspers gave" (2001, pp. 468-469). The 'different grounds' which Read mentions above allude to his employment of the 'austere' interpretation of the *Tractatus* to motivate his conclusions regarding schizophrenia's potential 'incomprehensibility': We will thus deal with these conclusions more directly in our discussion of the 'austere' interpreters, and Read's employment of their argument. For now, we will seek to understand the ethos of Winch's message in "Understanding a primitive society" (1964), and to evaluate its compatibility with Read's 'incomprehensibility' account of schizophrenia.

3.1.1 Sass, Read, and Winch

It is not as clear as Read makes it out to be which of the two interpreters of schizophrenia – Read or Sass – is more representative of the spirit of Winch. In this section, I will argue that it is

Sass's project that is more aligned with both the *ethos* and *methodology* forwarded in Winch's article. I will begin by illustrating the ways in which Winch's critiques of Evans-Pritchard and MacIntyre found in Winch's "Understanding a primitive society" (1964) apply as well against Read's proposal as they do against their original targets. I will argue that this is primarily because Read, not unlike MacIntyre, fails to recognize that his designation of 'unintelligibility' mistakenly applies his *own* standards of intelligibility to those he seeks to 'describe'.

In "Understanding a primitive society" (1964), Winch addresses Evans-Pritchard's and MacIntyre's respective treatments of the magical practices of the Zande culture. Winch refutes these authors' attempts to designate the Zande magical practices as 'unintelligible' or 'irrational' (in MacIntyre), or representative of false belief (in Evans-Pritchard), by arguing that MacIntyre and Evans-Pritchard both mistakenly apply their own cultural criteria for intelligibility, rationality, etc., beyond their proper domains of application. Winch points out that our task in *understanding* another culture is not simply to attempt to domesticate the foreign perspective to our own cultural schemas – to subjugate their hermeneutical system to our own. Rather, it involves expanding our own standards, perspectives, and schemas, towards those whom we wish to understand (Winch, 1964, pp. 317-318). The problem for Read is, as I will argue, that this same mistake is in evidence *anytime* we designate the practices or beliefs of an 'alien' culture as *unintelligible*. In these cases, the crucial question becomes; "*to whom* is the practice alleged to be unintelligible?" (Winch, 1964, p. 311; emphasis original).

Here, one might protest my equating of the lived-world of a schizophrenic to a culture like that of the Azande; a move which might appear especially concerning if, like Read, one believes that, "in serious cases [of schizophrenia] we have good grounds for thinking that *there could not be* a community to sustain [a schizophrenic world-view]. Thus," as Read concludes, "we might risk saying

that schizophrenics *don't have* a 'form of life'" (2001, p. 472, nt. 37). This point appears particularly problematic for my account when we acknowledge Winch's indebtedness to Wittgensteinian notions of language-games and Wittgenstein's grounding of a word's meaning in its usual contexts of use – notions which seem to foreground the role of some kind of social community. Addressing this point in full would take us too far afield, forcing us into the exegetical literature on the later Wittgenstein. I will, however, provide one brief thought-experiment countering Read's claim that a lack of 'community' to sustain a schizophrenic lived-world should disqualify such a lived-world from any possibility of understanding (or, indeed, from the possibility of *existence*).[11]

Consider the following thought experiment: In a small rural village, there exists a large storehouse of texts of theoretical mathematics. Most inhabitants have never had any reason to apply themselves to an understanding of these texts, due perhaps to a subsistence-farming lifestyle which demands their full attention and time: There is, however, one member of the village who, through dedicated reading, has mastered every one of these texts and dedicates herself to the advancement of new mathematical theories. Most members of the village believe the hermit mathematician to be quite insane, and communication between her and the rest of the villagers is minimal and difficult, though the kindly villagers donate food and clothing for the relative comfort of the strange recluse. The question is, in this case, is the solitude of the hermit mathematician a determining factor in her being, at least in principle, comprehensible? Here, despite the absence of a community of mathematicians to 'sustain' the hermit's lived-world – a lived-world characterized by abstractions and specialized language beyond the bounds of the linguistic practices of the cultural milieu – it still

[11] Here, as elsewhere, Read's assertions often come dangerously close to the dehumanizing claim that a severe schizophrenic is excluded from the possibility of being in community, among other similarly dehumanizing and stigmatizing conclusions (for example, see 2001, p. 460, for an explicit claim that schizophrenics (along with autistics) do not enjoy the 'full panoply' of human experience. See also the end of this work for many more examples from Read; 2001, 2003). Though I wish to acknowledge the extremely problematic nature of such assertions, I do not have the space to engage directly with them in the confines of this work.

does not seem justified to claim that there is thus no 'lived-world' to speak of in the hermit's case; indeed, we might say that there is no *less* a world-view in this hermit mathematician's case than in the case of the various hermit mathematicians living in our own time. (Indeed, philosophers reading this work might find themselves identifying with the highly abstracted, jargon-ridden language of the hermit mathematician, and the distance of this language from that of the culture at large.) Neither should we conclude from this that, in principle, such isolation is demonstrative of the *impossibility* of understanding the hermit or her highly abstract linguistic practices. It is entirely sufficient that the hermit's *own* linguistic practices, however isolated, 'hang-together' or cohere with the other practices characterizing the hermit's lived-world (perhaps including much chalk-board notation, excited celebratory outbursts at the achievement of some or other breakthrough, etc.): Whether or not the hermit's beloved texts are mastered by another member of the village in the hermit's own lifetime, thus allowing communication in the language of advanced mathematics, seems entirely irrelevant to the fact that the hermit's mathematics are, in principle, comprehensible. The practices of the hermit mathematician, linguistic and otherwise, do not appear to derive their 'intelligibility' from the contingent presence of another mathematician who shares these same practices.

Returning to our previous point – Winch teaches us that if the practices of an observed culture 'hang together' or cohere with one another, then it does not make sense to claim that such practices are unintelligible to *that culture*. Similarly, I argue that if the linguistic practices of the person with schizophrenia 'hang together', such that their locutions hold relationships to the other propositions of *their* linguistic world, then it does not seem that we can say that these linguistic practices are unintelligible *to that individual*. As mentioned previously, Winch (1964) holds that attempts to designate the magical practices of the Azande as irrational necessarily involves imposing *our* preexisting cognitive and/or cultural schemas upon those whom we are purportedly attempting

to understand. Winch observes something similar to this problem underlying the work of Alasdair MacIntrye:

> The task MacIntyre says we must undertake is to make intelligible (a) (to us) why it is that members of *S* think that certain of their practices are intelligible (b) (to them), when in fact they are not. [… Here] we are dealing with two different senses of the word 'intelligible.' The relation between these is precisely the question at issue. […] We must somehow bring *S*'s conception of intelligibility (b) into (intelligible!) relation with our own conception of intelligibility (a). (Winch, 1964, p. 317)

Winch's remarks, here, show us that asserting the unintelligibility of another culture's practices or beliefs, far from *avoiding* the problem of interpretation, simply smuggles in (by means of equivocation) what it purports to leave out: i.e., the subjugation of the target culture's conception of 'intelligibility' to our own. Such a statement of 'unintelligibility' thus raises the question, "*to whom* is the practice alleged to be unintelligible?" (Winch, 1964, p. 311). Such assertions of the 'unintelligibility' or 'irrationality' of our target culture or individual, are simply manifestations of *our* failure to understand – further, I would argue, they signify a kind of resolution on our part to not even *attempt* to understand.

As Winch points out, it does not help the person who wants to designate the Zande practices as representative of irrational belief, to show that these beliefs collapse into paradox or contradiction. Rather, pushing such paradoxical conclusions *upon* the target of our purported attempts at understanding simply demonstrates, in Winch's words, that, "the context from which the suggestion about the contradiction is made, the context of our scientific culture, is not on the same level as the context in which the [Zande] beliefs about witchcraft operate" (1964, p. 315). This move on the part of the would-be understander of the Zande thus commits what Winch describes as a 'category error', and represents a mistake on the part of the observer rather than the observed.

The above discussion reflects the problem of incommensurability more generally; i.e., the problem wherein two schemas, totally independent from one another, lack a larger meta-schematic structure which could otherwise mediate or translate between them. If we are to assume that a culture, for example, is truly alien from our own, such that there is *no common ground* upon which to begin a systematic translation between the two cultural schemas, then we necessarily hold a view in which any *apparent* translation simply signifies the subjugation of the target cultural schema to that of the observer (i.e., because our definitions prohibit any possibility of actual *communication* between the posited 'independent' systems). Of course, the existence of a *truly* alien culture, the conceptual borders of which are so far from our own that we hold no possibility of conceptual interaction, is a philosophically problematic postulate (perhaps ironically, one can refer to Conant (1992) for more on this. I will also spell out the implications of Conant's view in more detail below).

Happily for us, traversing this kind of impossible hermeneutical rift is unnecessary in Winch's account of what it is to understand an 'alien' other. Winch explicitly states that, "there are no good grounds for thinking it impossible *ever* to know how to interpret a cultural phenomenon" (Winch, 1997, p. 198). From quotes like these it is apparent that Winch does *not* view the issue of inter-group understanding to be one of incommensurable linguistic or cultural systems; indeed, one of the core aspects of his view is that we *always* have the ability to understand (however imperfectly) another culture. For Winch, such an understanding does not amount to the total uptake of our target culture's viewpoint – for, as observers of an 'alien' culture, we occupy positions very different from those we seek to comprehend, and we cannot merely *leave behind* our old worldviews, cultural and/or cognitive schemas, etc., and step into the skin of our target. Rather, Winchian understanding involves expanding *our* conceptual landscape in consideration of the meaning-making practices of the other group. As Winch puts this point:

> *Seriously to study another way of life is necessarily to seek to extend our own* – not simply to bring the other way within the already existing boundaries of our own, because the point about the latter in their present form, is that they *ex hypothesi* exclude the other. (Winch, 1964, pp. 317-318; emphasis mine)

Thus, for Winch, when we try to understand a hermeneutical system independent of our own we are not tasked with the domestication of the target to our original system. Rather, we should endeavour to expand our own original schema towards, and in consideration of, the other. In this way, meaningful communication and the improvement of understanding is *always* possible, and independent systems can bridge their hermeneutical gaps through a sort of intentional rapprochement.

For Winch, this rapprochement is made possible by the presence of very real commonalities between all human 'forms of life' (and, going beyond Winch, likely much of non-human life) in the form of what Winch calls life's 'limiting notions': birth, sex, and death. In Winch's view, when considering any 'alien culture', it is paramount to consider the ways in which the society deals with these three things, which serve as a kind of primordial scaffolding upon which a culture's schemas of belief and practice depend. For Winch, these elements become a kind of master key, the use of which can allow any culture to engage, at least in the most basic ways, with any other (as *all* cultures have had to grapple with these three elements throughout their histories).[12] Winch's powerful sentiment on this topic, here, speaks for itself:

> The specific forms which these concepts take, the particular institutions in which they are expressed, vary very considerably from one society to another; but their central position within a society's institutions is and must be a constant factor. *In trying to understand the life of*

[12] Here, I should note that calling Winch's 'limiting notions' a 'master key' could be misleading, insofar as this might imply that these notions can guarantee the understanding of a culture and its beliefs: This does *not* appear to be how Winch views these ideas. The 'limiting notions' seem instead to serve as universal *points of access* between cultural groups, or points of departure where attempts at understanding between groups can get started. Thus, while attempts at understanding can always get off the ground through the application of Winch's 'limiting notions', this is by no means to say that understanding is guaranteed via the use of these notions alone.

> *an alien society, then, it will be of the utmost importance to be clear about the way in which these notions enter into it.* (Winch, 1964, p. 322; emphasis mine).

A culture's evolutionary history of reacting to, and coping with, these 'limiting notions' inform every part of a culture's way of interacting with, and making sense of, the world around them (Winch, 1964, pp. 322-323). These 'limiting notions' go deeper still, informing every aspect of the way in which an *individual* lives their life and conceives of their death – for, just as every society has to grow to accept and deal with the reality of death, so too does every individual (Winch echoes Wittgenstein, here, stating that death is not a mere moment in 'my life', but the "cessation of my world"; Winch, 1964, p. 323).

Winch exemplifies the use of this 'master key', as I have called it, to provide an interpretation of the phenomenon of the 'soul stick': A practice reportedly followed by certain aboriginal groups, in which an individual carries an object which is believed to contain their own soul. Here, Winch's interpretation serves as a critique of MacIntyre's view that such a practice cannot possibly be made sense of. It will first be illuminating for us to place MacIntyre and Read's reflections on the supposed unintelligibility of their targets (the 'soul stick' practices, and the locutions of an individual with schizophrenia, respectively) side by side:

> Does the concept of 'carrying one's soul about with one', make sense? Of course we can redescribe what the aborigines are doing and transform it into sense, and perhaps Spencer and Gillen (and Durkheim who follows them) misdescribe what occurs. But if their reports are not erroneous, we confront a blank wall here, so far as meaning is concerned, although it is easy to give the rules for the use of the concept. (MacIntyre, 1964; quoted in Winch, 1964, p. 323)

Read echoes MacIntyre's sentiment, but this time with regards to the statements of a woman (Renée) with schizophrenia, who describes the feeling of fear induced in her by the very existence of

the objects surrounding her. (Here, I will first offer Renée's description of her own experience, followed by Read's discussion of that description).

> It was their very presence that made me complain… When… I looked at a chair or a jug, I thought not of their use or function… but as having lost their names, their functions and meaning; they became things and began to take on life, to exist. […] *Their life consisted uniquely in the fact that they were there, in their existence itself.* (Renée & Saechehaye, 1951, pp. 55-56; as quoted in Read, 2001, p. 462)

Read, like MacIntyre, evaluates Renée's statements as being beyond any possibility of understanding:

> Any way that she has of expressing her experience is 'inadequate', and so of course she is not understood. Her confusion is irredeemable, irrevocable. For surely there just isn't anything it can be for the *life* of objects to consist uniquely in their existence. […] I defy anyone to find a context in Renée's text or life for this remark. By which I mean: a context which results in its being able to be made sense of. I don't see how there is *anything* left which we can hear her as succeeding in saying with those words. (Read, 2001, pp. 462-463; emphasis original)

He further elaborates on this condemnation of Renée's statements in a later paper:

> My suggestion is that one can only really be getting Renée right if one produces an account of her that is itself in the end plain that it is nonsense… […] My question is: Can we avoid imposing on Renée a schema of interpretation that trashes her own, *without finding her to be either irrational* (not, as Sass would have it, 'hyperrational'), *or to be living a life that is so utterly not ours that we are fooling ourselves if we think we can understand it in any positive way*, or (and here our words really start to give out) a life that has no form, or a life-world that is so teeming with life that it is lifeless, or the sheer absence of anything that we will ultimately want to call a lived world, or. … (Read, 2003, p. 138; emphasis mine).

Read's dilemma demands that we either judge Renée's statements to be *irrational* or we concede that they are utterly *unintelligible*; further, Read argues that we should take Renée's statements to be indicative of a lack of *any coherent worldview*, etc. (Read does not make a case for why we are forced into such a dilemma, beyond encouraging his reader to simply acknowledge the obviousness of his account; see Read, 2003, p. 138). As we have seen above, Winch argues that asserting the unintelligibility of a target's perspective mistakes, again, the *observer's* criteria for

intelligibility for those of the *target*, and thereby fails to understand the target perspective. In such a case, the question, 'Is a statement actually intelligible?', is mistaken for the question, 'Does such a statement fit within *our* linguistic practices?' As in the case of MacIntyre, then, we are here faced with the misapplication of our own standards of intelligibility as an objective criterion that legislates beyond our own linguistic practices.

In Winch's view, as we have seen, it is *we* who make a category mistake when we assert of an 'alien' culture (that is to say, a culture or lived-world which we *take* to be alien) that it is irrational, unintelligible, etc. Such an assertion assumes the very question of intelligibility that it purports to answer, i.e., by taking the observer's standard of intelligibility and using it to legislate beyond its context – the observer's own cultural or individual perspective. Winch's methods of understanding are thus in opposition to *precisely the kinds of assertion* that Read makes about Renée – assertions which Winch argues simply exemplify the subjugation of the target's worldview to that of the observer.

Regarding MacIntyre's designation of the practices surrounding the soul-stick as irrational, Winch has the following to say:

> MacIntyre does not say why he regards the concept of carrying one's soul about with one in a stick 'thoroughly incoherent.' […] But it does not seem to me so hard to see sense in the practice, even from the little we are told about it here. […] The aborigine is clearly expressing a concern with his life as a whole in this practice; the anointing shows the close connection between such a concern and the contemplation of death. […] The point is that a concern with one's life as a whole, involving as it does the limiting conception of one's death, if it is to be expressed *within* a person's life, can necessarily only be expressed quasi-sacramentally. The form of the concern shows itself in the form of the sacrament. (Winch, 1964, p. 323)

Here, Winch appeals to one of the three elements of his master key – in this case, death – to attempt an interpretation of the phenomenon in question. One might attempt something similar in the case of Renée's expressions of fear of the *existence* of the objects around her. Perhaps – and here I am only offering possibilities – we might understand Renée's fear as resulting from a perception of the

objects around her as taking on an existence beyond the hermeneutical boundaries within which a human subject would ordinarily restrict them – i.e., the script allocated to the objects via our *domestication* of these objects to our own hermeneutical structures, wherein we perceive the objects exclusively through the lens of their function within *our own* lives. In such an interpretation, Renée's fears might be relating to death in an abstract sense; that Renée's own hermeneutical agency and autonomy are here being subsumed into that of the objects of her perception and, thus, Renée is granted frightening insight into the possibility of death – wherein 'her world' will cease to exist entirely.

Of course, this interpretation is simply one of innumerable options; the point is merely that Winch's threefold interpretive key of birth, sex, and death, applies just as readily in the case of Renée as it does in the case of the Azande, or in Winch's consideration of the 'soul-stick', etc. For Winch, the presence of these 'limiting notions' means that there is *always* some starting point for the understanding of a target group (or individual). As we have seen, Winch's notion of understanding requires our ability (and our *willingness*) to expand our own hermeneutical systems towards that of our target of observation. Of course, such a thing is not going to occur without significant effort, and we are not likely to *expend* this effort if we are convinced that the task is impossible; thus, my argument that the assertion of the 'unintelligibility' of a target represents a resolution to not even *attempt* understanding.

It should be further noted that Winch's 'master key' applies even more readily to the experiences described by Schreber in his *Memoirs* than they do to those of Renée. Schreber's autobiographical accounts demonstrate a significant focus on notions of world calamity (death), Schreber's own feminization and impregnation via the influence of the 'rays' (sex), and the possibility of his being intended by such external forces to repopulate the world by giving birth to a

new race of humanity (birth). While a systematic examination of these themes according to a Winchian framework has, as far as I know, not yet been attempted, Schreber's certainly appears to be a case where Winch's 'limiting notions' would readily apply. Moreover, while not explicitly employing Winchian notions or methodologies, Sass's own treatment of these themes appears totally consistent with Winch's recommended methods (see Sass, 1994, pp. 96-97, 121-130; Winch, 1964).

I will close this section with a rather lengthy, but telling statement that Winch makes in his 1997 article, 'Can we understand ourselves?'. This quotation makes clear not only Winch's opposition to any assertion of the 'unintelligibility' of a target culture's practices or beliefs, but also his critique of the idea that our *own* cultural schemas (here, I would draw the comparison with our individual *conceptual* schemas) are monolithic enough to consider our standpoint as observers as *so* different – *so* distant – from the standpoints of those we seek to understand:

> It is irresponsible […] to conclude that it will be 'impossible for us to understand such an alien cultural phenomenon in terms of our own culture'. There is on the one hand no reason at all why we should not be able to produce a finely articulated description of the phenomenon in question in its own cultural context; and it would be dogmatism to refuse this the name 'understanding'. And on the other hand, as I remarked earlier, culture is not a seamless web. 'Scientific' attitudes are an important aspect of our particular culture, but they certainly do not exhaust it. None of us – *none* of us – thinks like that *all the time*. (Winch, 1997, p. 200; emphasis original)

To conclude: The fact that Read appears not to consider the designation of other perspectives as 'nonsensical', 'incoherent', or as 'irredeemably, irrevocably confused' (Read, 2001, p. 462; altered wording), as an act of interpretation is, in my view, rather bizarre. Further, Winch's above statement that denying that any well-articulated description of a phenomenon should count as 'understanding' would amount to dogmatism, feels, in Read's case, particularly poignant. Lastly, the above quote allows us to see the way in which *any* comparison to some purportedly cultural (or, in our case, neurotypical) 'norm' should not be taken at face value. As Winch states clearly, "no culture

is a seamless web" (Winch, 1997, p. 200; quoted above); to claim that our own position is somehow emblematic of a larger, coherent, monolithic norm, mistakes the boundaries of 'our' group as being far more clearcut than they in fact are. In Winch's words: "*none* of us – thinks like that *all the time*" (Winch, 1997, p. 200; quoted above).

Now, it should be acknowledged that it is not the case that Winch believed that we could *never* be justified in labelling a group or practice 'irrational'. In fact, Winch himself raises two cases wherein he appears to believe that such a label is justified: the 'Black Mass' of modern witchcraft and contemporary astrology (Winch, 1964, p. 310). In Winch's view, these examples differ from those of magical practices in Azande culture because, crucially, they fall within the domain of *our* culture and, therefore, under the purview of *our* cultural criteria for rationality. The fact that these traditions and practices fall under our cultural domain is related to the fact that the practices are, for Winch, 'parasitic' upon notions central to our mainstream culture: As Winch argues, "[i]t is impossible to keep a discussion of the rationality of Black Magic or of astrology within the bounds of concepts peculiar to them; they have an essential reference outside of themselves" (1964, p. 310). With this point in mind, could we not argue that Read is correct in designating schizophrenic individuals as 'irrational', given that these individuals also fall within our cultural purview?

To mistake Winch's discussion here as a means for Read to avoid my critique is to miss the difference between the notion of 'irrationality' in play here, and that which Read needs for his critique to succeed. When Winch argues that modern witchcraft is hermeneutically parasitic on the dominant culture, he does not mean to say that there is *no identifiable logic* by which a Black Mass operates, or that we simply cannot understand the kind of thinking which undergirds modern astrology: Winch is arguing, in effect, that we *can* understand these systems, but that doing so requires concepts, norms, and traditions familiar to us in our mainstream culture. Thus, 'irrational'

here appears to be a pejorative assertion, rather than a claim as to the internal coherence or intelligibility of such practices (indeed, it would be remarkable to claim that there was no such thing as 'understanding' these practices, as there are innumerable works which give extensive, systematic accounts of how modern witches, etc., understand their *own* practices). In other words, Winch is *not* saying that these practices *cannot be understood;* rather, he is saying that such practices require our own cultural perspective to be made sense of, and our classification of them as 'irrational' corresponds to some kind of understanding of them that is thereby attained.[13] For our purposes, however, it is enough to note that *this* notion of irrationality, applied *within* the bounds of our cultural context, in no way implies the impossibility of understanding a perspective. Thus, even if Read *were* to claim that the fact that individuals with schizophrenia fall within our cultural domain makes them proper targets of the kind of pejorative designation of 'irrationality' which Winch applies to the 'modern witch', this designation would not place such individuals beyond the event-horizon of empathetic, nor even analytical, comprehension.

3.2 The 'Austere' Critique

I will now move on to consider the second part of Read's critique of Sass, which applies in the case that we accept Sass's comparison of schizophrenia with Wittgensteinian solipsism. This section of Read's critique argues that, even if it *is* true that these two (pseudo)perspectives should be considered analogous to one another, such a move would grant us no advantage in the interpretation of either. Read's argument here comes down to the particular (and not uncontroversial) reading of

[13] Exactly what this understanding amounts to – that is to say, exactly why Winch wants to retain the designations 'irrational', 'superstitious', and/or 'illusory', for the magical practices of our own culture – Winch does not elaborate upon in this paper beyond suggesting that, "[their] irrational character can be shown in terms of this dependence [on mainstream cultural practices]"; 1964, p. 310).

the *Tractatus* offered by interpreters like James Conant and Cora Diamond, among others. Referred to as the 'austere' interpretation, this account is complicated by the fact that it is not only forwarded as the best possible reading of the *Tractatus*, but also appears to be privately endorsed by its proponents. The resulting difficulties of the interpretation require a depth of analysis – as well as a grounding of the interpretation in a history of the topic – which, if pursued in full, would take us far afield from Read's critique of Sass. I will thus have to refrain from a full discussion of the 'austere interpretation', and focus instead only on those elements of the interpretation necessary to understand Read's argument.

Yet before we can understand the 'austere' interpretation of the *Tractatus*, we must first understand the view which this interpretation contrasts itself to – what the 'austere' readers call the 'traditional' interpretation. I will thus begin by summarizing the 'traditional' view which the 'austere' readers reject. Following this, I will provide some exposition of the 'austere' view itself, focusing on the points of the interpretation which Read depends upon most in his critique of Sass. I will then describe some problems with the 'austere' interpretation relevant to our analysis of Read; in particular, those centering around the notion of 'nonsense' and its designation. Finally, I will return to Read's critique, arguing that his use of the 'austere' interpretation is directly in conflict with the methodologies that the interpretation itself espouses, and ascribes to the *Tractatus*.

3.2.1 The 'Traditional' Interpretation

To fully understand the 'austere' interpretation of the *Tractatus*, and the complex debates the position has evoked among exegetical scholars of the early Wittgenstein, we must first understand the 'traditional' reading of the text which the 'austere' interpreters take themselves to be rejecting. The 'traditional' reading manifests itself most influentially in the writings of Wittgenstein scholars

Elizabeth Anscombe and Peter Hacker, who describe the motivating goal of the *Tractatus* as the detailing of the possibilities of expression in language, and thereby also the *impossibilities* of expression (Anscombe, 1967; Hacker, 1972). This much of the interpretation finds ample evidence in, among other places, the preface to the text, where Wittgenstein articulates his project as follows:

> The book deals with the problems of philosophy, and shows, I believe, that the reason why these problems are posed is that the logic of our language is misunderstood. 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.
>
> Thus the aim of the book is to draw a limit to thought, or rather – not to thought, but to the expression of thoughts: for in order to be able to draw a limit to thought, we should have to find both sides of the limit thinkable (i.e. we should have to be able to think what cannot be thought.)
>
> It will therefore only be in language that the limit can be drawn, and what lies on the other side of the limit will simply be nonsense. (*TLP*, Preface, pp. 3-4)

For the traditional interpreters of the *Tractatus*, the image of 'drawing a limit to language' refers to the delimiting of the domain of what can be *said* in language. As we have seen above, the Tractarian notion of 'meaning' amounts to representation; the domain of what can be *meant* in language is thus coterminous with the domain of what can be *represented* in language. For traditional interpreters, however, that which lies *beyond* this domain of the 'sayable', while impossible to *represent*, is not impossible to *communicate*: For, while some statements may fail to *say* anything – i.e., by failing to *represent* any concatenation of atomic facts by means of a corresponding concatenation of names (terms) – such statements may still be capable of *showing* certain truths. Further, as the *Tractatus* shows its reader the limits of what *can* be represented ('said'), it thereby also shows what *cannot* be said (i.e., everything left *out* of the domain of the sayable). The general ethos of this reading is summarized in Anscombe's remark: "There is indeed much that is inexpressible – which we must not try to state, but must contemplate without words" (1967, p. 19). In Anscombe's reading, then, the point of the *Tractatus* is to show us what cannot be said, so that we *stop trying to say it*: After all, a

great deal of confusion emerges from attempts to say what cannot be said. Thus, for Anscombe (as for Hacker, and others), the Tractarian system shows us that the unsayable *exists*, by showing us the limits of the sayable:

> The man […] who having been helped by the *Tractatus* 'sees the world rightly', i.e., sees what logic reveals as 'shewn', will not attempt to say it, since he knows it is unsayable. (Anscombe, 1967, p. 173)

We might explicate this notion of 'showing' by unpacking the Tractarian view of tautological statements like those of logic; statements which *show* that they are tautologies through the fact that they fail to *say* anything by means of their terms. Here it is helpful to briefly return to Wittgenstein's remarks on this topic in the *Tractatus*:

> 4.461 Propositions show what they say: tautologies and contradictions show that they say nothing. […]
>
> 6.1 The propositions of logic are tautologies.
>
> 6.11 Therefore the propositions of logic say nothing. (They are the analytic propositions.)
>
> 6.12 The fact that the propositions of logic are tautologies *shows* the formal – logical – properties of language and the world.
>
> The fact that a tautology is yielded by *this particular way* of connecting its constituents characterizes the logic of its constituents.
>
> If propositions are to yield a tautology when they are connected in a certain way, they must have certain structural properties. So their yielding a tautology when combined *in this way* shows that they possess these structural properties. (*TLP*, 4.461, 6.1-6.11, 6.12)

To summarize: A tautology *shows* that it is a tautology through the fact that it *says nothing*. Additionally, the fact that *this* particular configuration of names yields a tautology, while *that* configuration does not, serves to show us certain formal, or structural features of our language.

I bring up tautologies here (though contradictions would serve this purpose just as well) in order to demonstrate the way in which the traditional interpretation of the *Tractatus* centralizes the

idea of what can be 'shown' in contrast to what can be 'said'. In the case of tautologies, we are *shown* via the form of the statement itself, rather than by its content (of which it has none), certain 'properties of language and the world' (quoted above); further, these properties which are shown in this way cannot be *stated* (*TLP*, 4.1212; "What *can* be shown, *cannot* be said"). Of the 'truths' (I use scare quotes here to avoid confusing these 'truths' with true 'facts' in the world of the *Tractatus*) which can be shown but not said in Wittgenstein's Tractarian system, the most apparent are those of 'logical form':

> 4.121 Propositions cannot represent logical form: it is mirrored in them.
> What finds its reflection in language, language cannot represent.
> What expresses *itself* in language, *we* cannot express by means of language.
> Propositions *show* the logical form of reality.
> They display it. (*TLP*, 4.121)

In this remark we find, rather transparently, the claim that there exists a kind of 'truth' (again, these are not true 'facts', but ineffable properties of language and/or world) which is unsayable, but which 'shows itself' in the *form* of our language. In the traditional reading of the *Tractatus*, such as that given in Hacker's *Insight and Illusion* (1972), the *Tractatus* holds that certain truths *about* language, though in some way 'real', lie outside the domain of what can be spoken of *in* language. Some of these truths, thus, can only be *shown* through the form of language, or through key realizations about what can and cannot be spoken in language.

That there exists, beyond the reach of language, a realm of ineffable truths about reality and language is also implied elsewhere in Wittgenstein's writings; for example, in *Culture and Value* (1998/1977), wherein he states:

> For a human being the eternal, the consequential is often hidden behind an impenetrable veil. He knows: there is something under there, but he cannot *see* it; the veil reflects the daylight. (*CV,* p. 92).

This is hardly an isolated remark; in fact, Wittgenstein's works are full of such comments, which either heavily imply or even state directly (as above) the existence of some underlying reality beyond the 'veil' of the world – of what can be represented in language. Though it is clear that Wittgenstein's stance on a great many things changed drastically across his philosophical career (though just how drastically is a matter of some debate; see Winch, 2006, pp. 1-19), it does not seem that his ('apparent') view that what is truly important lies hidden to us is one of these things; indeed, reflections of the kind stated above occur throughout Wittgenstein's writings, both early and late (see Hacker, 2000).

In contrast to the traditional view, the 'austere' interpreters hold that Wittgenstein's reflections on the 'ineffable' – on that which cannot be *said*, yet which *shows* itself in our language – are not to be taken at face value. These authors interpret the *Tractatus* as instead forwarding a sort of parody of traditional philosophy, meant to serve as an example of the kinds of thinking which Wittgenstein actively opposes in his text. For these readers, then, the *Tractatus*' apparent espousal of the doctrine of 'saying' versus 'showing', its linguistic-metaphysical doctrines, and its presentation of the category of the 'transcendent', all amount to mere performances of the kinds of nonsense which, in reality, the text hopes to dissuade its readers from engaging in. Before turning fully to the 'austere' view, however, we should first explore the therapeutic goals of the *Tractatus*, and the role that these goals play in the traditional interpretation of the text.

Traditional and 'austere' interpretations of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* agree on the text's distinctly anti-philosophical bent, the tone of which is summarized concisely in the following excerpts from the preface:

> The book deals with the problems of philosophy and shows, as I believe, that the reason why these problems are posed is that the logic of our language is misunderstood. (*TLP,* p. 3)

and, further on,

> [T]he second thing in which the value of this work consists is that it shows how little is achieved when these problems are solved. (*TLP,* p. 4)

With these two quotations, we can put together a simplified summary of Wittgenstein's view of traditional philosophy: 1) The problems of traditional philosophy emerge largely out of linguistic confusions, and 2) Philosophical 'solutions' to these problems have no value outside of their potential to *resolve* these confusions.

Key to this 'therapeutic approach' to philosophy is the deflationary point that there is nothing *more* to be accomplished in philosophy, apart from the simple peace of mind associated with a reprieve from confusion. This means that philosophy, when done correctly, has a natural end-point: Not the solving, but the *dissolving* of philosophical problems. In many ways, Wittgenstein seems to hold that the real work of philosophy is simply to counter its own impulses, and to undo the confusions which result from these impulses. Here, it will be most efficient to simply offer the *Tractatus'* own remarks on the matter:

> 3.323 In everyday language, it very frequently happens that the same word has different modes of signification – and so belongs to different symbols – or that two words that have different modes of signification are employed in propositions in what is superficially the same way.
>
> Thus the word 'is' figures as the copula, as a sign for identity, and as an expression for existence; 'exist' figures as an intransitive verb like 'go', and 'identical' as an adjective; we speak of *something*, but also of *something's* happening.
>
> (In the proposition, 'Green is green' – where the first word is the proper name of a person and the last an adjective – these words do not merely have different meanings: they are *different symbols*.)
>
> 3.324 In this way the most fundamental confusions are easily produced (the whole of philosophy is full of them).

4.003 Most of the propositions and questions to be found in philosophical works are not false but nonsensical. Consequently we cannot give any answer to questions of this kind, but can only point out that they are nonsensical. Most of the propositions and questions of philosophers arise from our failure to understand the logic of our language.

(They belong to the same class as the question whether the good is more or less identical than the beautiful.)

And it is not surprising that the deepest problems are in fact *not* problems at all. (*TLP*, 3.323-3.324, 4.003; emphasis original)

For Wittgenstein, a large number of problems in philosophy also arise from treating its problems like those of empirical science, emulating scientific methodologies in attempts to solve what it believes to be empirical problems. For this reason, Wittgenstein makes the further remarks on the proper course for philosophy:

4.111 Philosophy is not one of the natural sciences.

(The word 'philosophy' must mean something whose place is above or below the natural sciences, not beside them.)

4.112 Philosophy aims at the logical clarification of thoughts.

Philosophy is not a body of doctrine but an activity.

A philosophical work consists essentially of elucidations.

Philosophy does not result in 'philosophical propositions', but rather in the clarification of propositions.

Without philosophy thoughts are, as it were, cloudy and indistinct: its task is to make them clear and to give them sharp boundaries.

4.113 Philosophy sets limits to the much disputed sphere of natural science. (*TLP*, 4.111-4.112, 4.113)

I reproduce these sections of the *Tractatus* to allow the reader to understand the scope and strength of the text's therapeutic project. While most Wittgenstein scholars would agree that the *Tractatus* is characterised (at least, to some degree) by a certain anti-philosophical, therapeutic ethos, the 'austere' interpreters take the further step of making this therapeutic ethos the pinwheel around

which the entirety of the text turns. Traditional interpretations acknowledge the importance of these aspects of the *Tractatus,* but they tend to consider them to be existing alongside many other motivations, many of which exist in considerable tension – even outright contradiction – with one another. By contrast, the 'austere' account asserts that the whole of the *Tractatus* is guided by therapeutic motivations; as we shall see, the account thus subjugates the various tensions and complexities found in traditional interpretations of the text to this single master narrative.

3.2.2 Conant

In contrast to the traditional view analyzed above, Conant's version of the 'austere' interpretation of the *Tractatus* demands that we view Wittgenstein's project as, in essence, a negative project portraying no positive 'doctrine' or system of its own, but merely detailing what *cannot* be done in language and thought; and thus what topics cannot be addressed through philosophical reflection. Conant argues that any serious interpretation of the *Tractatus* must account for Wittgenstein's view of (proper) philosophy as "consist[ing] essentially of elucidations" (*TLP*, 4.112); "where 'elucidation' is the name of an activity which contrasts with the (conventional philosophical) activity of presenting the reader with a doctrine" (Conant, 2000, p. 175). As Conant is aware, such a view of Wittgenstein's project appears in tension with many of the apparent motifs and assertions found in the *Tractatus*. Throughout the *Tractatus*, there are many instances where Wittgenstein appears to be doing exactly what Conant claims Wittgenstein is opposing in the text; namely, asserting metaphysical doctrine (as, for instance, in his postulation of networks of concatenated 'objects' as the grounding for his account of meaning-as-representation; see *TLP*, 2-2.032).

One might observe that the various contradictions between the motivations and methodologies of the *Tractatus* could be demonstrative of some deeper inconsistencies within

Wittgenstein's thinking at the time (indeed, some thinkers have argued that the Tractarian system should not be considered a totally coherent system; see Reid, 1998, p. 100; Winch, 1987, pp. 16-17). However, for Conant as for other 'austere' interpreters, an interpretation that posits this kind of inconsistency would be uncharitable: Instead, we would do better to understand the apparent paradoxes of the *Tractatus* as hinting at a larger project in the text. Specifically, the 'austere' readers believe that the Tractarian metaphysical system is meant to demonstrate – to *elucidate* – the nonsensicality of all such projects, by exposing its internal contradictions to its readers. In other words, the value of the *Tractatus* lies in our recognition that the text *itself* is nonsense: And, as Conant would argue, not some kind of 'substantial' nonsense which somehow indicates what it fails to say, but *mere* nonsense, no different from gibberish statements like 'Ab sur ah' (Conant, 2000, p. 196). In Conant's words: "[A]ccording to the austere reading, the aim of Tractarian elucidation is to reveal (through the employment of mere nonsense) that what appears to be substantial nonsense is mere nonsense. […] The aim […] is not insight into meta-physical features of reality, but rather insight into the sources of metaphysics [(i.e., linguistic confusion)]" (Conant, 2000, p. 196).

The crux of Conant's argument falls to the single point that the *Tractatus* is meant to demonstrate that there is no dividing nonsense into 'substantial'/'illuminating'/'insightful' nonsense and 'mere' nonsense; rather, *all* nonsense is *mere* nonsense. Indeed, it is our tendency to view certain nonsense-locutions as somehow communicating something – as expressing 'insights', despite the fact that the locution has not actually *said* anything – that creates the confusions out of which metaphysical theorizing can arise. As Conant writes, "[t]he only 'insight' that a Tractarian elucidation imparts, in the end, is one about the reader himself: that he is prone to such illusions of thought" (1992, p. 197). In walking his reader through the process of exposing apparently 'illuminating' nonsense as mere nonsense, Wittgenstein allows his reader to *see* that they are tempted to mistake mere nonsense as somehow meaningful, and to resist this temptation in the future.

Conant's view greatly simplifies the landscape of the *Tractatus*, which would otherwise be rife with internal contradictions. It also resonates with much of what Wittgenstein says on the topic of nonsense and on philosophers' tendencies to be misguided by such nonsense (for example, *TLP*, 4.003; quoted above). His view also finds support in the fact that some of the inconsistencies or paradoxes of the *Tractatus* are self-consciously presented in the text (though this does not necessarily mean that these inconsistencies were originally *intended*). This finds its most extreme manifestation in remark 6.54 of the text:

> 6.54 My propositions serve as elucidations in the following way: anyone who understands me eventually recognizes them as nonsensical, when he has used them – as steps – to climb up beyond them. (He must, so to speak, throw away the ladder after he has climbed up it.)
>
> He must transcend these propositions, and then he will see the world aright. (*TLP*, 6.54)

This comment serves as the cornerstone of Conant's argument: For the fact that Wittgenstein explicitly identifies the Tractarian system as nonsensical, implies a broader intentionality underlying the text – one which might make sense of the rest of the *Tractatus*'s tensions and paradoxes as well.

However, as in the case of many conspiracy theories, to read the incredibly complex array of thoughts and systems which constitute the *Tractatus* as governed by a single, overarching, half-implicit project, requires the reader to smooth over and/or explain away so many of the other valuable insights of the text. In responding to the challenges which the 'austere' interpreters posed to his own account of the *Tractatus*, P. M. S. Hacker wryly wrote; "it is perhaps not surprising that this interpretation should appeal to the post-modernist predilection for paradox characteristic of our times" (2000, p. 360). *Pace* Hacker, it appears to me that the 'austere' interpretation has far *less* of a love for paradox – far less of a tolerance, even – than Hacker's own 'insight' interpretation; as such,

I argue, it struggles to account for the many genuinely paradoxical facets of the *Tractatus*. The critique of the 'austere' interpretation I forward below might therefore be founded on the very 'post-modern predilections' that Hacker ascribes to the 'austere' interpretation itself.

In conclusion, Conant's 'austere' interpretation holds that the *Tractatus* is governed by a single, overarching narrative, according to which the self-defeating and contradictory aspects of the *Tractatus* represent performative elucidations of the reader's own tendency to be seduced by certain forms of nonsense. Yet, however elegant, the simplicity of this narrative runs the risk of explaining away, or simply ignoring, much of the *Tractatus'*s considerable nuance. Additionally, for reasons we will see later on, such an account is itself beset by internal contradiction, and is also largely contraindicated by a mass of evidence from Wittgenstein's other writings (see Hacker, 2000, for a list of such evidence). Before exploring the problems with the 'austere' interpretation, however, we must first understand the contributions to the 'austere' interpretation supplied by prominent Wittgenstein scholar Cora Diamond.

3.2.3 Diamond

Diamond famously wrote that the traditional interpretation of the *Tractatus*, represented in P. M. S. Hacker's text *Insight and Illusion*, amounts to 'chickening out' from the full commitments of the text (Diamond, 1991, p. 181). The traditional interpretation 'chickens out', in Diamond's view, when it holds that the *Tractatus genuinely* asserts the existence of objects whose concatenations serve to ground the representational meanings of our propositions; or, when it maintains that Wittgenstein's Tractarian view *really did* hold that certain truths, such as those underlying the tautologies of logic, are 'unsayable'. As Diamond writes:

> When Wittgenstein says that we cannot say 'There are objects,' he does not mean 'There are, all right, only *that there are* has to get expressed another way'. That the sentence means nothing at all and is not illegitimate for any other reason, we do not see. We are so convinced that we understand what we are trying to say that we see only the two possibilities: *it* is sayable, *it* is not sayable. But Wittgenstein's aim is to allow us to see that there is no 'it'. (Diamond, 1995, pp. 197-198; emphasis original)

For Diamond, the traditional interpretation fails to grasp the early Wittgenstein's larger goal: To show his readers how to avoid the linguistic confusions of the kind in which philosophy is so often mired. In other words, traditional interpretations attribute to Wittgenstein a view which is too close to the one which he himself criticizes in the text (and elsewhere).

In support of her view, Diamond contrasts the 'frame' of the text (which roughly corresponds to the preface and remark 6.54 of the *Tractatus*, though potentially also including comments 4.126-4.1272, 5.473-5.4733: see Hacker, 2000, p. 360), with the 'body' of the text (i.e., everything not included in the frame). The frame of the text demonstrates Wittgenstein's awareness of the *Tractatus*'s self-contradictory qualities – in so doing, Diamond argues, it communicates to the reader that these qualities are wholly *intentional*. Thus, paralleling Conant, Diamond believes that the frame is meant to show that the body of the text is meant ironically, and that the *apparent* linguistic-metaphysical methodologies of the text are not *actually* to be endorsed by the reader.

We have encountered some of what Diamond considers the 'frame' of the text earlier, but here it will be worthwhile to reproduce some of the most relevant sections:

> Thus the aim of the book is to draw a limit to thought, or rather – not to thought, but to the expression of thoughts: for in order to be able to draw a limit to thought, we should have to find both sides of the limit thinkable. (i.e. we should have to be able to think what cannot be thought).
>
> It will therefore only be in language that the limit can be drawn, and what lies on the other side of the limit will simply be nonsense. (*TLP*, Preface, pp. 3-4)

In Diamond's reading of this statement, Wittgenstein's suggestion here is that the idea of 'thinking both sides' of a limit to *thought* is obviously absurd: For *conceiving* of such a limit from both sides would mean that there was no limit there in the first place. Thus, the limit will be specified for, and in, *language* (and *not* thought) – and whatever is beyond that limit will simply be nonsense. This does not mean, however, that the limit does not *apply* just as much to thought as it does to language. As Diamond writes:

> [Wittgenstein's] statement that what is on the other side of the limit is simply nonsense seems to be meant to rule out exactly the idea that some of our sentences count as nonsense but *do* manage to gesture towards those things that cannot be put into words. (Diamond, 2000, p. 150)

In other words, Diamond argues that Wittgenstein's stipulation of the boundary of language *leaves nothing out*. It is not, as it were, that the limit divides those things that are sayable from those things that are not; rather, the limit specifies a totality, beyond which there is *only nonsense* (Diamond, 2000, pp. 149-150).

Diamond appeals to remark 6.54 of the *Tractatus* (quoted above) as the closing section of her 'frame': "My propositions serve as elucidations in the following way: anyone who understands me eventually recognizes them as nonsensical" (*TLP*, 6.54). Here, Diamond highlights the shift from speaking of understanding the text's propositions – for, as they are truly nonsensical, then there *is no understanding them* – to understanding Wittgenstein *himself*. As Diamond writes:

> To see how Wittgenstein conceives his own method, you have to see 6.53 with 6.54, and with the explicit description there of what Wittgenstein demands of you the reader of the Tractatus, the reader of a book of nonsensical propositions. *You are to understand not the propositions but the author.* (Diamond, 2000, pp. 155-156; emphasis mine).

Diamond thus takes remark 6.54 as further confirmation that nonsense propositions are not themselves to be understood; that there is, in fact, no content – no *meaning* – there to understand.

Instead, to successfully understand Wittgenstein the *author*, we are asked to discard not only the idea that Wittgenstein's nonsense propositions are in any way meaningful, but that there was any 'insight' which his nonsense could have otherwise communicated. This is because, as we have seen, Diamond doesn't believe that there are any 'insights' to be had which cannot simply be *said*; for everything outside the possibility of 'saying' is mere nonsense (Diamond, 2000, pp. 150-151).

Diamond's commitment to an 'austere' reading demands that she not 'chicken out' and attribute to Wittgenstein the view that there are, in fact, 'simple objects', etc., only we cannot *say that there are* (Diamond, 1995, pp. 194, 197-198). In other words, she rejects the category of the 'unsayable' entirely, holding instead that the possibilities of language are totally exhaustive and leave nothing (no 'thing') out. As Diamond writes, "the notion of something true of reality but not sayably true is to be used only with the awareness that it itself belongs to what has to be thrown away. One is not left with it at the end, after recognizing what the *Tractatus* has aimed at getting one to recognize" (1995, p. 182).

In the *Tractatus* we discover the limits of language, in Diamond's view, through a process whereby Wittgenstein first allows his reader to be taken in by his nonsensical propositions, and then slowly reveals his nonsensical propositions *to be nonsense*. The illusion that the nonsense of the *Tractatus* is anything *other* than nonsense is what Wittgenstein seeks to dispel in remark 6.54 (quoted above). As a result, any interpretation which fails to come to terms with the nonsensicality of the saying/showing distinction, among the other apparent doctrines found in the *Tractatus*, has failed to grasp the real point of the text. By retaining such distinctions, Diamond argues that traditional readings have failed to throw the Tractarian ladder away at all, and thus failed to live up to the spirit of the text.

By emphasizing the self-undermining, auto-cannibalistic method of the early Wittgenstein's project, Diamond's view does, I hold, capture a crucial aspect of the text's project that past interpretations have often failed to grapple with sufficiently. Much of the power behind Wittgenstein's rejection of certain forms of philosophizing comes from the process of pursuing these doctrines to their utmost, wherein they are found to self-destruct: In my view, it is this process of self-destruction which provides the *Tractatus* with some of its most intriguing and illuminating qualities. It is the *process* by which the text allows its reader to follow its own refutation of these philosophical approaches which, I believe, generate the text's most valuable insights – on this point, therefore, I believe that Diamond and Conant's interpretation has contributed greatly to the text's understanding.

However, to say that Wittgenstein *knew* that this is where his project in the *Tractatus* was headed from the start – that the text itself represents an *intentional* guided tour of the confusions of language, rather than a *manifestation* of the natural progression of such confusions – is, in my view, nearly indefensible. An appeal to Wittgenstein's pre-Tractarian preparatory *Notebooks 1914-1916*, or to the *ProtoTractatus*, is enough to give one an overwhelming sense of Wittgenstein's *genuine* preoccupation with the concepts which he would eventually move to reject over the course of the *Tractatus* itself (see *NB*, pp. 72-89, for a day-by-day understanding of Wittgenstein's grappling with 'transcendental' notions of ethics, God, aesthetics, etc.).[14] Wittgenstein's writings post-*Tractatus*

[14] Though some of the content of the *Notebooks* was intentionally left out of the final version of the *Tractatus*, those ideas that *do* carry over can be elucidated wonderfully by seeing how Wittgenstein was formulating his thoughts in the preceding years. For example, a section from page 68-69 reads: "Our difficulty was that we kept on speaking of simple objects and were unable to mention a single one. If a point in space does not exist, then its co-ordinates do not exist either, and if the coordinates exist then the point exists too.– That's how it is in logic. The simple sign is *essentially simple*. It functions as a simple object. (What does that mean?)" (1961, pp. 68-69). This quote is but one example picked at random: Similar examples of the young Wittgenstein grappling with what would become the Tractarian linguistic metaphysics pervade the *Notebooks*. Thus, for the 'austere' interpretation to obtain, these comments, too, must have been written with the intention of merely performatively demonstrating the appeal of 'disguised' nonsense. Yet, this would imply that this elucidatory 'performance' would have spanned years of Wittgenstein's life, extending also to conversations with Russell, Moore, and many others (see, for example, Wittgenstein's letters to Russell, in *NB*, 1961). In light of this evidence, we should ask ourselves if it would really be more uncharitable (let alone credible) to attribute to

similarly demonstrate his indecision between several of the viewpoints expressed in the text – including those which he there condemns (see Hacker, 2000, for what is perhaps a gratuitously detailed list of such occurrences).

Luckily for us, it seems perfectly reasonable to hold onto the 'austere' interpretation's valuable insights into the self-destructive qualities of the early Wittgenstein's Tractarian system, without committing oneself to the view that such qualities represent a systematic and consistent effort to demonstrate, through ironical elucidatory performances, the seductive appeal of its nonsense. While the early Wittgenstein may have been happy to see the auto-cannibalistic qualities of his strange and paradoxical text, his previous, contemporaneous, and following reflections on the relationships between language and reality betray a much more confused and wandering path than the 'austere' account is able to convincingly explicate.

3.2.4 'Austerity' and Nonsense

As we have seen above, Diamond and Conant's 'austere' interpretation of the *Tractatus* thus consists of a number of compatible and complementary views of the text. Firstly, this interpretation holds that Wittgenstein's project in the *Tractatus* is a negative one, whose purpose is not to assert philosophical or linguistic doctrine but, rather, to disincline its readers from certain ineffectual and confusion-laden habits of thinking and speaking. Secondly, the interpretation demands that its adherents abandon any notion of 'unsayability' – i.e., the idea that there are certain truths which, though in fact obtaining of reality/language/etc., cannot be *said* to do so obtain.

Wittgenstein's Tractarian view certain deep confusions, than it would be to imagine Wittgenstein himself to have been capable of such incredible feats of deception.

The most crucial aspects of the 'austere' interpretation, for our purposes, are those which Read takes up in his critique of Sass's *Paradoxes*: In particular, we will focus upon the 'austere' interpretation's conception of nonsense, along with its use of this conception to designate certain locutions *as* nonsensical. To understand this conception, and why the 'austere' interpreters depend upon it for their analysis to hold, we will need to understand the structure of the *Tractatus* from their perspective. This will involve our re-immersion in some of the linguistic metaphysics of the text itself, as well as some drawing out of some of the implications of the 'austere' reading.

I will begin this section with a rather lengthy summary of the 'austere' reading of the *Tractatus*, presented in Conant's "The Search for Logically Alien Thought" (1992):

> To read the [*Tractatus*] correctly we need to hold on to something and throw something away. What we hold on to is the frame of the text - the text's instructions for how to read it and when to throw it away. What we 'eventually' throw away is the body of the text - its mock doctrine. The proponents of the standard interpretation opt for the opposite procedure: they cling firmly to what they find in the body of the text and throw away the warnings and instructions offered in the frame. They peel far enough down into the onion to see that the sentences they are attracted to *are* nonsense, but they still want to hold onto what (they imagine) the nonsense is trying to say. They conclude that the Tractarian onion must have a pit in the middle: an 'insight' into the *truth* of certain deep matters - even though, strictly speaking, this truth cannot be put into language. Wittgenstein's aim is to enable us to recognize that there is no ineffable 'it' - the onion has no pit. One is simply left with what one is left with after one has peeled away all the layers of an onion. (pp. 159-160; emphasis original)

What Conant describes as the correct way to read the *Tractatus* here amounts to the preservation of a notion of nonsense, alongside an awareness that no locution is nonsensical by virtue of its own form *or* content: Rather, nonsense consists, for Conant as for Diamond, in the mistaken perception, or attribution, of sense in language wherein that sense is absent. For example, if I were to say, 'A is an object,' and imagine that I meant something by that locution – such that this locution seemed to me to be more significant than, for example, the locution 'Ab sur ah' – then I would stand in need of correction; for, the words I have chosen in the locution, 'A is an object,' do

not stand in the correct representational relationship to the world. This fact is not due to any deficiency of the words themselves, but due to my having failed to *define* the words in the locution, 'A is an object,' just as I have failed to define the terms in the locution, 'Ab sur ah'. In the former case, I am more likely to labor under the illusion that my locution holds some meaning, while in the latter case it is more immediately apparent that the locution is nonsensical (i.e., does not bear meaning). Thus, we can now understand Conant's remark:

> The aim is not to take us from a piece of deep nonsense to a deep insight into the nature of things, but rather from a piece of apparently deep nonsense to the dissolution of the *appearance* of depth. (1992, p. 159)

If the danger with nonsense is that, occasionally, it induces within us an illusion of depth – a perception, for example, that it communicates some unsayable truth – then the solution is simply to encourage a person to see through such illusions. Indeed, this statement can serve as a simplistic summary of the 'austere' view concerning the role of nonsense in the *Tractatus*.

Diamond emphasizes the role of nonsense in her own account in ways that parallel Conant's writings, but puts the situation still more clearly:

> You cannot draw a limit to thought because to do so you would have to be specifying what cannot be thought, you would have to grasp it in thought. And so you draw the limit in language instead: you will specify what can be said. That can be done; [Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*] is going to back up the claim that it can be. *But once you draw that limit, what there is besides straightforwardly intelligible sentences will simply be nonsense*. (2000, pp. 149-150; emphasis mine)

> What Wittgenstein means by calling his propositions nonsense is not that they do not fit into some official category of his of intelligible propositions but that *there is at most the illusion of understanding them*. (2000, p. 150; emphasis mine)

> We give the limit from the inside; and that is the only way to make clear *what is not there*. And this giving of the limits of expression from the inside is what Wittgenstein takes the book to

have achieved in its presentation of the general form of the proposition. (2000, p. 152; emphasis mine)

Here, we find Diamond expressing the view that nonsense is what is *left out* of the totality of language, such that when the limits are drawn to 'the expression of thoughts', all that is outside of these limits is simply nonsense. What is of interest to us, here, is that this implies that there is indeed 'something' left outside of the limits of language – indeed, that there *is* something left out of these limits is an essential point for the 'austere' interpreters, for their account understands the *Tractatus* as primarily serving to disincline its reader from being seduced by nonsense. As I have already argued, I believe that the 'austere' conception of the therapeutic aims of the *Tractatus* is well evidenced, and that their emphasis of this aim gets something right about the text. However, problems arise for the 'austere' account when they make the move to endorse such a position as internally consistent.

To begin to understand the inconsistencies in such an account, we must return to the following claims in the *Tractatus*:

5.6 *The limits of my language* mean the limits of my world.

5.61 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.' […] (*TLP,* 5.6-5.61)

Here, the *Tractatus* stipulates that language is *total*, leaving nothing out. Anything which *exists* (i.e., any 'thing' which is in the world) can thus be represented in language. Combine this thesis with remark 5.4733,

5.4733 […] [A]ny possible proposition is legitimately constructed, and, if it has no sense, that can only be because we have failed to give a *meaning* to some of its constituents.

(Even if we think that we have done so.) (*TLP*, 5.4733)

and we begin to understand the force behind the 'austere' claim that violations of syntactical form cannot exist (see Conant, 1992, p. 158). The trouble is that, in such a view, it is difficult to see how nonsense can exist *at all*; for, if logic and the world are coterminous – if they share the same limits – then anything which *failed* to be logical would simply not *exist* in the world. This point brings us back to the same problem we encountered in part one of this essay, where a claim that language is total places us in a perspective simultaneously *within* and *without* of said totality.[15]

Nothing can exist outside of the boundaries of language, if language is to be representative of a totality (i.e., '*my* world'). The *perception* that something exists beyond such a totality, as we have seen above, is a natural part of utilizing a language of contingencies to describe necessities. In such a language, any *discussion* of a totality entails the presence of a contrasting 'thing' which lies beyond the limits of the purported totality. For language to *truly be* 'my world' – for the limits of the world to coincide with the limits of logic – the illogical simply *cannot be*. Yet, in making this point, our words again fail us: For our contingency-based language has again implied in our discussion of 'logic filling the world' that there exists some 'illogical form' somehow lying *outside* the logic-filled totality. As we have also seen in part one of this essay, the related confusion wherein the speaker appears to occupy a perspective simultaneously *within* and somehow *beyond* the limits of the totality thus described, is but another face of this same linguistic paradox.

We have already seen the difficulties associated with this paradox – and we can guess that the 'austere' interpreters would not want to succumb to such a self-contradictory position. As we will see, the 'austere' interpreters attempt to resist the paradoxes resulting from such a view by forwarding a kind of 'privation account' of nonsense as simply consisting in a lack of meaning. Read (2003) aptly compares his own application of this concept to systems of, "*negative theology*, wherein

[15] See Hymers, 2000, pp. 27-28, for a defense of Putnam which follows a structure similar to the one I present here.

God is only defined by what it is not" (p. 135). The problem for Read is that negative theology, like the 'austere' interpretation, implicitly *affirms* – indeed, depends upon – the existence of that which it defines by means of this negation. The 'austere' interpretation's negative approach cannot refute the existence of the limits of language, nor that which lay beyond them, because the account *depends* upon our implicit acceptance of such things if its account is to be at all comprehensible. In the case that it were to successfully reject the notion of a limit of language, for example, or that of a category of ineffabilities which lie beyond said limit, then in that moment the 'austere' interpretation would, "[lose] the ability to characterize that to which it objects" (Reid, 1998, p. 108); and, thus, it would not longer be capable of achieving its therapeutic goals. The following sections will argue for the above claims in more detail.

3.2.5 A Negative Theology of Nonsense

> In a 2000 article published in *The New Wittgenstein*, Conant argues the following:
>
> > The critical difference between Frege's formulation and the one which the *Tractatus* endorses is that the former implicitly distinguishes between those propositions that are legitimately constructed and those that are not, while the latter rejects the idea that there is such a thing as a logically illegitimately constructed proposition. (2000, p. 176).

This point allows Conant to argue against the possibility of any forms of nonsense which might convey 'insights' despite their technically not 'saying' anything. Such a position denies the possibility of 'category conflict' in our terms, or the ability of words to carry meanings independent of the context of the propositions (or nonsense statements) in which they occur; a possibility which might otherwise serve as the basis for an account of 'insightful' nonsense (for more discussion of 'category clash' in the *Tractatus*, see Glock, 2004; Reid, 1998, §5; Hacker, 1973, pp. 21-22). For both Conant and Diamond, the *Tractatus'* commitment to the context principle – wherein a term only has

meaning in the context of the proposition in which it occurs – prohibits the existence of statements that are nonsensical by virtue of their logical form (Reid, 1998, §5).[16]

As the 'austere' interpreters have stipulated that nonsense cannot exist *in essence* – such that no statement can be nonsensical by virtue of its logical form – they must therefore come up with a new account of nonsense, and its identification in the world; for, as we have already seen, their account hinges upon the existence of nonsense – whatever this 'existence' consists in – such that the *Tractatus* can help its reader avoid indulging in it. The following two questions are thus warranted: 1) What *does* an 'austere' conception of nonsense consist in? and, 2) How might we *identify* nonsense, according to this conception?

As the 'austere' interpretation has discarded any notion of nonsense by virtue of logical form, the only kinds of nonsense left to them are those in which a speaker has not yet decided the meanings of their terms (even if they *think* that they have done so; see *TLP*, 5.4733). Such nonsense-locutions might better be termed 'language-in-waiting' rather than nonsense proper, as the moment that the terms are appropriately defined the locution *gains* the meaning that it had previously lacked. This means that nonsense consists in nothing apart from a *lack* of meaning – a lack which is contingent upon our failing to define our terms – such that *any* locution can bear sense (and, correspondingly, any locution can also *lack* sense if its terms are not appropriately defined). That there is no positive way to describe nonsense relates back to the 'austere' interpreters' inability to posit any real category of nonsense without also thereby asserting a category of unsayable 'things'. This privation account of nonsense can thus give us the first semblance of an answer to our first

[16] Reid's 1998 article, "Wittgenstein's Ladder: The *Tractatus* and Nonsense", prefigures several of the central aspects of the critique of the 'austere' conception of nonsense which I will forward in this and the next section – especially, in its observations of the 'austere' interpretation's difficulty in ascribing nonsense to speakers (see pp. 127-132). Reid's work also holds a far more nuanced discussion of the language-metaphysics underlying the debate surrounding the possibility of 'category clash' than I am able to provide.

question: Nonsense is nothing more than the *lack* of sense – it is simply 'language-in-waiting'. A more complete answer, however, demands a description of what 'lacking a sense' consists in for the 'austere' interpreters.

Conant argues that, "Wittgenstein's teaching is that the problem lies not in the words (we could find a use for them), but in our confused relation to the words: in our experiencing ourselves as meaning something definite by them, yet also feeling that what we take ourselves to be meaning with the words makes no sense" (1992, pp. 157-158). Conant's account thus revolves around the *feeling* of nonsense; a confused perception that our words are *meaningful*, while failing to capture *our meaning*. Diamond presents a similar formulation:

> The philosophical insight [Wittgenstein] wants to convey will come when you understand that you want to make use of a syntactical construction 'A is a such-and-such,' and that you are free to fix the meaning of the predicate noun in any way you choose, but that no assignment of meaning to it will satisfy you. *There is not some meaning you cannot give it; but no meaning, of those without limit which you can give it, will do; and so you see that there is no coherent understanding to be reached of what you wanted to say*. It dissolves: you are left with the sentence-structure 'A is an object,' standing there, as it were, innocently meaning nothing at all, not any longer thought of as illegitimate because of a violation of the principles of what can be put into words and what goes beyond them. (1995, p. 198; emphasis mine)

In both Conant's and Diamond's accounts, then, nonsense comes down to its speaker being dissatisfied with, or confused by, their own locution. Should the speaker so choose, they could *give* meaning to their words, but they do not do so. Instead, the speaker labors under an illusion that their words already capture their own inchoate meaning, while simultaneously being aware of the fact that their words do not in fact do so.

The difficulty in the above account lies in the fact that, if nonsense consists in our having failed to communicate our meaning by means of our statements – or, further, that "no meaning, of those without limit which you can give it" (Diamond, 1995, p. 198), is able to express what we had wanted to say – then it might seem that the 'austere' interpretation has simply deferred the unsayable

meaning from the speaker's *proposition* to their *intent*. For, what explanation might there be for the fact that no possible locution can communicate my meaning, apart from that the fact that my meaning cannot be put into words? I argue, therefore, that the 'austere' account of nonsense implicitly depends upon a speaker's having *meant* something which *cannot be conveyed* (despite the fact that the 'austere' interpreters would want to deny the 'something which cannot be conveyed', upon which their account depends, the status of 'existence').

That neither Diamond nor Conant would concede any such ineffable speaker's intentions 'existence' in the world is confirmed by both authors' constant qualifications of their own language around this topic. Consider, for example, the following quotation:

> The [traditional] gambit is to concede that our words don't say anything, but to then try to locate *that which they seem* to say beyond the limit of what can be said. One tries to pry the (illusory) content of the (mock) thought free from the words that engender it. One wants to hold onto the (illusion of) thought, even if one has to cut it free from any form of words which might express it. (Conant, 1992, p. 150; emphasis mine)

Quotations like these abound in Conant's writings on the topic, and they show the way in which his argument relies upon notions which he is unable to explicitly commit himself to. Thus, the content of a nonsensical locution is '(illusory) content', the thought expressed in nonsense is '(mock) thought', etc.; yet, as I have emphasized in the quotation above, his account simultaneously depends upon positing 'that which [nonsense] seem[s] to say'.

For the 'austere' interpreters, these qualifications are used in order to differentiate between the categories of '(mock) thought', '(illusory) content' etc., and that of 'thought', 'content,' etc., *properly speaking*. This is brought out in the following quotation from Diamond:

> The mental accompaniments of a sentence are irrelevant to its logical characteristics. *And yet it is exactly those familiar mental accompaniments of the sentence that may give us the illusion that we mean something* by a sentence which contains some familiar word, even though the word is not being used in its familiar logical role, and has not been given a new assignment of meaning.

> […] We are attracted by certain sentences, certain forms of words, and imagine that we mean something by them. *We are satisfied that we mean something by them because they have the mental accompaniments of meaningful sentences*. (Diamond, 2000, p. 159; emphasis mine)

In the 'austere' account, then, the 'illusion' of content, thought, etc., emerges from mental accompaniments which exist independently from the *logical* meaning of sentences, such that we can have the *appearance* of understanding when in fact there is no possibility of understanding (in the *logical sense*). As Diamond makes clear, "[t]he mental accompaniments of a sentence are irrelevant to its logical characteristics" (2000, p. 159). 'Meaning', in the Tractarian sense, is something which denotes a certain kind of relationship between concatenations of objects; it does *not* refer to the *feeling* of having meant something, or the *experience* of grasping a concept. Yet, crucially, many of the terms which the 'austere' interpreters employ in denoting the logical relations required in representation – such as 'meaning', 'sense', 'understanding', 'thought', etc. – hold strong subjective connotations in ordinary usage. Stipulating that these terms are *only* used to denote purely logical relations, the 'austere' interpreters thus implicitly bifurcate the meanings of these terms, by removing the possibility of their reference to any 'subjective' phenomena (i.e., 'mental accompaniments'). The problem, as we shall see, is that this redefining of our terms makes it easy for a person to accidentally equivocate on the meaning of 'meaning', etc. – *here*, using the term to denote a logical relationship, while *there*, drawing implications for the lived experience of the language user.

3.2.6 Equivocating on the Meaning of 'Meaning'

The above problem in the 'austere' account may in fact be a faithfully reproduction of a problem found within the *Tractatus* itself. Remark 5.4733 (quoted above), for example, forwards the claim that nonsense results from our *believing* that we have assigned appropriate meaning to our statements, when *in fact*, we have not done so – thus, the text allows us to *perceive* meaning where

there is none. The problem is that we thus have to deal with *two* senses of the term 'meaning'; the officially endorsed 'logical' sense of the term ('meaning'-*proper*) and the unofficially *acknowledged* subjective character of the term ('the *illusion* of meaning'). After defining 'meaning' or 'understanding' in purely logical terms, however, we cannot go on to draw implications from this 'logical' sense of the word for our *perception* of meaning; for our *experience* of understanding.[17] *Logical* 'meaning' and *phenomenal* 'meaning' are unrelated, in Tractarian terms; conclusions about the one hold no (obvious) repercussions for the other. Thus, using the logical notion of 'meaning' to draw conclusions for phenomenal 'meaning' has actually been proscribed by our being limited to third-personal, rather than phenomenal, grammatical modes when dealing with the topic; hence, the discussion of 'mental accompaniments' as relevant for the phenomenal experience of 'meaning' (in 'austere' terms; 'the illusion of sense'), while only logical relations pertain to the *Tractatus*' officially endorsed use of the term.[18] The officially endorsed definition of 'meaning' in the *Tractatus,* as it relates *only* to the logical relations between concatenations of objects/facts/etc., holds no implications for our *experience* of meaning: This is equally true of the concatenations of atomic facts and those of elementary propositions, as it is for the 'psychical objects' which constitute a 'thought' (which, make no mistake, are no more 'phenomenal' in nature than any *other* concatenations of objects; see Reid, 1998, p. 99, nt. 4).

The 'austere' readers are obviously aware of this bifurcation of the phenomenal and logical (what Diamond refers to as the "distinction between psychology and logic"; 2000, p. 159), and they trace the presence of this distinction back to the influence of Frege on Wittgenstein (Diamond,

[17] This point is reminiscent of the *Tractatus*' own position on the significance of arbitrarily stipulated definitions: "Although there is something arbitrary in our notations, *this* much is not arbitrary – that *when* we have determined one thing arbitrarily, something else is necessarily the case. (This derives from the *essence* of notation.)" (*TLP*, 3.342; emphasis original).

[18] Notice that the differentiation of 'mental accompaniments' and 'logical relations' tracks the same distinction as our previous discussions of 'phenomenal' and 'physical' grammars, respectively.

2000, p. 159; Conant, 2000, pp. 179-181). What they seem to underestimate, however, is the way in which excising any reference to 'psychological'/subjective/phenomenal content from one's language effectively limits the *conclusions* one can draw to the purely abstract, logical 'world'. The fact that speaking of 'meaning' in the logical sense may still *appear* to have implications for meaning as the word is *colloquially* used (i.e., incorporating at least *some* subjective aspects), speaks to the immense potential for confusion that accompanies such a move.

In plainer language, the problem comes down to the following point: The 'austere' interpreters argue that the utterer of nonsense does not have some unsayable 'thing' which cannot be expressed in words. Rather, they merely have an 'illusion of sense', which they can be taught to realize is simply an illusion, which will in turn allow them to be free of the impulse to speak nonsense. What this *means*, in a purely logical sense, is simply this: the speaker's *intention* which motivates a nonsense locution – i.e., the meaning which the nonsense speaker cannot put into words – is not something which our language (free of references to phenomena) will allow to be called a 'thing'. Instead, we must now call this speaker's intention an 'illusion'; which amounts to the postulation of an *experience* of meaning, absent the 'right kind of' logical relations between concatenations of objects. With this shift in our semantics, we can now say that the 'ineffable truth' we held was actually nothing more than an 'illusion of sense'. In other words, the category of the unsayable is not being *called* a category, because it is defined out of the world of objective existence. The ineffable *experience* which we had intended to capture in language is not an ineffable *thing,* because we restrict the word 'thing' for that which *exists*; that which *exists* is only that which can be captured in language; therefore, in Tractarian terms, an 'unsayable thing' is actually a contradiction in terms (recall *TLP*, 5.6; "*The limits of my language* mean the limits of my world"). Of course, it is precisely this tautological reasoning that leads the *Tractatus* to posit the category of the transcendental, which functions as a sort of coalition of all things which have fallen outside the

*Tractatus'*s narrow picture of language. As the excision of any such 'transcendental' categories is what gives the 'austere' interpretation both its name and notoriety, however, such an option is obviously unavailable to Conant and Diamond.

The bifurcation of the meaning of 'meaning', 'sense', etc., means that, if we came to the topic to understand anything about what our *usual* notion of understanding consists in – i.e., how we are brought to new modes of thinking about something through realizations of various kinds, or what it means to convey what you had been feeling to someone you care about, etc. – we might find the above system of nested tautologies of very little interest. In the end, the *Tractatus* has defined the terms 'meaning', 'thought', 'sense', 'understanding', such that all of these terms essentially refer to the same set of logical relations (i.e., those relations which allow one set of concatenations to correspond to, and thus to represent, another). As such, the statement, 'logic fills the world', for example, simply reduces to the statement of definition, 'the world simply *is* that which language can represent - i.e., that which is able to exist in certain logical relations'. Any sense of astonishment accompanying tautological assertions of this kind – tautological in the sense of being 'true by virtue of definition' – thus only signal an equivocation on the explicitly endorsed definitions of these terms and the terms' ordinary usage; a point as true for *us* as for Schreber (see section 2.4 of this text).

What this means for us is that we can, perhaps, fully grant the 'austere' interpreters the core of their account - which amounts to merely redefining terms according to the conception of 'logical relation' that the *Tractatus* sets out before us – with the caveat that these terms may not then be used to generate conclusions beyond their narrow re-definitions. For example, we might return to Diamond's statement: "Really to grasp that what you were trying to say shows itself in language is to cease to think of it as an inexpressible *content: that which* you were trying to say" (Diamond, 1995, p. 198). 'Strictly carried out', Diamond's suggestion amounts to a mere semantic shift: It demands that,

in cases where we utter nonsense, we refrain from referring to '*that which* you were trying to say' using the term 'content', 'thing', or any *other* term that might appear to imply its inclusion in the totality of the language-as-world. This would make Diamond's view more sympathetic, as she is right to note that any unsayable 'thing' would necessarily be excluded from the totality (never mind the fact that, ideally, there would be no 'it' to exclude). That our language appears to *force us* to identify such ineffabilities as 'things' (by treating them as nouns) surely represents a less than ideal situation for the 'austere' interpreters; however, we might be convinced that such infelicities are sufficiently clarified by their marking these 'ineffabilities' with scare-quotes, qualifications, and/or similar 'framing'-mechanisms, as Diamond suggests.[19]

The trouble occurs, however, when the 'austere' interpreters appear to want to transgress the boundaries of a solely semantic enterprise: They *appear* to be saying that, not only should we not *call* our ineffable speaker's intentions 'thoughts' – but that they are not *thoughts* at all (here I move from the former, logical sense, to the latter, phenomenal sense, in an attempt to mimic the pattern of the equivocation in question). When, for example, Diamond or Conant argue that there is no *perspective* underlying the 'illusion of perspective', they do not appear to be making the merely semantic point that we should not *refer* to an ineffable experience as a 'perspective': They appear to be arguing that, in such a case, there really is no *experience* of perspective. Such assertions equivocate between the *logical* sense of 'meaning', 'thought', 'perspective', etc., that it has explicitly endorsed, and the *phenomenal* aspects/associations that such terms ordinary contain. A *consistent*, (i.e., non-equivocating) 'austere' interpretation would come down to the rather obvious point that locutions like, 'ineffable thing' are self-contradictory in a system wherein language has been stipulated as total; therefore, a

[19] "The *Tractatus* I am suggesting, tells us, in part through its framing propositions, that its own propositions belong to the activity of providing a kind of self-understanding to those attracted by philosophy, a self-understanding that would be marked by their no longer being attracted to philosophy, *by their no longer coming out with unframed philosophical nonsense*" (Diamond, 2000, p. 160; emphasis mine).

consistent Tractarian language cannot accommodate assertions of the 'existence' of ineffabilities, as everything in the domain of the world-as-language holds the potential of existing within the kinds of logical relations that makes representation possible. The 'austere' argument, in this view, is *normative* - stipulating correct and consistent usage of terms within the Tractarian system (and, I would argue, the Tractarian system *alone*).

My argument above is largely prefigured by Lynette Reid's insightful article, "Wittgenstein's Ladder: The *Tractatus* and Nonsense" (1998), where she argues the following:

> When Conant and Diamond say that we must throw away the ladder *completely*, they are saying we must make the retrospective move that expresses an understanding of argument in the logical and not the psychologistic sense: we must reject the idea that the book has taught us anything, throw away the idea that through this book we have grasped anything (Reid, 1998, pp. 107-108).

In other words, the 'austere' interpretation's version of 'throwing away the ladder' amounts to an exhortation to redefine our terms in a purely logical sense, and thus to cease to *speak* of the 'phenomenal' (what Reid calls the 'psychological'). If such a reading is correct, we might then conclude that the 'austere' interpreters' assertion that we cannot *say* there are deeper 'meanings' communicated by the nonsense-propositions of the *Tractatus*, *really* means to argue that, "[t]here are, all right, only *that there are* has to get expressed another way" (Diamond, 1995, p. 198).

3.2.7 Phenomenal Meaning and the 'Illusion of Sense'

We have thus far seen how a consistent 'austere' interpretation would be restricted to speaking only of 'logical' meanings of its terms; and, that use of these 'logical definitions' to motivate arguments around the *phenomenal* or subjective aspects of 'thought', 'perspective', etc., should signal to us that an equivocation has occurred. However, even if this is the case, this fact may not be the

most confusing aspect of the 'austere' account. As I will argue below, the coherence of the 'austere' account may actually turn out to depend upon precisely that which the interpretation purports to deny – i.e., the category of the ineffable.

As we have seen, the phenomenal features which we associate with the term 'meaning' has no relation to the logical definition of the term explicitly endorsed by the 'austere' interpreters. (Indeed, such difficulties may have us hoping for a more perspicuous language that could help clear up this confusing double-usage of terms.) In order to claim that an *experience* of meaning is 'illusory', rather than representative of a real (i.e., *logical*) meaning, the 'austere' interpreters rely on a comparison between 'phenomenal' and 'logical' meaning. This can be illustrated in something like the following format:

	Experience of Meaning	No Experience of Meaning
Existence of Logical Relations	*Perception* of meaning	*Illusion* of nonsense[20]
No Logical Relations	*Illusion* of meaning	*Perception* of nonsense

The word 'perception', above, indicates a veridical experience of meaning, while 'illusion' indicates an experience of meaning that is misleading. The 'illusion of meaning' account, in this view, requires the *presence* of phenomenal meaning and the corresponding *absence* of the kinds of logical relations (i.e., logical meaning) among the concatenation of names in my proposition that would make representation possible. As it was the *presence* of the phenomenal meaning that first allowed us to conclude that a mismatch had in fact occurred, it would thus amount to contradiction to argue that

[20] It might appear difficult to think of an example of an 'illusion of nonsense'. We might consider, however, a situation in which we fail to recognize the meaning of a term which does occupy a place in our language. This might occur, for example, when our interlocutor is forced to repeat themselves several times before their locution 'clicks', so to speak, and is registered by us as a valid proposition of our language.

this mismatch somehow implies that the phenomenal meaning *does not 'exist'*. That is to say, there can only be an 'illusion' in so far as there exists a phenomenal *experience of meaning* (such that the experience *could be* misleading); thus, denying the presence of a phenomenal meaning in such a case would be self-contradictory. An 'austere' conception of nonsense that requires postulating an 'illusion of sense', then, implicitly relies upon notions of what I have been calling 'phenomenal meaning' operating independently from 'logical meaning'.

As I have mentioned above, there is some reason to believe that a similar bifurcation of 'meaning' into 'logical' and 'phenomenal' definitions is also found in the *Tractatus*. If the early Wittgenstein's Tractarian system *did* employ this kind of bifurcation, this might help to explain the text's treatment of the concepts of 'expression' and 'projection' – both of which would surely rank among the most troublesome terms that the system introduces. The core treatment of these concepts come from remarks 3.1-3.2, wherein we learn, for example, that:

> 3.11 We use the perceptible sign of a proposition (spoken or written, etc.) as a projection [*Projektion*] of a possible situation.
>
> The method of projection is to think of the sense of the proposition.
>
> 3.13 A proposition includes all that the projection includes, but not what is projected. […]
>
> 3.2 In a proposition a thought can be expressed [*ausgedrückt*] in such a way that elements of the propositional sign correspond to the objects of the thought. (*TLP*, 3.11, 3.13, 3.2)[21]

These topics go beyond our purview here: However, it is worth noting the language surrounding a proposition's 'expressing' a thought. As we have seen, the mirroring of logical form is what allows one thing to 'represent' another: The Tractarian Wittgenstein *already has a term* for this kind of mirroring. Why then introduce the concepts of 'projection' or 'expression' if these are only going to do the same work as 'representation'? Wittgenstein's switch from a third-personal grammar of

[21] I thank Michael Hymers for the contribution of Wittgenstein's original German terms.

physical objects (i.e., in discussing 'thought'-as-object) to an active, agentic-grammar (i.e., regarding the action, 'thinking of the sense' of a proposition), might be a clue as to what is going on in this section. For the 'thinking the sense' to be playing a role beyond that of the 'psychical-objects-in-concatenation' might indicate a similar bifurcation of language as we find in the 'austere' interpretation. Here, the agentic *verb* 'thinking' subs in for what I have called the 'phenomenal' sense of the word 'thought', while the *noun* 'thought' is reserved for the thought-object, i.e., the 'logical' meaning of the word.

Further unpacking the complications associated with these passages, including the implications for a psychological basis of naming-relations, for example, or the differentiation between 'sentences' and 'propositions' on the basis of some active participation by the subject, would take us too far afield from what is relevant to our conversation here. What *is* of importance is that, if the above analysis is correct, it would mean that the *Tractatus* might contain a precedent for the 'austere' notions of alignment and misalignment between 'phenomenal' and 'logical' meaning. Such an acknowledgement would make sense of the Preface's assertion that part of the text's value comes from the fact that, "thoughts are expressed in it, and on this score the better the thoughts are expressed – the more the nail has been hit on the head – the greater will be its value" (*TLP,* Preface, p. 4). This statement cannot be made sense of if we think of 'thoughts' here in the logical sense (for, if the propositions of the *Tractatus* are truly nonsensical, there is a literal sense in which they cannot express logical thoughts; this is merely what it means, when we say that the propositions are nonsensical). In this case, the 'thoughts' expressed cannot be logically concatenated objects. Instead, I would suggest that they be interpreted as speaker's *intentions*; which is to say that it is the *phenomenal* meanings underlying the nonsense utterances which Wittgenstein means to convey. This distinction is also, I argue, what Conant and Diamond are tracking in their discussion of the importance of understanding '*him*', the author, rather than his nonsense propositions (see section 3.2.5 of this text).

Yet, if my analysis is correct and the 'austere' interpreters are tracking a distinction found in the *Tractatus* itself, the problem remains that Wittgenstein's introduction of such a distinction served to make room for ineffable meaning conveyed through nonsense (only, perhaps, we are not to *call* such a thing 'meaning'); and ineffable meaning of this kind is precisely what the 'austere' interpreters purport to reject.

3.2.8 Imagining the Void

Further confirmation of the dependence of the 'austere' account upon some notion of ineffable experience comes from the role of 'imagination' in their interpretation. In "The Search for Logically Alien Thought" (1992), Conant's discussions take up Diamond's (1990; see Conant, 1992, p. 180; nt. 141) notion of imagination as playing an important role in the taking of nonsense for sense:

> This illusion of perspective is engendered through an illusion of sense. We imagine ourselves to be making sense of the words in which the thought experiment is couched, when no sense (as yet) has been made. (p. 157)

> In the body of the [*Tractatus*], we are offered (what appears to be) a doctrine about 'the limits of thought.' With the aid of this doctrine we imagine ourselves to be able to both draw these limits and see beyond them. (p. 159)

The language Conant uses here is indicative of the role that the 'austere' interpretation needs imagination to play, in order for their account of the *Tractatus* to function. Recall that Conant wants to rid his reader of the perception that nonsense could convey any ineffable meaning, arguing that instead of conceiving of nonsense as having failed to communicate a meaning, we ought to infer from the occurrence of nonsense that there *was no meaning to begin with*; that, as Conant writes, "there is no 'it'" (Conant, 1992, p. 157). We have already seen the 'austere' interpretation's rejection of the

possibility of nonsense by virtue of an illogical form (see section 3.2.5 of this text): Here, we have the additional assertion that nonsense is *not* produced by attempts at conveying an ineffable meaning. Rather, Conant argues that nonsense is indicative of the *lack* of any such meaning whatsoever. The trouble emerges, however, when the 'austere' interpreters attempt to articulate what our 'imagination' is meant to capture – for, according to their account there is no 'meaning', 'perspective', etc., underlying the production of nonsense.

Conant cannot appeal to the existence of any perspective whose content cannot be put into words, without thereby asserting the existence of a category of 'ineffables'. However, without *some* understanding of perspective-taking in the case of nonsense, Conant cannot account for how the *Tractatus* can guide its reader through various forms of nonsense such that the reader is made to recognize it as such, and thus to confront their own susceptibility to being taken in by certain kinds of nonsense. The notion of 'imagination' emerges in Conant's account, therefore, to perform this double function, allowing the 'austere' interpreter to postulate the possibility of emulating an *experience* of meaning (i.e., phenomenal meaning) in the case of the nonsense-speaker, while simultaneously allowing the 'austere' interpreter to deny the presence of any *real* 'meaning' (i.e., 'logical' meaning) in the case of such 'illusory' perspectives. 'Imagination' thus allows Conant's account to take advantage of a phenomenal experience of meaning (represented in, for example, an 'illusion of sense', etc.; see Conant, 1992, pp. 157-158), while simultaneously denying that such an experience be granted the title of 'perspective' (which, like the terms 'meaning', 'sense', 'thought', etc., has been given a strictly logical definition, referring only to the presence of certain logical relations).

Conant derives his account of 'imagination' from Cora Diamond, in whose work the concept is elaborated in more detail. Consider the following quotations:

> [W]hen I ascribe a thought or belief to someone, I must use an intelligible sentence of a language I understand. And if I understand a person who utters nonsense, I enter imaginatively into the seeing of it as sense, I as it were become the person who thinks he thinks it. I treat that person's nonsense in imagination as if I took it to be an intelligible sentence of a language I understand, *something I find in myself the possibility of meaning*. (Diamond, 2000, p. 165; emphasis original)

> The mental accompaniments of a sentence are irrelevant to its logical characteristics. And yet it is exactly those familiar mental accompaniments of the sentence that may give us the illusion that we mean something by a sentence which contains some familiar word, even though the word is not being used in its familiar logical role, and has not been given a new assignment of meaning. That, then, is one of the ideas in the *Tractatus* about the role of imagination in the producing of metaphysical nonsense. We are attracted by certain sentences, certain forms of words, and imagine that we mean something by them. We are satisfied that we mean something by them because they have the mental accompaniments of meaningful sentences. (Diamond, 2000, p. 159; quoted above)

In these quotations (as in the rest of her article, "Ethics, Imagination, and the Methodology of the Tractatus"; 2000), Diamond makes several things clear: Firstly, as we have seen above, the methodology of the *Tractatus* depends upon our capacity for 'false imagination' – roughly, our being attracted to certain nonsensical sentences due to our mistaken *perception* of sense. Thus, in nonsense-statements we can 'falsely imagine' a sense – we can *experience* meaning where there is, in fact, no *logical* meaning (because we have failed to give meaning to our terms – even if we *think* that we have; see *TLP*, 5.4733). Diamond's account of the methodology of the *Tractatus* characterizes this kind of 'false imagining':

> On my reading, the [*Tractatus*] understands the person who is in the grip of the illusion that there is philosophy in the traditional sense. It understands him through entering into that illusion in order to lead him out of it; and the upshot will not be any grasp of what can be seen from the philosophical point of view on the world. (Diamond, 2000, p. 160)

Diamond's view thus allows us to imagine 'understanding' the person taken in by nonsense: It further implies that the 'understanding' that we are tasked with imagining, differs according to the particular nonsense that one is attracted by (i.e., that understanding the metaphysician would differ

from, for example, understanding the ethicist).[22] In other words, Diamond's account appears to postulate that the person 'in the grip of the illusion that there is philosophy in the traditional sense' (quoted above) is occupying a different kind of illusory 'perspective' than the person taken in by, for example, the illusion of being able to trisect an angle (taken from Winch, 1997, p. 193; the example shows up in Wittgenstein's *Big Typescript*, p. 202e, among other places). Diamond's role of 'false imagining', here, would appear to contradict her (and Conant's) claims that there really isn't any ineffable 'perspective' underlying nonsense locutions: For, if we admit that the *Tractatus* succeeds in 'understanding' the utterer of nonsense, (by 'entering into the illusion' of there being philosophy 'in the traditional sense') then it seems that there *is* some kind of experiential content underlying these nonsense-utterances.

That there would be different experiences associated with being attracted to or taken in by different forms of nonsense, would imply that there are, in fact, different *kinds* of nonsense – which would contradict Diamond's position to the contrary (see Diamond, 2000, p. 150). The notion that there are different 'illusory' experiences associated with different instantiations of nonsense, is further implied by Diamond's view of ethical statements. Consider the following:

> Wittgenstein's approach forces a choice on us. i. We can imagine ourselves into the point of view from which the sentences we call ethical have something ethical in them; in that case what we are doing is imaginatively understanding an utterer of nonsense (perhaps ourselves), imaginatively engaging in being taken in by the appearance of sense of what is actually plain nonsense. Sentences of ours in which such an understanding is reflected will equally be nonsense, ii. Or we can look at such sentences and the utterers of them from the point of

[22] Note that Diamond would likely protest this talk of 'kinds of nonsense', as for her, *all* nonsense is *mere* nonsense: Her account does allow for differentiation, however, according to the contexts of the utterance of nonsense, and the "different roles that imagination has in our coming out with nonsense-sentences" (Diamond, 2000, p. 159). Unfortunately, I do not have the space to engage directly with these ideas: Suffice it to say that these complications are unimportant for my point that Diamond's notion of 'imagination' necessitates the phenomenal *experiences* of meaning underlying various utterances of nonsense; it depends on a notion that these experiences can differ, and thus that the experiences must have *some kind* of content.

> view of empirical psychology and of philosophy that does not engage in what it recognizes to be nonsense. (Diamond, 2000, p. 162)[23]

Here, it is quite explicitly stated that there is *something that it is like* to inhabit certain ethical perspectives. At such a point, it would be strange to go on insisting that there is such a perspective only we cannot *say* that there is. Diamond grants that there *is* an understanding of an utterer of nonsense – perhaps even ourselves – and further implies that utterers of different ethical statements require different understandings, etc. It thus seems unavoidable that we also accept that there are 'understandings' represented *in these* ethical speakers and/or their nonsense-locutions; understandings which the words they are uttering are failing to represent in Tractarian logical terms. If this reading is correct, then it is clear that the unsayable holds a prominent place in Diamond's view; indeed, its place is at the very *centre* of the view. It is my view that the same situation is equally present, though perhaps less overtly, in Conant's writings.

I will close this section with two tantalizing and concise quotations from Hymers (2010) and Reid (1998), respectively, which anticipate and powerfully summarize my above complaint:

> [I]f I imagine [nonsense sentences] to have an attraction for me, and if this imagination is to be more than a superficial engagement with a logical possibility, then I must imagine that it is because I believe that they do say something. But if I am to imagine *that* in any way that is not merely superficial, then I must imagine something about *what* they try to say. I must, in short, treat them as sentences that are nonsense, but which are nonetheless *about* something, which is just the troubling feat that we were supposed to avoid having to attribute to Wittgenstein if we were to avoid 'chickening out'. (Hymers, 2010, p. 73)

> [W]e can't but be conscious of the question whether appeal to 'the imaginative' clarifies our problem or merely postpones it yet again. After all, what are we to imagine? This presumably has to be given in a proposition, and understood. (Reid, 1998, p. 131)

[23] Here we might again notice the shadow of a sort of linguistic dualism, paralleling the bifurcation of 'meaning' as either *phenomenal* or *logical* – linguistic modes corresponding to options i. and ii., respectively.

3.3 Read, 'Austerity', and Nonsense

As we have seen above, the 'austere' reading of the *Tractatus* is not without its problems. I hope to have spelled out some of those problems that might make Read's adoption of the interpretation problematic. To summarize: I have argued that Conant and Diamond's interpretation of the text relies upon an implicit bifurcation of the meanings of terms like, 'meaning', 'sense', 'thought', 'perspective', 'understanding', etc., into explicitly endorsed *logical* definitions of the terms (here used to refer exclusively to existence of particular logical relationships between the concatenations of atomic facts, elementary propositions, or the simple psychical constituents of the thought postulated by the *Tractatus*) and the implicit conventional connotations of the terms which hold, at least in part, subjective or phenomenal aspects. I have further argued that, in doing so, the 'austere' reading may reproduce similar problems to those found within the *Tractatus* itself (see *TLP,* 5.4733; quoted above); however, in the case that *either* system depends upon this bifurcation, any conclusions drawn from 'logical' uses of the terms should effectively be restricted to their logical applications. In other words, consistency would require that any conclusions drawn regarding *logical* thought have no implications for *phenomenal* thought, etc. 'Austere' argumentation will thus only appear relevant to our usual applications of the above terms, which ordinarily incorporate some notion of phenomenal experience, in so far as we accept their implicit equivocation between the bifurcated senses of their terms. Only by confusing the explicitly endorsed *logical* sense of the term with that term's ordinary *phenomenal* connotations, will the former notion appear to bear consequences for the latter (when in fact, it has been stipulated that no relationship between *logical* and *phenomenal* senses of these terms exist; see Diamond, 2000, p. 159).

I have thus argued that the 'austere' reading, 'strictly carried out', merely exerts semantic pressures upon its adherents to use only the logical senses of the reading's bifurcated terms. Thus,

while we might still retain an *understanding* of 'what it is like' to be taken in by certain forms of nonsense, for example, we simply cannot *call* this 'what it is like'-ness a 'perspective' in such cases (because the term is now reserved only for its *logical*, rather than *phenomenal*, applications). The same methodology of excluding the phenomenal applications can be similarly applied to *any* term, thus (at least superficially) attaining a facsimile of a third-personal, objective language. I say 'superficially' because, as I have argued, the 'austere' system implicitly incorporates – further, *necessitates* – the notion of certain 'ineffabilities' for the account to function at all (otherwise, as Reid points out, "the *Tractatus loses* the ability to characterize that to which it objects"; 1998, p. 108).

Rupert Read parallels 'austere' argumentation when he states that the person with (severe) schizophrenia, as a speaker of nonsense, demonstrates not merely an incoherent 'form of life', but the total *lack* of anything meaningfully termed a 'form of life' at all (Read, 2001, p. 472; nt. 37, 39).[24] This argument is meant to apply in the case that we accept Sass's comparison of the experiences of severe schizophrenia to quasi-solipsism. Here, Read argues that the solipsist, as a speaker of nonsense, already exhibits not a *perspective*, but the fundamental *lack* of anything which we could call a perspective. As he writes:

> [A] right understanding of Wittgenstein on solipsism has at its centre Wittgenstein's use of the term 'nonsense' as a term of criticism. That is, one need not concede that solipsism, an illusory stopping point on the nonsensical merry-go-round of philosophical 'positions', gets as far as being a system. One can rather persuade (oneself and) others that they are only subject to a temptation, to *an inchoate and self-defeating desire for a system* hereabouts. (2001, p. 463)

Here, Read adopts the 'austere' account of nonsense which we have seen above, wherein the utterer of nonsense exhibits a lack of anything like a comprehensible perspective. Following this

[24] It should be noted, here, that Read does not believe his account applies to the "panoply of (*ordinary*) human psychology", wherein (he posits) one is able to "talk as one pleases" (2001, p. 472, nt. 36). Happily for Read (though unhappily for the targets of his argument) the inchoate notions of 'severity' and 'normalcy' offer his account sufficient arbitrariness to apply seemingly wherever *Read takes it to apply*.

interpretation, Read argues that, "[*t*]*here's no such thing* as creeping up indirectly on 'profound truths' which cannot be expressed 'directly'" (2001, p. 465); thus, one should not treat the nonsense that the (quasi)-solipsist comes out with as conveying any insights into the nature of the relationship between the metaphysical subject and object, nor into the problematic aspects of self-reference taken too far, etc. For Read (as for Conant and Diamond), *all* nonsense is *mere* nonsense, and the best insight into nonsense we can have is the realization that it in fact *has no depth* (see Conant, 1992, p. 159). Following this logic, Read argues that, if Sass is correct in comparing schizophrenia to solipsism, then the possibility of understanding disappears as there is *nothing left to understand* – no perspective which the individual with schizophrenia occupies (or, at least, nothing that we would *call* a perspective). At best, for Read, there is only an 'illusion of understanding' such pseudo-perspectives: And this 'illusion' itself can be dangerous, as it allows us to lose the nonsensicality that conditions like severe schizophrenia represent. Read thus writes that, "[t]he 'structure' of Sass's version of schizophrenia, and the 'logicality' Sass finds in Schreber, etc., must be understood by a serious Wittgensteinian as ultimately illustrative… only of a ruleless and limitless incoherence" (2001, p. 466). Further:

> … if Winch, Conant and Diamond are right on Wittgenstein, etc., as well as Sass being right on the salience of an analogy between Wittgenstein on solipsism on the one hand and Schreber *et al.* 'on' solipsism on the other, *then there can be no such thing as understanding schizophrenia.* It just will not then be the kind of 'thing' for which a hermeneutic can, strictly, be appropriate. (Read, 2001, pp. 466-467)

Put most strongly, Read writes:

> What is it like to be a schizophrenic? It's quite literally not (literally) *like* anything. (Read, 2001, p. 467)

I have already attempted to show that Conant and Diamond might very well *not* be right on Wittgenstein – or, at least, that regardless of whether the view they forward mirrors that of the

Tractarian Wittgenstein, the conception of nonsense resulting from their view is self-contradictory.[25] I *now* hope to show that, even if the 'austere' interpretation did not contain such problems – such that the account of nonsense it provided was viable and consistent – Read's use of this account to argue against Sass would be inappropriate. In fact, as I will argue, the therapeutic methodology that the 'austere' account ascribes to the *Tractatus* – a methodology which it itself endorses – depends upon precisely the kind of hermeneutical approach that Sass uses in *Paradoxes*.

3.3.1 A Hermeneutic of Nonsense

As we have seen above, the entirety of the 'austere' interpretation of the *Tractatus* hinges upon the reader's ability to "enter imaginatively into the seeing of [nonsense] for sense, […] as it were becom[ing] the person who thinks he thinks it" (Diamond, 2000, p. 165). The *Tractatus* itself is described as employing this methodology to emulate the 'perspective' of the person, "in the grip of philosophical nonsense" (Diamond, 2000, p. 157): In Diamond's articulation, the text treats its target's affliction by, "entering into that illusion in order to lead him out of it; and the upshot will not be any grasp of what can be seen from the philosophical point of view on the world (Diamond, 2000, p. 160).

Thus, the 'austere' interpreters *do* seem likely to agree with Read that solipsism is a manifestation of nonsense, and also appear likely to agree that such nonsense constitutes neither a 'position', nor a 'thought', nor a 'perspective': However, Read's suggestions that attempting to imaginatively engage with an utterer of nonsense taken in by solipsism is unhelpful or even dangerous, or that it is pointless to attempt to put oneself in the shoes of someone who is being

[25] I also refer the reader to Hacker (2000) and Reid (1998) for more comprehensive outlines of the various problems in the 'austere' interpretation; for there are many *other* reasons, besides the ones I have provided in this essay, to doubt the viability of the 'austere' account.

taken in by certain forms of nonsense, etc., will find no plausible grounding in the 'austere' interpretation. This is because the 'austere' account of the *Tractatus*' methodology centers around the ability *to do just that* – to imagine oneself into the situation of a person who has been taken in by certain nonsense locutions in order to guide them out of it.

An 'austere' interpretation that *did* agree with Read's claims that, 1) "It's quite literally not (literally) *like* anything," (Read, 2001, p. 467) to be a schizophrenic-as-(quasi-)solipsist, and, 2) that this fact proscribes any possibility of imaginatively entering into the schizophrenic form-of-life – this would necessarily be an 'austere' interpretation that could no longer claim that the *Tractatus* itself has any therapeutic benefit at all. Absent the notion of 'imaginatively entering into the taking of nonsense for sense', the 'austere' account of Tractarian methodology would simply amount to a condemnation of the *Tractatus* as misleading nonsense. With this in mind, it becomes clear that Read's employment of the 'austere' interpretation to critique Sass's methodology in the *Paradoxes* is based largely upon a misreading of that interpretation. One might forgive this misunderstanding, considering the semantic gymnastics employed by the 'austere' interpreters to hide their dependence on the existence of 'illusory perspectives' (see Conant, 1992, p. 150; quoted above). In reality, a consistent 'austere' account should be more likely to *endorse* than to condemn Sass's methodology, which in practice amounts to much the same kind of activity as they depict the *Tractatus* itself to be engaged in; i.e., an imaginative attempt to enter into the kind of illusory philosophical system which the targets of their therapeutic activity have been seduced by.

3.4 In Defense of Sass

In concluding the 'austere' prong of his critique of Sass's *Paradoxes*, Read writes:

> [A] sound understanding of Wittgenstein's philosophizing raises serious doubts as to whether it could *possibly* be right for schizophrenia to turn out to make sense, *even if* we suspend my 'Winchian' worries about Sass – i.e., *even if* schizophrenia is notionally 'best interpreted' as a lived analogue of solipsism. (Read, 2001, p. 467)

In my consideration of this portion of Read's critique, I hope to have demonstrated the following: Firstly, that the 'austere' interpretation's position on the status of nonsense, and on the 'perspectives' which produce such nonsense, relies upon the bifurcation of the meanings of terms otherwise bearing 'phenomenal' or subjective connotations – terms like 'meaning', 'perspective', 'thought', 'sense', etc. – into an officially endorsed *logical* definition, and an implicitly utilized 'phenomenal' meaning. By *officially* using the 'logical' definitions of these terms, while implicitly smuggling in an understanding of these terms as somehow *more than logical* (i.e., smuggling in their phenomenal or subjective character), the 'austere' account *appears* to be stating things about thoughts, meanings, senses, perspectives, etc., as *we* use these terms normally, while *actually* only speaking of one thing – the logical relationships correlating concatenations of objects with concatenations of names with concatenations of 'psychical-objects'. Systematically redefining our terms to refer only to *these logical relations* allows the 'austere' interpreters to avoid overtly discussing anything 'beyond language'; it is only by equivocating upon the officially endorsed *logical* definitions and the terms' usual *phenomenal* associations, however, that the 'austere' interpreters are able to generalize the conclusions of their arguments from the former to the latter. Thus, when 'austere' interpreters write that there is no 'it' – no 'perspective' underlying the uttering of nonsense, no 'meaning' which the ethicist, for example, had wanted to put into words, no 'thought' expressed by the metaphysician – they are *really* claiming that certain logical relations between various concatenations of objects, names, psychical-objects, are absent. If these locutions *appear* to be saying that, for example, the metaphysician is not having the kind of thing that we normally refer to when we use the word 'thought' – a notion characterized, at least in part, by its subjective, phenomenal connotations (as in, 'I just had a thought!', or 'the

thought struck me…') – this should merely serve as evidence that we have equivocated upon the term's definition; for, as Diamond herself makes clear, the 'logical character' and its 'mental accompaniments' are completely unrelated (see Diamond, 2000, p. 159).

The second thing which I hope to have demonstrated in the above section is that, even if we take the 'austere' critique at face value and accept that an account of schizophrenia as analogous to solipsism reduces *both* to nonsense, Read's critique of Sass *still* cannot succeed. This is because, as we have seen, the entirety of the 'austere' interpretation hinges upon our ability to 'imaginatively enter into the taking of nonsense for sense', such that we can help lead those who have been seduced by particular nonsense-statements out of their illusory 'non-perspectives'. Thus, even if we accept that schizophrenia really is representative of a kind of nonsense-perspective, it becomes all the more important to try to imaginatively recreate the way in which such nonsense ensnared its victims, so as to therapeutically treat the ailment through the strategic application of elucidatory nonsense – i.e., thus replicating the *Tractatus*' own methodology.[26] Of course, the above points should be taken as evidence of the suitability of 'austere' readings of Wittgenstein's therapeutic philosophy as a basis for a clinical approach to people with schizophrenia; it *does*, however, appear to proscribe the use of the 'austere' reading of the *Tractatus* as a basis for a theoretical critique of Sass's interpretive project.

[26] Read acknowledges something like this point in footnote 62 of his "On approaching schizophrenia through Wittgenstein" (2001, pp. 473-474), and briefly alludes to the point again in "On Delusions of Sense: A Response to Coetzee and Sass" (2003, p. 137). Interestingly, however, he does not appear to view this as overly problematic for his critique of Sass's approach. Further – when acknowledging this point, Read merely moves the goalposts of his critique, suggesting a lack of 'self-consciousness' in Sass's employment of nonsense (Read, 2001, pp. 473-474).

Chapter 4: Conclusion

In this work, I have attempted to defend the interpretive project found in Louis Sass's *The Paradoxes of Delusion* (1994). I did this first by exploring, elaborating upon, and expanding the text's comparison between certain experiences characteristic of schizophrenia, and Wittgensteinian treatments of 'solipsism'. This positive defense of Sass's project at times involved exploring the linguistic metaphysics of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1974/1921), along with some themes emergent from this early period of Wittgenstein's philosophy, including that of the 'linguistic dualism' and the depersonalized grammar of a phenomenal language. As an additional piece of interpretive evidence in support of Sass's project, I used the notion of quasi-solipsistic self-world interdependence to interpret the experience of fragility of self and world that is associated with the phenomenon of staring in schizophrenia. Finally, I argued that Sass's project represents a much-needed demonstration of the possibility of interpretation for schizophrenia, and that such a demonstration is key to improving our society's humanization of and respect for schizophrenic lived-worlds.

The second part of this work constituted an attempted refutation of the critiques of Sass's interpretive project forwarded by Rupert Read in "On approaching schizophrenia through Wittgenstein" (2001). My refutation of this critique paralleled the structure of the critique itself, focusing first on Read's use of Peter Winch's "Understanding a Primitive Society" (1964), followed by his appropriation of aspects of the 'austere' interpretation of the *Tractatus*. I argued that Winch's approach to understanding another culture actually contradicts the assertions made by Read regarding the 'unintelligibility' of the experience of individuals with (severe) schizophrenia: Here, I attempted to illustrate the parallels between Read's comments and those of Alasdair MacIntyre (as reproduced in Winch's above 1964 article), to show the ways in which Winch's rejection of

MacIntyre's assertions of the 'unintelligibility' of the magical practices of the Azande could be read equally as a refutation of Read's assertions of the 'unintelligibility' of (severe) schizophrenia.

Following a treatment of the Winchian wing of Read's critique, I endeavoured a detailed analysis of the 'austere' interpretation, which served as (admittedly distant) ground for Read's remark: "What is it like to be schizophrenic? It's quite literally not (literally) *like* anything" (2001, p. 467). In order to effectively refute this claim, I first outlined the exegetical debate surrounding the *Tractatus* out of which the 'austere' interpretation arises, detailing the structure of the 'austere' position on the concepts of nonsense and ineffability in the text. This required a substantial amount of unpacking of the (apparent) linguistic metaphysics found in the *Tractatus* itself, and I ended this section by arguing that, regardless of the accuracy of the 'austere' depiction of Tractarian philosophy, the interpretation is either untenable or uninteresting. I argued for this conclusion by considering the role of 'imagination' as well as 'illusions of sense' in the 'austere' interpretation, wherein the interpretation depends for its coherence upon precisely those notions of 'ineffability' which it claims to reject: It masks this dependence by bifurcating its terminology into explicitly endorsed 'logical' definitions and implicitly relied upon 'phenomenal' associations of its terms. The account is thus *uninteresting* if we interpret it consistently, restricting its application to the explicit logical definitions it endorses. The interpretation becomes *untenable* if we allow it to equivocate on its terminology, so that its employment of 'logically' defined terms might appear to have significance for our *usual* applications of the terms – terms which, in our usual language, include associations with phenomenal aspects, or 'mental accompaniments'.[27]

[27] I take it as further evidence of the phenomenal aspects of these terms' ordinary usage that Conant and Diamond, as Wittgenstein and Frege before them, perceive it to be necessary to stipulate that *their* usage of these terms excluded such mental/psychological phenomena (see Diamond, 2000, p. 159; Conant, 2000, pp. 180-181, n. 80, 86).

I used the above argument, along with references to more developed refutations of the position (see Reid, 1998; Hymers, 2010; Hacker, 2000), to cast doubt on the viability of the 'austere' interpretation; particularly, the interpretation's notions of nonsense and ineffability, upon which Read's argument depends. However, to conclude the section, I bracketed these concerns to consider the relationship between Read's and the 'austere' position. I argued that Read's position rests upon a misunderstanding of the 'austere' interpretation, whose account depends upon the application of 'imagination' as a means to recreate the 'non'-perspective of someone attracted to nonsense to make sense of their account of the *Tractatus*' therapeutic methodology. Thus, I concluded, Read's assertion that a 'quasi-solipsistic' understanding of schizophrenia prohibits hermeneutical interpretation, is at odds with the therapeutic ethos of the 'austere' interpretation. As Diamond writes:

> My point then is that the *Tractatus*, in its understanding of itself as addressed to those who are in the grip of philosophical nonsense, and in its understanding of the kind of demands it makes on its readers, supposes a kind of imaginative activity, an exercise of the capacity to enter into the taking of nonsense for sense, of the capacity to share imaginatively the inclination to think that one is thinking something in it. *If I could not as it were see your nonsense as sense, imaginatively let myself feel its attractiveness, I could not understand you.* (Diamond, 2000, pp. 157-158; emphasis mine)

In this work I have attempted to defend Sass's interpretive efforts with regards to schizophrenia. I have undertaken this project because, in my view, Sass's *The Paradoxes of Delusion* (1994) represents a uniquely respectful and even dignifying approach to the experience of those with schizophrenia; an approach which stands against the bulk of historical accounts of schizophrenia by taking as its *starting point* the value and relevance of such experience for psychology, philosophy, and for a greater understanding of the panoply of human existence more generally. Incorporating a belief in the dignity and relevance of human experience, 'disordered' or no, as an *axiom* of one's approach is the only way in which true understanding is made possible:[28] One (presumably, here, excluding

[28] Though this by no means is to say that the inclusion of such an axiom *guarantees* understanding.

Read) need only revisit the work of Peter Winch to be assured of this. Thus, it is not only the project undertaken by Sass that I have sought to defend by means of this work, but also what that project represents: namely, a respectful, dignifying, and *humanizing* approach to the experience of individuals with schizophrenia. That such an approach contrasts so strongly to the bulk of the literature on the topic, such that the group it discusses stands in genuine need of *humanization* in the literature, is obviously problematic. The normalization of the dehumanization of individuals with schizophrenia, and the devaluation of their experience – and the complicity of philosophical and psychological discourse in this dehumanization – can only be described as appalling.

This brings me to my final, concluding point. It is with sincere regret that the present work engages with the views Read forwards in "On approaching schizophrenia through Wittgenstein" (2001) from the perspective of philosophical analysis. In addressing these kinds of assertions in this way, I feel that I have failed to capture the true problem at hand: For, it should be noted, my qualms with the kinds of assertions that Read makes in his above-mentioned article are not at all related to the infelicities in his argumentation. Rather, my problem with Read comes from the *way he talks* about individuals with schizophrenia. It is my view that a self-respecting philosophy, psychiatry, or psychology should not give voice to the sort of claims which Read so flippantly makes in his work.

I am also keenly aware that the kinds of attitudes found in Read's work are not exclusive to Read. For this reason, too, I feel it necessary to reproduce below some of the assertions found in Read's articles – in the spirit of accountability and in the hopes that future authors might be more hesitant to adopt similar rhetoric. I reproduce these comments with as little alteration as possible, and absent any additional commentary, in order to compensate for the role the present work might

otherwise play in presenting such positions as worthy of philosophical engagement. I leave it up to my reader to judge Read's position for themselves, in light of the following statements:[29]

> [A]s I argued in my original paper, [the works of great novelists can] brilliantly provide us with the illusion that we are now *understanding* (in the usual sense of that word) an idiot, or a schizophrenic, or what-have-you. (2003, p. 136)

> Can we avoid imposing on Renée a schema of interpretation that trashes her own, without finding her to be either irrational (not, as Sass would have it, 'hyperrational'), or to be living a life that is so utterly not ours that we are fooling ourselves if we think we can understand it in any positive way, or (and here our words really start to give out) a life that has no form, or a life-world that is so teeming with life that it is lifeless, *or the sheer absence of anything that we will ultimately want to call a lived world*, or. . . . (2003, p. 138; emphasis mine)

> [T]here is a serious issue as to whether in serious cases of schizophrenia there can be any question of taking seriously any affirmation which a schizophrenic were to make of one's interpretation of their condition, thought or feelings. Because their schizophrenia (launching them as it arguably does on a hyperreflexive 'journey' which issues in nothing consistent) deprives them of being able to be taken seriously in any such affirmation (or denial)[.] (2001, p. 459)

> The breach between us and 'solipsistic schizophrenics', […] is then, it must seem, irreparable. (2001, p. 459).

> The full panoply of human expression and action, including perception, desire and affect, is needed [in order for a person to be intelligible]. Where one of these is, we want to say, wholly lacking, as in some autism and schizophrenia, I think we just don't know in the end what to say about the experience of the persons concerned. […] [T]here's nothing there to understand. We are faced with sheer nonsense. (2001, p. 460)

> While there is, perhaps, something one can call a Zande 'belief system' in action, albeit by our lights a pretty peculiar 'system', there is often in schizophrenics *only* the illusion of a system – almost invariably with no community to sustain it. (2001, p. 460)

[29] I note here the *singular* instance in either of the articles from which I have selected these remarks, wherein Read states anything remotely conciliatory with regards to those with schizophrenia, severe or otherwise: "Real human beings with severe psychopathologies deserve impossible degrees of compassion for the unfathomable terror and isolation they suffer" (p. 140). I leave it up to my reader to decide whether this comment suffices to offset the messages found in the rest of Read's commentary.

We might even say that there cannot, logically, be true self-understandings in severe schizophrenics (to facilitate criteria for others accurately understanding them). And without the existence of those, there can be no production of comprehension-yielding descriptions which could be the basis for interpretation(s). (2001, p. 461)

Any ways that [Renée] has of expressing her experience is 'inadequate', and so of course she is not understood. Her confusion is irredeemable, irrevocable. (2001, p. 462; here, Read refers to the author of *Autobiography of a schizophrenic girl*; Renée & Saechehaye, 1951)

[*T*]*here can be no such thing as understanding schizophrenia*. (2001, p. 466-467)

What we in fact have, after reading Sass, is, then – and this is very important – a much better chance of *not* hearing (say) Schreber's writings as simply an eruption of formless garbage, 'word salad', or some such. *They* are *that*; but not *only* that, we might risk saying. (2001, p. 467; note that Read is presenting this as a problematic feature of Sass's account)

What is it like to be schizophrenic? It's quite literally not (literally) *like* anything. (2001, p. 467)

There cannot be a successful interpretation of serious schizophrenia, because there *cannot* be true self-understandings of people with schizophrenia there to be the basis for such interpretations. Any interpretation will fail to present effectively the central aspects of the phenomenon, which are best regarded as nonsensical, as literally incomprehensible. (2001, p. 467)

[S]chizophrenia is – in its more challenging and serious aspects – 'something' that we have always implicitly known is incomprehensible… because there is in the end no thing there for us to understand, not even a 'world'. (There is only a mass of contradictions, which is as much – and as little – as to say: nothing.) (2001, p. 469)

What we can be intelligibly said to understand in another, in the sense of understanding what their actions are, or understanding their motives for action, or 'empathetically' understanding them, etc., is (most of) the hurly-burly and variety of ordinary life. But most serious schizophrenia does not fall under that heading. (2001, p. 469)

Sass does not adequately consider the possibility that Schreber's words cannot be properly understood as a form of *thinking*. (2001, p. 469)

[S]ome people's words (namely, a severe schizophrenic's words) cannot in the end be understood as a form of thinking *at all*. (2001, p. 469)

If we must conclude what I am urging us to conclude, then that ought to give us a certain sense of regret and 'loss' – but I have suggested that it is not a loss that is avoidable that can be reversed; it is important to see that in one important respect there is, if I am right, nothing that has actually been lost. (2001, p. 470)

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