

## INTRODUCTION

Of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Wittgenstein wrote: “Perhaps this book will be understood only by someone who has himself already had the thoughts that are expressed in it—or at least similar thoughts.—So it is not a textbook.” The same may be said of the present work.

Critics will attack this *Tractatus* on a number of grounds. The religious liberals, the presuppositionalists, and the pietists will dismiss it as a work of rationalism. Theological conservatives will say that Wittgenstein was little more than a misguided mystic and unworthy of offering methodological insights in the religious area. Many in the philosophical community will say that a work such as this shows no recognition of the replacement of Wittgenstein I by Wittgenstein II—the Wittgenstein of the *Philosophical Investigations*, who allegedly gave up all interest in verification for the sake of linguistic analysis and the substitution of puzzles for genuine philosophical problems.

Since the present work is only structurally modeled on the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, much of this criticism will be beside the point. But we note *en passant* that Wittgenstein himself wanted his *Philosophical Investigations*, if published, to appear bound together with his *Tractatus*: surely indicating that he did not intend his language games to float free of all relationship with the world, much less of verification. G. A. Smith has quite properly shown that Wittgenstein’s later philosophy of language creates legitimate scepticism concerning “the presumption that rational, logical thinking is always or ultimately a deductive mental process. But this is not to cast doubt on the possibility of rational, logical thinking.”<sup>1</sup> And to those in philosophy and in religion who regard verification as unimportant, we point out the obvious: either they think that all mutually contradictory positions are somehow true; or they are unconcerned with the effects of metaphysical error on individual and societal life. One would think that the events of 11 September 2001 would have put paid to such indifferentism.

The author, though an undergraduate majoring in philosophy and the classics at Cornell University during the time Wittgenstein visited Norman

<sup>1</sup> Gene Anne Smith, “Wittgenstein and the Sceptical Fallacy,” 3/2 *Canadian J. of Law and Jurisprudence* 155 at 179-80 (July 1990); cf. C. B. Daly, “New Light on Wittgenstein,” 10 *Philosophical Studies* 5-49 (1960).

Malcolm, never had the privilege of meeting Wittgenstein. There was contact with Malcolm, who perhaps understood Wittgenstein better than any other<sup>2</sup>; and I cut my teeth in formal logic under the instruction of Max Black, who allegedly was one of the very few to have understood on first reading Russell and Whitehead's argumentation in their *Principia Mathematica*. But my own studies focused on philosophy of religion and my chief mentor was Edwin A. Burtt, author of *The Metaphysical Foundations of Modern Science*. After Cornell, I pursued graduate studies in fields other than philosophy, having already come to appreciate that though traditional philosophy could eloquently articulate the problems, it was incapable of supplying the solutions so desperately needed by a fallen race. My *Tractatus*, whose writing literally spans some thirty-five years, is designed to combine a serious look at those problems with the only ultimately verifiable and satisfying solution.

It should not be inappropriate, therefore, to commandeer the final paragraph of Wittgenstein's Preface to his *Tractatus*—with the change of a single word: "... the truth of the thoughts that are here set forth seems to me unassailable and definitive. I therefore believe myself to have found, on all essential points, the final solution of the problems. And if I am not mistaken in this belief, then the ... thing in which the value of this work consists is that it shows how *much* is achieved when these problems are solved."

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Easter Day, A.D. 2002

<sup>2</sup> "In 1949, when Wittgenstein visited Malcolm at Cornell and sat in on one of his seminars, a student asked who the old guy was at the back—'impersonating Malcolm'" (David Edmonds and John Eidinow, *Wittgenstein's Poker* [London: Faber and Faber, 2001], p. 33; cf. pp. 202, 263).

Often as we walked together he would stop and exclaim “Oh, my God!,” looking at me almost piteously, as if imploring a divine intervention in human events.

— Norman Malcolm, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Memoir*, p. 32.

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If you can accept the miracle that God became man, then all of these difficulties are as nothing ... What inclines even me to believe in Christ’s Resurrection? It is as though I play with the thought.—If he did not rise from the dead, then he decomposed in the grave like any other man. *He is dead and decomposed*. In that case he is a teacher like any other and can no longer *help*; and once more we are orphaned and alone. And we must content ourselves with wisdom and speculation. We are as it were in a hell, where we can only dream, and are as it were cut off from heaven by a roof. But if I am to be *really* saved—then I need *certainty*—not wisdom, dreams, speculation—and this certainty is faith. And faith is faith in what my heart, my *soul* needs, not my speculative intelligence. For it is my soul, with its passions, as it were with its flesh and blood, that must be saved, not my abstract mind.

—Ludwig Wittgenstein, cited in *Wittgenstein: A Religious Point of View?*, ed. Norman Malcolm, pp. 13, 17.

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Il y a assez de lumière pour ceux qui ne désirent que de voir, et assez d’obscurité pour ceux qui ont une disposition contraire.

—Pascal, *Pensées*, No. 430.

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We can believe what we choose. We are answerable for what we choose to believe.

—John Henry Newman.

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Was sich überhaupt sagen läßt, läßt sich klar sagen.

—Wittgenstein, Preface to the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*.



## TABLE OF MAJOR PROPOSITIONS

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