A Taste of Wittgenstein for SFBT. 1: The *Tractatus**

Nick Drury

Wittgenstein holds a special place in Solution-Focused Brief Therapy due, in no small part, to his idea that " *... problems are solved in the literal sense of the word — dissolved like a lump of sugar in water*" (2005, §421).[1] In the last twenty years there has been renewed interest by philosophers in Wittgenstein due to a relatively new perspective on his work known as the 'resolute reading' or the New Wittgenstein (Read & Crary, 2000; Fischer, 2011). This is the idea that Wittgenstein's work can be looked upon as primarily a form of therapy for untangling knots or conceptual confusions in our thinking generated by philosophical assumptions, in order that we might be more attuned to the world and each other.[2] There is also a more subtle version of this, known as the 'elucidatory reading', which says not only are we more present as a result of this philosophical therapy, but we are also more aware of what gets us into philosophical knots (Hutto, 2003/2006). This may be of some interest to psychotherapists as they also have interest in dissolving problems so that people can get on with their lives more harmoniously. This, the first of two papers overviewing Wittgenstein's work, focuses on his early work and life.

Introduction

This paper attempts to weave a summary of Wittgenstein's first efforts at providing a philosophical therapy within an account of his life, as I think it helpful in developing our understanding of his 'philosophy as therapy' to know a little of his life and times. However the danger in writing biographies (and no doubt summaries), one of his executors (Anscombe) once remarked, is that

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* The second paper, "A taste of Wittgenstein for SFBT. 2: *Philosophical Investigations*", will appear in the next issue.
1. All references to Wittgenstein will just include date, and page or aphorism number.
2. Although this may not be an explicit goal in SFBT, it is a useful idea for understanding Wittgenstein's work.

the writer tends to drag his or her readers down to the biographer's level (Englemann, 1967, p. xiv). Therefore, I offer my apologies in advance.

From Vienna to Cambridge

Ludwig Wittgenstein was born on April 26th 1889 as the youngest of eight children in the second wealthiest family in the Austrian-Hungarian empire (after the Rothschilds). There appears to be nothing in his school years to indicate the plaudit of 'genius' later bestowed upon him. Indeed, he was considered by some as the dullard in the family. The family homes were the centre of culture and humanity in Vienna, with the likes of Brahms and Mahler as regular visitors. Gustav Klimt painted a famous picture of his sister Margaret; and Ravel wrote a famous piece for a one-armed piano-player following his brother Paul's loss of an arm during the First World War. Ludwig himself was particularly adept at whistling long detailed musical pieces.

Although mostly home-schooled, he did attend a school briefly, which was also attended by Hitler. This led one writer (Cornish, 1998) to speculate that Hitler began his hatred of the Jews due to his schoolyard relationship with Wittgenstein (the Wittgenstein family had converted to Catholicism from Judaism two generations prior to Ludwig's birth); but the evidence for this is considered poor. The only subject in which he did well at school was religious studies, which — as we shall see — was significant; and he told a friend later in life, "*I am not a religious man but I cannot help seeing every problem from a religious point of view*" (Rhees, 1984, p.79). After completing the work described in this paper, he worked as a gardener in a monastery for a while, and considered becoming a monk.

It is perhaps noteworthy that three of his four brothers committed suicide, and he wrote at various times in his life of his own contemplations of this. He was not totally at peace with his homosexuality either, and his brother Rudi referred to his own "perverted disposition" in his suicide note. A good argument has been made that Ludwig was an 'exile' in numerous ways (Peters, 2008). He became an exile from Vienna and the Austrian-Hungarian Empire, his family from Judaism, and he spent time in self-imposed isolation in Norway and Ireland during his years as a philosopher at Cambridge. He often referred to himself as an outsider, e.g., *"The philosopher is not a member of any community of ideas"* (1967, §455). He was, in many ways, an anthropological participant observer of our industrial culture. Is this not the position Foucault (2001) indicates the therapist adopt in order to engage in 'fearless speech'?

Similarly, he had much sympathy for Oswald Spengler's *The Decline of the West*; the idea that with the rise of the Newtonian mechanical mindset

Western culture had fallen from a cultural peak achieved at the time of Bach. *"Music came to a full stop with Brahms; and even in Brahms I can begin to hear the noise of machinery"* (Drury, 1984, p.112). *"[I]t isn't absurd … to believe that the age of science and technology is the beginning of the end for humanity"* (1980, p.56); but *"perhaps one day this civilization will produce a culture"* (1980, p.64). In a letter to his friend Maurice Drury (a psychiatrist) in 1946 he said he was writing for people a hundred years from then, when culture might be returning (Drury, 1984, p.160).

When he was 24, he learned Danish so he could study Kierkegaard in the original language, especially the mystical idea of a 'world soul' (not something to be believed in so much as experienced) and, during the First World War, as a soldier in the Austrian army, he read Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, learning the speeches of the character Father Zossima by heart. Later he told his psychiatrist friend Drury that there really have been people like Zossima *"who could see directly into the souls of other people and advise them"* (Monk, 1991, p.549). As he carried Tolstoy's *Gospel in Brief* with him during the war, he became known as 'the man with the gospels'. However, he made clear to friends that he couldn't believe what Catholics believe, and Bertrand Russell reports he was harsh on Christians in general. Again, his interest appears to have been mysticism, in the sense of being at one with the world.

At the age of 19 (in 1908), he came to Britain as an aeronautical engineer, and has a propeller patent from this period. Three years later, he arrived unannounced in Bertrand Russell's room at Cambridge to discuss the foundations of mathematics and logic. Russell invited him to his lectures and he was soon dominating these, and even pestering Russell after the lectures. Although Russell thought Wittgenstein was a genius, others thought he was a crank. By the time he was 27 (in 1916), he was severely criticizing Russell's work.

Philosophy as therapy

It could be said that the criticism of Russell and others was that Wittgenstein saw the purpose of philosophy quite differently. *"Philosophy is not a body of doctrine but an activity"* (1961, §4.112). Traditionally, since the time of the Greeks, philosophy in the West has been viewed as a "love of knowledge" or an attempt to grasp the essential nature of reality. Thus most of our philosophers have taken a position on various ideas, allowing us to categorise them as realists or nominalists, positivists or phenomenologists, etc. Whereas they wanted to paint a grand picture of the world, Wittgenstein was more bent on attuning us to the world, by untangling (or dissolving) the philosophical

knots in our thinking so that we could see (or be with) the world with clarity. It might be said, that for Wittgenstein, any theory or doctrine about the world was an indication of philosophical confusion; and as Bill O'Hanlon and others have said, "a hypothesis might accidentally enter a therapist's head and the best remedy for it is to lie down until it goes away" (1987, p.98).[3]

With the benefit of his later work, and the efforts of nearly a century of work by philosophers, we can now shed new light on his first attempts at philosophical therapy. For example, he was later to say that *"[t]he work of the philosopher consists in assembling reminders for a particular purpose"* (1958, §127). One "reminder" that Steve de Shazer (2005) used a lot was *"don't think, but look!"* (1958, §66). Another is the insight Wittgenstein brought to Cambridge with him, and was to feature prominently during the rest of his life; the idea that some words which have more than one meaning beguile us at times, as our attention can shift from one its meanings to another without us noticing. He called this the cardinal problem in philosophy (Kremer, 2007). *"Philosophy is a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of our language"* (1958, §109). To guard against being seduced by shifting meanings, his teacher Frege had warned him to pay particular attention to the context in which the word is being used. Remaining context focused (and not getting lost in your hypothesis) is a hallmark of Wittgenstein's work as it is in SFBT (de Shazer, 1994).

Another helpful reminder of where Wittgenstein's philosophical therapy is going, allowing us to make sense of some of the more difficult passages, is the claim by Moyal-Sharrock (2013) that the most important contribution he made was to revive the animal in us; that despite all our 'civilizing' we are still fundamentally animals. There is "something instinctive, thought-free, reflex-like" (p.263) about us; that most of the time our actions are not mediated by intellectualisations. Somewhat similarly, John Shotter (2004) has emphasised on the basis of Wittgenstein and others' work, that there is a spontaneous, embodied, anticipatory, mutual responsivity, occurring between us when we communicate, not only providing the context for our utterances, but also allowing us to complete each other's sentences at times. Although I am presenting Wittgenstein's work here largely as a theory or doctrine about human nature, Wittgensteinian scholars stress that this can generate the very philosophical traps that he is wanting to free us from.[4] He is wanting to *show* us

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3. Wittgenstein said: "Don't, for heaven's sake, be afraid of talking nonsense! But you must pay attention to your nonsense" (1980, p.56). Kierkegaard also comments on the difference in the ways people talk nonsense; that comes closer to the irreverence of Robert Anton Wilson's idea that bullshit is everyday nonsense but every now and then someone tries to force horseshit on you.

something about our nature and life, rather than *say* how it is.

Saying and Showing

His anti-theoretical position finds expression in his elucidations on the distinction between 'saying' and 'showing'. Many in the SFBT community are familiar with Ben Furman's metaphor of therapists as "pickpockets in a nudist camp" (Furman & Ahola, 1992); our task is to **show** people their own solutions, and we can't *say* what they are prior to picking their pockets. In everyday life, if someone makes an error adding up numbers, we endeavour to **show** them the error in their calculations. Just as with SFBT's solutions, many of Wittgenstein's elucidations consist of **showing** us aspects of our own actions we hadn't noticed before. Now an elucidation is like getting a joke or understanding a mathematical proof — we need to see it or 'get it'. The elucidation doesn't *say* (or **show** anything extrinsic to the joke or proof); the person has to use the elucidation. An elucidation (noun) doesn't automatically elucidate (verb). Suddenly the duck becomes the rabbit, or the two faces become the vase, in those well-known ambiguous figures.

The First World War and the *Tractatus*

The First World War interrupted the development of these ideas stemming from his arguments with Russell, so he returned to Vienna to enlist in the Austrian Army. During the war, he became a highly decorated officer, getting an Austrian medal equivalent to the Victoria Cross. He ended the war as a POW in Cassino, Italy, where he completed the manuscript for *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. He ends this very short book (about 70 pages) with the comment, *"My propositions are elucidatory in this way: he who understands me finally recognises them as senseless, when he has climbed out through them, on them, over them. (He must so to speak throw away the ladder, after he has climbed up on it.)"* (1961, §6.54). This work, he believed, has essentially **shown** (for those who get the elucidations) how these various foundational ideas arise from out of doing logic and mathematics. As this work answers all the questions of philosophy, he thought he could now retire from philosophy and do something else.

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4. There is an immense trap that numerous constructivists and social constructionists have fallen into when they presented Wittgenstein's ideas as a causal theory of social constructions. Such errors lead to a re-animation of the Cartesian ego endeavoring to manipulate social constructions (e.g., by law) rather than deconstructing these realities to see if alternative constructions might arise (a change in lore). See Francis (2005) and Shotter (1995, 2005).

However he had quite a bit of difficulty getting *Tractatus* published. It seemed that publishers expected a treatise on how the world **is** from philosophers, not one pointing out that we can't **say** how the world is. Part of the criticism of industrial culture, that he expressed in letters and conversations with friends, was that 'scientism' had taken over from traditional religion. Both had the effect of shifting attention away from this world to another world. Traditional religions to one of heavens and angels controlling the world from behind the scenes; 'scientism' to one of mechanical explanation — the idea that everything has a scientific explanation, and our attention is captured by imaginary laws governing the universe from behind the scenes. *"Science is a way of sending us to sleep, philosophy must serve to wake us up"* (1980, p.5). *"The whole modern conception of the world is founded on the illusion that the so-called laws of nature are the explanations of natural phenomena"* (1961, §6.371). *"Laws … are about the net and not about what the net describes"* (1961, §6.35). *"There must not be anything hypothetical in our considerations. We must do away with all explanation, and description alone must take its place"* (1958, §109).

Tractatus — Facts

Following these brief comments on his methodology and aim we can begin to look at the *Tractatus*, which was finally published in English in 1922. The *Tractatus* begins with the statement that *"[t]he world is the totality of facts, not of things"* (1961, §1.1). Now for most of us, having grown up in a culture when positivism reigns, and we think of ourselves as separate from a world we endeavour to capture in a net of reasoning (logic and mathematics), we would think that the world is made of things, and facts are our attempts to make sense of the things. However Wittgenstein makes sense here if we consider that the bird sees the cat as a cat, not as 'sense data' or an object (a 'thing') that it interprets as a cat (as Locke had argued). For living beings, our reaction is immediate and not mediated by interpretation (cf. 1961 §5.5423).

We live in a world of facts. When we look at those ambiguous figures like the Necker cube, the kissing vase, or the duck-rabbit, we see one or the other of the aspects. Looking at the Necker cube we don't see 12 straight lines and then interpret this one way or the other. We immediately see one of the cubes, and then with a slight shift in attention we see the other. In other words we see facts, or to say it slightly differently, our sense making is primary and not secondary. And as these ambiguous figures *show*, there are different ways of making sense. So what Wittgenstein is doing is helping us make sense of our sense making from within the world, not from an assumed ("objective")

position outside of the world (or apart from it). This was very difficult for his contemporaries to grasp as they were well entrenched in the 'objectivism' that positivism built its house on.

Now he goes on to point out that there may be regularities in nature but primarily they *show* themselves to us. In the duck-rabbit figure we see the duck, we see the rabbit, but we don't see both at the same time. We obviously can't step outside of the world and *say* (see or describe) both at the same time. We can of course do what I am doing here, describe what we are doing as we move from one viewpoint to the other, but we can't, as his publishers expected him to do, *say* how the world is as a whole. *"If there were a law of causality, it might be put in the following way: There are laws of nature. But of course that cannot be said: it makes itself manifest"* (1961, §6.36). Twelve years later, when he was contemplating this puzzle again of what can be *shown* more than can be *said* he noted: *"What a Copernicus or Darwin really achieved was not the discovery of a true theory but a fertile new point of view"* (1980, p.18e). We could say the same of Einstein in comparison with Newton. They saw the 'rabbit' that hadn't been noticed before. For Wittgenstein, science is descriptive, not explanatory.[5] As we have seen, his aim was therapeutic, and thus he wanted to get rid of all explanations as they take us out of this world to an imaginary realm about the world (which leads us to think we can control it). Wittgenstein's elucidations help us stay attuned or present to the world, and allow us to see or understand ordering processes in a new light. He wanted to dissolve all the world views of previous philosophers. Different perspectives, like Copernicus or Darwin achieved is fine, but there is no one world view here. No argument with the creationists. *"Our craving for generality"* (1966, p.17) is a major source of confusion in philosophy.

Thus the aim of the *Tractatus* was to draw a limit to what can be **said**. During the three or four years it took to get the book published, he sent a letter to a publisher saying the book is made up of two parts. The part in writing, and *"everything I have not written. And precisely this second part is the important one"* (Monk, 1991, p.178). Hardly the sort of comment that might endear the work to a publisher; but if you follow the **say-show** distinction then everything of importance, i.e., ethics, aesthetics, human relationships, etc., **shows** itself to us far more than anything we **say** about it. This does not mean, as the logical positivists or Vienna Circle were to misinterpret him as saying, that everything other than the physical is not just unspeakable, but unreal. Later in his career, he was to place greater emphasis on the idea that although we cannot describe the ethical or aesthetic, we can express it. The

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5. See Drury (2006) for an account of Goethe's 'delicate empiricism' as a method of science closer to Wittgenstein.

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metaphors of religion, literature, and art are expressions of what we can **see** far more clearly than we can **say**. In the *Tractatus* he expressed it thus: *"There are, indeed things that cannot be put into words. They make themselves manifest. They are what is mystical"* (1961, §6.522). (The word 'mystical' stems from the Greek 'muen' meaning to keep silent.)

He then goes on to describe how we present these 'facts' in our language, and at this point introduces us to the idea that language pictures the world. (In his later writings (1930 onwards) he expresses some regret in restricting the use of language to picturing or representing reality in the *Tractatus*, for of course there are all sorts of other ways language is used — giving orders, asking a question, thanking, etc., (1958, §23). However, we might say that empirical science's primary function is to present descriptions of the facts. [But even there, a Wittgensteinian writer, Spencer Brown (1969), argues that science and mathematics are primarily prescriptive — 'look down a microscope', 'drop a perpendicular']). However, during this early period, he was in agreement with Russell that propositions (statements of facts) picture the world, and so both had an interest in the structure of propositions (i.e. logic). Russell thinking that this structure (logic) is discoverable (laws of thought), and Wittgenstein trying to show they are inventions.

Russell, who took the positivist position outside or apart from the world, thought there must be 'meta-propositions' (propositions about propositions, i.e., 'logical objects'), which he expressed in his theory of logical typing. But for Wittgenstein, who saw himself as a participant in the world, there were no 'meta-propositions' that were grounded in reality. For Wittgenstein, the structure (logic) of our propositions reflect the expressions of our perceptions, which as we have seen with the Necker cube or duck-rabbit, can vary. (Although at the time of the *Tractatus* he thought propositions had a general form. He was later to regret that.) Just as the elements of a portrait are arranged in a way to resemble the person they represent, the structure of our propositions resemble the aspect we are seeing (the duck or the rabbit). They say more about us than the world (Shotter, 2012). He said that his fundamental idea is that this order cannot be **said**, but **shows** itself (1961, §4.0312). He argued with Russell, saying that we are limited in only being able to **say** empirical propositions; we are only able to describe facts in the world. If we try to **say** something about the structure of the world, and this includes so-called scientific laws, we are stepping out of the world into some sort of meta (-physical) realm, and this generates all sorts of ghosts and conundrums such as an infinite regress of laws behind laws. Thus Wittgenstein distinguishes what can be **said**, the propositions of science, from what can be **shown**, the so-called logical objects that Russell thought he was dis-

covering that connects different propositions together. As we shall see, this **say-show** distinction is not limited to the so-called logical objects, but also to all the important things to us as people — ethics, aesthetics, religion, art, music, and understanding people. If you like, it is preferable to regards these things as **showing** themselves in their expression than in what they **say**. A case of actions speaking louder than words.

The upshot was whilst Russell thought, in keeping with the scientific or positivistic traditions of our culture, he was discovering real ideas (that lay the foundations for mathematics and logic [and *"mathematics is a method of logic"* {1961, §6.234}], and so were real things for Russell); Wittgenstein thought it more useful to consider these ideas as senseless (although not useless) artefacts that come from the social activity of doing mathematics or talking logically. Once you see this aspect (what we now call the 'socially constructed' nature) of these ideas, you will see they are essentially senseless, in that they do not refer to anything tangible that resides in the world. One of the ways he did this was to **show** us that the so-called propositions of logic are tautologies (*"I know nothing about the weather when I know that it is either raining or not raining"* (1961, §4.461)); they **say** nothing about the world as it is. However talk about the weather **shows** that raining and not raining structure both language and the world. Then, as he proceeds he goes on to **show** us that his own arguments or propositions about logic are also meaningless, but if we get what he is **showing** us, then they are not entirely useless.

Mathematics and logic as social constructions

Possibly, because most Western intellectuals position themselves as observers of the world, rather than participants, they seem to struggle with this idea that mathematics and logic, which *"look like a fact of nature"* (something we discover) are better considered inventions (1978, II, §37). *"I shall try again and again to show that what is considered a mathematical discovery had much better be called a mathematical invention"* (1976, p.22). Money is of course such an invention, or what we would now call a socially constructed 'reality' — as these pieces of paper, plastic, or metal obtain their value or 'reality' through the tacit agreement we have through using them. As Searle (1995) says, "the very definition of the word "money" is self-referential" (p.32). Social realities are made up of constitutive rules, not regulative rules. Or intrinsic or tacit rules, not extrinsic or explicit laws. Lore not laws regulate social realities. We can deconstruct (lay open to view) social constructions, and that may lead us to play or construct different realities, but we can't step outside them (cf. Shotter, 2012 for a discussion on the relationship to Whorf).[6]

Understanding this difference between intrinsic and extrinsic rules we can see how Wittgenstein thought Russell and his cohorts were treating philosophy as a science aimed at (***saying***) discovering the foundations of logic and mathematics, what Boole before them called the 'laws of thought'. By contrast what Wittgenstein wanted to do was ***show*** us how we are creating these apparent (mathematical and logical) 'truths' in doing mathematics or speaking logically.

We don't need to explicitly know formal logic to speak logically; language existed long before there were logicians, and even little children who are competent language users can distinguish nonsense from sense. A useful way to see how mathematics is an invention rather than discoveries is to consider mathematics as being like other inventions, especially the microscope or a pair of glasses. These are all useful inventions for helping us see facts that we might not have seen without them. They help us extend our perceptual power. Also we learnt how to double things or cut things in half long before we had or learnt numbers. Numbers and mathematics was a useful invention to give expression to what we were doing when we cut something in half.

When we learn chess, mathematics, or even everyday things like good hygiene, the rules are an expression of the game or way of life; the rules are not independent of their application.[7] But we all too easily turn these intrinsic regularities into external rules that must be obeyed (cf, 1961, §6.37). This seems especially so if we have had a fright of some sort or believe these rules to be causal. It is not difficult to discover this kind of shift has occurred in those difficulties some call phobias and obsessions. For example, the expression of good hygiene has taken on a demand characteristic after the intrinsic rules have been separated from the activity (Heaton, 2010).

The *Tractatus* as Therapy

We might say then, that through studying the *Tractatus* we come realise that we are already aware of the logic of our language due to our everyday use of it. *Tractatus* is primarily a therapeutic text helping us see that everyday language is perfectly suited to our needs, and the idea that we need a theoretical account of logic is just part of a widespread confusion that we need any theory at all (Parry, 2009). Once we have dispelled the idea that we need any theory, including the ones of the *Tractatus*, then we can express or act more ethically

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6. See note 4 on page 5.
7. Daniel Everett's Don't Sleep, There Are Snakes (2009) provides a readable account of a missionary's discovery that Chomsky's universal grammar doesn't apply to the Pirahā people of Brazil.

(even if we now have no theoretical justification for these acts!). Surely, I hear you say, if we have no world-view then we have no basis for acting ethically, and this 'therapeutic philosophy' is going to bring further chaos on the world!

This is where we return to Wittgenstein's interest in Kierkegaard and Schopenhauer. Because we had been standing back from life, trying to understand it theoretically, or capture the world in a net of reasoning, we had been avoiding or evading the everyday requirements that life makes on us to act. We had been sitting in academic ivory towers philosophizing, and ignoring the plight of those around us. What actions we were taking, were being mediated through some world-view or philosophy. The therapy of the *Tractatus* transforms us, so that our 'will' is now more directly and immediately engaged with life. We are now more present to life. It's a therapy that leads us to see that our attempts to formulate, what we thought was the 'problem of life' (e.g. that the universe appears to have an order that can be known objectively to us), as well as the attempted solutions that came from those formulations, has just led us into greater confusion. Liberated from this confusion, we are now more committed to acting with resolution. (We might say we become more disciplined.) This is called the 'resolute' reading of Wittgenstein (Read & Crary, 2000; Fischer, 2011; Bronzo, 2012). When Wittgenstein concludes the *Tractatus* with the famous injunction *"[w]hereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent"*, for the resolute reader this silence is 'pregnant' as we are primed to act. Some draw a parallel here with Heidegger's writings on authenticity (Cahill, 2004).

On having no head

One of the things dissolved (like sugar in water) by the *Tractatus*, is the ego or sense of being a Cartesian self ("I think, therefore I am"), separate from the world. Nietzsche had seen that the "I" is an artefact of the noun-verb structure of grammar, and has no more existence than the "it" in "it is raining". Hume too, saw that there was no ego or self that is an object of experience. The thinking subject is not an entity that is separate from what he or she thinks — *"There is no such thing as the subject that thinks or entertains ideas"* (1961, §5.631). If you like, there is thinking or seeing going on, but no one who is thinking or seeing (no little homunculus inside your head). The Cartesian error had come about because we can distinguish an empirical or objective subject — the person I see in the mirror and other people, and the apparent subject who (we tell ourselves) must be doing the seeing and thinking. When we start introspecting we can get the two confused, as Descartes did.[8] Dissolving this confusion, we see "I" is a pronoun, not a noun.

Wittgenstein's way of dissolving the self (or 'I') in *Tractatus* was by leading us through an argument on a form of solipsism. Solipsism is the idea that I alone exist; I am creating the whole world. (It is a difficult doctrine to argue against, but fun to imagine a conference of solipsists arguing as to which one of them is really there!) He starts out by noting that *"what the solipsist means is quite correct; only it cannot be said, but makes itself manifest"* (1961, §5.62). That is, we can take the view that *"The world and life are one"* (1961, §5.621). Or, *"I am my world"* (1961, §5.63). We see this solipsism in the child who says after anaesthesia, "They stuck a needle in my arm and I disappeared". Or another of Wittgenstein's ways of pointing at it: *"At death the world does not alter, but comes to an end"* (1961, §6.431). So you might ask, where am I, or where is the subject in this world that I am? Well, *"[t]he subject does not belong to the world: rather, it is a limit of the world"* (1961, §5.632). Alternatively, *"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"* (1961, §5.633). However experientially the eye or "I" is not outside the visual field. That is to say, there is *"no part of our experience [which] is at the same time a priori"* (1961, §5.634). It is not in the experiential field, and it is not outside it; it is the experiential field (*"I am my world"*). As one Zen Buddhist writer noted, it is living life as if one had no head (Harding, 1961).

So as we begin to understand this, a psychological transformation occurs and we feel our sense of self shrinking to nothing or expanding to the limits of our experiential field (as far as my eyes can see and ears can hear). *"The self of solipsism shrinks to a point without extension, and there remains the reality coordinated with it"* (1961, §5.64). Kremer (2004) says this is the self-emptying described in religious experience, where by becoming nothing or shrinking to an extension-less point (or by becoming everything), God, Dharma, the Tao, the Force, Al-lah, (etc.), can enter in.

Doing 'God's' Will and 'Divining'

'But surely,' you say, 'I have my will, and that is separate from the world'. On this point Wittgenstein agrees — *"The world is independent of my will"* (1961, §6.373). However we can easily be led into an egotistical trap here (one that is fuelled by our culture's 'scientism' or Cartesianism). We often exercise our will by predicting what is going to happen, and then taking action. (Although more frequently there is not two things, planning and acting, but

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8. Wittgenstein (1961, 1966) refers to the often unnoticed slippage that occurs between the use of "is" as verb and then as an adjective to show how this confusion occurs.

just one — *"The act of the will … is the action itself"* (1984, p.87, 4.11.16).) Note however, there is no certainty here. *"The events of the future cannot be inferred from those of the present. Superstition is the belief in the causal nexus"* (1961, §5.1361). A meteorite might plunge through the roof before I finish typing this sentence. *"There is no compulsion making one thing happen because another has happened. The only necessity that exists is logical necessity"* (1961, §6.37). So although I might make predictions and exercise my will, it is only by the grace of the universe (in not sending meteorites through my roof), that these work out for me. *"[A] favour granted by fate, so to speak"* (1961, §6.372).

So we might say, as some religious texts do, that there are two 'wills' in play here, mine and God's (or the universe's). *"There are two godheads: the world and my independent I"* (1984, p.74, 9:7:16). If mine is in accord with the universe's will then things work out happily for me, but if not, the universe, so to speak, pushes back against me. *"In order to live happily I must be in agreement with the world … That is to say: 'I am doing the will of God' "* (1984, p.75. 9:7:16). When the universe pushes back, my world shrinks, as I am the boundary (or limits) of my world; and when I am in accord with it, my world expands. *"If the good or bad exercise of the will does alter the world, it can only alter the limits of the world, not the facts — not what can be expressed by means of language. In short the effect must be that it becomes an altogether different world. It must so to speak, wax and wane as a whole. The world of the happy man is a different one from that of the unhappy man"* (1961, §6.43). *"Feeling the world as a limited whole — it is this that is mystical"* (1961, §6.45).

Thus, the *Tractatus* has enabled us to see an ethical position that is quite unlike Descartes (1637/1998) dictum to be "the masters and possessors of nature" that now so characterises positivistic industrial culture. For the laws that we sought to discover that would enable us to manipulate nature to our will turned out to be *"about the net and not what the net describes"* (1961, §6.35). But, by emptying ourselves or attuning our will to the universe, as most religions had taught in some form, our sense of self expands to experience the universe more. It is not possible to say what the limit of this expansion might be. This ethic is an ecology of mind (Bateson, 1972).

Dowsing is the art of divining for water, and provides us with a sense of this word 'divine'. Goethe developed this as a method of science, an alternative to Newton's, which he called the 'delicate empiricism'. For Goethe, we become the scientific instrument, by making ourselves one with the phenomena we wish to understand, feeling it out from the 'inside' so to speak (Drury, 2006; Seamon & Zajonc, 2006). As I have shown elsewhere, this is an approach to science and psychotherapy that is also far more consistent with some indig-

enous 'ways of knowing' (Drury, 2011). And it is this that the *Tractatus* has **shown** us is of importance, not what can be ***said***.

An End of Philosophy

Now Wittgenstein delivered this into the citadel of the church of Western 'scientism', and it is of little wonder that few understood him. To utilise a metaphor from his later philosophy, a place had not been prepared for it. Perhaps amusingly, when he was giving his oral defence of the *Tractatus* for his PhD at Cambridge in 1929 he patted his examiners Russell and G. E. Moore on the back, saying, *"Don't worry, I know you'll never understand it."* He told Drury that it would take about 100 years to be understood, and maybe we are seeing this as the 'resolute and elucidatory readings' catches the intellectual interest.

By the time he returned from the war in 1919 he was one of the richest men in Europe, due to his late father having invested the family fortune wisely. He also believed that he had answered all the important questions of philosophy and there was no need to pursue it further. So in keeping with his religious ideas or teachings he gave away his entire fortune, mainly to his siblings, and began training as a schoolteacher. He insisted on living the rest of his life like a monk, and went to teach 'peasant' children in the poorest of Alpine villages. After getting sacked as a teacher in 1926 for hitting children, he worked for a while in an Austrian monastery as a gardener (living in the tool shed). Despite numerous invitations to return to Cambridge, he saw no value in it. Later in that decade he formed a business partnership in Vienna, with his old Cambridge friend and fellow Austrian, Engelmann, as architects; and together they designed and had a house built for Wittgenstein's sister Gretl. This was to be his new career.

Besides the *Tractatus*, the only other things he ever published in his lifetime were a children's dictionary when he was teaching; a book review of Coffey's *The Science of Logic* in 1913; a short paper in 1912 entitled "What is philosophy'; and an article entitled 'Some remarks on logical form' in 1929 (that he characterised as short and weak (1993, p.156). Since his death numerous lecture notes, notes taken by students at lectures, notebooks, and a manuscript he was preparing have been published. It is perhaps highly noteworthy in these times of 'publish or perish', that he managed to publish so little and still be regarded by many as the most important philosopher of the 20th century.

The *Tractatus* and SFBT

As de Shazer made clear in a number of his writings, SFBT does not have a philosophical theory underlying it, and Wittgenstein's work does not provide the (missing or hidden) theory. For both there is nothing hidden. But Wittgenstein is useful in helping deconstruct many of the positivistic assumptions therapists have been socialised into, and once understood, his aphorisms can serve as helpful reminders. For *"Nothing is so difficult as not deceiving oneself"* (1980, p. 34e), (especially I might add, in a culture where positivism reigns). As noted above de Shazer uses Wittgenstein's aphorisms as reminders to remain observant of what is going on, especially with the language actually used by the client, staying on the surface and not giving in to the urge to dig deeper for an underlying pathology, and such like.

For the positivist the idea that talking about solutions as a way of talking our way out of problems may appear superficial, but from Wittgenstein's elucidations on how we socially construct the realities we inhabit it seems clear that all therapies are endeavouring to do this in one way or another. Not only that but Wittgenstein's elucidations on the boundaries of what is being socially constructed shows that there will always be phenomena occurring that have not been enlisted into a social construction. In SFBT we express this by saying that change is always going on, or the solutions are already present in our client's lives, and questions about exceptions may elicit candidates for the solution-focused construction. Similarly questions about how clients cope with such a problem may show more clearly strengths and resiliencies that the client is possibly bringing to the solution.

Wittgenstein's elucidations on ethics also remind us of our way of being in therapy. The difficulty here is in showing this; for: *"It is clear that ethics cannot be put into words. Ethics is transcendental. (Ethics and aesthetics are one and the same)"* (1961, §6.421). When we look at Wittgenstein's way of life we begin to glimpse what he means by this. One of the richest men in Europe, with the equivalent of a Victoria Cross, gives away all his money and is living in a gardener's shed — what is he showing us? In his *Notebooks* he had written: "*I cannot bend the happenings of the world to my will: I am completely powerless. I can only make myself independent of the world — and so in a certain sense master it — by renouncing any influence on happenings*" (1984, p.73, 11.6.16). This is quite a different attitude to Descartes "masters and possessors of nature", which we see in applied behaviourism.

In SFBT we express Wittgenstein's ethic by reminding ourselves not to be working harder than the client; or as Brian Cade expressed it "It is important never to be more enthusiastic about the need for any particular change than is the client" (Cade, 2013). Our task is to be present and responsive. Our ethics express themselves, or can be seen in how we are ***involved*** in what we

say and do, not in what we say (Diamond, 1991). (*"What expresses itself in language, we cannot express by means of language"* (1961, §4.121).) That is to say, it is our attitude that is ethical, but as *"I am my world"* (1961, §5.63), I can't step outside it and say it without it becoming an injunction. *"When an ethical law of the form, 'thou shalt … ' is laid down, one's first thought is 'And what if I do not do it?' "* (1961, §6.422). Numerous writers have described this attitude in different ways. Anderson and Goolishian (1992) called it the 'not knowing' position, Shotter (2012) calls it 'dialogicity', and Ogden (2013) 'relational mindfulness'.

Now in therapy, we are also inviting our client to be responsively present, for we are inviting them to an attitudinal shift. When the client shifts from being a 'victim' to being a 'survivor' a shift in attitude has occurred. I construct a different world as a survivor than I do as a victim. *"The world of the happy man is a different one from that of the unhappy man"* (1961, §6.43). As we have seen Wittgenstein doesn't subscribe to what we now call the 'discourse determinism' view of social constructionism (Francis, 2005). As with other animals, with suffering there may be groaning, crying, wincing, or shaking going on; but for us humans it is only when I begin describing what is happening that social constructions begin. (Not only the groaning and crying, but also the spontaneous acts of resistance (Wade, 2007).) When we take the view that it is not so much behaviour that is subject to reward and punishment as it is attitude (cf., 1961, §6.422), then the 'relationally mindful' atmosphere creates space for these alternative constructions to occur. By allowing ourselves to be changed by the therapeutic conversation as much as the client (albeit in different ways), the conversation may take on a life of its own. We are now more likely to show how we are being affected by the client's stories, rather than pass judgement on them. We see this frequently in Insoo Kim Berg's simple utterances of 'wow'.

The therapy didn't elucidate some …

During the late 1920s, whilst working as architect with Engelmann in Vienna, Wittgenstein was invited to meet with the Vienna Circle, who were developing a philosophy of science based on the *Tractatus* called Logical Positivism. He endeavoured to stress upon them that the important part of his work was in what was not said, and at times even turned his back to them and read the mystical poetry of Tagore to stress the point. However it soon became apparent to both that they were singing from different song sheets. The positivists had positioned science as the pursuit of truth and philosophy as the pursuit of meaning — but Wittgenstein realised that this positioned

philosophy as the pursuit of truth about meaning, and thus made philosophy into science. He realised that the claim in the *Tractatus* that all propositions have a general form, an essence if you like, was misleading, and it was this that was driving the Vienna Circle and others to search for **the** method of science. He began making plans to return to Cambridge … .

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About the author

Nick Drury is a New Zealand psychologist with 3 children and 3 grandchildren. He grew up on a Waikato dairy farm reading Freud, Marx, and Nietzsche, and playing many sports. He ran his first marathon at 15. After losing himself to the '60s, he emerged as a psychotherapist and has been in practice for more than 35 years.

Email: nickdrury@clear.net.nz