The ethical and the metaphysical will in the early Wittgenstein (and beyond)

La voluntad ética y la voluntad metafísica en el Wittgenstein temprano (y tras él)

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Abstract

In the *Notebooks 1914-1916*, Wittgenstein engages himself in a dialogue with Schopenhauer's project —one that Wittgenstein makes his own— of substituting an immanent metaphysics of human experience for the transcendent metaphysics discredited by Kant's critique, and thus for finding a path that would be able both of capturing the reality of human agency and of staying away from the kind of self-alienation that appears to be the necessary consequence of philosophical reflection. Wittgenstein's reflections on the ethical and the metaphysical will are instrumental to bring this project to successful completion. However, I will go well beyond Wittgenstein's early work in order to elucidate what strikes me as the solution provided by the late Wittgenstein (mainly, in *On Certainty*) to two problems that the *Notebooks* and the *Tractatus* left unanswered. On the one hand, there is the question about whether the agreement between agency and passivity is possible—namely, about how to come to see the friction of the world not only as something that is, but rather as something that ought to be. On the other, there is the problem of how to make of ethical subjectivity and metaphysical subjectivity two constitutively co-related aspects of the same transcendental subjectivity.

Keywords: Agency, Free Will, Meaningfulness, Schopenhauer, Transcendental Subjectivity.

Resumen

En los *Cuadernos 1914-1916* a partir de los cuales se construye el *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein hace suyo el proyecto de Schopenhauer de reemplazar la metafísica trascendente desacreditada por la crítica de Kant por una metafísica inmanente de la experiencia humana, y se embarca en la tarea tanto de encontrar una forma de capturar la realidad

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de la agencia humana como de evitar formas de auto-alienación que parecen seguirse de la reflexión filosófica. El análisis allí realizado de la voluntad ética y de la voluntad metafísica es imprescindible para el éxito del proyecto. Sin embargo, tendremos que esperar a su última producción, en concreto, a las notas recogidas en *Sobre la certeza*, para que Wittgenstein proporcione una solución convincente de dos problemas que su obra temprana deja sin responder. Se trata, por un lado, de la cuestión de la conciliación de agencia y pasividad, es decir, de si la fricción y la opacidad del mundo son (o no) aspectos necesarios para la constitución de la subjetividad. Y, por otro lado, del problema de si subjetividad ética y subjetividad metafísica son aspectos correlacionados de la misma subjetividad trascendental.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Agencia, Schopenhauer, Significado, Subjetividad Trascendental, Voluntad libre.

1. The transcendental stance: Some problems stemming from Wittgenstein's characterization of the will in the *Notebooks 1914-1916* and the *Tractatus*

It is frequently assumed that Wittgenstein's philosophy hangs in a vacuum, and that interpreters are in their rights to ignore the cultural and philosophical context in which his work was created —at least relative to the aim of making his thought intellectually transparent and philosophically fruitful. By contrast, it is my view that Wittgenstein's work only gains both clarity and philosophical significance within a *cultural context* —one which in its basic aspects is still our context.

Following Frederick Beiser (Cf. Beiser 1987: 2-3), it would not be unreasonable to claim that Kant's and Spinoza's philosophies are paradigm expressions of the abovementioned context, the former as it represents *philosophical criticism*, and the latter as it stands for a radical version of *naturalism and externalism*. The consequence of Kant's philosophy was (and still is) the *abandonment of (transcendent) metaphysics*; and the consequence of Spinoza's philosophy was (and still is) a passive view of the self that insists that we only appear to ourselves to be active, whereas in fact we are really *passive playthings of nature*. The two philosophies seem to be destructive of ethics and religion, thus undermining all those beliefs traditionally considered as necessary for the conduct of life.[1]

[1] It is, however, clear that Spinoza's view is much more destructive than Kant's criticism, which leaves genuine agency unscathed. One might rightly claim that Spinozism is the

It is only against the previous background that it makes sense Wittgenstein's constant engagement with Tolstoy's way of conceiving Christianity as well as with Schopenhauer's project of substituting an *immanent metaphysics of human experience* for the transcendent metaphysics discredited by Kant's critique, and thus for finding a path "between the doctrine of omniscience of the earlier dogmatism and the despair of the Kantian Critique" (Schopenhauer 2010: 428) —a path that, against a fatalism bewitched by the paradigm of describing physical objects, would be able both of capturing the *reality of human agency* and of staying away from the kind of *self-alienation* which appears to be the necessary consequence of philosophical detached reflection, in such a way that (after critical philosophy) the world would be redeemed as being constitutive of transcendental subjectivity itself.

Tolstoy's view —one that Wittgenstein shares— is that to restore the religious orientation toward the world as based on dogma —namely, on a set of abstract propositions regarding abstract, philosophical objects—is, after Kant, as impossible as to restore the belief in witches. However, Tolstoy —as well as Wittgenstein— speaks to those whose attachment to the religious worldview is such that they cannot part with it, and yet cannot but deal with it *honestly*. Such persons are to be re-assured, not by a chain of reasoning from the world to the transcendent realm, but by insisting on the *natural truth* —one that is rooted in *experience*— of the religious attitude, as it is cashed into a living experience that intensifies assent and brings truisms home to the agent with a sense of insight and self-appropriation. The curious thing is that if on this view *religion is ethics enhanced* —enhanced by a vivid sense of *everlasting responsibility* which results from much dwelling upon conduct, from having the ethical perpetually in our mind; it is not less true that for Wittgenstein *metaphysics is also ethics, or the conditions that make ethics possible enhanced*, since within a context (ours) of complete indifference towards ourselves as *responsible* agents, metaphysics results from much dwelling upon *das leben*, namely, upon humans' very being as *free, finite agents* acting within a space-temporal world. On the view here advanced Wittgenstein's teaching is that of *how to deal with metaphysics honestly (that is, after Spinoza and after Kant)*, and not that of *how not to deal with metaphysics at all*.

Firstly, I will argue that we may regard Wittgenstein's early investigations on the nature of the ethical and the metaphysical will as a rigorous adaptation (as well as a partial modification) of Kant's and Schopenhauer's. With respect to the

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hidden kernel of radical scepticism, since what the radical sceptic really does is suggesting that the feeling of ourselves as living agents is nothing more than a (transcendental) illusion.

topic of the metaphysical will, this means that Wittgenstein is fully committed to drawing the consequences of (as well as applying as a test) Schopenhauer's insight that, because an external investigation on the inner nature of things gets "nothing but images and names" (Schopenhauer 2010: 99), any project to capture the will (the living aspect of behaviour) by virtue of (spectatorial) representations so as to conceive it as a phenomenon among phenomena is doomed to failure.[2] On the other hand, Wittgenstein is also tracing the limits of our form of life *from within*, reaching the furthest limit of the utterable in such a way that that which is not statable in the human form of life but is manifest in it *could be made explicit*. Curiously, the only way to prevent a radical divorce between agents and their actions is by rejecting *as fundamental* any kind of *cognitive and epistemic* relation between self and world; and by locating the will in the domain of the transcendental. Reductivism is the unavoidable outcome of representationalism. And representationalism, which stands for the primacy of *theoretical reason* and for making of our fundamental relation to the world and to ourselves an *epistemic relation*, is the constant target of Wittgenstein's philosophy, early as well as late —as I have argued elsewhere.

However, I will go well beyond both the *Notebooks* and the *Tractatus* in order to address, at least in broad strokes, two problems that threaten to make of the transcendental standpoint of Wittgenstein's earlier investigations nothing but a transcendental pretence or babble, thus making of transcendental philosophy a fraud.

The *first problem* concerns Wittgenstein's early solution to the question of the divided condition of human beings, who are torn between, on the one hand, the practical certainty of one's moral obligation and, on the other, the equally undeniable feeling of constraint attendant upon one's empirical awareness of oneself as part and parcel of the natural world-order. The early Wittgenstein understood this problem in terms of the agreement between the ethical will and God's will, and provided an early (and, as it will come to be, provisional) solution to it in terms of the equilibrium *between two independent absolutes* —an equilibrium that comes from the fact that the ethical 'I' finally overcomes its limitations and stands face to face with the world as such—it goes without saying that this kind of solution, besides being profoundly dualistic, does not reconcile the 'I' with the contingent, open character of experience.

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[2] Which might rightly be seen as Schopenhauer's particular way of expressing the Kantian insight into *the primacy of the practical*.

The issue at hand might also be expressed as the question of whether it would be possible, if at all, overcoming the discrepancy between the 'I' that is "the bearer of ethics" (Wittgenstein 1979a: 80) and an alien world indifferent to our ethical concerns —and that, in the face of the humbling truth that there is no evidential connection between our ethical will and the world (*Id.* 73, 77). This momentous question is inherited by Wittgenstein from Kant as it is expressed by the latter in practical reason's final purpose of the *highest good* (Cf. Kant 2015: 108-114).

Even more importantly, the *second problem* concerns the fact that in the *Notebooks* the ethical 'I' and the metaphysical 'I' remain *unrelated*, so instituting a radical dualism between *practical* and *theoretical* reason.

Although they rarely surface in explicit discussion, it will be claimed that these two problems guide much of Wittgenstein's late philosophy. Curiously, they came very close to the surface in Wittgenstein's last notes —*On Certainty*. There, it seems to me, Wittgenstein, labouring *under sceptical pressure*, was both able of displaying, *by means of the constitutive character of hinges and without excluding the openness of experience*, the original co-ordination of transcendental subjectivity and world; as well as of instituting *ethical duty* at the very heart of the response to the sceptical challenge, thus arguing that reason cannot be theoretical without also being practical (in the Kantian sense) —and vice versa. It is this kind of conciliation which is signified by the transcendental.

At the root of the present approach lies the conviction that Wittgenstein understood his philosophical project as a response to a deep and fundamentally practical need —a demand not for theoretical certainty or even for practical conviction, but rather for *personal unity* or *wholeness*. This existential task of his philosophy thus presupposes in Wittgenstein's readers an acute sensitivity to our *divided condition as human beings*. This is why one is not ready for Wittgenstein's therapeutical philosophy without such a distress. In such a case, it answers questions that one has not yet posed for oneself: it bandages one who has yet to suffer the wound.

2. The meaning of the world and the heroic conception of the ethical

"My work has extended from the foundations of logic to the nature of the world" (Wittgenstein 1979a: 79). This is how Wittgenstein came to describe the progress of his investigation while working on the topics which would come to close the *Tractatus* and which the members of the Vienna Circle will later either misrepresent or flatly ignore. According to Engelmann, such an extension

is anything but accidental. As a matter of fact, and following Engelmann's observations on the *Tractatus*, one might rightly say that the logical aspects of Wittgenstein's early writings are for him nothing but "the only suitable tool for elaborating his world picture" (Engelmann 1967: 96); or, in other words, that, providing the most general and complete knowledge of the structure of the world ('The world as we find it'), they are the correct statement of the problem of metaphysics, namely, the proper means for putting an end to the inroads of science into metaphysics so as to awake a pressing need for metaphysics [the feeling of how little would be solved even by a complete system of science (Cf. Wittgenstein 1995: § 6.52)], and to make the unutterable manifest.

Readers familiar with Schopenhauer will easily recognize his mark on Wittgenstein's early attitude to philosophy. After all, Schopenhauer's main task was to conciliate the negative results of Kant's critique of transcendent metaphysics —a critique that Schopenhauer fully endorsed and whose outcome is the impossibility of any causal and explanatory ascent from the physical to the metaphysical— with a full commitment to a metaphysical domain which, irreducible to phenomena and causally and epistemologically disconnected from them, constitutes the deeper kernel of the physical, the *inner nature* of the world as representation. This modification marks the transition from a conception of metaphysics as dealing with the transcendent ground of phenomena to an *immanent* and *hermeneutical* approach to metaphysics, one concerned with the *meaning* and the *significance* of the *whole* series of phenomena, rather than with their *causes*.

The questions raised by Schopenhauer were: What is the problem of metaphysics? Is there, as it seems to be, a genuine and natural problem of metaphysics —one that is not reduced to the 'paper doubts' artificially built by philosophers by misusing and abusing ordinary grammar and quotidian reasoning? And if so, How to awake in us a living appreciation of the problem of metaphysics so as to cultivate views capable to institute a way of life which affects our thoughts, feelings, and expectations at many different points? It is my view that the early Wittgenstein enters into metaphysics by two different (although possibly interconnected) routes: an *ethical* route where the main problem is that of the *meaning of life*, and an *epistemological* route where Wittgenstein confronts an extreme variety of post-Kantian scepticism that *conceiving experience in terms of representation*, threatens to reduce the subject to a mere "subject of knowledge" (Cf. Wittgenstein 1979a: 80) and the world to a lifeless concatenation of events, so depriving experience of its *character* and the world of its *living, first-hand intelligibility (as an object of care)*.

While dealing with the ethical aspect of Wittgenstein's early metaphysics it is crucial to notice that the problem of a meaningful life cannot be understood from the standpoint of an empirical ego that is a part of the world. It is only for the metaphysical 'I', for the 'I' to which any course of action is equally insignificant and (empirical) life itself appears as senseless, for the 'I' that *fully aware of its freedom*, stands in front of the world as a whole and that keeps it at a distance, that the question about the meaning of life can be fully understood. That question is *unconditional*, to wit, it is a question whose understanding and solution do not depend on any conditions of the world, so that it discounts everything, including empirical death, among its factors.

The previous considerations point to the domain of ethics [a domain that Wittgenstein, following Schopenhauer, considers transcendental (Cf. Wittgenstein 1995: § 6.421)] as something rooted, not in the psychological ego, but in the metaphysical 'I' that is "the bearer of ethics" (Wittgenstein 1979a: 80). In this way, and by the route of ethics, the transcendental 'I' comes to be considered in philosophy (*Ibid.*), as the judge of the world and the *measurer* of things (Cf. *Id.* 82).

There is, however, another way to understand the problem of metaphysics, one that, although possibly related to ethics, it should be casted in different terms: as a question concerning both the *intelligibility* of intentional action and the *meaning* of phenomena.

The problem here raised is that were our relation to the world merely conceived as a *cognitive* and *perceptual* relation, that is, as an *external* relation to objects that appear in the theatre of consciousness, filling its stage with contents, our world would be a ghostly succession of disconnected and impenetrable events, in such a way that it would seem something alien from us, something that has become in a manner cut off from us and to which we are merely related as alienated *observers*. My experience would thus be 'mine' in the limited sense in which my representations are 'mine', as something that both happens *in* me *and* happens *to* me.

This picture would be, on the one hand, a false description of our experience, since our own actions are given to us, not only as events on a par with the rest of our representations, namely, as if they were given from a third person point of view, but 'from within' as actions to which we are *intimately* related and whose meaning is immediately transparent to us. Put another way, we are not related to our actions as spectators only, but as *doers*.

On the other hand, this picture models the world as a heap of disconnected events whose meaning, if any, is opaque. It is thus natural both to think that a complete description of the world would be constitutively unable to provide an

understanding of phenomena (it would provide their form, not their content), and that the essence of the world is something that is beyond *the world as representation* but never operates without it. Insofar as our voluntary actions are as it were a window into the meaning of one set of events, my bodily actions also provide a window into that which, being manifested in and through phenomena, makes them intelligible: the will. The main point is, however, that metaphysics enters into the picture because of the intrinsic limits of science. This is why for Wittgenstein "if the will did not exist, neither would there be that centre of the world" (Wittgenstein 1979a: 80), and why he speaks of the metaphysical 'I', not only as the bearer of ethics, but as something that "is common to the whole world" and that is both "my will" and the "world-will" (*Id.* 85). In these celebrated passages Wittgenstein points to Schopenhauer again, specifically, to the latter's doctrine that in order to make sense of the whole world such as it is given in representation, the subject of will has to be the 'inner kernel' of all phenomena, the common factor which is manifested in the world without being one of the items of it. The transcendental 'I' is thus also the *bearer of the world*.

The problem with those two approaches is that, as Wittgenstein himself came to see, they point to different aspects of the transcendental 'I', namely that dealing with two distinct notions of 'meaning', they present different, maybe accidentally related pictures of the relation between will and world.

Let me start exploring Wittgenstein's early view on the meaningful life and the sanctity of the ethical.

Notice, in the first place, what Wittgenstein writes in a series of cryptic but insightful remarks about the solution to the problem of the meaning of life. On the one hand, he makes clear that, insofar as the solution has "to be seen in the disappearance of this problem" (Wittgenstein 1979a: 74) and that "things acquire 'significance' only through the relation to my will" (*Id.* 84), such a will being nothing other than the transcendental 'I' that is the measurer of the world, the world can never take a meaning of its own. Which means that the solution of the problem of the meaning of life is in a certain way *intrinsic* to the understanding of the problem, to the mere fact that the 'I' is the autonomous evaluator of the world.

On the other hand, however, Wittgenstein is prone to characterize the solution in terms of an agreement between "two godheads" (Wittgenstein 1979a: 74), namely, between "my independent I" (*Ibid.*) and an alien will (*Ibid.*) that he identifies with God, fate, the world (*Ibid.*), and "how things stand" (*Id.* 79), so that he underlines both that the source of any possible discrepancy between those two

domains is within ourselves and that a happy, and thus a meaningful life, is "the life that can renounce the amenities of the world" (*Id.* 81), the life that willingly renouncing to affect the world takes accomplishments as "graces of fate" (*Ibid.*).

The question is how those two ethical views can be reconciled, since, while the first one, emphasizing that the world as such is meaningless, seems to conceive the transcendental 'I' insofar as it is autonomous as the source of meaning, the second one, underlining that what is required for overcoming the discrepancy between the two godheads is a full acceptation of the will of God as our own will, seems to conceive the ethical viewpoint as a perspective from which one comes to see the world as meaningful. However, discovering that the world has a meaning seems not the same as locating a meaningful life outside the world. According to the latter view, "things acquire significance" insofar as the will turns away from them, so that by means of externalizing all phenomena, the 'I' rests on the invulnerability of the ethical stance. In this sense, a meaningful life is a life detached from all happenings, a life where one sees things rightly since one sees them as fortuitous and meaningless. According to the former view, however, "things acquire significance" in a literal sense, insofar as the will overcomes an internal obstacle that prevents seeing things as right (as the will of God), so that they are ordered and meaningful.

This complex and apparently contradictory picture is, in my opinion, grounded in a remarkable *teleological* conception of meaning. What Wittgenstein seems to suggest is that the meaning of the world is given to the subject of will *by the very fact that the latter stands in front of the world as its measurer*, to wit, by the very fact that it is *through the 'I'* that the world at last holds up before itself a mirror, so that it appears no longer meaningless and directionless, but in its metaphysical significance.

It is thus as if the world would be pressing towards the 'I' as the measurer of the world, as if the world's *telos* were its evaluation. This means that, in one sense, what gives meaning to the world lies beyond it. However, in a different sense, the world has a meaning of its own, namely, that it is directed towards an end ("to see that life has meaning" [Wittgenstein 1979a: 74]) that is the very meaning of all the process. The meaning of the world is thus its coming to acquire meaning for the subject of will, its being seen *by and through the 'I' itself* as significant. Accordingly, it seems coherent (i) that contrary to Schopenhauer's *Weltschmerz* (Cf. Beiser 2016: 13-24), Wittgenstein determines a happy life in terms of *agreement with the world*, and (ii) that, in this case following Schopenhauer, he stresses the *ascetic* elements of such a life. The former, because, since disagreement results from the pursuits

of an empirical ego to which the world has no other value than a relative one, the transcendental 'I' agrees with the world by the very fact of being its meaning. The latter, because it is intrinsic to the transcendental position that willing ceases, so that the passing from a subjective to an *objective* will lies in the acquisition of a *way of living* where the vicissitudes of life are as it were external.

Light might dawn finally on the whole of Wittgenstein's early conception of the invulnerability (and meaning) of the ethical by considering the same question as to the character of a meaningful life from a Kantian standpoint. The issue at hand is that of how to reconcile, if at all, the ethical nature of the agent and the fact that the world (as alien to morality) does neither reward the virtuous nor punish the sinner.

As it is well known, Kant offers in the second *Critique* a deduction of the Idea of God (which is one of the postulates of practical reason) as something that we must presuppose as condition for achieving practical reason's final purpose of the *highest good* (Cf. Kant 2015: 108-114). The highest good is for Kant a state in which the greatest possible virtue is joined with the greatest possible happiness; a state which is the object of all of practical reason's endeavors. It is important also to notice that for Kant the highest good is neither an extrinsic end imposed on the will from without, nor a local and temporal end that representational knowledge gives us as a goal. It is duty —the will as determined by the moral law— that gives rise to the highest good as an intrinsic end for the ethical subject.

Thus, Kant is facing two related questions: (i) the more abstract question as to whether a supersensual phenomenon —the ethical will— can be *efficacious* within a sensual world, so that the moral law does not command in vain; and (ii) the problem of whether reason's demand for a world in which happiness and virtue are connected, and the highest good becomes actual, could still be conceived as something that is neither an *illusory command* nor a piece of *wishful thinking*, *in the face of the obstinacy of appearances to the contrary* (appearances that far from minimizing, Kant is realist enough to underline). Faith in God's governance of the world stands for Kant as the necessary assumption without which morality either would break down or would become an empty object of reverence, one that would be empty because as unrealizable it would not be the spring of purposeful action.

It is clear that the early Wittgenstein of the *Notebooks* and the *Tractatus* was passionately committed to the questions raised by Kant. However, it is far from clear which stance he took. Wittgenstein's answer seems to fluctuate between two opposing views. On the one hand, he seems sometimes to come to agree with the existence of the world as "dependent of an alien will" and "mystical"

(Cf. Wittgenstein 1979a: 74, and Wittgenstein 1995: § 6.44). On this view, faith in God's governance of the world would permit us seeing all events as 'the will of God', so that they would be seen as meaningful. The same faith would also underwrite our trust as moral agents in that the ethical will does make a difference in the natural world.

However, Wittgenstein's more frequent attitude in his early reflections is quite other. It is as if he were discouraging reason's demand for the highest good, and thought to resolve the Kantian problem by denying its existence —on this view happiness and virtue are not disproportional because they are, in fact, identical. Stoicism thus permeates Wittgenstein's early tone, and encourages the view of the ethical 'I' as a moral hero who externalizing all phenomena, substitutes an invulnerable inner life of moral triumph for an external life ruled by chance. The ethical 'I' would stand firm in the *righteousness of its will*, no matter whether its will has consequences. The moral law stands on its own, independent from the world. The only assurance required for a meaningful life is the certainty of one's intentions. Faith in God is not even required for the self-sustained moral law, because there are neither problems nor constitutive ends that would demand a relation between moral activity and religious belief.

Let me call the previous view as that of *the radical self-sustained conception of the ethical*. It goes without saying that this is the ethical analog of the Calvinist doctrine of final perseverance, so blind to the human possibility of falling away (Cf. Newman 2005: 3).

3. Willing and acting

The problem is that the ethical 'I' is detached from the world, or, better said, that it is related to the world as its *end*. This is a picture that bears no apparent relation to the conception of the 'I' as manifested in phenomena, so that it is related to them in a more mundane and intimate way, or, at least, in a non-teleological way —not as the *direction* followed by nature, but as its very *substance*. Of course, the same 'I' might be the bearer of the world and the bearer of ethics, but if so, such an identity seems deeply mysterious. As far as I know, Wittgenstein never tried to elucidate in his early writings how the ethical and the metaphysical 'I' are (can be) related.

The curious thing is that from among the complex remarks on the will contained in the *Notebooks* Wittgenstein only excerpted for being used in the *Tractatus* those concerning the ethical will. That is a curious thing because in the

Notebooks Wittgenstein delved into the relation between will and action, bringing to light a set of issues that would be instrumental to his classical investigation on the voluntary as it stands in *Philosophical Investigations*. Let me give a concise account of those topics and of how they were also triggered by a critical survey of Schopenhauer.

In what is a full endorsement of Schopenhauer's view, Wittgenstein writes: "It is true: Man *is* the microcosm" (Wittgenstein 1979a: 84). Which means that the 'special' relation that we have with our respective bodies and actions is the key for understanding the world, the 'hidden' path to solve the riddle of the internal nature of the world.

The point is that, contrary to what happens with the movements of other bodies, my bodily actions are given to me, on the one hand, as objective events at the same level than any other event, and, on the other hand, as will. Therefore, each one of us enjoys a privileged and 'internal' relation to one's own body. Notice, however, that will and action are not two different things, but *one thing* which is given to us *in two different ways*, actively as an 'act of will', and representationally as a bodily movement. It is thus wrong to think that will and action are two different events, the first internal, the second external, *causally connected*, as if my will were the internal cause of my voluntary movements. Notice too that the whole metaphysical building shared by Schopenhauer and the early Wittgenstein rests on the aforementioned *identity*, since the sole ground for claiming that *the nature of the world is will* is the identity of our will and our actions. A gap between them would entail a *contingent* relation between two distinct items, so that it would divorce myself from my actions (they would be the product of chance or, at best, the results of an *empirical* regularity) and the world from its nature. The outcome of such gap would be the kind of post-Kantian scepticism which, as a version of occasionalism, removes actions from oneself and makes of the world something 'flat' (a mental imagery of sorts) and unintelligible.

This is why Wittgenstein is emphatic both in rejecting the view that the 'act of will' is a causal connector related to the body or its mover ["there is no such a thing" (Wittgenstein 1979a: 86)], and in endorsing the identity thesis (Cf. *Id.* 87) and what in terms reminiscent of Spinoza he calls the "psycho-physical parallelism" (Cf. *Id.* 85). This latter expression signals the most important feature of Wittgenstein's early position —the fact that he, as well as Schopenhauer, is advancing a *dual-aspect* model of voluntary actions.

Nonetheless, the most salient aspect of the situation is that while attempting to shed light on the above theory, Wittgenstein comes to be entangled in a web of

problems that arise from the very model that he is borrowing from Schopenhauer. Wittgenstein comes thus to see that, conceiving our relation to the will in terms of an 'internal' experience, Schopenhauer is unable to overcome the representational and cognitive conception of the will that he is explicitly combatting. Let us survey the main points of Wittgenstein's analysis.

The *epistemological problem* of the will arises from the facts (i) that willing is *immediately* experienced by the subject, namely, that one cannot carry out an 'act of will' without *knowing* that one is carrying it out (Cf. Wittgenstein 1979a: 86); (ii) that one immediately knows, not only *that* one is willing, but *what* one is willing (cf. *Id.* 88); and (iii) that, since willing and doing are the same, one immediately knows *that* and *what* one is doing.

Notice, firstly, that the second fact requires to locate willing within a wider internal context of desires, beliefs and intentions that are 'given' to the subject and that are the necessary antecedents of the 'act of will', a requirement that, while depriving willing of its mysterious and isolated nature, it threatens either to remove it away (as a genuine and distinct psychological event) or to construct its 'givenness' on the same level as the 'givenness' of beliefs and intentions, that is, as a *representational* 'givenness', as a piece of a *process* to which the subject is related as an *observer*, and not as a *doer*.

Notice, in the second place, that we are not related to our bodily movements in the same way that we are related to our 'acts of will', immediately and non-inferentially. This means that the fact that it is, say, my arm that I experience raising is immaterial to the question of how I know that I am *voluntarily* raising my arm. It is not only that my experience of the arm raising would be the same whether or not that movement is voluntary, but that, as the question of finks and masks have come to make clear in the literature regarding dispositions (Molnar 2003: 102-110), I might be wrong about my doing something while I cannot be wrong on my willing to do it. These considerations suggest an *epistemological* point —that no experience, including no experience of *performing an activity*, is able to capture the 'act of will'—, and an *ontological* point —that willing and successful action are not the same item given in two different ways, so that they are modally *decoupled* after all—.

The main problem is, however, that according to Schopenhauer's picture willing is a *psychological event* to which we are *epistemically* related by immediate knowledge. It is, of course, a Janus-faced event, one that is both psychological and physical. But that surely does not make it something categorially distinct from events. The trouble of this approach is that it locates the 'act of will' among

internal *phenomena*, so that it is both something on the same ontological level as other phenomena and something from which a *cognitive distance* separates us. From this it follows that Schopenhauer is really conceiving the subject that wills as a subject of representation, so that such subject observes 'his' willing as if it were the willing of other. In this sense, we would be 'within' our willing only by virtue of having a privileged representational access to the contents of our consciousness. The paradox is that we are trying to capture an *active event* when all events, external as well as internal, are given *representationally* (as 'idea') to us, as passive happenings to which we are only observationally related.

It is my view that the last pages of the *Notebooks* are evidence of how Wittgenstein became aware of the above problems, mainly, of the unsatisfactory response that, in terms of the 'internal givenness of willing' and of the 'act of will', Schopenhauer gave to the problem of the will. The trouble lies in the facts that conceived as an item, willing seems to dissolve itself into feelings and experiences of bodily movements (Cf. Wittgenstein 1979a: 87), so that there is no "foothold for the will in the world" (*Ibid.*), and, more importantly, that were the will an event, it would lack the primitive, immediate, and foundational character which constitutes its 'nature'. This is why Wittgenstein ends its notes pointing to the will as something that instead of being an event, "accompanies" (*Id.* 88) events, namely, as something more akin to the *atmosphere* round a situation than to a *factor* of the situation that we could report, know, or appeal to as evidence for the intentional character or our actions. This is also why he abruptly closes the investigation with the same negative thesis that will be endorsed by the analysis of voluntary action in *Philosophical Investigations*: "The act of will is not an experience." (*Id.* 89)

Wittgenstein did not come to provide in the *Notebooks* a positive response to the questions he raised. Nonetheless, he reached a point where it was required a radical shift in the way the issue is regarded, to wit, a point where a battery of obstacles made necessary to substitute a *non-epistemic* for an *epistemic* view of the will. Interestingly enough, Wittgenstein took his leave from Schopenhauer because of his deep commitment to the Schopenhauerian insight that, whatever might be its status, *willing is not a phenomenon*.

4. The original co-ordination of mind and world

As I noted in my introductory remarks, it is not the object of this paper to pursue the problem of how Wittgenstein came to conceive of voluntary action in *Philosophical Investigations* and to overcome the ambiguities that permeate

Schopenhauer's view. Within the current context it would be sufficient to point that Wittgenstein came to see the voluntary character of action as of the nature of a *proto-phenomenon* that is manifested in phenomena without being itself a phenomenon, and so as a fundamental aspect of the world to which we are related *grammatically or transcendentally*, rather than empirically. In this respect, willing is, like life itself, the *unquestioned* (Wittgenstein 1975: § 47) and the *given* (Wittgenstein 1986: 226) —thus belonging to the scaffolding of our hinge-commitments.

What I want to do to put an end to this article is at least to gesture towards what strikes me as the solution to the two problems that the *Notebooks* (as well as the *Tractatus*) left unanswered. On the one hand, there is the question about whether it is possible the agreement between *agency* and *passivity* (Mind and World) —namely, about how to come to accept the limitations that the world imposes on our free activity; how to come to see the friction of the world not only as something that *is*, but rather as something that *ought to be for duty and freedom to be* possible. On the other, there is the problem of how to make of *ethical subjectivity* and *metaphysical subjectivity* two constitutively co-related aspects of the same *transcendental subjectivity*.

To the first question Wittgenstein's late philosophy, *by making of hinges such as "There is an external world" constitutive of agency and consciousness* ("consciousness as the very essence of experience, the appearance of the world, the world" Wittgenstein 1993: 254) *and by displaying Wittgenstein's full awareness of the fact that because his philosophy does neither create nor change anything within the ordinary standpoint it has the character of transcendental philosophy*, seems to imply the following answer: What a grammatical or transcendental account of the ordinary standpoint can do is to *make sense* of the division between freedom and passivity by showing it to be *necessary for the possibility of any experience whatsoever* —including our awareness of our own freedom and our capacity to act accordingly, not to mention our cognitive capacity to experience the world. The conflict cannot thus be entirely removed, because its removal would at the same time abolish the fundamental condition for the very possibility of experience, freedom, cognition, and self-consciousness. Having a divided self should not be perceived, according to the latest Wittgenstein, as a threat to human freedom, but rather as a *condition* and a *consequence* of the same.

What Wittgenstein came to conclude is, therefore, that since the sceptic cannot challenge as arbitrary our trust in hinges without challenging for that reason as arbitrary the very conditions that make that challenge possible, we are as reflective performers within our rights to assume that hinges are as certain as agency is. As

a matter of fact, Wittgenstein provides in *On Certainty* a variety of transcendental arguments to the end of making it visible how deeply, *logically interrelated* are the subjective and the objective dimensions of human experience, thus contributing to the issue of providing closure for rationality without excluding the openness of empirical experience (Cf. Wittgenstein 2004: § 676). For the purpose of the present discussion, the crucial point in Wittgenstein's arguments is that they bring out that global scenarios would cancel *doings* if actualized —and that, regardless of whether those doings are apt or inept. Trust in general hinges is thus trust in that we are really acting.

This means that just as the late Wittgenstein transforms his early claim of absolute autonomy into a demonstration of the necessarily finite, embodied, and constrained character of all actual human freedom, so too does he transform his early demand for wholeness into a transcendental account of the necessity of disunity. Anyway, it seems interesting to underwrite that on this view the 'I' that metaphysically bears the world is the same 'I' that is the bearer of ethics. Without passivity neither there is an ethical I nor even an I —the absolute Will of Schopenhauer by which the early Wittgenstein was bewitched is a pure, impersonal driving; as such, it transcends both experience and the domain of the transcendental.

Let me add to the previous remark that the more Wittgenstein became aware of the complexity of the practical, the more his early, heroic conception of ethics came to be suspected and eventually abandoned. Wittgenstein's later remarks on ethics (Cf. Wittgenstein 2006: 95) were thus written under the shadow of what Bernard Williams called "the radical contingency of the ethical" (Williams 2002: 20). It is important to note that such a radical turnabout from invulnerability to contingency resulted in the insight that far from being a virtue, certain virtue is detrimental to bona fide morality, as well as in a deeper appreciation on the part of Wittgenstein of the relations between ethics and religious belief, agency and ultimate responsibility, human limitation and trust. Not to mention that *opacity* and *friction* make of 'the other' something 'real' by which one is confronted —unlike what happens with transparency, from which egotism and the abolition of the human (and the ethical) stems.

There is a significant difference between the transcendent extrinsicism of the early Wittgenstein as expressed in the *Tractatus* —"*How* things are in the world is a matter of complete indifference for what is higher" (Wittgenstein 1995: § 6. 432)—, and the insight that there is an intimate connection between the

existence of the world and the ethical so that the 'how' acquires significance, as Wittgenstein put it to Waismann:

> Men have felt that there is a connection and they have expressed it thus: God the Father created the world, the Son of God (the Word that comes from God) is that which is ethical. That the Godhead is thought as divided and, again, as one being indicates that there is a connection here. (Wittgenstein 1979b: 118)

As for the second question, Wittgenstein's answer is contained in his way of *characterizing* and *countering* radical scepticism in *On Certainty*.

In the first place, let me notice that according to Wittgenstein, the sceptic's fundamental error, one that is tellingly reflected in his exclusive attention to whether our representations are properly related to the world, lies in his uncritical adoption of a *passive view* of human relations to the world. Crucially, scepticism not only makes of *how we relate to ourselves through our actions* a matter of deception, but also raises the question as to whether our feeling of ourselves as *living agents* is nothing more than an illusion. This means that the sceptical attack on the external world always is an attack on subjectivity, freedom, and agency. A point that can also be expressed by noting that by putting in question the world —which, as we mentioned above, is a condition of freedom—, the sceptic is also undermining subjectivity.

Wittgenstein's strategy against radical doubt is as follows —to concede the epistemic force of such doubt, that is, to concede the metaphysical possibility that one's awareness of one's freedom might be nothing more than deception, and then to respond by *refusing to entertain such a possibility*. Wittgenstein's strategy is thus to *counterbalance epistemic doubt with practical commitment*.

However, this refusal, far from being an instance of arbitrariness or wishful thinking, turns out to involve no element of *choice* at all. It stems from *duty*, since neither are free agents *permitted to consider* such a possibility without destroying their own inner selves and thus renouncing themselves nor can they *will to go any further than willing without cancelling willing itself*. This is why, in Wittgenstein's philosophy, *one makes oneself into the ultimate ground of one's philosophy* so as to appear as if our system of beliefs and our relation to the world were *groundless*. Anyway, Wittgenstein's dramatic expressions in *On Certainty* when confronted with radical scepticism (Wittgenstein 2004: §§ 613, 614, 380, 384) signal that what is at stake here is much more than knowledge or epistemic justification —*it is the very centre of the world*, that is, *transcendental subjectivity*.

For all those reasons, it would not seem too fanciful both to approach Wittgenstein's late philosophy as an example of *Lebensphilosophie* and to see it as endorsing a *neutral realism* of sorts, where 'neutral realism' stands for the fundamental coincidence of pure idealism and pure realism as *Tractatus* § 5.633 expresses it.

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