

On Trying to be Resolute: A Response to Kremer on the *Tractatus*

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1. Introduction

A way of reading the *Tractatus* has been proposed which, according to its advocates, is importantly novel and essentially distinct from anything to be found in the work of such previously influential students of the book as Anscombe, Stenius, Hacker or Pears. The point of difference is differently described, but the currently most used description seems to be Goldfarb's term 'resolution' – hence one speaks of 'the (or a) resolute reading'. I'll shortly ask what resolution is. For now, it is enough that it aims to give full weight to the penultimate section of the *Tractatus* in which Wittgenstein declares his propositions to be nonsense, where giving full weight to that declaration involves not hearing it as allowing that those (strictly speaking) 'nonsensical' propositions might have another (more important) kind of 'sense'. In that same section Wittgenstein explains that these nonsense propositions, while devoid of meaning, have a use: to make the kind of use of them that their author intends – and so to understand *him* (not *them*) – requires *recognizing that* they are nonsense; and through that recognition one 'surmounts' these propositions, and is led 'to see the world aright'. So there is a point to (Wittgenstein's having written) all this nonsense. *What point?*

This is the question addressed by Michael Kremer in 'The purpose of Tractarian nonsense'.¹ The question is a real and pressing one. After all, unless we have some fairly richly developed answers to the questions, what Wittgenstein's aims were in writing the book, and how his words might be effective in serving those aims, we just don't have a reading of the book; and so unless there are resolute answers to those questions, there is no resolute reading. Kremer thus deserves credit for confronting the question, and further for recognizing the inadequacy or radical incompleteness of some earlier resolute suggestions (pp. 46–7). For instance, one prominent idea has been that by recognizing Wittgenstein's propositions as nonsense we are freed from the grip of the kinds of philosophical concerns that led to their production, and that it was Wittgenstein's intention in writing the book to promote this liberation. But for that suggestion to amount to a reading, it needs to be spelled out what those concerns are, how exactly the attempt to cater to them falls into nonsense, why this collapse into nonsense is characteristic of the motivating concerns rather than of just this one attempt to cater to them, how realizing *that* is supposed to

dispel the concerns rather than inducing despair at the impossibility of satisfying them, and so forth. As Kremer says, resolute interpreters have so far hardly begun to do this.

And it would of course be too much to expect of a single article. Kremer intends only to make a beginning (p. 66). The general flavour of the beginning he intends is best conveyed by a twist he gives, towards the end of his paper, to Wittgenstein's image of a ladder to be thrown away after it is climbed.

My image is this: we are in a pit of our own making. The 'ladder' of the *Tractatus* leads us not higher and higher *above* the world, but out of the pit *into* the world, in which we are now free to live. (p. 60)

The 'pit' is the kind of philosophy that imagines itself obliged to provide 'ultimate justifications' for ways of thinking, speaking, reasoning, and acting; standing with its bottom in the pit, the 'ladder' indulges this imagining; surmounting it is a matter of realizing that the obligation is as incoherent as the philosophical theorizing that promises to meet it, and thus regaining the ordinary perspective of untroubled engagement in ungrounded meaning. A presumption of the image, of course, is that this ordinary perspective is self-sustaining in a way that the loftier viewpoints countenanced by 'irresolute' readings cannot be: those readings cannot throw the ladder away after climbing it; if they pretend to, it is only deliberate blindness to obvious inconsistency that prevents them noticing their fall.

Like Kremer's, my aims here are limited. I intend only to show, through limited internal criticism, that Kremer does not provide a compelling beginning for a resolute reading of the *Tractatus*.

My plan is as follows. In Part 2 I will first ask what resolution is, aiming to clarify and separate its core commitments from others that are tentative and perhaps more negotiable. This sifting investigation will lead to the question, whether resolution's core commitments are supposed sufficient to sustain at least an outline reading of the *Tractatus*, or not. If not, then there is really no resolute reading to discuss. Part 3 accordingly explores a positive answer to the question, aiming first to identify points where resolution's core commitments cannot deliver all the approach demands of them, and secondly to draw some general morals about the deficiencies of the approach. Part 4 then outlines how Kremer proposes to make good these deficiencies, before turning to criticism.

It should be clear from this plan that I do not intend a general or sweeping refutation of the resolute reading, let alone of every point insisted upon by resolute readers (many of which I think are well taken, if not always well placed). Some writers in the field have reacted to the resolute reading with an outraged, 'No! But surely. . .!' My own reaction, at least to its core ideas, is better captured, 'Well, yes, so far. And now. . .?' I hope in what follows to make that question more articulate.

2. What is it to be Resolute?

2.1 Core Commitments

Resolution's first commitment is a view of what nonsense is and what it cannot be: nonsense is a failure to make sense; it cannot be a matter of making *the wrong kind of sense*. By 'the wrong kind of sense' is meant a depiction of things as standing to one another in a way that, because of the logical kinds of things they are, those things logically cannot stand, a depiction that 'contradicts logic' (TLP 3.032). There is no such thing as that, any more than there is such a thing as giving a map reference for a place that does not exist. Of course, there are strings of signs that fail to be map references (e.g. '75°W, 130°N'), and strings of signs that fail to be depictions of anything. In each case, the explanation is that no meaning has been given to one or more of the component signs as they occur in that string (e.g. that no meaning has been assigned to '130°' in connection with 'North', though it has in connection with 'West'), and *not*, as one might be tempted to think, that the meanings that *have* been assigned to the various components of the string will not cohere. Wittgenstein presents this view of nonsense at TLP 5.473ff. It is an immediate consequence of the contextualism about meaning he expounds throughout the 3's, and specifically of his identification of symbols – working parts of propositions, or propositional variables – and not mere signs, as the bearers of meaning.² Adapting terminology of Conant's (2000: 176), I'll call commitment to this view of nonsense 'austerity'.

The second element of resolution is a 'full-hearted recognition' that when Wittgenstein describes his own propositions as 'nonsense' his meaning is that they are nonsense in the only way the austere view of TLP 5.473ff. allows, that they fail to make sense. This stands in contrast to any 'half-hearted' idea that they make *the wrong kind of sense*, perhaps the wrong kind of sense to be put into words, or the wrong kind of sense to be shoe-horned into something that the doctrines of the *Tractatus* would admit as a significant proposition. Any such half-hearted attitude is, the thought goes, symptomatic of an attempt to preserve the idea that there is something portrayed by the nonsense. It is symptomatic of an 'irresolute dithering' (Diamond 1997: 79), which on the one hand pretends to let go of these propositions as nonsense but on the other clings onto them, supposing, in Goldfarb's words,

that *these* sentences, while nonsensical, somehow gesture at something that is going on, some inexpressible state of affairs or true but inexpressible thought, (1997: 61)

or, in Kremer's, that they are 'something like propositions' or 'quasi-truths' (p. 44).

How these first two components of resolution are linked is most clearly apparent in connection with remarks employing 'formal concepts' (TLP 4.126ff.).

Consider Goldfarb's (invented) example, 'No concept is an object' (1997: 61). This appears to deny that some concept is an object, as it were:

$$\exists\phi\exists x \phi = x.$$

That, all agree, is nonsense. On the conception of nonsense rejected by austerity, however, that expression is nonsense because it presents a concept and an object as standing one to another in a way that those types of things logically cannot stand, that is, because it presents an impossible combination of logical types; so its denial, understood as purporting *that* this combination *is* impossible, must be counted correct – even though it is admitted to be, as the denial of something nonsensical, itself nonsensical. In that way, offending against resolution's first component leads pretty much inevitably to offending against its second. Conversely, respecting the first component means counting the displayed string as merely a malformed presentation, not a presentation of something malformed; and then there is no temptation to construe the apparent denial of that string as the denial of anything.

The two components of resolution so far introduced are, I believe, clear, clearly presumed in Kremer's understanding of the notion, and clearly correct. Collectively I'll call them the core commitments of resolution. Just as clearly, this core does not exhaust what resolute readers have in mind. Beyond this point, however, it becomes less easy to separate what is supposed to be part of the notion of resolution, and so a constraint on any resolute reading, from further interpretative suggestions presented within those constraints.³ In the remainder of this section I sketch several elaborations which are plausibly of the first kind; and of the many things that might be mentioned under this rubric I select only those with a direct bearing on Kremer's discussion.

2.2 *Is Resolution Merely Consistency?*

First is the idea that resolution is a matter of following through with the implications of a position, and therefore required by mere consistency – so that 'irresolute' comes almost to mean 'inconsistent', professing that p while tacitly maintaining that $\text{not-}p$. This is a mistake. To hold that 'nonsense' in TLP 6.54 means something different from what is described in TLP 5.4733 is not a contradiction. To suggest that it means, for instance, 'non-factual' (or 'not bi-polar'), and thus to present Wittgenstein as holding that his remarks delineating necessary features of fact-stating discourse do not share those features, and so do not themselves belong to that discourse, is not to attribute a contradiction to Wittgenstein. What rules out such suggestions is not consistency, but their lack of interest.

2.3 *Is Resolution Specially Opposed to Realism?*

Goldfarb introduced the term 'irresolute' as a less graphic but more flexible description for readings which Diamond accused of 'chickening out':

...to keep the idea that there is something or other in reality that we gesture at, however badly, when we speak of 'the logical form of reality', so that *it, what* we were gesturing at, is there but cannot be expressed in words[.] *That* is what I want to call chickening out. What counts as not chickening out [includes]. . .throw[ing] away in the end the attempt to take seriously the language of 'features of reality'...that cannot be put into words but show themselves. (1991: 181)

Here it seems plain that resolution, not chickening out, has particularly to do with repudiating a certain sort of realism. Goldfarb's discussion echoes and applauds the suggestion (1997: 63). The sort of realism in question is one that imagines an ontological grounding for thought and language. It supposes itself capable of 'stepping outside of thought to see what logical form is really, in itself, not as it appears *in* thought' (1997: 67), and of advancing what is thus seen as an explanation of, or justification for, the forms adopted in language. It is *because* objects and concepts are fundamentally different in nature that our expressions for them differ in the ways that they do. Or more specifically, it is *because* such and such is a concept that our term for it appropriately behaves as a predicate (Goldfarb 1997: 60, 64–5; cf. Diamond 1991: 128).⁴

Now it is surely right that this kind of realism is ruled out by the core ideas of resolution. If there is nothing so much as gestured at by saying that concepts and objects are fundamentally different, then there is no explanation in which that figures as *explanans*. What is much less obvious, however, is why resolution should be thought of as *specifically* excluding such explanations.

Here it becomes relevant to turn to an influential text for the development of the resolute approach to the *Tractatus*, Geach's 'Saying and showing in Frege and Wittgenstein'. The first of four theses Geach maintains there is that 'Frege already held. . .that there are logical category distinctions which will clearly show themselves in a well-constructed symbolism, but which cannot properly be asserted in language' (1977: 55). The second, to which Geach devotes a greater part of his discussion, is this.

(2) The category distinctions in question are features both of verbal expressions and also of the reality our language is describing; in consequence, the manoeuvre of 'semantic ascent' – transformation of talk about things in the world to talk about expressions in a language – is in principle entirely futile as an attempt to resolve problems, or in particular to remove the difficulty about unsayables raised under (1) [the first thesis]. (*ibid.*)⁵

The formal articulation of a proposition precisely reflects – i.e. simply *is* – the formal articulation of the situation it presents. So if there is any obstacle to describing the logical character of what (the elements of) a proposition mean(s), then there is precisely the same obstacle to describing the logical character of (the elements of) the proposition itself (themselves). As Geach's discussion makes

plain, the grounds for ascribing this thesis to Frege and to Wittgenstein lie in precisely those aspects of their shared contextualism about meaning which yield the austere conception of nonsense presented at TLP 5.473ff.

If, with Geach's point firmly in mind, we now return to the realist's supposed explanations, in which an ontological grounding for the forms of language is attempted, it will no longer be obvious why their *explanantes* should be thought in worse shape than their *explananda*. If there is nothing so much as gestured at in saying that a concept is fundamentally different from an object, then it seems that equally, and for precisely the same reasons, there is nothing so much as gestured at in saying that a predicate is fundamentally different from a name. If that is accepted, then the realist's preferred *direction* of explanation drops out as irrelevant. If both '*p*' and '*q*' are empty, then '*q* because *p*' and '*p* because *q*' are equally empty. It would thus be no improvement, in the way of resolution, to hold in opposition to realism that the distinction of concept and object, instead of lying 'deep in the nature of things', is merely a reflection of the forms of language.⁶ Further, not only is the direction of explanation an irrelevance: the very fact that '*p*' and '*q*' are put in any kind of connection, explanatory or otherwise, itself appears irrelevant. Thus, those who count it a 'misguided impulse' to imagine that we can attain a view of 'what logical form is really, in itself', might be expected to count it no less misguided to imagine that we can see form 'as it appears *in* thought'. In each case, one would have thought, there is nothing to see.

On occasion it appears that Diamond would accept this. In responding to Goldfarb, she characterizes irresolution as supposing 'that there can be a conveying of ideas about the nature of reality *and language* despite those ideas not being sayable' (Diamond 1997: 78; my emphasis). But against this there stands, not only her explanation of chickening out, which singles out 'the language of "features of reality"' as what resolution will lead us to abandon, but the following central (and typical) characterization of a form that abandonment might take:

We can then look at some of Frege's logical work as providing replacements for certain parts of the philosophical vocabulary, in particular, predicates like 'function', 'concept', 'relation'. These are replaced by features of a notation designed to make logical similarities and differences clear. For Wittgenstein the provision of replacements for terms in the philosophical vocabulary is not an incidental achievement but a principal aim, and, more important, it is the *whole* philosophical vocabulary which is to be replaced, including that of the *Tractatus* itself. (Diamond 1991: 183)

Can a notation be designed to make logical similarities and differences clear *unless there are* logical similarities and differences?

Somewhat similarly, Goldfarb describes a resolute treatment of particular philosophical themes as tracing a 'destabilization' from within which leads to 'a proper appreciation of the work of our language' (1997: 66). Is that 'proper appreciation' an appreciation of *something*? Geach's point might suggest that this proper

appreciation is the residue of abandoning the attempt to describe, by means of language, language's formal articulation. But, if so, why should *this* residue be any less problematic than an appreciation of *reality's* order, attained in abandoning the attempt to put *that* into words?⁷

However these questions are answered, it is clear at least that in resolution's self-understanding any suggestion that there are features of reality that might be made clear by, or shown in, a notation is more insidious, and more scrupulously to be guarded against, than a corresponding suggestion about features of language. What attention to Geach's point reveals to be less clear is why this should be so.⁸

2.4 Must Resolution Repudiate the Saying-Showing Distinction?

Recent paragraphs have been concerned to raise a question about the content of resolution. They do not amount to a criticism of it. Of course, if what a notation enables one to see more clearly (Diamond), or what one achieves a proper appreciation of (Goldfarb), were 'something like propositions', 'quasi-truths' about language's logical character, then the ideas just described would be at least on the verge of contradiction with resolution's core commitments. But I have not claimed that. It is by no means obvious that anything that might be made clear or appreciated is thereby 'something like a proposition'. Still, one would expect this brush with the appearance of contradiction to induce a certain caution over *how much* like a proposition, and *in what ways* like one, a claimed object of appreciation has to be for that claim to be indicative of irresolution. More particularly, one might expect that caution to manifest itself in resolution's treatment of the idea of what is shown but cannot be said. That, though, is not how things turn out.

If a sentence '*p*' is simply nonsense, then, without special stipulation,⁹ there is likewise no meaning to 'One is shown that *p*'. If there is no way '*p*' presents things as being, there is no such thing as being shown that they are that way. Thus resolution's core ideas rule out *one* sort of resort to the saying-showing distinction, according to which the meaningful propositions of language *show* various inexpressible things to be so, while the nonsensical propositions of philosophy *state what* is thus shown. For an interpreter to make that resort would be patently inconsistent. And to imagine that Wittgenstein himself resorted to the distinction in that way, as thin cover for his embarrassment at stating what he held could not be stated, would indeed be 'to treat Wittgenstein as a bumbling fool' (Kremer, p. 45). From Kremer's statement that 'the resolute reading. . . seems required' if we are to avoid that consequence, one might conclude that resolution's opposition to or suspicion of the saying-showing distinction will be correspondingly limited.

But the animus spreads. Kremer's discussion immediately slides from the point just made, through dismissal of the idea that 'Wittgenstein [in writing nonsense] conveys insight into those things that can be shown but not said', to contend that 'the resolute reading cannot accept the idea that there are many distinguishable "things which are inexpressible" which "make themselves

manifest'' (pp. 45–6).¹⁰ He concludes, 'the truth is that the doctrine of showing and saying is yet another piece of justificatory nonsense' (p. 56).¹¹ Similarly, Conant holds that the whole idea of things that are shown is one that must be completely, and without reservation, thrown away (2000: 196).

There are two sides to this spreading of the theme, concerning first what is shown, and secondly how nonsense sentences relate to it. On the one side we should note that Wittgenstein, and those of his interpreters Kremer condemns as irresolute, typically talk of what is shown as certain *features* – features of a proposition, of a state of affairs, of language, of reality, the world. What austerity condemns is, by contrast, the idea of a quasi-truth or inexpressible state of affairs. Evidently, Kremer supposes that by countenancing the first one is implicitly committed to the second. Since that is not true of ordinary talk of features – of a landscape, for instance, or of a face – an argument is needed to make the commitment explicit. However it might be supposed to run, this argument cannot be merely an elaboration of austerity, since the incoherence of 'impossible combinations' which that opposes is essentially one that concerns only the 'conclusion' of the needed argument. That is to say, the incoherence austerity warns against is *already* that of something supposed to be, though unsayable, 'quasi-propositional' – something that is supposed both to have and yet to lack the structure of a proposition. Reflection on that incoherence cannot therefore reveal why *any* recognition of something unsayable will fall within its ambit, or why commitment to an inexpressible feature should amount to commitment to 'something like a proposition'. Similar points hold on the other side of the spread, concerning how nonsensical sentences are supposed to relate to what is shown. Here what austerity directly opposes is the idea that such a sentence 'expresses a logically incoherent thought' (Conant 2000: 176), that it *manages* to say what cannot be said. The stance usually ascribed to irresolute readings is rather that these sentences are the products of *failed attempts* to say what cannot be said (p. 44). So again, argument is needed that in taking seriously the second idea one would be committed to the first. And again, whatever argument is offered cannot merely reiterate the core idea of austerity: that is a criticism of one particular conception of the *success* of a nonsense sentence; it does not begin to address the variety of proposals that might be made as to how, in its *failure*, a nonsense sentence might be useful.

A line of argument to bridge this latest gap is suggested by Kremer's claim that 'there is an incoherence in the very attempt' to express the inexpressible (p. 44).¹² If this meant only that failure is indeed inevitable, and that there is consequently no such thing as a 'near miss' – a piece of nonsense that, as it were, *almost* manages to bring off the impossible – it would be acceptable as a reiteration of austerity. Kremer, however, plainly intends something stronger, namely that the description of a remark as an attempt to express what is shown could be intelligible only by drawing on a conception of what it would be for the remark to succeed in that attempt, so that even to describe nonsense as failing in this one commits oneself, in opposition to austerity, to there being such a thing as *that which* it fails to do. But why should one accept this? Quite generally, attempts are

canonically described by reference to what they are attempting to do. Ordinarily, therefore, the intelligibility of describing someone as attempting to ϕ is sustained simply by the thought that, had they succeeded, they would have ϕ -ed. Where there is no such thing as ϕ -ing, evidently, the significance of the description cannot be assured in that straightforward way.¹³ But such a description is, even so, very often intelligible. What sustains it may be an account of the beliefs and motives that informed the attempt, of analogies between this and other projects, of a practical or intellectual context or tradition in which such things are attempted, of invalid reasoning that led someone to suppose there to be such a thing as they were attempting, and so on indefinitely. Unless such avenues of understanding are explored Kremer's contention has little force.

There is, however, a further contention which, if sound, would serve to exclude all of these avenues, as well as bridging the first gap we noted, in connection with what is shown, between inexpressible features and the quasi-propositions ruled out by austerity.

Thus Wittgenstein is again led to the thought that we are dealing with something that cannot be expressed in language, something that cannot be said but only shown. . .

Yet, as we have seen, this way out dissolves into incoherence as soon as we try to adopt it in a serious way. To do so we have at least to think, if not say, the doctrine of saying and showing. Yet this doctrine can only get its content from examples, and in giving examples we immediately contradict the very doctrine that we are trying to flesh out. (p. 55)

Unfortunately, though, the contention is not sound. Indeed, the crucial claims in this passage seem to me not just false but very obviously so. Surely *anyone* will agree that, judged as an attempt to 'flesh out' the saying-showing distinction, the unadorned presentation of alleged examples, in remarks such as 'We are shown but cannot say that substance is form and content', would be a hopeless flop. Yet it is only to such a flat-footed attempt that Kremer's charge of 'immediate' self-contradiction applies.

We have found no clear or compelling explanation of why an attitude founded on austerity should spread itself to reject the saying-showing contrast. Instead we found a tendency to recognize no relevant distinctions: no distinction between the ideas that there are features that are shown and that there are quasi-facts that cannot be expressed; no distinction between conceiving nonsense as a failed attempt to express what is shown, which therefore expresses nothing at all, and taking it to express a logically incoherent thought; no distinction between an illuminating commentary on such an attempt and a stupid pretence at instancing how it might succeed. This makes for a terminological awkwardness. If 'resolution' meant austerity and what follows from it, then we've found no reason why 'a resolute reading' should be one that rejects the saying-showing distinction. On the other hand, since those who self-apply the term *do* take it as including that,¹⁴ insistence on a tighter usage is liable just to cloud things. So, acquiescing in the

broader usage, the conclusion of this section is that suspicion of the saying-showing contrast is a part, but so far as yet appears an independent part, of resolution.¹⁵

2.5 Does Resolution Imply a Thoroughgoing Unity of Method?

This last question about resolution is the vaguest, but also, I think, among the most important if we are to get an idea of what is thought distinctive about the interpretative approach it recommends. Because of its vagueness, the treatment of the question in this section is inevitably impressionistic. From this treatment, however, a somewhat sharper question will emerge, and in Part 3 that question will be pursued in closer connection with the details of Wittgenstein's text.

Resolute interpreters have previously written on 'how to read the *Tractatus*', on 'the method of the *Tractatus*', and now Kremer adds an essay on 'the purpose' of its nonsense. Titles do not add up to a thesis, of course, but these carry a strong implication of unity of approach. There is to be *a* right method of reading the book, *one* broad kind of point that the method will uncover; and the method and the point are presumed capable at least of a general description independent of engagement with the details of the book's various particular discussions, a presumption which in turn implies a unity of approach and aim *in* those various discussions.

In these respects resolute interpreters are certainly responsive to something in Wittgenstein. In his Preface Wittgenstein tells us that 'the book deals with the problems of philosophy' – not *some* problems, or even *some central* problems, but *the* problems – and records his judgement that, by it, 'the problems have in essentials been finally solved'. To keep a vivid sense of the style of Wittgenstein's thought, and of the kind of book he took himself to have written, it is useful periodically to remind oneself of the initial *preposterousness* of these claims. Even discounting for Wittgenstein's aristocratic arrogance, it is simply unintelligible that he should have made these claims unless he believed that the seemingly diverse problems confronting philosophy have enough commonality, enough of a common character or a common root, to permit a unitary solution. In the Preface what we learn of that commonality is that philosophical problems are posed as a result of 'misunderstanding the logic of our language'. Yet this seems not to be enough. Philosophical problems might have it in common that they rest on misunderstanding, as colds perhaps have it in common that they are caused by viruses, without there being either a single or a final cure. What is needed to make sense of Wittgenstein's claims is the idea that there is one central misunderstanding, of which all the others are merely manifestations, so that if *it* is uprooted its various outgrowths can be left just to wither away, having been 'in essentials' solved. So far, then, resolution's emphasis on a unity of approach, with its suggestion that the principal task of a reading is to identify *the* illusion that Wittgenstein is concerned throughout his various discussions to have us recognize *as* an illusion, appears in tune with its target.

The picture is, however, complicated by another dimension along which unity or diversity of approach might be assessed. We noted how resolution prides itself on having the courage of its convictions (e.g. Diamond 1997: 78). This it primarily conceives, not in terms of accepting consequences of commitments wherever they arise, but as a matter of pressing a line of thought all the way to its end and not stopping short.¹⁶ The characteristic error which resolution finds in earlier approaches to the book is to mistake the penultimate phase through which its thought passes for the end itself, and so to present as Wittgenstein's own teaching the very thing that he is most concerned to bring us, 'in the end', to repudiate (cf. Conant 2000: 178). The thing in question is often described as a viewpoint, whose adoption is essential to pursuit of the characteristic ambitions of philosophy (Diamond 1991: 185, 196; Conant 2000: 197; Goldfarb 1997: 70; Kremer 2001: 66). Wittgenstein realizes that no external attack on this idea could be effective: someone whose confidence in the viewpoint is as yet unshaken could not but regard such an attack as failing sympathetically to engage with what he sees, hence as deliberately obtuse or, at best, an uncomprehending irrelevance (Conant 1992: 217–8). So instead Wittgenstein engages imaginatively, and invites us as readers likewise to engage, with that viewpoint. Through the presentation of what someone wedded to the viewpoint will construe as effective argumentation he concentrates its pretensions, and the various confusions to which it gives rise, into the single idea that how things are seen to be from that viewpoint cannot be adequately expressed, that the limits it discerns to coherent thought cannot be formulated in a way that respects those very limits. Everything up to *and including* this idea is part of the engagement, and is conducted in an adopted tone of voice. The final move comes only when that single idea, into which the whole of philosophy's ambition has been condensed, is itself exposed as unstable. This final move is one of disengagement, from those ambitions, and hence from philosophy. Only with this final move does Wittgenstein re-adopt, and only by following him through this final move do we recognize, his own, ordinary voice.

So much by way of an impressionistic sketch of the dialectical structure resolution discerns in the *Tractatus*. I have presented it so as to pose in a somewhat sharper form the question that heads this section, namely: Is it part of the interpretative framework of resolution that each later move in this dialectic should be effected through the same means as earlier moves? In the sketch, the idea of a mute philosophical vision of the world – a vision in which one silently contemplates what is shown, having learned from previous scrapes not even to try to say it – appears as philosophy's last, ineffective, bolt-hole. Are we to suppose that *the same* hounds as chased it there then destroy it? Resolution's portrayal of itself as pressing its line of thought to the very end suggests that the answer should be Yes, but how seriously are we to take that suggestion?

The question remains a vague one (as I admitted it would), but it can now be seen as equivalent to the question, how *schematic* we should understand 'the resolute reading' to be. If the answer is Yes, so that the same pressure is supposed to be operative throughout the dialectic, then it makes sense to ask what that pressure is; and *if* that question is appropriate at all, then no other answer presents itself than the austere view of nonsense. Of course, that answer would leave countless details to be

filled in, but we would have at least a general idea of the kind of filling resolution anticipates. We could then begin to explore the prospects of providing that kind of filling, attempting to reconstruct particular passages and themes of argument within the book in a way that gives prominence and effect to the austere view, and in that way to assess whether the scheme of interpretation that resolution offers is viable. In a similar way we could review the few details that resolute readers have themselves provided, asking, for instance, whether suggestions like Kremer's as to how the saying-showing distinction is to 'dissolve into nonsense' can be understood so as genuinely to turn on austerity about nonsense.¹⁷ But *if*, on the other hand, the answer is No, then very little of this would be to the point. Resolution would then consist just in the insistence that the full dialectic of the book must be gone through. It would say very little about *how*. More particularly, it would leave open the question, at what point(s) in the dialectic insistence on austerity is to be effective.

Neither stance looks remotely comfortable. The first raises again a question of consistency. If some principle or pressure is to be effective all the way through to 'the end' of the dialectic, it is hard to see how we would not be left, 'at the end', in firm possession of that principle. Yet at earlier stages of the dialectic that principle, the austere view of nonsense, is recommended as a consequence of contextualism, that is to say, by the kind of merely apparent reasoning from which we are supposed, 'in the end', *completely* to disengage. So, somehow, commitment to austerity is to survive the dissolution of the theorizing that compelled its adoption. Let's allow that it can (there are various models one might suggest as to how). The main difficulty is not to provide for austerity's survival, but to provide *uniquely* for that. That is, since resolution is committed to dispel the apparent inconsistency there is in holding onto this one seemingly-transitional thought all the way to the end, is it not thereby committed to allow that the same trick might be pulled off elsewhere, and thus, most generally, to allow that the irresolution it detects in other approaches might, like its own, be merely apparent? The second alternative is, though, clearly worse: it would leave 'the resolute reading' so indeterminate and open-ended as to hardly count even as a schema for interpretation.

It is therefore the first alternative that must be explored, but it cannot usefully be explored at the abstracted and impressionistic level adopted in this section. The question, to what extent resolution's core idea of austerity can guide us through the dialectical structure its advocates discern in the *Tractatus*, is a real one. Whether the broad kind of development of the resolute reading which Kremer proposes is necessary, and, if so, whether his specific proposals meet the need, both depend on the outcome. But to give the question bite we need to connect it with some of what actually goes on in Wittgenstein's text.

3. From Types to Solipsism: A Test Case for the Prospects of a Resolute Reading

I propose, then, to address the question by selecting, as a test case, one important passage of argument in the *Tractatus*, and from that point tracing a route that

brings us to 'the end' of the dialectic. Along the route I will be concerned to ask, how far resolution's core idea of austerity helps us to make the moves that have to be made to reach 'the end'. At the close of Part 3 I will bring together the results of this investigation to provide a context for Kremer's proposals, which are taken up in detail in Part 4. It is to some extent arbitrary which passage or theme is chosen for a test case in this approach. It seems best, though, to start out from a passage that clearly lends itself to resolute interpretation.

3.1 *The Opening Move: Wittgenstein's Criticism of Russell*

Russell's error is shown by the fact that in drawing up his symbolic rules he has to speak about the things his signs mean. (TLP 3.331)

Russell is here envisaged as holding, schematically, that because X is so-and-so while Y is not, X and Y are of different logical types, and thus nothing can be significantly predicated of both X and Y – when to hold that X is but that Y is not so-and-so precisely *is* to predicate something of both X and Y . Russell, that is, purports to override type-distinctions in order to justify them, whereas 'if anything is to count as nonsense in the grammar which is to be justified, then it cannot at the same time pass for sense in the grammar of the propositions that justify it' (PB §7).

One cannot distinguish forms from one another by saying that one has this property, the other that; for this assumes that there is sense in asserting either property of either form. (TLP 4.1241)

What this criticism shows to be impossible is also, as Wittgenstein goes on to explain, unnecessary. Russell conceives the restrictions he is here trying to impose as necessary to exclude such paradoxical formulations as ' $F(F(fx))$ ' – where ' F ' might be read 'does not apply to itself'. Yet it is, on Wittgenstein's view, only through neglect of the contextualist distinction of sign and symbol that we imagine there is any such formulation to exclude. We imagine, that is, that by assigning this meaning to the inner ' F ' in ' $F(F(fx))$ ' we have thereby settled the meaning of the outer ' F ', so that the whole expresses the Russellian paradox that not applying to itself does not apply to itself. That, however, is to take meaning to attach to a mere sign, independently of its (different) symbolic roles in the whole of which it is part. When we appreciate instead that meaning attaches only to symbols, we realize that our stipulation about the inner ' F ' is simply *silent* about the outer ' F ': we have thus not laid down for the whole an impossible meaning, one that type-theory must be invoked to exclude; we have simply failed to lay down for it any meaning at all.

In this exchange Russell is represented as adopting towards the type-hierarchy the kind of 'sideways-on' viewpoint that resolute readers identify as Wittgenstein's principal target (Diamond 1991: 185; Conant 2000: 197). To the

centred viewpoint of the grammar he aims to justify logical types constitute maximal ranges of generality, but to the sideways-on view they present themselves merely as different species of things. What to the centred view is mere nonsense is then to the sideways-on view *the wrong kind* of sense. Looking on from the side Russell then feels the need to say what *makes* it wrong, but finds that he cannot do so without producing yet more things that are wrong in just that way. What Wittgenstein's part in the exchange helps one to realize is that the need to justify type-restrictions is felt only if they are conceived *as* restrictions, and that they can be so conceived only by supposing oneself able to override them: one feels the need to say *why* the Russell paradox is nonsense only if one does not really accept that it *is*, simply, nonsense.

We have in this exchange, then, several of the ingredients that a resolute reading encourages us to find. We have the idea of an external viewpoint invoked to fulfil a philosophical need. We have a destabilization from within of the remarks emanating from that viewpoint – the phenomenon that, if we try to take seriously what these remarks purport to say, we can make no sense of the remarks themselves. We also have the feature that the failure of the remarks is indicative of an incoherence in the need they aim to satisfy, so that their failure does not leave us with something that cannot be done, but only with a realization that there was no such thing to be done. And finally, austerity about nonsense, and the contextualism to which it belongs, have a central role in bringing about that realization.

3.2 *A Consequent Threat of Disunity, and a Sketch of Wittgenstein's Response*

Yet this is, both in the development of Wittgenstein's thought, and within the *Tractatus* itself, *only the first stage of the dialectic*. Following it through one reaches Wittgenstein's early contention that 'a THEORY of types is impossible' (NM 109): the theory must go; the hierarchy remains. So long as that is so repudiation of Russell's sideways-on view is the rejection of only one form of instability. What I just now misleadingly called the 'centred viewpoint' of the stratified grammar Russell aimed to justify is itself unstable: it threatens to fragment, and thus to have *no* centre. Russell's sideways-on view at least purports to encompass the hierarchy as a whole, allowing itself conceptions of a generality excluded from the language whose grammar it attempts to justify. Although it surrenders those conceptions the compass of this language is no less than what presents itself to Russell's view, in that everything Russell purports to generalize over falls within the range of some generalization formulable in the language. These generalizations cannot however be (finitely) brought together, so that no thought expressible within the language generalizes over everything the language encompasses, and in that way a demand for unity, or the possibility of synthesis, goes unsatisfied. In consequence, if by a *language* we understand the expression of the unitary perspective of a subject, then this language is not one language but (infinitely) many languages. Or conversely, if by 'I' we were to try to understand the subject whose language this unsurveyably stratified language is, then 'I' could not be a

unitary subject: 'I should have as many-coloured and diverse a self as I have representations of which I am conscious to myself' (CPR B134). And correspondingly, of course, for the notion of world as comprising everything that is the case. If we understand 'everything' to express a generalization available within the language, it encompasses only a part of what is: there are (infinitely) many such 'everything's', many worlds. Or conversely, if 'everything that is the case' were somehow brought to co-ordinate with what is expressible by the language in its entirety, then it is a conception of the world which I, whose language that is, cannot comprehend. However exactly one cuts it, the framework idea that logic constitutes one's standpoint on reality (cf. TLP 2.173) is under severe threat.¹⁸

Might it be said at this point, though, that the threat is just another symptom of irresolution? In this supposed further stage of the dialectic – the thought would go – the centred viewpoint is being counted unstable only because it is inadequate to the extent of what is seen from sideways on, a viewpoint we pretended to abandon but which is still being drawn upon, and which still supplies the source of our unease. Bluntly, to say that the hierarchy remains when its theory is abandoned is just to say in other words: reality is hierarchically structured, but it cannot be said that it is. The lesson of austerity is that every such claim must be abandoned 'full-heartedly', not 'half-heartedly' toyed with as it is here. If only we would learn that lesson, and have the courage to stick resolutely to the commitments incurred, then we would recognize that this supposed further stage of the dialectic just disintegrates into insignificance.

But no, that response just won't do. It is inadequate both in itself, and as a reflection of how these issues are to be thought through in the *Tractatus*. Considered in itself its mistake is to think of Russell's sideways-on view as the *source* of the hierarchical conception's compulsion rather than as a flawed attempt to articulate it. The source – or more guardedly, the source here most relevant – lies in the conception of the proposition as 'a function of the expressions contained in it' (TLP 3.318), and so of a symbol or expression as a propositional variable (TLP 3.314). To conceive a proposition in accordance with this model, the proposition ' $F(a)$ ' for instance, is to think of ' a ' as replaceable by other arguments, yielding a grasp of a function $F(\xi)$, which may then be thought replaceable by other arguments, yielding a function $(\varphi)a$, which may then be thought replaceable by other arguments . . . *and so on*. This 'and so on' betokens a generalization that can find no place in the series of type-bound generalizations that it ranks, but whose understanding yet appears to be every bit as much internal to our grasp of the structure of propositions as they are. The tension this further stage of the dialectic points to is thus not, as the imagined response presents it, between on the one hand a metaphysically innocent, internal appreciation of the structure of language, and on the other a metaphysically ambitious attempt externally to vindicate that structure. The feelings that one *must* be able to understand the generality of that 'and so on', and that one *cannot*, have the same internal source. Nor is it a tension that can be dispelled by rehearsing again the virtues of austerity, because the austere view of nonsense is itself grounded in that same conception of propositional complexity and the identity of symbols:

austerity, it is tempting to say, is part of the problem, so cannot now be presented as its solution.

So much for an evaluation of the response in itself. Considered as a framework for understanding Wittgenstein's treatment of these issues in the *Tractatus* it is only more obviously inadequate. The task, to which the most central and distinctive of Wittgenstein's logical innovations must be understood as contributing, is to explain how the hierarchical structure that logic must acknowledge and deal with is constructible and so foreseeable (TLP 5.555–6), and therefore does not pose the threat of disintegration just sketched. As portrayed in that sketch, logic would be an endless series of surprises (cf. 6.1251), of unforeseeable forms whose understanding each calls for a new experience (NB 75, 89). The shape taken in the *Tractatus* by the demand for unity that stands opposed to this is the requirement that there be a general form of proposition, or in other words that propositions should constitute a single logical type over which the 'everything' in 'everything that is the case' can range. Central to meeting that requirement is Wittgenstein's notion of an operation which, in contrast to a function, is not characteristic of the form of its result (TLP 5.241): for that reason a truth-operation is iterable, the same operation being applicable again to its own result (5.251), so that no hierarchy of propositions is generated by truth-functional complexity.¹⁹ This central move is complemented, first, by an account of generality as at bottom truth-functional (5.52 ff.), and therefore as falling within its scope. Here we meet the hierarchy that Wittgenstein's account *does* acknowledge, the foreseeable, simple (Fregean) hierarchy of functions (5.501) or prototypes (5.522, cf. 3.315) by which the bases of a truth-operation may be determined (5.501). An essential second complement, then, is a means of excluding those varieties of paradox which, according to Russell's treatment, would recur within the simple hierarchy and so demand ramification. In my view what supplies this need is Wittgenstein's conception of the proposition as a fact (3.14).

3.3 *Unity Secured, at the Apparent Cost of Idealism*

That is, of course, only the barest outline of a complex story.²⁰ I've rushed through it to indicate that it, too, does not bring us to 'the end' of Wittgenstein's dialectic. In satisfying the requirement that there be a general form of proposition Wittgenstein's logical innovations secure the unity of the subject and of the world encompassed by its language. But the manner in which this is accomplished invites a further thought about the *ground* of this unity. In the story just outlined, the unity of the world appears as a product of the way the unity of the understanding is secured. The effect of that is that a view directed outwards, towards the facts, when it is coloured by that thought, will find in their cohesion only a reflection of a fundamental requirement of subjectivity.

To register fully the force of this thought one should note a characteristic ambiguity, or two-sidedness, in such notions as that of the general form of proposition. This means, first, the formal character shared by every proposition, a common

formal property of propositions; and secondly, the way any particular proposition is formed, or constructed.²¹ Similarly, when one talks of the unity of the proposition, one means *both* a common nature that unifies the body of propositions as a formal totality *and* the 'propositional bond' (cf. 4.221) by which any given proposition coheres. Thus not only the general, philosophical notion of a proposition, or of the facts, but any given fact, comes to be seen as manifesting a constructed or conditioned unity. That there are facts at all, that anything at all is *so*, becomes a reflection of the unifying self. There seems to be no better way to capture the aspect that the world then appears to present than to say: the world is *my* world.

This is, of course, nonsense. To reach the end of (this strand of) the dialectic will call for exposing it as nonsense in a way that can dispel its attractions. Our particular concern here is what role the core ideas of resolution, in particular the austere conception of nonsense, could have in effecting this final move.

In 'The world is *my* world', or 'The fact *are facts* for *me*', the notion 'I' will appear to have a distinctive significance precisely in so far as does the notion of 'the facts', because by this 'I' one aims to express a character manifest by (or in) the facts. And in turn, to the precise extent that there seems to be such a character there will seem to be force in the questions,

What if there is something outside the facts? Which our propositions are unable to express? (NB 51),

and,

But is *language* the only language? (NB 52),

that is to say, is the only language I understand the only language that, independently of the requirements of my understanding, there could be? In barest outline, I believe that Wittgenstein aimed to dispel the attractions of solipsism by indulging these questions, in order to undermine their apparent force: his approach is to show that the notion of something's being the case that I grasp in appreciating the general form of proposition – and therefore, as we just saw, in understanding *any* proposition²² – is absolutely unrestricted, and subject to no characterizing limitations that could, by reflection, confer on the 'I' a distinctive significance.²³

Can resolution help in this? To some extent I think it does. The idea of 'something outside the facts' is the idea of a way things are that does not conform to the conditions of representation. A thought of such a way for things to be would therefore be an *impossible* thought²⁴ – precisely the kind of thing austerity warns against. A contrast between different kinds of nonsense would imply and sustain a contrast between different kinds of sense, between ways things representably are (the right kind of sense) and ways they unrepresentably are (the wrong kind). Whatever characteristic it was that distinguished something of the first kind from the second, and that I recognized in it in being able to *think* it (to attach an 'I think'

to it), would then be the character expressed by 'I'. Austerity's insistence that there is neither of these contrasts, and that intelligibility (to give the supposed character a name) is not a notion that distinguishes between things that are otherwise similar, is thus a way of addressing a possible source of attraction in the idea that the solipsist's 'I' expresses a distinctive character, the character of intelligibility.

But that does not, I think, take us to the end of the issue. The austere diagnosis and response just sketched is right in holding that the impression of significance in the solipsist's 'I', and the attractiveness of what we take the solipsist to *intend* (TLP5.62), rests on the idea of a contrast between the facts, conceived as subject to the requirements of representation, and what is not so subject. And it is of course right that this is not a contrast that could be drawn by citing things on either side of it:

We cannot therefore say in logic: this and this there is in the world, that there is not. (TLP 5.61)

This, though, is a point that will have been anticipated:

And how could we *ask* whether THAT can be expressed which cannot be EXPRESSED? (NB 52)

The temptation to think of a 'domain outside the facts' (*ibid.*) involves no quasi-Humean anxiety that one might, just around the next corner, be presented with one of the denizens of that domain. Austerity reminds us that a nonsense sentence is not a means of presenting us with that, not a means of representing something unrepresentable.²⁵ But what is tempting here is only the general idea of a contrast, and not the admittedly confused thought of instancing it.²⁶

What remains to be shown, then, is that invoking the general idea of this contrast is as self-stultifying as trying to instance it. That demands more specific attention to the context in which, and the purpose for which, the idea is invoked than is paid in the austere response just canvassed. And that in turn demands that we set down some markers.

First is the ordinary truth that I (PMS) am the subject of a limited conception of the world: there are things I know and things I don't; things I understand and things I don't; particular ways things are presented to me because of who and how I am, and, for the same reasons, other ways those things are not presented to me, and other things that are not presented to me at all. This limited conception is 'adequate for individuation' (NB 89): it has a shape which fixes me (PMS) as its centre, and it is shaped in all manner of less literal ways that reveal how, as well as who, PMS is; my character is given in my outlook. The second marker is that all of this can be formulated as an ordinary truth because my limited and centred conception of things is only part of what there is, and that the various contrasts its description appeals to are contrasts that I myself can make. So third, if I were to mimic an ecological usage, and call the object of my limited conception 'my

world', it would be immediately apparent in the conditions for it to say anything that what would be said by 'The world is my world' is straightforwardly false. Fourth, whatever else it is supposed to be, the solipsist's utterance of 'The world is my world' is not to be straightforwardly false. But fifth, it is, even so, by analogy with the ecological falsehood they ordinarily express that those same words will be counted apt to voice what the solipsist intends: it is to hold in that use, too, that my character is apparent in my world. It is the tension between the fourth and fifth of these markers that points to 'the end' of this dialectic. For us to imagine that it has a point the solipsist's utterance must be understood in analogy with its ecological counterpart, as invoking the idea of a contrast; but for it to have the *intended* point it must be denied that any contrast is invoked. Wittgenstein's criticism of his interlocutor's appeal to the metaphor of the visual field has the same structure: the metaphor can seem to give point to the solipsist's 'my' only through the invocation of a vantage point from which the field is representable as circumscribed; but that 'my' can have the *intended* point only from a point of view – that of the eye – that allows *no* circumscription.

3.4 Turning Points Identified, and Morals Drawn

The collapse of those metaphors provides only the shape of Wittgenstein's resolution of the issue of solipsism. A properly persuasive interpretation would have to show how this same shape is played out in the arena of Wittgenstein's logical concerns.²⁷ But we have enough in place now to return to the question, whether pressing the core ideas of resolution will see us through to the end of this dialectic. It will be helpful first to recall three points in the foregoing outline where austerity about nonsense, taken by itself, would give incomplete or misleading indications of the shape of Wittgenstein's argument. Then, through a general observation about austerity's potential as a guide, I will relate these points to issues raised in previous sections.

The first of these points arose in the criticism of Russell's attempt to justify type-distinctions by overriding them. Austerity about nonsense is central to this criticism, but emphasizing *only* that would obscure the fact that his rejection of Russell's overarching perspective leaves Wittgenstein with a further and deeper problem: if not 'from without', as Russell attempted, how *is* the unity in language and the world to be comprehended? The second point is, in effect, a consequence of the first. Wittgenstein's positive and original logical theorizing – his account of truth-operations, of generality, and so on – is addressed to that question. Had we taken austerity's recommendation to regard the exposure of nonsense in Russell's position as 'the end' of the matter, so as not giving rise to this further question, we should have been at a loss to locate the need for this theorizing. Finally, the third point occurred in interpreting Wittgenstein's dissolution of the solipsistic viewpoint to which that theorizing in turn gives rise. Austerity proves that the viewpoint cannot sustain its impression that the character of subjectivity manifests itself throughout the facts by evidencing in contrast, through the use of

nonsense sentences, quasi-facts which lack that character. But we saw that we need to go beyond that point, to highlight contradictory demands that the solipsistic viewpoint imposes on the general idea of such a contrast.

Each point illustrates that, considered as a guide to interpretation, the austere view of nonsense is too indiscriminating. Let's accept straight off that the whole course of argument described in sections 3.1–3.3, from the criticism of Russell to the engagement with solipsism, is a tissue of nonsense. Still, it may be that, for understanding the direction and target of Wittgenstein's thought, that is one of the least helpful things to know about what kind of tissue it is. In TLP 6.53 Wittgenstein describes an approach quite different from that of the *Tractatus*, but which would, he says, be 'the only strictly correct method'. It amounts to a kind of heckling from the sidelines, which wouldn't itself try to do anything in philosophy, '– and then, whenever someone else wanted to say something metaphysical, [would] demonstrate to him that he had given no meaning to certain signs in his propositions'.²⁸ We should note a point of connection and one of difference between this and the preceding discussion. First, the close parallel in wording with TLP 5.4733 confirms that the method will demonstrate 'the other's' remark to be nonsense in just the way austerity conceives it. Second, the method is to be triggered 'always, whenever' – that is, *as soon as* – 'the other' indulges his inclination towards philosophy. The two points are non-accidentally connected. In so far as austerity recognizes no distinctions of kind amongst nonsense, a method informed by it cannot be tuned to target the right kind of nonsense. From its point of view it would be wholly arbitrary to hold back from criticism, to allow the train of nonsense to develop under its own momentum, until the philosophically telling target comes into view. Nonsense is just nonsense. If the point is to curb the impulse to produce nonsense, or to make plain to 'the other' that he is subject to this impulse, then, presumably, the sooner the better.

That is what austerity recommended in section 3.2 above, in connection with the criticism of Russell, when it urged that its lesson be pressed fully home so that no lingering impression of significance remained. In opposition to this I then urged that to press the point too soon would be to miss Wittgenstein's real concern, to put a stop to the dialectic before that concern emerges. It should now be clear that an understanding of what *is* the right moment, and what is 'too soon', outstrips any guidance austerity can offer.

Earlier (in section 2.3) we noted, but could not then explain, resolution's particular opposition to a kind of realism – realism that purports to offer an ontological grounding for the forms of thought and language. Russell's attempt to justify a type-stratified grammar by talking, from sideways on, 'about the things his signs mean' (3.331) is the Tractarian paradigm of that kind of realism. We saw (in section 3.1) that Wittgenstein does indeed offer a telling criticism of this realism. But to imagine that in appreciating this criticism we have located Wittgenstein's real target is to press the point 'too soon'. The dialectic continues, to develop a way of coping with abandoning that kind of realism without surrendering the promise of intelligibility it offered. And, as the philosophical tradition might lead one to expect, the inherent tendency of that continuing dialectic is towards an

intense form of transcendental idealism, in which intelligibility is assured, not through the (Russellian) possibility of a language-independent (sideways-on) grasp of a structure things in themselves possess, but by the world's being structured and unified by the requirements of the subject's unity. The I, whose unity is at the same time the unity of the world ('I am my world' – 5.63), is Wittgenstein's real target. It doesn't figure much in 'the resolute reading'.²⁹ One explanation of that would point to austerity's recommendation to halt the dialectic before this concern emerges.

That is about getting to 'the end' of the dialectic. The second of the three points listed above was more modest, and had to do with getting even to the next stage: *if we think the criticism of Russell leaves no outstanding problem, it held, then we cannot understand Wittgenstein's own logical theorizing as addressing that problem, and so will not understand it at all.* This too can now be seen to connect with points made earlier. According to section 2.5's impressionistic sketch of the overall structure that resolution recommends we find in the *Tractatus*, the pretensions of positive philosophy are to be concentrated by argument into a single idea that is finally 'destabilized from within', that 'collapses on itself', or 'implodes'. Wittgenstein's own logical theorizing is the argument this sketch speaks of. Its role in the sketch implies two obvious points about that argument. First, there has to be some sense in which *we* can recognize that the argument is a good one.³⁰ There is nothing to be learned from the implosion of bad philosophy, nothing of value in witnessing the disintegration of the appearance of sense in third-rate stuff.³¹ *That* is too common an experience. Second, the argument must be allowed to run its course. We just now saw that austerity cannot guide us in judging what *is* the full course of the argument. Even more plainly, *it* cannot provide the sense in which Wittgenstein's argument is compelling.³²

The third and last of these points distinguished demonstrating the impossibility of instancing a certain contrast from undermining the general idea of such a contrast. It connects with our earlier discussion of saying and showing (in section 2.4). What the solipsist holds to be shown is a pervasive feature of reality. He will not only admit, but will insist, that the words with which he responds to what he is shown do not express that reality possesses that feature. That, he would explain, would be to construe what is shown as too much like a fact,³³ as some kind of 'quasi-fact', when what is in question is *the ground of there being any facts*. Quasi-facts are what austerity rejects. The solipsist agrees in rejecting them, and goes on to explain why. A quasi-fact is no more than *quasi-factual* because it is not expressible in language, but in counting it *quasi-factual* we present this inexpressibility as accidental to it: its nature is that of something that could be, and perhaps in other circumstances would be, expressed. What is shown, on the other hand, is *in its essence* inexpressible. Or so, one imagines, the solipsist might say.

The solipsist, in other words, is *all for* austerity. It frees his words from being lumbered with the wrong kind of sense, so frees them to resonate, through metaphor and analogy, in ways he counts apt to what he is shown. This should not be surprising. Austerity is, after all, a part of the logical theorizing through which Wittgenstein condenses the pretensions of philosophy into the solipsistic

viewpoint. So neither should it be surprising that a rehearsal of austerity is not enough to undermine the impression that there is such a viewpoint – that there is *any* kind of aptness in the solipsist's austere nonsensical words.

At the end of Part 2 we encountered a dilemma set by the question, whether or not it is part of resolution to suppose that its core commitment, austerity about nonsense, will be the operative pressure throughout Wittgenstein's dialectic. In this section I have been criticising a version of a positive answer to that question, according to which austerity of itself is enough to guide us in reconstructing Wittgenstein's dialectic, and to effect the argumentative moves through which it passes. It might be that this is a straw man: so far as I can discern, no resolute reader has unambiguously committed himself or herself to just this position. But at any rate, if it is a straw man, it is at least better filled out than the alternative. Perhaps, that is, the core idea of austerity is not to have the role I've lately supposed in guiding and shaping the resolute reading. But then, to pick up on the other side of the dilemma: if not that, what else?

4. Kremer's 'Problematic of Justification'

4.1 Overview

Kremer's principal structural proposal can be read as offering an answer to that question. He suggests that Wittgenstein's treatments of 'the diverse topics that [he] associates with the saying-showing distinction' are unified by their common concern with a 'problematic of justification' (p. 52). On this account Wittgenstein construes philosophy as responding to a felt need 'to justify ourselves, our thoughts, words and deeds' (p. 51), but facing the dissatisfaction that whatever it offers in justification will itself raise again the same kind of question: how is it, in turn, to be justified. The appeal of the saying-showing distinction lies in its seeming to provide a way of stopping this kind of regress. What is needed for that is something that could justify but not need to be justified: it should be enough like a proposition to stand to what it justifies in the kind of relation that propositions stand to one another, but different enough from a proposition that it makes no sense to ask after its justification; it should have, as it were, the right shape to be a premise but the wrong shape to be a conclusion.

. . .the issue of justification arises whenever there is something that can be brought into question, for which it seems we need to provide an account. The sorts of things that can be brought into question include propositions, claims, assertions and beliefs. . .[also] actions or more general systems of thought or action. . .a language, or a conceptual scheme, or a life. Still, in every case the demand for justification arises when something is put into question, and the typical form of an answer to this demand will be a proposition or a system of propositions. The difficulty

is that such an answer is just the sort of thing that can itself be brought into question – so that it seems that we can never be secure in our justifications.

To stop the looming regress we seem to need something sufficiently like a proposition to serve as a justification, an answer to a question, yet sufficiently different from a proposition to need no further justification. . . . The doctrine that there are ‘things’ that can be shown – and so can be ‘meant’, ‘grasped’, and communicated, and can also be ‘quite correct’ – but which cannot be said – and so cannot be put into question – seems to fit the bill. (pp. 51–2)

Wittgenstein’s approach, Kremer holds, is to tempt us with this thought, only finally to expose it as an incoherent attempt ‘to have our justificatory cake and eat it too’ (p. 51). In that way we are led to reject both ‘the demand for justification’ and ‘the temptation to satisfy [it] in the realm of the “shown”’ (p. 52).

Let me first list some of the apparent virtues of this suggestion. First, and most generally, it does offer an answer to the question with which Part 3 ended. It both makes room for us to find in the *Tractatus* genuine argumentative engagement on a diversity of philosophical topics, and provides a clear indication of the shape that we should expect that engagement to take: for any topic to be treated in line with this proposal there must first be argument which establishes the structure of a regress. Second, the very generality of the notion of justification, and therefore of the regressive structure Kremer envisages, holds out the promise of our being able to unify those various particular argumentative engagements. So third, the proposal offers a definite idea as to how the seemingly diverse problems of philosophy are to be concentrated into a single crucial idea, as the impressionistic sketch of section 2.5 above led us to expect. Fourth, this crucial idea, of regress-stopping things we are shown, is vulnerable to criticism on the grounds of austerity, for these things are required by their role in the proposal to have precisely the inconsistent, quasi-factual status that austerity targets. So fifth, the proposal assigns a central place to the core idea of austerity in the dialectical structure it discerns, without presupposing that every move in that structure will be effected by recourse to that idea. Finally, we might note that a concern with regresses generated by confused justificatory demands is an evident and central feature of Wittgenstein’s later work, most famously in his discussion of the force of rules. So, if the proposal can be made out, it promises to illuminate an important continuity in Wittgenstein’s thought.

Some of the problems Kremer’s proposal faces are simply mirror-images of these points. The first is posed by the extreme generality of the regressive structure that is to unify the various particular strands of argument in the *Tractatus*: the worry here is simply whether the structure can be understood broadly enough to embrace every argument Kremer wants it to without becoming so vague that it would apply to almost anything. Certainly, any reader of Kremer’s description of the regressive structure, quoted above, will be able to multiply *ad lib* non-Tractarian episodes in philosophy to fit it.³⁴ This excess may seem innocent

enough until we bring to bear another of the above points. Kremer's proposal is that a philosopher caught in the regressive structure will be driven to resort to a saying-showing distinction in the attempt to halt it. And as Kremer rightly emphasizes (p. 50), if Wittgenstein's approach is to be compelling it must be made to seem that this resort is *inevitable*: if there are other options open, other ways of stopping or coping with the regress, then Wittgenstein's criticism of this particular resort would just be the conventional philosophical move of pointing out a wrong turning; it would not reflect back to reveal anything about the dialectic up to the point where the wrong turning was made, or about the ambitions that informed it. Yet it is, to say the least, hard to believe that this inevitability is compatible with the generality of Kremer's description of the regressive structure. A retreat into ineffability has not, for instance, been characteristic of responses to Carroll's problem in 'Achilles and the Tortoise' (which calls only for clarity over the complementary intra-systematic roles of axioms and rules), or to problems set by justificatory regresses in epistemology (Descartes was not tempted to think of 'I am' as ineffable).³⁵ The problem is sharpened again if we consider examples of responses to regress that might, at a pinch, be made to fit Kremer's description. Propositions belonging to Carnap's linguistic frameworks, or Wittgenstein's own 'Moorean' propositions in *On Certainty*, might be counted things with the right shape to justify but not to be justified, because in each case their non-justified acceptance is held to be constitutive of a justificatory practice; and, perhaps for that reason, the language of things shown but not said is tempting in connection with them. But something much more specific is required for Kremer's proposal. A regress-stopping resort to things shown but not said is, on his account, to be exposed as nonsensical by resolution's core idea of austerity. The things resorted to must therefore be precisely the quasi-facts that austerity targets. And again, one wonders how this very specific demand might be satisfied in every case of retreat from a regressive structure that otherwise fits Kremer's description. (That I have two hands might be in several ways unlike a typical empirical proposition, but it is not remotely tempting to view it as a 'logically incoherent thought', or an impossible combination of logical types.)

None of these points constitutes a definitive objection to Kremer's proposal. But together they strongly suggest that its apparent virtues are owed chiefly to the broad brush with which it is sketched.

4.2 Textual Evidence

Those reflections have a more abstracted, a prioristic character than one might expect of an exegetical discussion. Here, though, a respondent's hand is forced by Kremer's own approach. In his article there is not a single train of argument from the *Tractatus* that is persuasively exhibited as displaying – nor, hardly, is any specific passage of argument even claimed to display – the regressive structure which, according to his general proposal, unites them all.

Kremer devotes sections VI to VIII of his paper to illustrating his proposal in

the areas of logic and ethics. His discussion of ethics is, though, principally concerned to articulate the final realization, the 'ethical point' of the book, rather than the dialectic that is to lead to it; also, it draws heavily on thoughts about the will briefly adumbrated in the *Notebooks* but altogether absent from the *Tractatus* (p. 59). For both reasons I will confine attention in this brief section to his remarks on logical issues in section VI.

A reading of Wittgenstein's logical thought as addressing incoherent and superfluous attempts at justification will clearly give prominence to the idea that 'Logic must look after itself' (TLP 5.473, NB 2). The passage Kremer first cites as motivated by that idea, and which sets the framework of discussion for a major part of his section VI, occurs parenthetically in TLP 5.452.

Thus in the *Principia Mathematica* of Whitehead and Russell there occur definitions and primitive propositions in words. Why suddenly words here? This would need a justification. None is given, and none could be, for the procedure is actually not allowed.

About this Kremer writes:

Now in *Principia*, as in Frege's logical works, ordinary language is used for certain particular purposes. . .for example, explanations of fundamental logical distinctions [concept-object in Frege, logical types in Russell]; explanations of. . .primitive terms. . .; stipulations concerning which strings of symbols are to count as meaningful and which are not; informal arguments for the correctness of basic logical axioms; and statements of rules of inference. All these can be seen. . .as bearing justificatory weight, and all are dismissed by Wittgenstein as attempts to say what can only be shown. (pp. 52–3)

This throws no light on the passage cited, nor on how it could support Kremer's proposal, for the following reasons. (i) Wittgenstein's specific target in TLP 5.452, quite clearly announced, is the procedure of *Principia*, not some general tendency characteristic equally of Frege's works. (ii) The use of ordinary language he objects to is in formulating 'definitions and primitive propositions'. These do not occur on Kremer's list, and are not mentioned in his subsequent discussion. In addition, ordinary language is not used in either of these two roles by Frege, who is the main reference point for that discussion. (iii) With little to guide us in the immediate context, there is room to speculate over *exactly* what Wittgenstein objected to in the procedure of *Principia*. What I think is the most likely answer is clearly apparent in examples such as *Principia's* *9.131 'Definition' of 'being of the same type', or in the 'Primitive Proposition' *9.14, 'If ' ϕx ' is significant, then if x is of the same type as a , ϕa is significant, and vice versa', from which is inferred at *12 that 'types which have a common member coincide'. The resort to words here is not avoidable: the definition and primitive proposition together purport to fix the shape of the *Principia* hierarchy, hence the significance of its symbolism.

Wittgenstein's most obvious (and by now familiar) reason for counting the procedure 'not allowed' is that it can be effective only by breaching the conditions of significance it purports to formulate. (iv) But more importantly here, whether or not that diagnosis of it is along the right lines, Wittgenstein's complaint is, very clearly, that the procedure is '*not allowed*'. He does not say that we have here an allowable but essentially ineffective justificatory move, one that would need in its turn a justification of just the same kind. He says that what Russell does here cannot be allowed at all. So, simply, there is no question of a *regress* of any kind in this passage. For all the prominence Kremer gives it, then, it offers no support at all for his proposal.

I cannot comment in the same detail on every part of Kremer's discussion. A reader can quickly confirm that in the remainder of his section VI only one passage from Wittgenstein's writings is cited which speaks explicitly of a regress (p. 53), while in another a regress is clearly threatened (p. 55). Both passages are drawn, not from the *Tractatus*, but from Wittgenstein's lectures of the early 1930's.

4.3 How Resolute is the Proposal?

Returning now to the general description of the proposal, quoted in section 4.1 above, we saw Kremer reason as follows: when a proposition is brought into question, and a justification demanded, the answer will be a proposition; 'the difficulty is that [this] is just the sort of thing that can itself be brought into question' (p. 52). Why so? Is there some inference here from the given fact that some propositions are open to question to the conclusion that all are? Or is it itself a given that a proposition *as such* is the sort of thing for which a justification can reasonably be sought?

The second seems to be Kremer's view. In introducing the issue of justification in logic he says, for instance that 'principles cannot play the role of ultimate justifiers if we take them to be propositions in the ordinary sense. If we try to appeal to them as justifications through saying them we make them vulnerable to question and challenge' (p. 52). In the 'ordinary sense', it seems, a proposition cannot be self-evident, a priori true, or just the only thing there is to think. Nor, it seems, can it be necessary: 'as soon as [a] principle is set up as a proposition it can be called into question; . . . it becomes simply another thing that can be intelligibly asserted but also intelligibly denied. If true, it is only contingently true' (p. 55). This is from the beginning of Kremer's discussion of ethics. It implies, for instance, that if it is *said* that torturing a child to death for pleasure is heinous, this is *thereby* something intelligibly denied.

Plainly, this is no 'ordinary sense' of proposition, but the product of Wittgenstein's theorizing: 'whatever we can describe at all could be otherwise' (TLP 5.634); 'There is no picture that is *a priori* true' (TLP 2.225). How then can it have such a central role in a reading which understands the *Tractatus* 'as providing no *theory* of meaning, sense and nonsense' (p. 42)?

Kremer neither raises nor answers the question. But perhaps it *is* answerable.

An answer would have to maintain that the principle of the bipolarity of propositions (along with the associated but unstated principle that only a necessity can finally explain or justify) belongs only to the earlier stages of the dialectic, which Kremer is here describing but not endorsing. It has a role, as a temporary commitment, in driving the philosophical search for ultimate justifications into the bolt-hole of quasi-propositions that are shown but not sayable; when that bolt-hole is finally shown to be untenable, the commitment is discharged.

This answer is so far consistent, but radically incomplete. Alluding to the shape of a *reductio*, it forgets that an argument by *reductio* forces rejection of only *one* of the assumptions which collectively lead to absurdity. That point would be met if it could be shown that the relevant '*reductio*' has, effectively, only one 'assumption' – or in other words, that commitment to bipolarity³⁶ is an inextricable part of the quest for ultimate justifications. There is no hint in Kremer's discussion that he recognizes this commitment (it seems to me unlikely that it could be met at all, but it is surely clear that any way of meeting it would have to draw on a committed and highly specific conception of justification, thereby undoing the attractive seeming-generality of his proposal). Nor is there in Kremer's essay any indication of an alternative strategy by which his proposal's apparent commitment to bipolarity might be shown to be merely 'transitional'.

With regard to another Tractarian principle central to Kremer's proposal the position is more definitive. Here is how he describes 'the ultimate ethical point of the *Tractatus*':

We began with a question, the question of justification. . . We have arrived at a mystical 'answer' which is no answer at all. The very attempt to use it as an answer requires that we put it into words and so abandon it. Yet if there is no answer, then there is also no question (6.5, 6.52). . . Here is the ultimate solution to the 'problems of philosophy' promised in the Preface. There are no such problems. . . (p. 56)

Evidently, there is no prospect of rendering this thought's reliance on the principle that 'a question exists only where an answer exists' (TLP 6.52) merely transitional. It is the principle by which the dialectic's *final* move of disengagement is effected, so stands undeniably as an undischarged premise of the 'ultimate solution'. What is there to be said for the principle? Why, in Kremer's view, should we accept it? In readings Kremer opposes it is the upshot of theorizing which reveals the emptiness of seeming-questions that would, if genuine, serve as counter-examples (e.g. 'Why is there a world?', 'Why does anything at all exist?', 'Why does anything matter?'). Plainly Kremer can have no truck with such support: to do so would be to rely on the special meaning of 'nonsense' developed in the body of the book to declare that the propositions constituting that body are nonsense, something Kremer insists would be incoherent (p. 43). But then where *does* the principle come from? Standing alone, as on Kremer's proposal it must, it seems no better than a positivist dogma.

Of the many bits of Tractarian theory that Kremer draws on in the course of his

essay, I have mentioned in this section only two principles that are essential to the formulation of his general proposal. For these at least we have a right to expect that a resolute reading will explain how their employment is consistent with resolution, how we are not to be left standing on them when the ladder is thrown away. Kremer offers no such explanation.

4.4 *Is Austerity Central After All?*

One of the seeming strengths of Kremer's proposal noted in the overview of section 4.1 above is the definite place it allots to the core idea of austerity in collapsing philosophy's last bolt-hole, the saying-showing distinction. So it is surprising that, when Kremer comes to say a little more about how this distinction is to collapse into nonsense, that core idea is not much in evidence.

We encountered one of these episodes in section 2.4 above. The saying-showing can be 'fleshed out' or 'given content', Kremer holds, only by examples; but 'in giving such examples we immediately contradict the...doctrine' (p. 55, cf. p. 44). I then agreed that to give an example would involve a kind of contradiction, but saw no reason to accept Kremer's other premise, that this is the only way of 'fleshing out' the distinction.

The kind of contradiction involved is the self-stultification familiar from discussions of Descartes' *cogito*, where the contradiction is not internal to the content of a claim, but lies in a clash between that content and some feature of the claim itself – perhaps the kind of meaning it is to bear, the modal status it is to have, or perhaps simply its being made at all. This notion of self-stultification dominates Kremer's further comments on the collapse of the saying-showing distinction. Yet plainly, self-stultification need not involve nonsense at all,³⁷ so hardly provides a setting in which the importance of conceiving nonsense austere will emerge.

Consider for instance Kremer's contention that Wittgenstein's description of the only strictly correct method in TLP 6.53, 'like the positivist's verification theory of meaning, ... appears to violate its own strictures' (p. 57).

The 'right method', we are told, would be to 'say nothing except what can be said, therefore propositions of natural science, therefore something that has nothing to do with philosophy'. Yet this proclamation is not a proposition of natural science, nor does it have nothing to do with philosophy. . . We now see that we are to recognize 6.53 and 7. . . as nonsense as well. These propositions, along with the doctrine of saying and showing itself, are the last attempts at self-justification. (pp. 57–8)

Perhaps TLP 6.53 is nonsense. But this comparison with verificationism does not reveal why, and more particularly does not 'demonstrate that [Wittgenstein] had given no meaning to some of the signs' in that proposition. At risk of labouring the over-familiar, the problem with

(V) Every truth is empirical or tautologous

is brought out by the reasoning: (V) is not empirical; (V) is not tautologous; so, if (V) is a truth, (V) is not a truth; so, (V) is not a truth. This little argument, on which Kremer's remark is clearly modelled, exposes no sign in (V) as having been given no meaning. Which would it be? Not 'empirical', since an understanding of that is presupposed in the argument; nor 'tautologous', for the same reason. Might it be 'truth'? Or 'every'?³⁸

For an instance of a different model, that Kremer more often draws upon, consider his comment on TLP 6.423.

'Of the will that is the subject of the ethical we cannot speak' . . . is nonsense – to say 'we cannot speak of *x*' is to speak of *x*. There is *nothing* of which we can say that we cannot speak of it. The solution of the problems of life lies in realizing this. (p. 59)

It is revealing that Kremer's schematic '*x*' occurs in what one might call an object-position, rather than taking the place of a sentence, so forcing us to understand 'speak of' as meaning (roughly) *mention*, or *refer to*, rather than *express*. It is only this that gives to his claims in this passage³⁹ their air of obviousness. At the same time, it renders *irrelevant* to those claims the idea of austerity, which has to do with the impossibility of putting into words, in quasi-propositional form, something that cannot be expressed. For, as Moore nicely remarks, '. . . in fact there is no absurdity in the idea of saying a good deal *about* what cannot be said. What is impossible is to say a good deal – anything – *that* cannot be said'.⁴⁰ By ignoring this point Kremer leaves behind the region that is austerity's concern, and treads instead the over-worked ground of the problem of singular negative existentials.

Austerity was to be the key to the implosion of the saying-showing distinction. But when the point is reached, it seems that austerity has nothing to do with it. What should we make of this? It would be an unjustified over-reaction to conclude that the core idea of austerity does not, after all, have the central place in 'the resolute reading' that its advocates have claimed. Instead we should find in this aspect of Kremer's discussion confirmation of two points made earlier. First, it has yet to be made clear how, or why, austerity will preclude any but the most trivially self-stultifying appeal to the saying-showing distinction (section 2.4). And second, the problem anticipated in section 4.1, of making compatible the generality of Kremer's proposal with the very specific preconditions of the role that austerity is to play in it, turns out to be a real one.

5. Conclusion

Kremer's essay begins by acknowledging that the resolute reading has yet to offer a persuasively developed account of what Wittgenstein was up to in the *Tractatus*. That remains true at the close of his essay.

I began by stressing that I do not intend this discussion as a general criticism of resolution. More particularly, I have not set out to criticise every part of

Kremer's paper. This is not for lack of space, or any such reason. Instead, it is because there is much in Kremer's paper that I agree with, and much else that I think is, if not exactly right, still in various ways thought-provoking or illuminating. That is, surely, not just what one *would* expect, but what one *should* expect. It would be not just implausible, but crass, to suppose that responses to so rich a text as Wittgenstein's will divide neatly into right-thinking sheep and wrong-headed goats – all the more so, to suppose that adherence to resolution, as it has so far been clarified or developed, might be made the touchstone of such a division. So the one effect I'd most like to think that this essay might have would be to temper the evangelical zeal with which resolute readers condemn, as just another representative of some undifferentiated 'standard reading', any work on the *Tractatus* which does not declare allegiance to their supposed new insight.⁴¹

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NOTES

¹ Kremer (2001). Further references to this article are by page reference alone.

² For the theme that mere signs are not the bearers of meaning, and that therefore sameness of sign is so far no indication of sameness of meaning, see especially TLP 3.322. For the intrinsic connection between this and the view of nonsense summarized at TLP 5.4733, see PTLP 5.30641, which combines the two separated passages of TLP in a single sentence.

³ One should not perhaps expect a sharp line here, but there must be *some* line. 'Irresolution' is by design and definition a term of condemnation, and it cannot be made by definition wrong to dispute *just anything* maintained by an interpretation that calls itself resolute.

⁴ That contextualism about meaning precludes these kinds of realist explanations has been a constant theme of Dummett's writings on Frege since his (1973). Wright (1984) presents this as the core meaning of Frege's context principle. In the following paragraphs I follow the lead of resolute responses to the *Tractatus* in presenting (B) the repudiation of this form of realism as a consequence of (A) austerity about nonsense. But these earlier discussions indicate that (A) and (B) are not best conceived as cause and effect, but rather as common effects of contextualism.

⁵ As part of a third thesis Geach holds that 'thesis (2) is merely taken over [by Wittgenstein, from Frege], and stated with greater emphasis' (1977: 56).

⁶ So far, I think, Goldfarb would agree. He explicitly does not want the repudiation of realism to involve instead 'some kind of linguistic idealism' (1997: 65). I am not clear whether he could accept what follows.

⁷ Of resolute readers' accounts of these matters, Conant's is the most puzzling. In a discussion divided between p. 195 and footnote 93 of his (2000), we are told that it is 'perfectly consistent with an austere reading of Frege' (fn. 93) to hold that 'the logical

distinctions which [Frege's nonsensical elucidatory 'propositions'] attempt to convey – such as the distinction between concept and object – show themselves through the difference in the signs of *Begriffsschrift*' (p. 195), *provided that* this is 'understood in the appropriate way' (fn. 93). What is this 'appropriate' understanding, which is to rescue a formulation that Conant elsewhere (e.g. 2000: 196) condemns as paradigmatic of irresolution? Footnote 93 has nothing further to say on the matter. Returning to the text of p. 195, it might seem important that Conant speaks of differences in the *signs*, rather than the *symbols*, of Frege's *Begriffsschrift*. But this cannot be right. First, differences between signs, strictly *qua* signs, could not show any such distinction as that between concept and object. And secondly, if only signs were in question, there need have been no resort to an elucidatory approach in the first place: there is no obstacle to straightforwardly meaningful description of the behaviour of signs in a formal language such as Frege's; beginning logic students do it all the time. The only other clue Conant's text provides is that an 'appropriate' understanding will not assign to nonsensical elucidations the 'additional positive role (of conveying a kind of inexpressible insight) which Geach ascribes to Fregean elucidation'. First, and somewhat trivially, Geach nowhere in his article actually describes an elucidation as imparting an 'inexpressible insight'. But secondly, and much more importantly, it is absolutely plain from Geach's discussion that, had he described an elucidation in this way, this would not be to ascribe to it an *additional* role, but only to redescribe its 'didactic' role in instilling mastery of the symbolism (Geach 1977: 56, 58). Geach says, 'The insight we gain, by aid of strictly nonsignificant sentences, into the workings of logical notation can be definitely tested – even by University examiners' (1977: 70); and it surely goes without saying that these examiners are not testing for the presence of an insight *additional to* competence in logic. There seems, then, to be no discernible difference between what Geach claims for elucidation, which is said to 'presuppose[. . .] the prior ascription of the substantial [non-austere] conception of nonsense' (Conant 2000: 195), and Conant's own account of the matter, which we are assured is 'perfectly consistent' with austerity.

⁸ Someone might suggest that resolution has been concerned to guard against 'the language of "features of reality"', and less troubled by talk of 'features of language', because only the first is, as one might say, a real and present danger, a temptation that philosophers actually succumb to. Thus, Diamond: 'Wittgenstein, throughout the *Tractatus*, when he speaks about what shows itself but cannot be said, speaks of these things as features of reality' (1991: 181). This remark is just false. Counterexamples from the single passage of argument most emphasized by Diamond herself, that concerning formal concepts, include TLP 4.1211, 4.122, 4.124, 4.126. A study of the PTLP ancestry of this discussion of formal concepts makes plain that, for Wittgenstein, the *central* case here of something shown but not expressible by language is that of 'a feature of a propositional structure' (PTLP 4.102263).

⁹ Resolution's austerity about nonsense not only does not preclude such a stipulation, it essentially allows it. There is, as it were, no existing meaning to get in the way of a newly stipulated one. Moore, who whole-heartedly endorses austerity about nonsense, makes full and exciting use of the space left open, by stipulating a meaning for 'we are shown that *p*', where '*p*' is a nonsense sentence (Moore 1997: ch. 7).

¹⁰ The scare quotes here register Kremer's disapproval of the Pears-McGuinness translation of TLP 6.522.

¹¹ See also p. 57, where it is said that the saying-showing distinction 'dissolves into nonsense'.

¹² An argument to that effect is spelled out by Wetherspoon (2000: 342–4). Conant's position is less clear. He finds no difficulty in speaking himself of such attempts (e.g. 2000:

195, in a passage 'perfectly consistent' with austerity – *ibid.* fn. 93; see also 1992: 216). Peter Hacker's so speaking, on the other hand, is said 'implicitly' to commit him to 'the (only apparently intelligible) notion that nonsense can so much as try to say something' (2000: fn.96).

¹³ For that reason, impossible attempts create problems of understanding in various areas of philosophy. If I mistake my own car for yours and drive it away, is that attempted theft? Given the independence of the parallel postulate, can we describe geometers as having tried to derive it from the others? And so on.

¹⁴ Speaking of the idea that in a sentence such as 'A is an object' 'we are trying to put into words something that shows itself in language but cannot be said', Diamond says, 'I call that chickening out [= _{def.} being irresolute]. It involves holding that the things we speak about are members of this or that logical category, really and truly, only we cannot say so. That they are is represented in another way' (1991: 194). This second definition of chickening out makes rejection of the saying-showing contrast part of resolution. Similarly, Conant claims that the idea (A) that Wittgenstein aimed 'to 'show' something which cannot be said' 'go[es] along with' (B) the 'substantial' (= non-austere) conception of nonsense (2000: 177). (How tight a connection this 'going along with' is supposed to be is, though, not entirely clear. Conant's next paragraph distinguishes two 'variants of the substantial conception', labelled 'the *positivist variant* and the *ineffability variant*'. He notes, 'the positivist interpretation . . . eschews the idea that there are things which can be "shown" but not said' (*ibid.*: fn. 13). So one concludes that positivist readers form that subclass of those who hold (A) and (B) who eschew (A). Perhaps it helps here to be told that Conant is only 'pretending' that the two variants can be distinguished as he does in his text (*ibid.*: fn. 14).)

¹⁵ I have not discussed the simplest attempt to demonstrate that repudiation of the saying-showing distinction is a necessary consequence of resolution. It would run like this: it is part of the core commitment of resolution to accept 'full-heartedly' that Wittgenstein's propositions are nonsense; but the saying-showing distinction is developed in those propositions; so it too is to be rejected as nonsense. That reasoning is too crude to be worth discussing. Only a *very* unsympathetic reader would attribute it to Kremer. (Such a reader would no doubt cite in evidence an argument Kremer presents on p. 64, which runs: Wittgenstein called the saying-showing distinction a 'problem of philosophy', indeed 'the cardinal problem of philosophy' (Letter to Russell, CL 124); but he also said that the 'problems of philosophy' are to be exposed as resting on 'misunderstanding', and thereby dissolved (Preface); *ergo*, the saying-showing distinction is itself a product of misunderstanding and is to be dissolved. I cannot explain what attracts Kremer to this wholly unpersuasive juxtaposition of unconnected texts, and think it better simply to discount the argument.)

¹⁶ This theme is most to the fore is Conant (1991), but is pervasive: phrases like 'at the end' (Conant 1991: 344), 'in the end' (Diamond 1991: 181; Conant 2000: 197), 'at the end of the day' (Kremer 2001: 43) are characteristic. What comes before 'the end' is termed 'transitional' (Diamond 1991: 183, 185; Goldfarb 1997: 66).

¹⁷ This question is raised and answered negatively in section 4.4 below.

¹⁸ See in this connection Potter (2000), ch. 6, esp. pp. 168–71.

¹⁹ See NM 116 for the close connection between this thought and the principle underlying austerity.

²⁰ Some of its details are filled in by my 2000.

²¹ NM 113; cf. also NM 116, where 'the most general form of proposition' is connected with 'what is *common* to all relations of whatever number of places' – presumably, their

role *as verbs* (as Russell might say) in unifying the proposition in which they occur.

²² 'The formal concept is already given with an object which falls under it' (TLP 4.12721). The above point is just the application of this to the central case of the concept *proposition*.

²³ 'I am my world' (5.63) – or better, it seems to me, 'I am the world' (cf. Bell 1996: 157) – is a no doubt extravagant but undeniably apt way of combining two thoughts that arise in response to Wittgenstein's question, 'Is not my world adequate for individuation? (NB 89). First, yes, it would be *sufficient*, since no singling out of one item from others is relevant to an 'I' that is to be co-ordinate with, and so not part of, reality. But second, it is also *necessary*: I am individuated only in so far as *my world* is individuated. Accepting that 'a stone, the body of a beast, the body of a man, my body, all stand on the same level' (NB 84), so sidelining the in-its-sphere-legitimate 'psycho-physical conception' that 'my character is expressed only in the build of *my* body or brain and not equally in the build of the whole of the rest of the world' (NB 85), it remains that there will be point in speaking of *my* character only if it *is* so expressed. As I understand it, the metaphor of the visual field is introduced at TLP 5.633 by Wittgenstein's solipsist interlocutor ('You will say. . .') as a representation of the 'build' of the world in which my character is expressed, so that Wittgenstein's criticism of the representation ('the visual field has no such form. . .' – 5.6331) is to be understood as a denial that there is any such 'build'. This approach to the passage is elaborated in my (1996).

²⁴ And so, as Anscombe's translation of TLP 5.61 nicely puts it, an impossible *thought* (Anscombe 1959: 163).

²⁵ Of course, *nothing* could be that. Like the slogan, 'Nonsense is nonsense', this way of summarizing austerity presents it as, in a way, trivial. In common with advocates of resolution (as I understand them), I think one can acknowledge and even emphasize that aspect of the position without belittling its importance.

²⁶ There is an obvious analogy between this point and a natural response to Putnam's refutation of brain-in-a-vat scepticism (Putnam 1981: ch. 1), namely, that even if it is admitted that no determinate reference can reach outside the vat, it remains to be shown that the envatted subject cannot have the general thought that things might be in *some* way very different from how they appear. See Sacks (1989: ch. 3) for the response; and see Moore (1997: 142–6) for a development of the analogy.

²⁷ This is attempted in the remarks on TLP 4.5's treatment of the general form of proposition in section 4 (ii) of my (1996), but I no longer think the attempt persuasive. The main faults of that earlier discussion are: (a) that it does not connect the solipsism issue with Wittgenstein's response to Russell; (b) that it unnecessarily opposes its reading of the *overall shape* of the solipsism passage to that offered by David Pears (1987: ch. 7), when the real differences are on matters of relative detail.

²⁸ This is not, to be sure, one of Wittgenstein's better remarks. The main problem with this method is not that it would be 'unsatisfying to the other' (though that is an understatement: 'the other', who has a taste for what is higher, would find in the practitioner's demonstrations only the contemptible, ankle-biting pignicquity associated with the worst kinds of 'ordinary language philosophy'). The main problem is that the method is founded on too atomistic a notion of the contrast between sense and nonsense: it presumes, wrongly, that a piece of nonsense can be immediately latched onto and exposed as nonsense without waiting to see how it pans out.

²⁹ To forestall an objection by counterexample: (i) Eli Friedlander's *Signs of Sense* (2001) is anything but silent about the issue of solipsism; but if it is said that *that* work offers a resolute reading, then I surrender any claim to understand what resolution might be; (ii)

Kremer's own (forthcoming) is more to the point, but is concerned primarily with the ethical truth there might be in solipsism, rather than the metaphysical issue of unity.

³⁰ Kremer importantly acknowledges this when he says that Wittgenstein must 'tempt[. . .] us to see the *Tractatus* as the final philosophical theory' (p. 50).

³¹ This is *so* obvious that there would hardly be point saying it if it weren't for certain remarks of resolute readers which seem to imply to opposite. Conant, for instance, describes as 'central to the teaching of. . .the *Tractatus*', 'the insight that we can and do imagine that we mean something where we mean nothing' (1989: 255) – but who ever needed to be told *that*? To call that common fact of experience an 'insight' is absurd. Perhaps similarly, 'The only "insight" that a Tractarian elucidation imparts, in the end, is one about the reader himself: that he is prone to such illusions of thought' (Conant 2000: 197). Whether this *is* similar depends on the force of '*such* illusions'. If this extends to just any case of 'the illusion of thinking we mean something when we mean nothing', an illusion to be dispelled by 'undo[ing] our attraction to various grammatically well-formed strings of words that resonate with an aura of sense' (Conant 1992: 216), then it is similar, and implies a pitifully poor reward for the effort of studying the book. If, on the other hand, 'such illusions' refers specifically to a distinctive crux in philosophy, then the deflationary tone of Conant's remark ('the only "insight". . .') seems to me misplaced.

³² Note, it would be a much stronger claim, and one I am not making, to hold that austerity *precludes* any such sense.

³³ See Kremer pp. 61–2 on the importance of making differences big enough. The point is, evidently, not one proper to resolute readings.

³⁴ Two very obvious examples:

(i) McDowell has been concerned to expose as confused the idea that meaning must be explained 'as from outside meaning'. Someone who thought that could be brought to worry that any explanation offered, in purporting itself to be meaningful, would stand again in need of the same kind of explanation – and by that worry be forced into holding that the 'real' explanation had better not even purport to be meaningful, had better not be capable of being put into words.

(ii) Someone persuaded by Skolem that object-language reference is indeterminate is easily brought to see that the features supposed to make it so are shared by the metalinguistic specifications by which he first hoped to resolve that indeterminacy. He may thus be driven to the idea that what 'really' fixes reference – the mind's projection of facts into symbols, perhaps – had better not be storable even in a meta-meta- . . .-meta-language.

³⁵ These are two examples that Kremer presents as illuminating comparisons with the 'problematic of justification' he finds in the *Tractatus*.

³⁶ Along with, of course, any other part of Wittgenstein's theorizing that has an effective role in forcing the retreat to the bolt-hole.

³⁷ If I say out loud (pronouncing it correctly), 'I cannot pronounce the word "banana" ', what I say is trivially false, and not (therefore) nonsensical.

³⁸ To repeat, I don't deny that TLP 6.53 might be shown to be (austerely) nonsensical; the point is only that Kremer's comparison does not do that.

³⁹ Aside from that about the problems of life, which has an altogether different air.

⁴⁰ Moore (1997: 156), first emphasis mine, second original. Moore is commenting here on Russell's observation, in his Introduction to TLP, that 'after all, Mr Wittgenstein manages to say a good deal about what cannot be said'.

⁴¹ Thanks to José Bermúdez, Michael Kremer, Adrian Moore, Michael Potter, and Ian Proops for comments on a draft. Extracts from the paper were given as talks at Gregynog, Wales, and at the University of Leeds; for helpful comments and questions I am especially

grateful to James Conant and Roger White (whom I also have to thank for letting me see a draft paper of his on connected issues). Thanks, too, to Warren Goldfarb, for raising with me the question, how far an earlier essay of mine might be compatible with the resolute reading, and thereby unwittingly prompting Parts 2 and 3 of this one. The paper was written during research leave provided by the University of Stirling and the Arts and Humanities Research Board; I am grateful for their support.

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