Coordinates of a Conversation

> Even though the divergencies are admittedly tremendous, they
> are due more to the difference in time, culture, and science.
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> —Friedrich Nietzsche, "Postcard to Overbeck"

Throughout the following pages I argue that Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosphicus* (TLP) and Spinoza's *Ethics* (E) both pursue the same end. We can profitably take each as aiming to establish that there cannot be any position outside the world, thought, and language, that there can be no overarching standpoint from which anyone or anything can encompass the world, thought, and language as wholes, can act on them, regiment them, know them, or make meaningful pronouncements on them. Borrowing Spinoza's terminology, I call this philosophical perspective the *perspective of radical immanence.*

Spinoza and Wittgenstein worked in very different times. In Spinoza's time, it was almost impossible *not* to conceive God as occupying a position of overarching transcendence. Even Descartes, who had opened the philosophical vistas of modernity and arguably constitutes the principal influence on Spinoza, continued to conceive of God's relation to the world in this way. Accordingly, Spinoza's attempt to demonstrate the impossibility of such an overarching position has God as its main object: the burden of his work consists in trying to prove with the full rigor of geometry—and hence apodictically—that God can neither be nor be conceived as a supreme overarching entity who created the world and resides eternally outside it, overseeing its course with perfect freedom and benevolence.

In Wittgenstein's time God was of no prime concern to philosophers. If anything provided the intellectual focus for the environment in which Wittgenstein worked, it was logic in its relation to language. All sources attest that in his earlier years, Wittgenstein was consumed with such issues. But even if philosophical involvement with logic is not identical to philosophical involvement with God, there

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is a parallel: logic, as it was being radically rethought in the early twentieth century, mainly by Frege and Russell—whom Wittgenstein himself labeled his principal philosophical teachers—was being surreptitiously taken out of the world, as it were, to become elevated to the overarching position I have described. The young Wittgenstein, then, whether despite or because of his active participation in these developments, vehemently rejected such elevation and tried to demonstrate with the full rigor of logic—and hence apodictically—that logic is *immanent* in language, in thought, and in a sense, in the world.

We might say, therefore, that independent of the enormous differences in historical circumstances and philosophical context and of the ways in which God and logic were conceived and discussed in each period, the principal philosophical influences on (and thus the main philosophical opponents of) both these authors had the same relationship to the world (and thought and language) in mind when thinking about God or logic, respectively. It was this position relative to the world (and thought and language) that concentrated the philosophical wrath of both Spinoza and Wittgenstein. Hence both set out to demonstrate, each in his own way, the impossibility of such a position. This is what I mean when I say that both Wittgenstein and Spinoza espouse the same philosophical perspective of radical immanence, and this is what I will cash out by reading the *Ethics* and the *Tractatus* in conjunction.

The perspective of radical immanence as I define it has been espoused by others, too. Many philosophers share, in some way or other, the insight that there can be no position overarching the world (and thought and language). With respect to this insight, however, Spinoza and Wittgenstein are distinguished by two things. First, both focus their work on this insight as such and concentrate their efforts on working out what the perspective it defines amounts to and what it involves for the whole of philosophy. Spinoza and Wittgenstein make the perspective of radical immanence appear most perspicuously in all its presuppositions and in all its consequences. Second, both of them reason implacably, with a kind of single-mindedness rarely found in the history of philosophy, mustering for the purpose the highest standards of rigor their respective periods afforded. We might say that both distill the perspective of radical immanence and present only this concentrate and its implications.

These characteristics make the *Ethics* and the *Tractatus* exemplary texts not just with respect to the perspective of radical immanence but for the whole history of philosophy. Consequently, any serious effort to read the two works in conjunction will offer insights into related discussions: trying to clarify the issues associated with the perspective of radical immanence in the cases of Spinoza and Wittgenstein will help us understand how other philosophers treat what amounts to the same perspective. In addition, trying to grasp the perspective at issue as Spinoza and Wittgenstein handle it might help us understand how this perspective is important for the philosophical endeavor in its entirety. Glimpses of such wider understanding will emerge in what follows.

Basically the same characteristics make the two texts notoriously difficult. It

is therefore no coincidence that each has given rise to a vast array of divergent in-terpretations. Such difficulties are perhaps responsible for the continuing deferral of a canonical reading of either work that would lead to a wide consensus, despite valiant efforts to the contrary. Concomitantly, the same difficulties seem to deter efforts to read the two works systematically in conjunction despite their arresting similarities, which many others have noted. Wittgenstein himself came to accept Moore's mediation to that effect and thus came to owe to Spinoza the very title of the only book he published in his lifetime (Monk 1990). The absence of canonical readings, as well as the absence of systematic comparative readings, leaves room, so to speak, for the effort I undertake here.

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The difficulties of these texts are due to more than just the denseness of the writers' subjects or the relentlessness of their reasoning and the austerity of their styles. They arise as well—and this decisively—from the focus on the perspective of radical immanence itself. We may get a foretaste of this kind of difficulty if we ask an apparently innocent question: from what standpoint is the proposition defining the perspective issued? On what does it rest, and what are the overall conditions of its enunciation? But once we ask this question, we cannot fail to realize that any statement of the perspective of radical immanence looks bizarre, with nonsense seeming to lurk threateningly in the background.

For one thing, if the proposition is true, if there can be no position outside the world (and thought and language), then there can be no position from which to is-sue this proposition—talking, as it does, of the world (and thought and language) from the outside. If the proposition is true, it cannot be meaningfully stated; it self-destructs because what it says precludes what it must presuppose to say what it says. And even if we disregard abstract issues of meaning, the proposition cannot be sup-ported or vitiated by bringing in appropriate justificatory grounds. For again, from what standpoint and under what conditions of enunciation can such dialogue take place? Inside the world (and thought and language), outside it, or on some mysteri-ous ground in between? And with regard to the last alternative, we might further ask what the nature of this in-between can possibly be and hence to what kind of argument either side of the dialogue can appeal. We are landing dangerously close to nonsense as our thoughts on the matter start disintegrating.

Given this, the only remaining option seems to be that the proposition in ques-tion is simply not true.[1] Things appear now as quite straightforward. If the proposi-tion defining the perspective of radical immanence is not true, if it is not true that there can be no position outside the world, thought, and language from which one can talk about them as wholes, then it is true that there *can be* such a position.[2] Stating that such a position is available is stating it from the very position in ques-tion; it is stating it by simultaneously occupying the position outside the world (and thought and language) that the proposition states is possible. The proposition is thus consistent with the conditions of its enunciation and therefore apparently self-consistent. The net result seems to be that only a philosophical perspective counter-

ing that of radical immanence at its defining core can be self-consistent or, at least, can properly take into account the conditions of its own enunciation. An additional bonus is that espousing such a counterperspective should make the one espousing it quite self-satisfied: simply by assuming that there can be a position outside the world (and thought and language), one comes to occupy no less than the position traditionally assigned to God.

This apparently impeccable piece of reasoning can be only anathema for Wittgenstein and Spinoza, for it seems to leave as the only viable option exactly what both set out to demolish. But it is easy to see how they would have responded: they would have maintained that the argument just sketched assumes the possibility of a position outside the world (and thought and language), and in taking this for granted, it surreptitiously elevates this possibility above the world (and thought and language), thereby begging the question. Hence, despite appearances, it too short-circuits itself; despite appearances to the contrary, it boils down to nonsense.

Nonetheless, it is hard to see how either Spinoza or Wittgenstein could deny that the definition of the perspective of radical immanence self-destructs, thus hovering dangerously close to nonsense by its own lights. To someone pinpointing this, they might have answered that under conditions to be carefully specified, one can make good sense at least of the definition's intent. It seems to follow that both our authors would be maintaining, more generally, that propositions appearing to make sense might in fact be nonsense while, conversely, propositions appearing to be nonsensical might, at least under certain conditions, let one go through them to reach the intent in making them.

If this is the kind of answer Spinoza and Wittgenstein would have given to the previously stated objections, then both should have something to say about nonsense, something powerful enough to take care of these objections. Of course, nonsense notoriously constitutes one of the key elements of the *Tractatus,* and the way Wittgenstein handles it (among other things, by retrospectively inflicting the charge on his own work) continues to tax Wittgenstein scholars. In Spinoza's case, the subject of nonsense, or in his terms, of "confusion," is less pronounced but appears in the *Ethics* nevertheless. In E II p40s Spinoza explicitly characterizes what he calls universal and transcendental terms as "confusing" even as he goes on using such terms unrestrainedly. Savan (1958) has specifically discussed how Spinoza's work relates to self-inflicted confusion in ways I will discuss later on.[3]

The doubtful meaning status (to say it politely) that the definition of the perspective of radical immanence enjoys leads one to ask how this perspective can be supported, to investigate the strategy that Spinoza and Wittgenstein have to deploy to establish this perspective and defend it. Given the previous considerations, it seems impossible to argue straightforwardly for this perspective in open philosophical battle with the perspective countering it, namely, the assertion or silent presupposition that any position outside the world, thought, or language is available. And this seems impossible for two interconnected reasons.

First, such a straightforward way of arguing would leave the perspective of radical immanence open to the charge of nonsense, thereby making the philosophical

battle follow circles like the one previously discussed. Second, if we disregard the indictment, we notice that the formulation of the perspective of radical immanence rules out the possibility of any neutral ground on which the battle in question could be fought: to maintain that there is no position outside the world (and thought and language) is simultaneously to maintain that there is no room for any philosophical approach that would allow the possibility of such a position. There is no place for a battle to occur and thus no space an opponent might occupy to wage a battle. The perspective of radical immanence seems to foreclose any opposition. More strongly put, the perspective takes itself to be the only possible philosophical perspective; consequently, there cannot be philosophical perspective*s* in the first place, so that the perspective of radical immanence cannot take itself as being *a* philosophical perspective. If philosophy could be reduced to the fight between these two mutually exclusive perspectives, and if the perspective of radical immanence indeed emerges victorious, then the whole of philosophy is done away with in the sense that no room remains for any philosophical dispute. The claim that these conditions are fulfilled so that the conclusion goes through is certainly exorbitant, and the task of establishing it is correspondingly enormous.

Be that as it may, however, the philosophical battle has to be fought, and this fight cannot be limited to accusations of nonsense and appeals to abstract possibilities.[4] But as the previously adduced considerations testify, the perspective of radical immanence finds itself at a relative disadvantage: the proposition defining it carries its self-destructive character on its face, while its contradictory does not. The former thus carries the burden of establishing its exorbitant claim even as massive parts of the philosophical tradition tend to side with its opponent. It is imperative, then, that the perspective of radical immanence find some terrain on which to engage the battle and fight it to the end. Thankfully, there seems one option left: establishing the perspective by working from within the opposing perspective, seeking to undermine it and destroy it from the inside.

As I construe it, working from within comprises two features. First, the strategy should involve provisionally *accepting* the possibility of a world-, thought-, or language-transcending standpoint. This applies to concrete philosophical views that may appear in various forms and guises and that might concern any philosophical subject whatsoever. Second, one using this strategy should advance some particular philosophical content that does not appear to differ in kind from the philosophical views against which he or she is arguing. At this stage of its deployment, then, anyone employing such a strategy should not hesitate in advancing philosophical content that appears to sanction a position outside the world, thought, or language. Setting up and advancing such content constitutes what we may call "the first movement" of the strategy.

The strategy involves granting legitimacy to the philosophical views opposing the perspective of radical immanence, which means that the particular debates in which someone using it engages take the standard form of philosophical debate, utilizing the standard philosophical tools of demonstrations, arguments, examples and counterexamples, comments, scholia, and so on. But their use can be only pro-

visional, for the propositions and views they are used to establish must in turn be rejected, since they, too, sanction the possibility of the perspective of radical immanence. That is, the views for which one argues in the first movement can ultimately have no more validity than the views against which they were initially set. We may call the movement leading to such self-annihilation the "second movement" of the strategy.

In TLP 6.54, the penultimate proposition of the *Tractatus,* Wittgenstein all but openly admits the existence of such a second movement, and the strategy behind the *Ethics* enfolds a second movement as well, albeit less explicitly. Further, the two movements unfurl simultaneously in the context of the unique strategy they conjointly make up, while they need not be textually separated in some clear-cut fashion.

For this strategy to succeed, the content advanced should possess the requisite philosophical power; that is, it should be capable of convincing open-minded opponents that it indeed manages to undermine not only the views it addresses in the first movement but also those advanced in doing so. The strategy is thus not designed to gain some advantage: winning the battle brings both sides to exactly the same plane, one wherein all issues engaged have become elucidated. Thus the strategy ought not be seen as a devious or deceitful one, for though following it involves making claims only to later reject them, the ultimate point is to provide genuine elucidation for everybody concerned.

To win this battle by following the strategy described is therefore to close off the philosophical enterprise altogether, for the successful deployment of it shows as untenable both the denial of the perspective of radical immanence and the philosophical content advanced for winning the dispute. The loss of all contenders on the philosophical stage and hence any stage on which a philosophical debate can transpire touches all philosophical subjects, leaving nothing more for philosophy to address. The issues have become elucidated, philosophical shadows have disappeared, and a new light has been shed on the whole intellectual landscape.

Both Spinoza and Wittgenstein seem to endorse the gist of this conclusion. Wittgenstein expressly holds that he has solved "in essentials the problems of philosophy"—in a way, moreover, that is "unassailable and definitive" (TLP Pr ¶8)— while Spinoza holds equally expressly that the philosophical theory he composed and completed to his satisfaction (E V p42s) is the only true one offering "adequate knowledge of the essence of things" (E II p40s2). Barring the inessential for Wittgenstein and the possible applications of the true philosophical theory to subjects of more practical concern for Spinoza (such as those he envisages in his *Thelogico-Political Treatise* and his *Political Treatise*), there is nothing left with which philosophy might occupy itself. Philosophy as traditionally practiced is finished, and philosophical peace—or philosophical silence—has come to reign everlastingly, at least for those who earnestly engaged either treatise and followed it scrupulously to the end.

The strategy I am discussing cannot be effectively deployed in the ethereal medium where philosophy is usually taken to reside and its disembodied arguments

to confront one another. Wittgenstein considers philosophy as an activity rather than a theory (TLP 4.112), while Spinoza, although ostensibly viewing philosophy as theory, nevertheless construes thinking in general as an activity of the mind (E II d3ex), a claim to which Wittgenstein would not object. Spinoza specifies the nature of that activity by expressly ushering the body into the picture: mind and body are one ("psychophysical parallelism" or "mind-body identity"), and hence philosophical activity is simultaneously bodily activity.

Since philosophical activity takes place in language, the ways in which Spinoza and Wittgenstein approach language will affect how they appraise the nature of philosophical activity and hence their strategies for pursuing such an appraisal. Remarkably, both take language as indissolubly linked to the body. Wittgenstein says that language "is part of the human organism" (TLP 4.002), while Spinoza maintains that "the essence of words is constituted solely by corporeal motions" of the human body (E II p49s). For both, the linguistic expression of philosophical activity cannot avoid involving the body fundamentally. It follows that engaging in philosophical activity and deploying a philosophical strategy amounts to doing something to somebody, a relationship that is not only mind to mind but also body to body, even if this doing involves only elucidating and convincing and even if this somebody is only oneself. According to all biographical accounts, both Spinoza and Wittgenstein were consumed by doing philosophy, with their own bodies bearing witness to the fact.

Hence the strategy in question is not merely to state this or that; it is also to *do* this or that. Spinoza and Wittgenstein do things with philosophical words and suffer things from philosophical words. Their strategy cannot be understood unless one takes into account the performative axis. We will see later how Wittgenstein uses nonsense as a performative instrument in the guise of what I will call "telling nonsense" and how Spinoza goes along in much the same way, if perhaps more hesitantly. We might say, therefore, that if the whole of philosophy is to be dissipated, then success can be gauged only performatively, that is, in deed. The impossibility of straightforwardly arguing for the perspective of radical immanence seems in any event to disallow that either Wittgenstein or Spinoza could establish it in the airy form philosophical engagements usually take for granted, another consideration that perhaps more conspicuously shows the performative dimension to be indispensable.

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I have mentioned differences between the ways Wittgenstein and Spinoza engage the perspective of radical immanence, but the exact nature of the impossibility (or possibility) of a position outside the world/thought/language remains to be clarified. To rectify this omission and to explicate the principle behind those differences, I start by distinguishing conceptual possibilities (or impossibilities) from purely logical ones. Borrowing a key element of Wittgenstein's later work, I regard conceptual possibilities as those allowed by the *grammar* subtending our thoughts and uses of language (the "language games"). In other words, I take conceptual pos-

sibilities as synonymous with grammatical possibilities in the later Wittgenstein's sense of the term.[5] In contrast, I regard logical possibilities much as the *Tractatus* seems to countenance them: the bare possibilities underpinning all conceptual distinctions, the possibilities "remaining"[6] after all conceptual issues have been clarified by "the one and only complete analysis" (TLP 3.25).

An example from the history of science might help to clarify this distinction. In Newtonian physics, a wave used to be defined as the propagation of a medium's disturbances. This definition makes the conceptual relation between "wave" and "medium" an analytic one; hence, the claim that a wave can propagate in vacuum, without a medium in which disturbances might be propagated, becomes a logical contradiction. But the advent of the special theory of relativity forced us to change our views on the matter. It became established that some waves (electromagnetic ones) do propagate in the absence of any medium. Introducing this novel conceptual possibility with respect to the facts it made us understand was tantamount to widening the previously available grammatical space, a widening capable of conceptually accommodating the novel kind of wave along with the old even as the old concept of a wave was reshaped in terms of the novel grammatical space. What matters here is that after the reconceptualization, the *logical* impossibility implied by the contradiction disappeared. It was retrospectively interpreted as a *grammatical* impossibility, the old grammatical space's inability to accommodate the novel concept, with logical consistency being reinstated in the process.

The lesson should be clear. Conceptual revolutions of this kind ("paradigm shifts" in Kuhn's terminology) widen the grammatical space available in ways that would have been impossible to conceive before the revolution, but after the fact, such widening can be seen to not touch logic as such. Logical possibilities cannot change by conceptual revolutions, but grammatical possibilities can and do. One of the burdens of this book is to show that the *Tractatus* sanctions this distinction between grammatical and logical possibility and thus might help elucidate the nature of a conceptual revolution in science.[7] At the present juncture, this distinction helps us understand how the historical distance separating Wittgenstein from Spinoza can be cashed out philosophically, a point that determines one major constraint on my conjoint reading of the *Tractatus* and the *Ethics*.

Spinoza worked during the irresistible advent of the scientific revolution, which was establishing a radically novel way of conceiving the workings of the world (and hence a novel grammar) that would remain unshakable up to the beginnings of the twentieth century. Independent of any changes in the physical theories at play, the deeper way of conceiving things was taken as final; no radical conceptual change could ever come to challenge foundations. The important point here, however, is that this finality equates grammatical impossibility with logical impossibility: grammar bans the (grammatically) inconceivable, but if the grammar is final, then by definition there can be no novel grammatical space on whose basis one might retrospectively interpret the previously inconceivable as a "mere" grammatical impossibility that has been overcome. Hence the inconceivable becomes synonymous with the logically impossible. It follows that within the framework

of thought governing Spinoza's time, and independent of the ways in which differ-ent philosophers or theologians were considering the inconceivable in relation to God's powers or attributes (Mason 2000), the inconceivable could not then be split between the logically impossible and the grammatically impossible. Grammatical possibilities and logical possibilities perforce ran together.

Wittgenstein, however, worked in a time of major revolutions in physics as well as revolutionary advances in the conception of logic. The developments in phys-ics were showing, among other things, that concepts taken as unshakable could change radically and—as would become clarified much later—come to be replaced by incommensurable namesakes without upsetting logic in the process.[8] Concur-rently, the advances in logic allowed explicating, among other things, how the con-ceptual could and should be rigorously distinguished from the logical. Thus the means for distinguishing grammatical from logical possibility had become per-fectly available, even if the notion of grammar needed more time to gestate and attain philosophical dignity in the later Wittgenstein's hands.

Therefore, once we disregard all other kinds of differences separating Wittgen-stein from Spinoza (philosophical vocabularies and agendas, modes of argumen-tation, broader cultural factors, and so forth), the crux of the matter seems to be simple: the *philosophical* distance separating the two is that conditioned by the *his-torical* fact that Spinoza lacked a way of distinguishing the grammatical from the logical, whereas Wittgenstein did not. Thus acknowledging that the implacability of their reasoning compelled each to rely on and put to use only the highest stan-dards of rigorous thought his time could afford, we might say that Spinoza could establish the perspective of radical immanence only at the conceptual level, for he was limited to the means then exhibiting those standards—namely, the deductive structures of geometrical order. With those means, the result of his toil could at best take the form of an unshakable philosophical theory.

For Wittgenstein, this was not enough. The revolutionary developments in the physics of his day were showing that establishing a theory at the conceptual level does not secure the theory for good, no matter how accurately aspects of the world might appear to comply with its dictates and no matter how rigorously the reason-ing establishing it had been exercised. It is always possible that some part or aspect of the world might prove recalcitrant, leaving the theory open to the concomitant radical change.[9] Therefore all theories are vulnerable to the possibility of radical change, even if this possibility remains abstract and effectively idle until a concep-tual revolution materializes it retroactively, making it manifest at the same time. The philosophical message is that any theory whatsoever, postclassical physical the-ories included, will always be open to the abstract possibility in question. To secure the perspective of radical immanence for good, then, Wittgenstein had to establish it at the level where these abstract possibilities themselves reside.

At the same time, the developments in logic (determined significantly by Wit-genstein's own work) had rendered logic capable of treating precisely such abstract possibilities. These are the bare (i.e., conceptually empty) possibilities that under-lie[10] all language (and all thought and all the world) and constitute logic itself. Witt-

genstein states this succinctly: "Logic treats of every possibility, and all possibilities are its facts" (TLP 2.0121). It follows that he can permanently secure the perspective of radical immanence by establishing it at the level of these bare possibilities, of logic as such. No theory whatsoever, be it philosophical, scientific, or something else, can reside at this level, for it underpins, and thus allows for, not just any theory and any grammar but also any thought, any piece of language, and anything at all in the world.

Therefore, establishing the perspective of radical immanence at the level of logic and with the means of logic cannot amount to composing a philosophical theory. On the contrary, establishing this perspective at that level reveals the secret of philosophical theories generally. By talking about the world, thought, and language in the standard all-encompassing terms, such theories entitle themselves to an external position that excludes them from the family of bona fide theories, for what they take as their object cannot be the object of any theory. Even if they might offer elucidatory insights, they ultimately amount to nothing. All the characteristics of the strategy I rehearsed previously—the two strategic movements and the self-destructive end—find a clearer expression in the *Tractatus* than in the *Ethics* because, in trying to establish the perspective of radical immanence at the level of logic and by means of logic, Wittgenstein was forced to go "below" theories and deductive reasoning in general to see what makes them possible. By the same token, he was forced to "discover" that the strategy in question was the only strategy he could possibly deploy.

Lest this appear too one-sided, we might argue on Spinoza's behalf as follows. First, the grammatically inconceivable, taken here strictly in relation to science, is not subjective or psychological in the sense that somebody remains blind to a possibility up to the moment when he or she realizes that it is conceptually possible after all. The grammatically inconceivable is *objective* in the sense that no one can overcome it simply by thinking more deeply than others have. Certainly, no grammatical change can arise ex nihilo; only an act of the imagination can bring it about. But the act of imagination implicated in scientific change differs from the kind involved in, say, literature; science is a *normative* enterprise, and hence the act of imagination leading to such a change should prove compelling, at least up to the limits set by scientific practice. Within those limits, the relevant part or aspect of the world should be conceived—by everyone—as the theory coming out of the grammatical change says it should. It is this normative force that allows the novel theory to win the day, simultaneously widening the grammatical space.

A grammatical change in science is radical indeed, and hence the difficulty of bringing it about is correspondingly massive. Since grammar operates from the background to silently determine our concepts and our intuitions, as well as the ways in which concepts interconnect and intuitions marry with concepts—since, if we follow McDowell (1996), we should consider concepts as going all the way down, passively organizing even our barest experiences—such a change demands that we alter at a single blow practically everything determining how we understand things in nature so that our understanding comes to conform to the strictures of the novel

grammatical space. What is at stake here is so demanding that, to use Kuhn's turn of phrase, those having undergone the transition to the novel grammatical space live in a different world from the one inhabited by those who have not. For all these reasons, grammatical impossibilities hardly differ from logical impossibilities, while effectively (not abstractly) distinguishing the two can be achieved only ex post facto and only from the vantage point instituted by the novel grammatical space. Such distinction can be had only *post festum*.

Given all this, and because the distinction between grammatical and logical impossibility was literally unthinkable in Spinoza's time, nobody could expect Spinoza to have followed a strategy based on this distinction as clearly as Wittgenstein did. On the contrary, it is a tribute to his implacable reasoning that Spinoza deployed his own strategy in a way that, short of fully realizing the double nature of what he was doing, acknowledging it expressly and drawing all its consequences, matches in all essentials the strategy Wittgenstein deployed.

Yet there is more to add on Spinoza's behalf, from the positive side this time, something at the heart of my undertaking.

Recall that the strategy required for establishing the perspective of radical immanence unfurls along two movements, with the first advancing particular philosophical content. Now if Wittgenstein does manage to establish the perspective of radical immanence at the logical level, as he takes himself to have accomplished, then the outcome of his toil is logically "unassailable and definitive." One might argue from there that the philosophical content he advances along the first movement of his strategy is the only philosophical content that can be advanced for the purpose. Given this, if Spinoza, in seeking the same result, reasons as implacably as Wittgenstein does, then the philosophical content the latter advances should match, in its essentials, Spinoza's philosophical theory on all philosophical subjects that both the *Tractatus* and the *Ethics* address (barring, of course, differences in philosophical vocabulary). To find what Wittgenstein advances in the *Tractatus,* then, we might do worse than to consider what Spinoza advances in the *Ethics.*

Admittedly, this is a strong claim that must be justified in the pages to follow. But if it can be demonstrated, then there are almost no bounds to the admiration one should bestow on Spinoza's philosophical acumen: barring again various inessential differences, Spinoza managed to advance content that parallels Wittgenstein's, but he did so almost three centuries earlier, when everything around him was pushing in different directions and the materials that later allowed Wittgenstein to conceive and conduct his endeavor were literally unthinkable.

In pinning down the specific lines of thought that both Wittgenstein and Spinoza advance, and thus carrying on with my own task, Spinoza's treatise may even prove to be more helpful than Wittgenstein's, as the authors themselves suggest. Thus Wittgenstein openly declares that his work "is not a textbook" (TLP Pr ¶1), thereby admitting that the *Tractatus* could well be assessed—to use a quintessential understatement—as overly concise. In contrast, Spinoza acknowledges equally openly that he has written the *Ethics* "in order to point out the road" to its readers (E V p42s), for "nowhere can each individual display the extent of his skill and ge-

nius more than in so educating men that they come at last to live under the sway of their own reason" (E IV Ap §9). Such a description might reasonably enough be taken to suggest that Spinoza sought to compose a helpful textbook. As I will show, some disparities between the *Tractatus* and the *Ethics* might stem from these different modes of presentation.

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The task I have assigned myself might appear tantamount to trying to understand the fundamentals of the *Tractatus* by relying on the *Ethics* while simultaneously trying to understand the fundamentals of the *Ethics* by relying on the *Tractatus.* But this formulation exceeds my ambitions. The fundamentals of the *Tractatus* involve the logical apparatus Wittgenstein introduces, the formalization he proposes, and the conclusions he draws about mathematics and its relation to logic. The following pages barely touch on these matters.[11] The fundamentals of the *Ethics* involve the way Spinoza characterizes the specific emotions in the later parts of his treatise, their role in individuals' lives, and his proposals for overcoming their nefarious effects. I address these matters only to the extent that they help clarify how he cashes out the perspective of radical immanence. More accurately, the texts to be compared are basically limited to an informal *Tractatus* and the first two parts of the *Ethics,* those in which the perspective of radical immanence is introduced and its main ingredients are drawn out.

But even with the investigation limited in this fashion, my account of the two treatises does not aspire to be more than large-scale overview of what they have to say, a constraint imposed by the material at hand. To examine the purported match with even a minimum of conscientiousness, I am obliged to look at many subjects of standard philosophical concern, particularly those on which the two treatises appear to disagree. If I sought to do justice to the material available, however, I would have to write not a monograph but an (idiosyncratic) encyclopedia of philosophy. This is no rhetorical flourish. Both the *Ethics* and the *Tractatus* aim at constituting complete philosophical treatises: each constitutes an attempt to cover all the subjects of major philosophical concern in its time and to solve or dissolve (at least in the essentials) all the corresponding philosophical problems. The scope is even broader in the case of Wittgenstein, for in the *Tractatus* he seems to tackle philosophical subjects that practically none of his contemporaries would have considered important, doing so, moreover, in a way that baffled readers then and continues to baffle them now. To treat all those subjects in detail while taking into account the volumes of insightful interpretations written on those subjects and on either of the treatises would be a Herculean task, one far beyond my capacities.

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In chapter 1 I introduce the two authors to each other, talk about their texts' surface-level similarities and affinities, underscore the intellectual rigor characterizing both, and examine how this rigor relates to philosophical method for either man. The chapter closes by pinning down the core of the two endeavors. If Spinoza

undertakes to demonstrate the impossibility of a position overarching the world and thought and language at the ontological level, Wittgenstein undertakes the same at the logical level.

In chapter 2 I examine the frame in which the *Tractatus* and the *Ethics* are set. I discuss the purpose governing the composition of each treatise and the goal each author takes himself to have established. I try to clarify how purpose precedes the activity it governs even though it can be manifested only in the deployment of that activity, whether the author recognizes this or not. I emphasize philosophical activity. The ethical intent and hence the ethical character of both treatises enter at this juncture—obviously intent and purpose are closely connected—while the impossibility of an external position from which to render universal moral injunctions means that both treatises must uphold an ethics of responsibility.

I discuss how these matters relate to the end each author takes his treatise to have attained. Philosophical worries cease at that end, and philosophical silence reigns as those who have scrupulously followed either treatise come to see the world as it really is, *sub specie aeterni* (Wittgenstein) or *sub specie aeternitatis* (Spinoza). Concurrently, I try to clarify what Spinoza means by his "third kind" of knowledge, since it bears an indivisible connection to the end in question.

Furthermore, I examine how Spinoza's thesis on the eternity of the mind might be understood as not too outlandish, for it is interwoven with the way Spinoza understands the human body and its capacities and with what might be called "expert action." This discussion is left open until chapter 6, where I attempt to unravel the connection between the eternity of the mind and the possibility (or rather impossibility) of an afterlife. Wittgenstein's thoughts on those matters appear only briefly here; a more ample examination is reserved for other chapters, although the way he considers life is discussed here as a prerequisite for that.

The following two chapters are devoted to the strategy deployed by the *Tractatus*. Chapter 3 begins by presenting a rough general schema on the relations among history, philosophy, the history of philosophy, and the history of science to argue that radical scientific change takes philosophy by surprise and provokes its more or less drastic reorganization. This schema sets forth a lens for envisioning the *Ethics* and the *Tractatus*.

On the basis of this schema, I try to explicate grammar, how grammar—or rather its germ—is characterized in the *Tractatus* and how it is implicated in radical scientific change. I discuss the prerequisites of the "eureka" leap associated with coming to understand a radically novel scientific theory and seek to identify these prerequisites through a dialogue between a teacher of the novel theory and students eager to learn it while still confined within the old grammatical bounds. This discussion helps illuminate the strategy deployed by the *Tractatus*. I argue that the eureka leap is not only a mental but also a bodily experience, and this allows discussing how Wittgenstein regards the human body. Along the way, I try to pinpoint the differences between coming to understand a radically novel scientific theory and coming to understand a philosophical treatise such as the *Tractatus*.

Chapter 4 confronts the strategy of the *Tractatus* as such. It starts by discussing

strategy in general and goes on to a preliminary examination of the strategy Spinoza deploys in the *Ethics*; in addition, I lay out my own strategy for making sense of the *Tractatus*. I present the two movements of Wittgenstein's strategy, examine what "working from within" entails, and discuss how the three terms—*showing, elucidation,* and *nonsense*—key to Wittgenstein's project are put to work. I propose a classification of the *Tractatus*'s propositions in accordance with the strategy these conjointly make up and clarify how the performative dimension enters the picture.

In chapter 5 I discuss the operative plans the *Ethics* and the *Tractatus* set out and their overall structures. I also suggest an explanation for a surprising fact, namely, that both writers begin their treatises abruptly from ontology: Spinoza, by laying out the general coordinates of his conception of God; and Wittgenstein, by laying out the general coordinates of his understanding of the world. I call this surprising because given the position of each author in the philosophical developments of the corresponding period, one would expect Spinoza to start from epistemology, following Descartes, and Wittgenstein to start from logic and its relation to language, following Frege and Russell. I discuss the constraints these plans, structures, and beginnings impose on the match in philosophical content and thus complete the preparation for undertaking the examination of that match in chapters 6 though 8.

Chapter 6 engages the category of substance in three rounds. The first round addresses Spinoza's conception; the second round, Wittgenstein's; and the third examines the match between the two conceptions by bringing together the strands emerging from the first two rounds. The chapter begins by discussing Spinoza's reasons for equating Substance with God and God with Nature. I argue that the latter equation makes Spinoza a kind of naturalist and thus ushers him into the contemporary philosophical landscape, where Wittgenstein resides. I locate some particular characteristics of the language Spinoza employs for establishing his claims on Substance; for example, he indirectly admits that he often uses what he himself calls confusing terms, and he precedes his definitions with a first-person clause. I argue that these features validate the claim that Spinoza's strategy incorporates a second movement, one that—less overtly and barring his theory's self-destruction—matches Wittgenstein's second movement in the essential elements. I also specify some fundamental ingredients of the way Wittgenstein regards the relation of language to thought. These ingredients suggest that Wittgenstein's overall understanding of language and thought might not differ greatly from Spinoza's.

To examine this last claim, I start from Spinoza's overall conception of language as related to his epistemology. I try to clarify how imagination and memory matter here, as well as why Spinoza considers language to be a fundamentally bodily function. Here we can see why he distinguishes three kinds of knowledge: the best, "third kind" of knowledge, which is intuitive knowledge of the essence of things (discussed in chapter 2 as involving "blessedness" in a way to which Wittgenstein would not object); adequate knowledge, "the second kind," which is knowledge by adequate concepts; and inadequate knowledge, "the first kind," which is casual and unreliable knowledge. I argue that Wittgenstein considers thought to be something

much like Spinoza's second kind and that although Wittgenstein envisages imagination from the altogether different angle of its relation to logic, he ought not object overmuch to the core of Spinoza's understanding of imagination and its function.

Spinoza (and Wittgenstein) see knowledge and thought as connected to language, so that I make an effort to go deeper into Spinoza's conception of the latter, to underscore that Spinoza understands the fundamental linguistic relation, that of signification, as involving two horns. On the one hand, a bodily affection, such as hearing a sound or seeing the written rendition of a given word, *stands in for* another bodily item, namely, traces of previous bodily affections produced by the same sound or sight. The sum of these traces, which Spinoza calls "habit," constitutes the first horn of the signification relation. The other horn stems from Spinoza's general thesis on body-mind identity, according to which any bodily item necessarily has a mental correlate, which is what Spinoza calls an "idea." Spinoza regards the ideas making up memory to be the mental correlates of the bodily affections making up habit. Hence the second horn of the signifying relation takes the following form: the mental correlates (the ideas) of our bodies' now hearing or seeing written the given word *express* in the mind the mental correlates (the ideas in memory) of the traces previously left on our bodies by the same sound or sight, that is, by the corresponding habit. The two horns of the relation are thus that of "standing in for" (within the body) and that of "expressing" (within the mind).

Although Wittgenstein follows a different route, he comes very close to the same understanding of the signifying relation, at least once we take into account three things: first, that he views language as a part of the human organism and hence a bodily function; second, that a proposition is a fact that stands in for another fact; and third, that a proposition has two aspects, one perceptible by the senses and the other mental in that it expresses a thought. The vindication of the match as such has to wait for chapter 8, where, as I said, I seek to spell out how Spinoza understands the mind-body identity thesis and what Wittgenstein has to say on the matter. It is noteworthy that Spinoza concludes that language is confusing by its very essence, so to speak, while Wittgenstein holds that language disguises thought. I suggest that "confusion" and "disguise" bear significant similarities, basing this on a demonstration that Spinoza understands the linguistic expression of adequate knowledge—by means of what he calls "common notions"—in much the same way as Wittgenstein understands propositions to express thoughts and picture facts univocally.

Chapter 6 continues with a discussion of the way Wittgenstein understands substance. I argue that the objects he says form "the substance of the world" (TLP 2.021) are purely logical, implying no ontological commitments or entailments. Since a logical possibility cannot float freely by itself—a possibility is always a possibility *of* or a possibility *that*—it requires by definition "something" substantive on which to anchor it. Wittgenstein's objects are thus merely the substantive, utterly "thin" bearers of logical possibilities and nothing more. Further on, after discussing how Spinoza characterizes bodies in general and why he believes that atoms cannot exist in nature, I show that Spinoza is obliged to introduce what he calls

"simplest bodies" for reasons having more to do with logic than with physics. These reasons are impressively close to Wittgenstein's reasons for introducing objects.

The chapter closes by completing the discussion on the eternity of the mind, explicating why eternity of the mind not only cannot imply afterlife for Spinoza but necessarily excludes it. Here, then, emerges the third round of my discussion of substance, where I present a succinct overview of the previous material.

Chapter 7 is devoted to clarifying Spinoza's overall epistemology, with an emphasis on the proper interpretation of Attributes. I first explicate an interpretation by which Spinoza's notion of ideas comes to match Wittgenstein's notion of thoughts and Wittgenstein's category of facts comes to match Spinoza's extended modes. I further argue that Spinoza's Attributes may be taken as objective perspectives on Substance, much as one might view a major science, such as physics or psychology. Since Spinoza holds that there are infinitely many Attributes, while human reason has access to only two—Extension and Thought—I tentatively explore how Spinoza might have conceived of inaccessible Attributes. To that effect, I ask whether he considered them necessarily inaccessible or only contingently so and examine the extent to which much later endeavors—namely, Freud's approach to human subjectivity and Marx's approach to society and history—might count as Attributes of this sort.

Further on, I argue that Spinoza's failure to distinguish the conceptual (the grammatical) from the purely logical forced him to run together two "parts" of each Attribute, ones that, on Wittgenstein's way of viewing things, should be carefully kept distinct. These two parts are, on the one hand, the logical core of each Attribute, which ensures that it is—exactly like all the others—an objective perspective on Substance, and, on the other hand, the specificity of the Attribute, which can be laid out with concepts proper only to it. Once this distinction is made, the logical core in question might be construed as amounting to a Wittgensteinian manifold of logical possibilities, and the infinite number of Spinozistic Attributes might be regarded as corresponding to the indefinite number of Wittgensteinian objects. That is, the logical core of any specific Spinozistic Attribute can be identified with the manifold of logical possibilities defining, or attached to, a particular Wittgensteinian object, with this particularity subtending that specificity. This allows me to round off my discussion of the manner and extent to which Spinoza's overall epistemology matches the relevant logical requirements set forth by Wittgenstein.

Chapter 8 focuses on possibility, as either Spinoza or Wittgenstein conceive it, as well as on the apparently divergent ways the two portray necessity. I commence by examining how Spinoza understands the naturally possible yet inexistent modes and how this understanding relates to his physics. With respect to this physics, I argue that Spinoza seems to have thought that the natural science of his day should come up with some kind of natural history rather than take the form Newton and his followers gave to it. To make better sense of this last claim, I appeal to more contemporary physical theories or conceptions of physics. It is remarkable that the main instigators of those theories or particular conceptions—namely, Boltzmann and Hertz—numbered among Wittgenstein's heroes in natural science.

Since natural science is a particular way of ordering and connecting things in nature, Spinoza's famous thesis that "the order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and the connection of things" (E II p7) comes to the forefront. At this point I turn to this thesis, which has already cropped up in connection to various issues of epistemology, addressing what order and connection might amount to for Spinoza and what Wittgenstein might be able to say on the matter. I argue that the common order and connection characterizing all Spinozistic Attributes largely parallel the "form" and "structure" Wittgenstein discusses concerning objects and their associated manifolds of logical possibilities. This means that the order and connection in question is what Spinoza would have called simply "logic." This discussion helps clarify Spinoza's epistemology and its connection to the logical realm underpinning it—again, one invisible to him as a distinct realm.

At this point I collect all the previously discussed strands of the body-mind identity thesis to arrive at the surprising conclusion that Wittgenstein can be read as holding a version of it, a link that can be made once we identify Wittgenstein's world with the body of Spinoza's God and the mind of Wittgenstein's "metaphysical subject" (TLP 5.641) with the mind of Spinoza's God. On this basis, solipsism's identity with realism (TLP 5.64) becomes a large-scale version of the mind-body identity thesis. I argue further that, given Wittgenstein's understanding of the human body, the match could be extended, with qualifications, to cover finite human bodies as well.[12] I return to Wittgenstein's physics and his reasons for considering a scientific law (and causality itself) to be not a matter of logic but rather a function of the conceptual network that constitutes a scientific theory. This is, however, a function that no scientific conceptual network can omit: we can think only in terms of concepts, not at the level of logic as such; scientific concepts are connected in conceptual networks by means of the corresponding laws; and only connections of this sort are thinkable (TLP 6.361). Each such network characterizes a scientific law in its own way, and it is up to science to explain why anyone should abide by one law rather than another. Yet what interests Wittgenstein on the matter is not how science comes up with such networks and how it assesses their differences. As always, he focuses on logical possibility, that is, on what makes such networks and the differences among them possible. On this basis, and given that Spinoza could not go below the conceptual, the implacable necessity of natural laws that Spinoza endorses conflicts less than one might expect with Wittgenstein's statement that "there is only *logical* necessity" (TLP 6.37).

The chapter concludes by zeroing in on God and logic and the relation holding between the two for Spinoza and for Wittgenstein. I confirm that the *Ethics* and the *Tractatus* align to an impressive extent and that most of the remaining differences might be explained by the historical distance separating them. Each author believed himself to have written a complete philosophical treatise, though the texts' differing formats create additional disparities between the finished products of the authors' toil.

Having completed my principal task, in the last chapter, "Exodus," I discuss in outline why these treatises continue to be philosophically important and how the

work of Spinoza and that of Wittgenstein evolved after each man had reached what he took to be a satisfactory end to the tasks he had assigned himself. The persisting question as to the relation between Wittgenstein's early and later work is broached but discussed only through the lens of the older Wittgenstein's conception of grammar and its relation to logic, which I use to examine radical grammatical change in science. On the basis of this examination, I conclude that Wittgenstein's later work *consummates* the perspective of radical immanence: if logic gives way to grammar, as the older Wittgenstein maintains, then radical grammatical breaks in the history of science cannot be forestalled by means of logic and philosophy even in principle. All possibility of a view *sub specie aeterni*—arguably the remaining vestige of the external vantage point—is thereby completely banned: history and its surprises acquire a kind of predominance over logic and philosophy. This, I suggest, is why Wittgenstein acknowledged the motto governing the whole of his later work to be Goethe's dictum "Im Anfang war die Tat" (in the beginning was the deed).

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At this point a demanding reader might feel fed up with even just this synopsis of the discussion to come. Unclear claims proliferate, and the claims ostensibly justifying them are too vague or convoluted to bear serious scrutiny. The chapters seem to follow little discernible order, the connections linking my claims seem nebulous, and the issues that most people take to be the main contributions of the *Ethics* and the *Tractatus* are either openly excluded from the discussion or lost in the haze. But this should be expected: the *Ethics* and the *Tractatus* are extremely difficult texts, and hence any effort to read them anachronistically in conjunction will only compound the difficulties.

In my defense, I ask only that the reader concede, at least for the sake of argument, my central claim to be tenable, for if the *Ethics* and the *Tractatus* do indeed aim at much the same goal, then relying on one text to understand the other might temper rather than aggravate the all too apparent difficulties of the treatises themselves. Proceeding in this way does involve disrupting the flow of the texts at issue, disregarding the order they follow, mixing up the two, jumping from one philosophical topic to another—in short, engaging in all kinds of philosophically dubious moves. These are unavoidable factors of this kind of project, ones that might well give the demanding reader an overall impression of muddle and disorder, if not downright confusion. Hence, if this reader is to keep an open mind, I should expose at the outset all the unorthodox moves I will allow myself. Apart from asking for the reader's patience and goodwill, I cannot do more.

First of all, I aim at no more than a large-scale overview of these treatises, or rather, of what I take as their core. I do not inspect all the philosophical subjects that the *Ethics* or the *Tractatus* covers, and merely sketch the arguments concerning those I do inspect. These sketches are unevenly distributed and unevenly worked out, with only a few offering a more rounded discussion. The historical developments to which I sometimes must appeal are drafted even more roughly. The issue steering my choices is the extent to which an examination of these subjects might

contribute to our understanding of either treatise in relation to the perspective of radical immanence.

Second, to understand what either Spinoza or Wittgenstein advances, we should try reading their texts as closely as possible. Given each text's notorious difficulties, anyone attempting to do this will need help—in the best of possible worlds, that of some intellectually rigorous commentator. As the reader may have inferred from the preceding discussion, my guiding hypothesis is that Wittgenstein provides such an ideal commentator for Spinoza and vice versa. The reason I read the *Ethics* and the *Tractatus* in conjunction emerges from this hypothesis, just as what follows is intended to put it to the test. Hence my principle of reading might be stated thus: under the constraints mentioned, I read the *Ethics* by appealing for the required help to the *Tractatus* while I read the *Tractatus* by appealing for the required help to the *Ethics*.

Nevertheless, this principle of reading requires a vital qualification, for in the form just stated, it implies abilities far greater than those I could deploy. Hence, I appeal to additional help in applying this principle—namely, the vast secondary literature. Yet this literature itself is of gigantic proportions, and the complexity of the material it addresses, enormous. To manage this surfeit of material, I followed a simple principle, though one perhaps unorthodox in its abruptness or even brutality: I considered only those contributions that have shaped or qualified the general coordinates of my interpretation of either text. I take practically no heed of past and present contributions going in different directions, no matter how influential, and I disregard almost all philosophical exchanges concerning them in one way or another. Moreover, I use only what suits my purposes without explaining why I use it and without thoroughly investigating whether the author's overall approach could legitimize the loan. This attitude clearly risks making my text appear overly dogmatic, and I accept the charge insofar as the text itself does not succeed in alleviating it.

This way of proceeding implies no disrespect for the contributions I overlook, even if it might give the impression of mimicking the arrogance both Spinoza and Wittgenstein seem to exhibit in that respect. In my case, this way of proceeding follows from the modest ambitions of the present work, namely, to produce only what one might call a first-level understanding. I do not try to adjudicate any contentious subject of Spinoza or Wittgenstein scholarship because a first-level understanding forms the *prerequisite framework* wherein such contentions can be competently debated. Nonetheless, I have outlined the literature I used and the reasons for selecting it in the preface.

The project might be more gently characterized as equivalent to what the French call "*explication de texte*." This is a close reading of the text itself with a minimum of asides. In using this approach, one takes no notice of issues related to the text's ancestry; one discounts the response it constitutes with respect to its immediate predecessors or contemporary opponents; one disregards the author's later work, as well as any effects the text might have produced; one sets aside controversial interpretations or, if they cannot be ignored, focuses on the passages in the text

that underlie them; and finally, one aims simply to clarify the order the text follows, the topics it engages, the arguments it presents, its turns of phrase, and so forth. To do their job of clarification, the comments about such matters might be inspired from sources foreign to the text but familiar to the intended audience of the explication. *Explication de texte* is practiced for the most part in teaching contexts, for its only ambition is to promote the kind of first-level understanding I have in mind.

Yet my *explication de texte* is a more complex affair, for it involves two texts instead of one, while neither is explicated in its own right; instead, the explication of one relies on the explication of the other. This interexplication must follow a comprehensible flow without presupposing too much on the readers' part and without overly taxing their patience and goodwill. These requirements impose constraints leading me to adopt unusual stylistic devices. I quote more than is customary, grafting passages into my text and turning them into integral parts of it (though never without first indicating their origins). On occasion, then, I let my text speak in the voice of Spinoza or of Wittgenstein. To preserve the syntax, however, I often had to alter the grammatical structure of the borrowed passages or even break them up. I sometimes incorporate one part of the passage in one location of my text and the other part in another, though always trying not to distort the author's intended meaning. Finally, although I sought to respect the local contexts in which these passages occur, such respect is not always immediately apparent, so that Spinoza or Wittgenstein might emerge at times as unrecognizable.

Even if the reader makes allowances for these unusual moves, however, the appeal to the technique of *explication de texte* cannot shield my account from all criticism. *Explication de texte* is never as innocent as the definition of it might seem to imply. Anyone crafting an explication inevitably imports something of his or her deeper views. This inevitable bias, then, frequently causes the explication to edge closer to reconstruction than its author would care to admit. And so it is with my own text, too.

I read the *Ethics* and the *Tractatus* through the lens provided by philosophy and the history of science, although neither treatise appears as licensing such a viewpoint. In fact, I explicitly argue that neither the *Ethics* nor the *Tractatus* occupies itself overmuch with science and that each sets forth the deep philosophical reasons for this reticence. Be that as it may, my vantage point—my bias—is rooted in the intricate discussions on scientific change following in Kuhn's wake. My general outlook and my bolder interpretative suggestions as well as most of my examples come from these quarters. To be perfectly frank, I should add that a particular French whiff flavors my account because my involvement with issues of scientific change has been significantly influenced by what one might call the French tradition in philosophy and historiography of science.

Furthermore, the large number of direct quotations from the *Ethics* and the *Tractatus* makes it difficult to neatly separate what Spinoza or Wittgenstein holds from what I am asserting in their names. Thus, rather than let Spinoza or Wittgenstein speak in his own voice, I may appear to be doing the opposite, subsuming their voices to my own. I do strive to effect the required separation: obvious stylistic

moves are designed to pin down the places where I depart from the letter of a text to follow a tangent of my own. But this can hardly save the explicatory character of the account; rather than constitute a bona fide explication, it risks appearing as reconstruction with a vengeance, as a reconstruction whose vantage point is expressly censured by its very object, a reconstruction remaining groundless and authorizing itself, so to speak, by the unhindered liberty of a mere fiat. To put Nietzsche's trope to a novel use, instead of proceeding to an explication with the finely tuned instruments that the best philosophical traditions have perfected, I might appear to be philosophizing with a sledgehammer (Kaufmann 1982, 463–68).

I mention Nietzsche here to suggest that the matters I address involve not just Spinoza and Wittgenstein alone but many other philosophers as well. Nonetheless, I read Spinoza and Wittgenstein as engaging in an earnest conversation unfettered by what other interlocutors might add to what the two have to say to each other. In the last analysis, this is why I refrain from taking into account relevant contributions of other authors and from circumspectly examining their views in relation to mine. I do at times mention other philosophers by name or allude to their work by a well-known catchword, yet I do this almost by free association, trying merely to intimate a more general philosophical context. Thus, apart from the few places where I find it necessary to do so, I barely discuss even Descartes or Frege and Russell, the immediate predecessors and direct or indirect influences on the two authors occupying these pages. At the same time, I allow Nietzsche to stand for all interlocutors of Spinoza and Wittgenstein by letting him open each chapter. As I try to explicate at the beginning of chapter 1, there is a way, or so I would like to claim, of allowing him to be considered a kind of mediator between the two.

What is the demanding reader to make of all this? The evocation of explication seems not to have safeguarded my account but rather kicked the bucket empty: I have come to admit that my explication amounts to a tendentious, self-authorized reconstruction with no established grounds on which to stand. To the extent that the main question bothering that reader is the difficulty, if not impossibility, of bringing Spinoza and Wittgenstein anachronistically together, my admission of all these dubious moves will have merely highlighted this difficulty. Thus the reader may very well abandon his or her efforts at this point, considering the case as hopeless. Spinoza and Wittgenstein will be much better off, such a reader might say, if left alone to pursue their courses along their separate paths; most likely, my efforts to tame the work of either by bringing the two together cannot far outclass the efforts expended by the protagonist of an old joke: a rather frail and not too intelligent-looking man boasts at a bar that he has managed to beat the world champion of boxing as well as the world champion of chess. To the repeated questions from his gaping audience he reluctantly comes to reply: "Well, that was not too difficult after all; I have beaten the world champion of boxing at chess and the world champion of chess at boxing."

A reader unmoved by the joke, finding it insufficiently serious for the matters at hand, can evoke a more dignified version of the same indictment. This is poem XI, 305, of the Palatine Anthology (fourth century AD), whose title is a man's

proper name alluding to Pallas Athena, the goddess of wisdom. Here is the poem in my own rough translation:

PALLADAS

Son of effrontery, nursling of folly, most ignorant of men,
Tell me, how dare you swagger since you know nothing?
When with grammarians, you act the Platonist.
And when they ask you about Plato's doctrines,
You declare yourself immediately a grammarian.
You flee from one to the other.
A Platonist? Of course not;
And of grammar you know nothing.

Be that as it may, my will—my conatus—forces me to hold on and persevere. What remains at this stage is to respectfully ask my kind readers to withhold final judgment, no matter how harsh, until they hear me out.