Coordinates of a Conversation

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

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is therefore no coincidence that each has given rise to a vast array of divergent interpretations. 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 issue 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 supported 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 mysterious 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 question is simply not true.[1] Things appear now as quite straightforward. If the proposition 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 question; 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-

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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

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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 perspectives 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-

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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

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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-

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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

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of thought governing Spinoza's time, and independent of the ways in which different 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 physics 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] Concurrently, the advances in logic allowed explicating, among other things, how the conceptual could and should be rigorously distinguished from the logical. Thus the means for distinguishing grammatical from logical possibility had become perfectly 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 Wittgenstein from Spinoza (philosophical vocabularies and agendas, modes of argumentation, 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 *historical* 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 standards 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 reasoning 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 conceptual revolution materializes it retroactively, making it manifest at the same time. The philosophical message is that any theory whatsoever, postclassical physical theories 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 Wittgenstein's own work) had rendered logic capable of treating precisely such abstract possibilities. These are the bare (i.e., conceptually empty) possibilities that underlie[10] all language (and all thought and all the world) and constitute logic itself. Witt-

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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

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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-

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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

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