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Neutral Monism

By 1911, when Wittgenstein arrived in Cambridge, neutral monism was becoming a widely shared view. Among its advocates were Ernst Mach, William James, Karl Pearson, and the American new realists.[1] Russell, too, was greatly interested in neutral monism and discussed it at length in several articles published between 1912 and 1914, although he did not fully embrace the view until 1921. Wittgenstein did not await Russell's approval: by 1916 he had made up his mind that neutral monism provides the way out of philosophical difficulties. This is the single most important fact to be known about Wittgenstein's views, for if one fails to take it into account, one is bound to misunderstand him completely.

The great attraction of neutral monism was that it appeared to offer an escape from the problems generated by dualism. W. T. Stace nicely summarizes the matter as follows:

> Neutral monism appears to be inspired by two main motives. The first is to get rid of the psycho-physical dualism which has troubled philosophy since the time of Descartes. The second motive is empiricism. The "stuff" of the neutral monists is never any kind of hidden unperceivable "substance" or *Ding-an-sich*. It is never something which lies *behind* the phenomenal world, out of sight. It always, in every version of it, consists in some sort of directly perceivable entities – for instance, sensations, sense-data, colours, smells, sounds. Thus, if matter is wholly constructed out of any such directly experienceable stuff, there will be nothing in it which will not be empirically verifiable. The same will be true of mind.[2]

By this final remark, that "the same will be true of mind," Stace means to say that neutral monists hold that mental events are also not "something which lies *behind* the phenomenal world."

This, then, is the view that Wittgenstein had embraced by 1916. In the present chapter my aim is to sketch in the main features of this view and to show, by quoting from both the *Tractatus* and his later writings, how Wittgenstein's remarks bear the stamp of neutral monism.

The two most important features of neutral monism were developed by Berkeley (the elimination of matter[3]) and Hume (the elimination of the self as an entity[4]), but the neutral monists made significant additions. Their aim was to dispatch dualism by doing away with (Cartesian) minds as well as matter, which is why the view came to be called *neutral* monism, which distinguishes it from the "mentalistic" monism of ideal-

ists such as F. H. Bradley. Accordingly, they sometimes stated their view by saying that the world consists of a neutral stuff, a stuff which, in itself, is neither mental nor physical but which may, in some of its relations, be called "mental" and, in other relations, "physical." This formulation did not interest Wittgenstein, and I will therefore ignore it.[5]

The Elimination of Matter

As we saw in Chapter 1, Mach states his position by saying that "the world consists only of our sensations." Wittgenstein in his pre-*Tractatus* notebooks said something similar: "All experience is world and does not need the subject" (NB, p. 89). This is an explicit affirmation of neutral monism, although Wittgenstein, in his notebooks, calls it "realism" (NB, p. 85) and in the *Tractatus*, "pure realism" (TLP, 5.64).[6]

Mach also states his position by saying: ". . . we do not find the [alleged] gap between bodies and sensations . . . , between what is without and what is within, between the material world and the spiritual world,"[7] and goes on to say: "I see . . . no opposition of physical and psychical, but [see only] simple identity as regards these elements. In the sensory sphere of my consciousness everything is at once physical and psychical."[8] Wittgenstein was endorsing such a view when, in his lectures of 1931–32, he said: "Idealists were right in that we never transcend experience. Mind and matter is a division *in* experience" (WL32, p. 80). He also said: "To talk about the relation of [physical] object and sense-datum is nonsense. They are not two separate things" (WL32, p. 109). In 1938, after much of *Philosophical Investigations* had been written, he repeated this point:

> It is not a question here at all whether the name of the physical object signifies one object and the name of the impression signifies another, as if one successively pointed to two different objects and said, "I mean this object, not that one." The picture of the different objects is here used entirely wrongly.
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> Not, the one name is for the immediate object, the other for something else [that's *not* given in immediate experience]; but rather, the two words are simply used differently (CE, Appendix B, pp. 435–436; my translation).

These passages, and others we will consider presently, show that Wittgenstein joined the neutral monists in dismissing material objects.

Elimination of the Self as an Entity

The most distinctive feature of neutral monism was its insistence that there is no self (or ego) and hence that there is no need for the dualist's distinction between the mental and the physical (or the inner and the outer). In 1914 Russell was not yet prepared to concede this, but he nevertheless recognized the attraction of neutral monism:

In favor of the theory [of neutral monism], we may observe . . . the very notable simplification which it introduces. That the things given in experience should be of two fundamentally different kinds, mental and physical, is far less satisfactory to our intellectual desires than that the dualism should be merely apparent and superficial. Occam's razor, . . . which I should regard as the supreme methodological maxim in philosophizing, prescribes James's [monistic] theory as preferable to dualism if it can possibly be made to account for the facts.[9]

When Russell wrote this passage he thought that neutral monism could not account for all the facts. In particular, he held that a "mental" fact (such as his seeing an image) contains as one of its constituents a "self," which is acquainted with the other constituent of the fact (e.g., an image), and that this makes that other constituent (the image) subjective rather than "neutral." He goes on to acknowledge, however, that this analysis is faced with the difficulty Hume had pointed out:

The strongest objection which can be urged against the above analysis of experience into a dual relation of subject and object is derived from the elusiveness of the subject in introspection. We can easily become aware of our own experiences, but we seem never to become aware of the subject itself. This argument tends, of course, to support neutral monism.[10]

In 1914 Russell did not find this argument compelling and therefore rejected neutral monism and, in consequence, embraced skepticism regarding other minds.

The position Russell was unwilling to adopt in 1914 is that which Mach, in *The Analysis of Sensations*, had formulated as follows:

The primary fact is not the ego, but the elements (sensations). . . . The elements constitute the I. "*I* have the sensation green," signifies that the element green occurs in a given complex of other elements (sensations, memories). When *I* cease to have the sensation green, when *I* die, then the elements no longer occur in the ordinary, familiar association. That is all. Only an ideal mental-economical unity, not a real unity, has ceased to exist. The ego is not a definite, unalterable, sharply-bounded unity.[11]

"The ego," Mach concludes, "must be given up."[12]

In another passage dealing with this topic Mach quotes with approval a passage from Lichtenberg:

In his philosophical notes Lichtenberg says: "We become conscious of certain presentations that are not dependent upon us; of others that we at least think are dependent upon us. Where is the border-line? We know only the existence of our sensations, presentations, and thoughts. We should say *It thinks*, just as we say [of the dawn] *It lightens*. It is going too far to say *Cogito*, if we translate *Cogito* by *I think*. The assumption, or postulation, of the ego is a mere practical necessity." Though the method by which Lichtenberg arrived at this result is somewhat different from ours, we must nevertheless give our full assent to his conclusion.[13]

The elimination of the Cartesian ego seemed essential to the neutral monists because it seemed to them (a) that skeptical questions about the existence of the external world arose precisely from Descartes' *Cogito* and (b) that those questions, once posed, were unanswerable. Although Descartes had said in *The Meditations* that God would not deceive us into thinking that there is an external world, Mach and the other neutral monists were unwilling to invoke a deity in order to avoid skepticism. Yet, they were unwilling to accept skepticism regarding the world dealt with by the sciences. Their way out of this impasse was to reject Descartes' Cogito, and this they accomplished by following Hume's lead in declaring that the *I* is not a genuine entity. For with the Cartesian *I* abolished, there could no longer be a question about what existed 'outside' (or 'beyond') this alleged *I*: if there is no self, there is also nothing 'beyond' it.

Wittgenstein, also intent upon avoiding skepticism, followed Mach's lead in this matter. In a notebook entry dated 7 August 1916 he wrote: "The I is not an object" (NB, p. 80), meaning that the first-person pronoun will not, contrary to Russell, occur in propositions whose logical form has been fully analysed. On 2 September he expanded on this: "Here we can see that solipsism coincides with pure realism, if it is strictly thought out. The I of solipsism shrinks to an extensionless point and what remains is the reality co-ordinated with it" (NB, p. 82). On 9 November, 1916 he explicitly embraced neutral monism: "All experience is world and does not need the subject" (NB, p. 89). In the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein makes these points in a more explicit way: "There is no such thing as the subject that thinks or entertains ideas" (TLP, 5.631). Later, in his conversations with Waismann he said: "The word 'I' belongs to those words that can be eliminated from language" (WVC, p. 49).

In Chapter 5 we will consider in detail Wittgenstein's treatment of this topic, both in the *Tractatus* and in his later work.[14] Suffice it here to say that he was confident that he could dismiss Russell's objection to neutral monism (that a mental fact contains the self as a constituent) and could thereby dismiss the dualist's notion of minds and their private contents. Also, he thought he had seen how to eliminate any epistemological problem about 'other minds,' for there *are* no minds.

There are no Inner and Outer Worlds

Having eliminated the ego, neutral monists thought it important to exhibit the implications of this. One such implication is that the philosophical distinction between an 'inner' and an 'outer' world must be abandoned. Mach stated the matter as follows:

There is no rift between the psychical and the physical, no inside and outside, no "sensation" to which an external "thing" different from sensation, corresponds. There is but one kind of elements, out of which this supposed inside and outside are formed – elements which are themselves inside or outside, according to the aspect in which, for the time being, they are viewed.[15]

Karl Pearson, another of the neutral monists whom Wittgenstein seems to have read and borrowed from, wrote:

There is no better exercise for the mind than the endeavor to reduce the perceptions we have of "external things" to the simple sense impressions by which we know them. The arbitrary distinction between outside and inside ourselves is then clearly seen to be one merely of everyday practical convenience. . . . The distinction between ourselves and the outside world is thus only an arbitrary, if practically convenient, division between one type of sense-impression [color, shape, etc.] and another [e.g., pain]. The group of sense-impressions forming what I term *myself* is only a small subdivision of the vast world of sense-impressions.[16]

Like Mach and Pearson, Wittgenstein was eager to eliminate any distinction between the 'inner' and the 'outer,' as we can see from the following passages:

Thought is a symbolic process. . . . It may involve images and these we think of as being "in the mind." This simile of being "inside" or "outside" the mind is pernicious. It derives from "in the head" when we think of ourselves as looking out from our heads and of thinking as something going on "in our head." But we then forget the picture and go on using language derived from it (WL32, p. 25).

The "inner" and the "outer," a *picture* (Z, §554).[17]

What misleads us here [in thinking about toothache] is the notion of "outside plus the inside" (LSD, p. 10).

"What I show [e.g. a drawing] *reveals* what I see" – in what sense does it do that? The idea is that now [in looking at my drawing] you can so to speak look inside me. Whereas [in truth] I only reveal to you what I see in a game of revealing and hiding which is entirely played with signs of one category [i.e., in a game in which what is revealed and what is hidden are *both* explicable in terms of immediate experience]. . . .

We are thinking of a game in which there is an inside in the normal sense [e.g., "inside this box"].

We must get clear about how the metaphor of revealing (outside and inside) is actually applied by us; otherwise we shall be tempted to look for an inside behind that which in our metaphor is the inside. . . .

You compare it with such a statement as: "If he had learned to open up, I could now see what's inside." I say yes, but remember what opening up in this case is like [e.g., confessing to secret fears] (NFL, p. 280).

In his last writings on this topic, in 1950, Wittgenstein wrote: "The 'inner' is a delusion" (LW, II, p. 84).

The Elimination of Private Objects

Neutral monists, by eliminating the Ego, meant to dispose of the idea that sense-impressions are "private" – i.e., *belong* to someone. Mach states this explicitly, using "sensations" to mean "sense-impressions":

> Whoever cannot get rid of the conception of the Ego as a reality which underlies everything, will also not be able to avoid drawing a fundamental distinction between my sensations and your sensations. . . . From the standpoint which I here take up . . . , I no more draw an essential distinction between my sensations and the sensations of another person, than I regard red or green as belonging to an individual body.[18] Whether it may or may not prove possible to transfer someone else's sensations to me by means of nervous connexions, my view is not affected one way or the other. The most familiar facts provide a sufficient basis for this view.[19]

Wittgenstein's innovation was to extend Mach's pronouncement to include not only sense-impressions but all bodily 'sensations' (pain, tickling, etc.) as well. The Blue Book contains a passage which appears to be a direct commentary on the one just quoted from Mach:

> If we are angry with someone for going out on a cold day with a cold in his head, we sometimes say: "I won't feel your cold." And this can mean: "I don't suffer when you catch cold." This is a proposition taught by experience. For we could imagine a, so to speak, wireless connection between the two bodies which made one person feel pain in his head when the other had exposed his to the cold air. One might in this case argue that the pains [I receive from this wireless connection] are mine because they are felt in my head; but suppose I and someone else had a part of our bodies in common, say a hand. Imagine the nerves and tendons of my arm and A's connected to this hand by an operation. Now imagine the hand stung by a wasp. Both of us cry, contort our faces, give the same description of the pain, etc. Now are we to say we have the same pain or different ones? If in such a case you say: "We feel pain in the same place, in the same body, our descriptions tally, but still my pain can't be his," I suppose as a reason you will be inclined to say: "because my pain is my pain and his pain is his pain." And here you are making a grammatical statement about the use of such a phrase as "the same pain." You say that you don't want to apply the phrase, "he has got my pain" or "we both have the same pain," and instead, perhaps, you will apply such a phrase as "his pain is exactly like mine." . . . Of course, if we exclude the phrase "I have his toothache" from our language, we also thereby exclude "I have (or feel) *my* toothache." Another form of our metaphysical statement is this: "A man's sense-data are private to himself." And this way of expressing it is even more misleading because it looks still more like an experiential proposition; the philosopher who says this may well think that he is expressing a kind of scientific truth.
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> We use the phrase "two books have the same color," but we could perfectly well say: "They can't have the *same* colour, because, after all, this book has its own colour, and the other book has its own colour too." This also would be stating a grammatical rule – a rule, incidentally, not in accordance with our ordinary usage. The reason why one should think of these two different usages at all is this: We compare the case of sense data with that of physical bodies, in which case we make a distinction between: "this is the same chair I saw an hour

ago" and "this is not the same chair, but one exactly like the other." Here it makes sense to say, and it is an experiential proposition: "A and B couldn't have seen the same chair, for A was in London and B in Cambridge; they saw two chairs exactly alike." (Here it will be useful if you consider the different criteria for what we call "the identity of these objects." How do we apply the statements: "This is the same day . . .," "This is the same word . . .," "This is the same occasion," etc.?) (BB, pp. 54–55).

It is evident that Wittgenstein meant to dismiss the idea that sensations are private. This is a point he made repeatedly in his later writings and lectures, and in Chapter 6 we will consider this point in greater detail.

Behaviorism

Neither Mach nor Russell had offered a solution to the problem of other minds. Both were prepared to allow that there may be other minds, but neither had explained how one could have knowledge of them. Russell, because he held that the argument from analogy provides no certainty, was a skeptic in this matter. Mach says that "since [a person] does not perceive the sensations of his fellow-men or animals [he] supplies them by analogy,"[20] but Mach fails to address the epistemological problem this view entails. In this respect Mach fails to complete the project of neutral monism, which is to show that everything that exists lies open to view – or, as Stace puts it, nothing is "hidden." The completion of this project fell to the American new realists, especially R. B. Perry, who made a point of declaring that mental activities lie open to view. In a section of his book which is entitled "The Alleged Impossibility of Observing the Contents of Another Mind," he says that the mind is, "like any other thing, . . . open to general [i.e., public] observation."[21] As an illustration of this point he makes the remark (quoted above in note 28 of Chapter 1) that another person's intention or purpose is "in your full view" because his purpose or intention is "revealed . . . in the motions of [his] body." As a further illustration he writes:

> There is another way in which you readily follow my mind, namely, through my verbal report. . . . Now it is frequently assumed by the sophisticated that when I thus verbally reveal my mind you do not *directly* know it. You are supposed directly to know only my words. But I cannot understand such a supposition, unless it means simply that you know my mind only *after* and *through* hearing my words.[22]

Perry allows that a person may, on occasion, not wish to divulge his plans or his suspicions and may in this sense keep them "hidden from general observation," but this, he adds, "does not imply any general proposition to the effect that a mind is *essentially* such as to be *absolutely* cut off from observation."[23] Perry's view, then, is that although it may occasionally be *difficult* to know the thoughts, emotions, etc. of another

person, there is no general epistemological problem about knowing the mind of another.

Wittgenstein, too, thought that pure realism, having done away with Cartesian minds and their private contents, eliminated the epistemological problem about other minds, for if there are no (Cartesian) minds, then the fact that other people have thoughts and feelings, etc. must *also* be given in experience. This required Wittgenstein to assume that a doubly reductionist account could be given of the thoughts, feelings, etc. of others, i.e., that anything he said about another person's thoughts or feelings could be reduced to propositions about their bodies and that these, in turn, could be reduced to propositions about sense-impressions.

That Wittgenstein had adopted a behavioristic account of other people at the time of the *Tractatus* is evident from Frank Ramsey's notes of his 1923 interview with Wittgenstein regarding the *Tractatus*.[24] Waismann, in his compendium of Wittgenstein's views as they stood in the early 1930s, states Wittgenstein's position as follows:

> A proposition cannot say more than is established by means of the method of its verification. If I say "My friend is angry" and establish this in virtue of his displaying certain perceptible behaviour, I only *mean* that he displays that behaviour (WVC, p. 244).

In The Blue Book Wittgenstein put the matter as follows:

> . . . the activities of the mind lie open before us. And when we are worried about the nature of thinking, the puzzlement which we wrongly interpret to be one about the nature of a medium [in which thinking occurs] is a puzzlement caused by the mystifying use of our language. This kind of mistake recurs again and again in philosophy. . . . We are most strongly tempted to think that here are things hidden, something we can see from the outside but which we can't look into. And yet nothing of the sort is the case. . . . All the facts that concern us lie open before us. . . . (BB, p. 6).

Wittgenstein's behaviorism will be discussed in detail in Chapter 9.

The Mind–Body Problem

Stace, in the passage quoted at the beginning of this chapter, says that one of the main motives of the neutral monists "is to get rid of the psycho–physical dualism which has troubled philosophy since the time of Descartes." The problem for dualists is that of explaining how thoughts, emotions, sensations, etc. are related to (Cartesian) bodies, and what makes this a problem is that it is difficult to see how something of a mental (immaterial) nature could be related to a material body. Neutral monists maintained that this problem is a bogus one because, contrary to Descartes, the world is *not* composed of two different materials, mind and matter. What did Wittgenstein say about this?

The Blue Book is Wittgenstein's detailed exposition and defense of neutral monism, and in the course of it he undertakes to deal with the mind-body problem. This part of his discussion begins with his comments on the following passage from Mach's *The Analysis of Sensations*:

> The philosophical spiritualist [the idealist] is often sensible of the difficulty of imparting the needed solidity to his mind-created world of bodies; the materialist is at a loss when required to endow the world of matter with sensation. The monistic point of view, which reflexion has evolved, is easily clouded by our older and more powerful instinctive notions [i.e., by our dualistic notions of mind and body].[25]

Mach says here that the idealist has difficulty "imparting the needed solidity" to the world, meaning, presumably, that the world would seem to lack solidity if it consists only of sensations (and not matter, too). And it is Mach's claim that neutral monism, by affirming that everything that is perceived is "at once physical and psychical," provides the world its "needed solidity." Wittgenstein begins by explaining Mach's point. He argues that it would be a mistake to think that a world without matter would lack solidity, and he does so by comparing this to the mistake made by popularizing scientists who tell us that "the floor on which we stand is not solid, as it appears to common sense," because wood consists of "particles filling space so thinly that it can almost be called empty" (BB, p. 45). The mistake here, he says, is that, as the word "solidity" is normally used, we contrast a solid floor with one that isn't solid because the wood is rotten, so that "not solid" is so used that it has an anti-thesis, whereas the popularizing scientist is misusing the phrase "lacks solidity" by declaring that *everything* lacks solidity, i.e., even when the wood is *not* rotten. Wittgenstein adds that the truth of the matter is that particle theory in physics is meant precisely "to explain the very phenomenon of solidity." Similarly, if we say that a world consisting of sensations (i.e., a world without matter) would lack solidity, we are again using words "in a typically metaphysical way, namely without an antithesis." I.e., just as it is a mistake to say the floor lacks solidity because it consists of particles, so it is a mistake to say that the table lacks solidity because it consists of sensible qualities, for one of those qualities is the solidity we feel when we handle the table.

At this point (BB, pp. 46–47) Wittgenstein introduces the second part of Mach's claim, namely, that neutral monism enables us to understand how animals and humans can have sensations, i.e., how sensations can be related to *bodies*. Wittgenstein begins by remarking that there are "propositions of which we may say that they describe facts in the material world" and also "propositions describing personal experience." He continues:

> At first sight it may appear . . . that here we have [as dualists claim] two kinds of worlds, worlds built of different materials; a mental world and a physical

world. The mental world in fact is liable to be imagined as gaseous, or rather, aethereal. But let me remind you here of the queer role which the gaseous and the aethereal play in philosophy – when we perceive that a substantive [e.g., "I"] is not used as what in general we should call the name of an object, and when therefore we can't help saying to ourselves that it is the name of an aethereal object. . . .[26] This is a hint as to how the problem of the two materials, *mind* and *matter*, is going to dissolve (BB, p. 47).

The problem he is referring to here is the mind–body problem (How can a *material* thing have thoughts, sensations, etc.?[27]), and Wittgenstein devotes the remainder of The Blue Book to its dissolution. I will not attempt to summarize all that he says in this regard, but three of his points can be briefly noted.

His first point, which we have already covered, is that we are misled by the substantive term "I" when it is used in, for example, "I am in pain," for in such a proposition it "is not a demonstrative pronoun" (BB, p. 68). Our failure to realize this, he says, "creates the illusion that we use this word to refer to something bodiless, which, however, has its seat in our body. In fact this seems to be the real ego, the one of which it was said, 'Cogito, ergo sum' " (BB, p. 69). In short, the dualist's notion of the mind results from a failure to understand the grammar of "I."

Wittgenstein's second point, by which he dismisses the dualist's notion of matter (i.e., that material things are distinct from sense-impressions), is less easily summarized, but in the course of it says: ". . . don't think that the expression 'physical object' is meant to distinguish one kind of object from another" (BB, p. 51). He is here making the point that he had made earlier in lectures: ". . . there is no fact that this is a physical object over and above the qualities and judgements of sense-data about it" (WL32, p. 81).

Taken together, these two points amount to the following: the idea that the world is composed of two very different materials, mind and matter, is a muddle, because (i) the dualistic conception of mind is a confusion about the grammar of "I," and (ii) the dualistic conception of matter involves the mistake of thinking that a chair, for example, is something over and above sense-data. But how does this provide a solution to the mind–body problem? Wittgenstein's discussion does not make this very clear, but it seems to involve a third point, which he develops early in The Blue Book, a point we have already considered, namely, that "the activities of the mind lie open before us" (BB, p. 6). This, as I have suggested, is a form of behaviorism, and Wittgenstein seems to have thought he could solve the mind–body problem by combining behaviorism with his first two points. He concludes The Blue Book on the following note:

Let us now ask: "Can a human *body* have pain?" One is inclined to say: "How can the body have pain? The body in itself is something dead; a body isn't conscious!". . . . And it is as though we saw that what has pain must be of a

different nature from that of a material object; that, in fact, it must be of a mental nature. . . .

On the other hand we can perfectly well adopt the expression "This body feels pain", and we shall then, just as usual, tell it to go to the doctor, to lie down, and even to remember that when the last time it had pains they were over in a day. "But wouldn't this form of expression at least be an indirect one?". . . . One expression is no more direct than the other. . . .

The kernel of our proposition that that which has pain or sees or thinks is of a mental nature is only, that the word "I" in "I have pains" does not denote a particular body. . . . (BB, pp. 73–74).

I will not pause here to assess this argument, but this much is clear: The Blue Book disposes of the mind–body problem in the manner of the neutral monists, i.e., "the problem of the two materials, *mind* and *matter*," is a pseudoproblem because there aren't two such materials.

Opposition to the Causal Theory of Perception

Having dismissed not only matter but also Cartesian minds as repositories of sense-impressions, neutral monists were in a position to reject representative theories of perception, including Locke's causal theory. Thus, Mach writes:

For us . . . the world does not consist of mysterious entities, which by their interaction with another, equally mysterious entity, the ego, produce sensations, which alone are accessible. For us, colors, sounds, spaces, times, . . . are provisionally the ultimate elements, whose given connexion it is our business to investigate. It is precisely in this that the exploration of reality consists.[28]

Mach also says that it is a confusion to think of "experiences . . . as 'effects' of an external world. . . . This conception gives us a tangle of metaphysical difficulties which it seems impossible to unravel."[29] Karl Pearson was equally explicit in rejecting the causal theory of perception, saying: "There is no necessity, nay, there is want of logic, in the statement that behind sense-impressions there are 'things-in-themselves' *producing* sense-impressions."[30]

In his early period Wittgenstein did not state any criticism specifically of the causal theory of perception. Very likely he thought it unnecessary because of his explicitly stated objection to the very idea of causation, e.g., "Belief in the causal nexus is *superstition*" (TLP, 5.1361). Later, however, he stated his opposition to the causal theory in the same way as Russell had stated it (see Chapter 1, this volume) in 1914. In his lectures of 1931–1932 he said:

There is a tendency to make the relation between physical objects and sense-data a contingent relation. Hence such phrases as "caused by," "beyond," "outside." But the world is not composed of sense-data and physical objects. The relation between them is one in language – a necessary relation. If there were a relation of causation, you could ask whether anyone has ever seen a

physical object causing a sense-datum. . . . All causal laws are learned by experience. We cannot therefore learn what is the cause of experience. If you give a scientific explanation of what happens, for instance, when you see, you are again describing an experience (WL32, p. 81).

Wittgenstein also said: "It is a fallacy to ask what causes my sense-data . . . ." (WL32, p. 115).

The Distinction between Appearance and Reality

In a clothing store a clerk may have occasion to explain to a customer, "The suit looks black in this artificial light, but take it to the window and you'll see that it *is* navy blue." The clerk does not mean to say: The suit is black, but it will, in chameleon fashion, *turn blue* in other circumstances. To the neutral monist (or any empiricist) the clerk's remark suggests a sort of dualism: how the suit *looks* in artificial light and what color the suit really *is* – despite it's present appearance. It was therefore obligatory for neutral monists to address the matter of "appearance and reality." Thus Mach writes:

A common and popular way of thinking and speaking is to contrast "appearance" with "reality." A pencil held in front of us in the air is seen by us as straight; dip it into water, and we see it crooked. In the latter case we say that the pencil *appears* crooked, but is in *reality* straight. But what justifies us in declaring one fact rather than another to be the reality, degrading the other to the level of appearance? In both cases we have to do with facts which present us with different combinations of the elements, combinations which in the two cases are differently conditioned. Precisely because of its environment the pencil dipped in water is optically crooked; but it is tactually and metrically straight. . . . To be sure, our expectation is deceived when, not paying sufficient attention to the conditions, and substituting for one another different cases of the combination, we fall into the natural error of expecting what we are accustomed to, although the case may be an unusual one. The facts are not to blame for that. In these cases, to speak of "appearance" may have a practical meaning, but cannot have a scientific meaning. Similarly, the question which is often asked, whether the world is real or whether we merely dream it, is devoid of all scientific meaning. Even the wildest dream is a fact as much as any other. If our dreams were more regular, more connected, more stable, they would also have more practical importance for us.[31]

Mach adds: "The expression 'sense-illusion' proves . . . that we have not yet deemed it necessary to incorporate into our ordinary language [the fact] *that the senses represent things neither wrongly nor correctly*."[32]

In *Our Knowledge of the External World* Russell says something very similar:

The first thing to realize is that there are no such things as "illusions of sense." Objects of sense, even when they occur in dreams, are the most indubitably real objects known to us. What, then, makes us call them unreal in dreams? Merely the unusual nature of their connection with other objects of sense. I dream that

I am in America, but I wake up and find myself in England without those intervening days on the Atlantic which, alas! are inseparably connected with a "real" visit to America. Objects of sense are called "real" when they have the kind of connection with other objects of sense which experience has led us to regard as normal; when they fail in this, they are called "illusions." But what is illusory is only the inferences to which they give rise; in themselves, they are every bit as real as the objects of waking life. And conversely, the sensible objects of waking life must not be expected to have more intrinsic reality than those of dreams. Dreams and waking life, in our first efforts at construction, must be treated with equal respect. . . .[33]

In "The Relation of Sense-Data to Physics" Russell presents a parallel account of hallucinations and more commonplace illusions.[34]

Wittgenstein did not discuss this topic in the *Tractatus*, but the phenomenological language he envisions there contains no provision for propositions of the form "It looks . . . , but it's really _____." In his later years Wittgenstein addressed this topic as follows:

. . . the words "seem," "error," etc. have a certain emotional overtone which doesn't belong to the essence of the phenomena. . . . We talk for instance of an optical illusion and associate this expression with the idea of a mistake, although of course it isn't essential that there should be any mistake; and if appearances were normally more important in our lives than the results of measurement,[35] then language would also show a different attitude to this phenomenon.

There is not – as I used to believe – a primary language as opposed to our ordinary language, the "secondary" one. But one could speak of a primary language as opposed to ours in so far as the former would not permit any way of expressing a preference for certain phenomena over others; it would have to be, so to speak, absolutely *impartial* (PR, p. 84).

In this passage Wittgenstein is saying that the logical form of the facts we perceive is that which is presupposed in the *Tractatus*, i.e., there are not two kinds of perceptual facts: those that are illusory (or *mere* appearance) and those that are not. But does not ordinary language treat matters differently? Wittgenstein writes:

. . . the form of words "the appearance of this tree" incorporates the idea of a necessary connection between what we are calling the appearance and "the existence of a tree." . . . But this connection isn't there [since it is not *necessary* that I encounter resistance when I go to touch what appeared to be a tree].

Idealists would like to reproach language [e.g., the phrase "appearance of a tree"] with presenting what is secondary [e.g., a tree] as primary and what is primary [i.e., appearances] as secondary. But that is only the case with these inessential valuations ("only" an appearance) which are independent of perceptual facts.[36] Apart from that, ordinary language makes no decision as to what is primary or secondary. We have no reason to accept [the objection] that the expression "the appearance of a tree" represents something which is secondary in relation to the expression "tree." The expression "only an image" goes back to the idea that we can't eat the image of an apple (PR, pp. 270–271).

Here Wittgenstein is saying that although ordinary language permits the expression "the appearance of a tree," this should not be taken to mean what it seems (to idealists) to mean, i.e., should not be taken to conflict with Russell's remark that there are no illusions of sense.

In The Blue Book Wittgenstein explains the matter as follows:

> Now if I say "I see my hand move," this at first sight seems to presuppose that I agree with the proposition "my hand moves." But if I regard the proposition "I see my hand move" as one of the evidences for the proposition "my hand moves," the truth of the latter is, of course, not presupposed in the truth of the former. One might therefore suggest [as an improvement] the expression "It looks as though my hand were moving" instead of "I see my hand moving." But this expression, although it indicates that my hand may appear to be moving without really moving, might still suggest that after all there must be a hand in order that it should appear to be moving; whereas we can easily imagine cases in which the proposition describing the visual evidence is true and at the same time other evidences make us say that I have no hand. Our ordinary way of expression obscures this. We are handicapped in ordinary language by having to describe, say, a tactile sensation by means of terms for physical objects such as the word "eye," "finger," etc., when what we want to say does not entail the existence of an eye or a finger, etc. We have to use a roundabout description of our sensations. This of course does not mean that ordinary language is insufficient for our special purposes, but that it is . . . sometimes misleading (BB, pp. 51–52).

What we find in these passages is Wittgenstein's attempt to reconcile ordinary language with the neutral monists' view of appearance and reality. As we will see in Chapter 15, he continued to struggle with this problem in *On Certainty*.

Conclusion

I remarked in the Introduction that Wittgenstein held a metaphysical view of the world that was fundamentally opposed to Moore's dualistic realism and the foregoing passages provide some indication of how they differed. In a reference to Moore in The Blue Book (p. 48) Wittgenstein says that "the common-sense philosopher . . . is not the common-sense man, who is as far from realism as from idealism," by which he meant that the plain man is not a (Moorean) realist, in that he does not talk about (or believe in the existence of) things that transcend experience, but is also not an idealist, in that he does not doubt (or deny) the existence of tables, chairs, and other people.[37] In other words, Wittgenstein thought of the common-sense man in just the way that a neutral monist *would* think of him. In this he was in agreement with Hume, who said in the *Treatise* (I, iv, ii) that "however [dualistic] philosophers may distinguish betwixt the objects and perceptions of the senses . . . ; yet this is a distinction which is not comprehended by the generality of mankind, who as they perceive only one being, can never assent to the

opinion of a double existence. . . . Those very sensations, which enter by the eye or ear, are with them the true objects; nor can they readily conceive that this pen or paper, which is immediately perceiv'd, represents another, which is different from, but resembling it." Wittgenstein, as we will see, continued to hold this view of what the plain man thinks and says (ordinary language).[38]

Notes

1. In order to understand Wittgenstein one should be familiar with the new realists' manifesto, *The New Realism*, Edwin B. Holt, *et al.* (New York: Macmillan, 1912) and Ralph Barton Perry's *Present Philosophical Tendencies*, op. cit. Wittgenstein was probably made aware of these books by Russell's references to them in his 1914 essay "On the Nature of Acquaintance," op. cit., pp. 140 and 145. Internal evidence suggests that Wittgenstein read portions of the aforementioned books, especially Chapter I of the manifesto and Chapter XII of Perry's book.
2. "Russell's Neutral Monism" in *The Philosophy of Bertrand Russell*, ed. Paul A. Schilpp, op. cit., p. 354.
3. Berkeley puts this in a way that would have appealed to Wittgenstein when he says that it is a mistake to think that all of mankind "believe the existence of Matter or things without the mind. Strictly speaking, to believe that which . . . has no meaning in it, is impossible" (*Principles*, I, §54). As noted in Chapter 1, Wittgenstein told Frank Ramsey that it is "nonsense to believe in anything not given in experience."
4. *Treatise*, I, iv, vi.
5. In *The Analysis of Mind*, Russell says: "The stuff of which the world of our experience is composed is, in my belief, neither mind nor matter, but something more primitive than either" (New York: Macmillan, 1921, p. 10) and goes on in the final chapter to sketch what he calls "that fundamental science which I believe to be the true metaphysic, in which mind and matter alike are seen to be constructed out of a neutral stuff" (p. 287). (Mach also represents his "analysis" as though it were a *scientific* undertaking.) Wittgenstein regarded this as highly misleading because it obscures the logical, or linguistic, character of philosophy (see WL35, pp. 128–129) and makes it appear that philosophers had carried out something like a chemical analysis and discovered one basic stuff. Russell, for example, says that by means "of analysis . . . you can get down in theory, if not in practice, to the ultimate simples of which the world is built" ("The Philosophy of Logical Atomism" in *Logic and Knowledge*, op. cit., p. 270). Wittgenstein thought that this makes it appear that philosophers had discovered something *new*, something hitherto unknown (WL32, p. 35). "Philosophers," he said, "constantly see the method of science before their eyes, and are irresistibly tempted to ask and answer questions in the way science does. This tendency is the real source of metaphysics, and leads the philosopher into complete darkness" (BB, p. 18). It does so because it obscures the fact that philosophical problems "are solved, not by giving new information, but by arranging what we have always known" (PI, §109).
6. In adopting the name "realism," Wittgenstein was following the current fashion, for the name "neutral monism" gained currency somewhat later. R. B. Perry, for example, described Mach's *The Analysis of Sensations* as

"among the classics of modern realism" (*Present Philosophical Tendencies*, op. cit., p. 310). Russell, in *Our Knowledge of the External World*, refers to this view as the "new realism" (op. cit., p. 14). After the publication of the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein did not again use the term "pure realism." It should be noted that his pure realism, which he never abondoned, is to be distinguished from Moore's dualistic "realism," which Wittgenstein invariably disparaged.

7. *The Analysis of Sensations*, op. cit., p. 17.
8. Ibid., p. 44.
9. "On the Nature of Acquaintance," op. cit., pp. 145–146.
10. Ibid., p. 163.
11. Op. cit., pp. 23–24.
12. Ibid., p. 24.
13. Ibid., pp. 28–29.
14. That Wittgenstein continued in his later years to hold the *Tractatus* view that the self is a logical fiction can be seen in many places: WL35, p. 21; BB, p. 63; NFL, pp. 282 and 297; LSD, pp. 32–33 and 137, and PI, §§404–411.
15. Op. cit., p. 310.
16. *The Grammar of Science* (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1957), p. 66. This book was first published in 1892 and was revised in subsequent editions. The third edition, quoted here, was published in 1911.
17. See RPP, II, §§650–651 for an explanation of this passage.
18. This remark of Mach's seems to have greatly influenced Wittgenstein, for he repeatedly used the same comparison, e.g., PR, p. 91, BB, p. 55, and LSD, pp. 4–6.
19. *The Analysis of Sensations*, op. cit., pp. 360–361.
20. Op. cit., p. 34.
21. *Present Philosophical Tendencies*, op. cit., p. 286.
22. Ibid, p. 289.
23. Ibid.
24. These notes are quoted in Merrill and Jaakko Hintikka's book *Investigating Wittgenstein*, op. cit., p. 77.
25. Op. cit., p. 14.
26. Descartes, in the Second Meditation, said he had formerly thought of his soul as "something subtle like air or fire or aether mingled among the grosser parts of my body" *Descartes: Philosophical Writings*, eds. and trans., Elizabeth Anscombe and Peter Geach (Edinburgh: Nelson, 1954), pp. 67–68.
27. Wittgentstein dramatizes the issue by saying that "the problem . . . could be expressed by the question: 'Is it possible for a machine to think?'. . . . The trouble is . . that the sentence 'A machine thinks (perceives, wishes)' seems somehow nonsensical" (BB, p. 47).
28. *The Analysis of Sensations*, op. cit., pp. 29–30.
29. Ibid., p. 35.
30. *The Grammar of Science*, op. cit., p. 68.
31. *The Analysis of Sensations*, op. cit., pp. 10–11.
32. Ibid., p. 10.
33. Op. cit., pp. 92–93.
34. In *Mysticism and Logic*, op. cit., esp. pp. 173–179.
35. On a later page Wittgenstein says: "In visual space there is no measurement" (PR, p. 266), having said that visual space is the *basis* of physical space (PR, p. 100).
36. I have slightly altered the translation of this sentence.

37. For a discussion of this see note 19 in Chapter 1, this volume.
38. This was not an uncommon view. See the discussion of naive realism by R. J. Hirst in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (New York: Macmillan, 1967), ed. Paul Edwards, Vol. 7, in which Hirst reports (and I think correctly) that naive realism "is usually alleged by philosophers to be [the view held by] the plain man" (p. 78). Hirst goes on to say that "the Oxford linguistic analysts," i.e., J. L. Austin and others, who are "strong critics of the sense-datum theory (unlike Moore), . . . reject the traditional naive realism as unfair to the plain man. . ." (ibid., p. 80). Despite Wittgenstein's well-known comtempt for Oxford philosophers (see Norman Malcolm, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Memoir*, op. cit., p. 98), it is commonly (but mistakenly) assumed that he agreed with their position on this matter. Malcolm, for instance, attempts to argue for this interpretation in "Wittgenstein's 'Scepticism' in *On Certainty*," *Inquiry* (Vol. 31), esp. p. 292. Malcolm, however, completely misunderstands the passages he quotes from Wittgenstein in defense of this interpretation. See Chapter 10.