

Freedom and fatalism in Wittgenstein's "Lectures on Freedom of the
Will"

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Abstract

This thesis seeks to demonstrate the continuing relevance of Wittgenstein's approach to the problem of freedom of the will, primarily as expounded in his "Lectures on Freedom of the Will" (LFW). My overall aim is to show how Wittgenstein works to reconfigure the debates about freedom of the will so that it can be confronted as the kind of problem he thinks it ultimately is: an ethical and existential problem. Not published until 1989, the LFW have received scant critical attention. I argue that Wittgenstein's approach is highly distinctive in a way that makes it significantly less vulnerable than its closest cousins to certain powerful lines of critical attack. Chapter One brings out the distinctiveness of the LFW, especially vis-à-vis a putatively Wittgensteinian form of compatibilism, exemplified by Kai Nielsen. Albeit in different ways, Wittgenstein and Nielsen are both concerned to show why being caused to act, e.g. by the laws of nature, does not equate to being compelled to act, e.g. against one's will. Unlike Nielsen, however, Wittgenstein further recognises that showing the compatibility of freedom and natural laws establishes no more than the logical consistency of holding people responsible, given determinism, and so cannot itself constitute a defence of our practices. Chapter Two introduces, as a still closer comparison with Wittgenstein, P. F. Strawson's practice-based defence of interpersonal, 'reactive' attitudes (e.g. feelings of resentment, gratitude, etc.). I argue that the same correlation between a belief in freedom of the will and the primitive expression of 'reactive' attitudes/feelings is central also to the LFW. However, I further argue that certain major lines of criticism of Strawson's practice-based defence of our current practices, familiar in the critical literature, do not in the same way threaten Wittgenstein's defence of a broader practice-based approach, one that encompasses both reactive and non-reactive attitudes. Chapters Three and Four deal with the difficulties arising from the recognition that our most entrenched and 'natural' attitudes are non-reactive rather than reactive, including attitudes that are properly called 'fatalistic'. Chapter Three develops a response to Galen Strawson's criticism that if reactive and non-reactive attitudes are both equally expressive of human nature, then any merely descriptive approach to these attitudes will be incapable of resolving the fundamental question of which of these sorts of attitude we ought to adopt. Finally, Chapter Four examines Wittgenstein's sustained interest in forms of life, especially religious forms of life, which appear to give equal weight to both reactive and non-reactive attitudes.

Abbreviations

AWL	<i>Wittgenstein's Lectures, Cambridge: From the Notes of Alice Ambrose and Margaret Macdonald, 1932-1935</i> , A. Ambrose (ed.), New York: Prometheus Books: 2001.
BB	<i>The Blue & Brown Books: Preliminary Studies for the Philosophical Investigations</i> , Oxford: Blackwell Publishers: 2008.
CV	<i>Culture and Value</i> , P. Winch (trans.), Chicago: Chicago University Press: 1984.
CV (1998)	<i>Culture and Value (Revised second edition with English translation)</i> , G. H. von Wright (ed.), P. Winch (trans.), Oxford: Blackwell Publishers: 1998.
CE	"Cause and Effect: Intuitive Awareness" in <i>Ludwig Wittgenstein: Philosophical Occasions, 1912-51</i> , J. Klagge & A. Nordmann (eds.) Hackett Publishing: 1993.
EPB	"Eine Philosophische Betrachtung" in <i>Schriften</i> Bd. 5. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, R. Rhees (ed.), P. von Morstein (trans.), pp. 117–282: 1970.
LC	<i>Lectures and Conversations: On Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief</i> , C. Barrett (ed.), Berkeley: University of California Press: 1967.
LE	"A Lecture on Ethics" in <i>The Philosophical Review</i> , 74:1, pp. 3-12: 1965.
The LFW	"Lectures on Freedom of the Will - notes by Yorick Smithies", in <i>Ludwig Wittgenstein: Philosophical Occasions, 1912-51</i> , J. Klagge & A. Nordmann (eds.) Hackett Publishing: 1993.
MS	<i>Wittgenstein's unpublished manuscripts</i> , G. H. von Wright (ed.), Oxford: Blackwell Publishers: 1982.
OC	<i>On Certainty</i> , G. E. M. Anscombe & G. H. von Wright (eds.), New York: Harper & Row: 1972.
PI	<i>Philosophical Investigations</i> , G. E. M. Anscombe (trans.), Oxford: Blackwell Publishers: 2001.
PG	<i>Philosophical Grammar</i> , A. Kenny (trans.), University of California Press: 1974.
PR	<i>Philosophical Remarks</i> , R. Rhees (ed.), Oxford: Blackwell Publishers: 1998.
RFGB	"Remarks on Frazer's <i>Golden Bough</i> " in <i>Ludwig Wittgenstein: Philosophical Occasions, 1912-51</i> , J. Klagge & A. Nordmann (eds.) Hackett Publishing: 1993.
TLP	<i>Tractatus Logico Philosophicus</i> , C. K. Ogden (trans.), London: Routledge: 1999.
Z	<i>Zettel</i> , G. E. M. Anscombe & G. H. von Wright (ed.) University of California Press: 2007.

Chapter I

Compatibilism and Wittgenstein's "Lectures on Freedom of the Will"

'I feel discomfort and know the cause' makes it sound as if there were two things going on in my soul—discomfort and knowing the cause. In these cases 'cause' is hardly ever used at all. You use 'why?' and 'because', but not 'cause'.

—Ludwig Wittgenstein, "Lectures on Aesthetics" (notes taken by Rush Rhees).

Published in 1989 as a single lecture, and later republished as two, separate lectures in 1993, the extant record of Wittgenstein's "Lectures on Freedom of the Will" (LFW) are an annotated set of typewritten notes by Yorick Smythies—a student and lifelong friend of Wittgenstein's—who was granted special dispensation to take notes during Wittgenstein's classes.¹ With regards the date of the lectures themselves, there is some debate; although I see no reason to dispute the various arguments put forward by Klagge and Nordmann that the most likely inauguration date is late 1939.² Since their publication, scant critical attention has been paid to the LFW despite their being the only substantial source of information on Wittgenstein's views concerning freedom of the will.³ Where the LFW have been referred to, it is in order to shore up pre-conceived notions of how Wittgenstein might putatively respond to the alleged incompatibility of human freedom and natural laws. As a result, commentators have tended to overlook more distinctive elements of the LFW.⁴ Where *some* attention is paid to the more distinctive elements of the LFW, moreover, this has not then been interpolated back into the wider debate concerning freedom of the will.⁵ How, then,

¹ Wittgenstein, L. first published in 1989 "A Lecture on Freedom of the Will" in *Philosophical Investigations* 12(2) pp. 85–100. Later reprinted in 1993 as two separate "Lectures on Freedom of the Will", in *Ludwig Wittgenstein: Philosophical Occasions, 1912–51*, J. Klagge & A. Nordmann (eds.), Hackett Publishing, pp. 427–444. Notes by Y. Smythies. All page further references are from the reprinted edition.

² Klagge & Nordmann, pp. 427–8. Normal Malcolm's coversheet to the lectures (compiled in 1967) first gave the date of their inaugurations as "probably 1939" but this was later amended to 1945–6; this later date was then itself changed to 1946–7 when the lectures were published in 1989. In no particular order, the key arguments Klagge & Nordmann put forward for the earlier date are as follows; i) all those known to have been present at the lectures were in Cambridge in 1939, and several notable figures who were present in 1947 have no memory of the lectures; ii) as we shall see, some of the arguments in the LFW are summarised in LFM, known to have been given in 1939; iii) 1939 would have obvious significance to an Austrian Jew living in England, which is thought to be reflected, both in Wittgenstein's letters from this time and in the LFW (e.g. his references to not being a hero).

³ Beyond the brief summary of the LFW in LFM, Wittgenstein makes only one other reference to 'free will' in a remark dated to 1947 (CV, p. 63); this perhaps explains the revised date of the LFW.

⁴ E.g. Nielsen 1971, Shanker 1993, Dilman 1999.

⁵ E.g. Soulez 2000, Brenner 2001a.

are we to understand the bearing the LFW have on on-going debates about determinism, compatibilism and freedom of the will?

One natural way to interpret the LFW is as advancing a certain sort of compatibilist account of freedom of the will. Very roughly, ‘compatibilism’ is, in this context, the view that, even on the supposition that our decisions and actions are determined by the laws of nature, these can nevertheless be justifiably regarded as free and responsible. My aim in this chapter is to show that while, to this extent in common cause with the compatibilist, Wittgenstein denies that being caused to act entails being compelled to act, we will miss the distinctiveness of his approach to these issues, and their significance for on-going philosophical discussion, so long as we fail to recognise the sense in which the LFW resist characterisation as advancing a compatibilist approach to freedom of the will.

Wittgenstein opens the LFW by asking, ‘Could one say that the decision of a person was not free because it was determined by natural laws?’⁶ A straightforwardly compatibilist answer to this question would be that, solely on the basis of a person’s decision being determined by natural laws, we could *not* deny that the person’s decision was free. We should note that this answer generally arises in response to the incompatibilist argument that not only *could* we say that a person’s decision was not free, but that we *should* say so. In light of these differing responses, this opening question serves as an initial point of contact between compatibilists and incompatibilists; that is, both of these positions agree that this question is central to the philosophical problem of the will. The question itself is a variation of what we

⁶ LFW, p. 429.

might call the Compatibility Question, i.e. whether or not freedom and determination by natural laws are logically or conceptually compatible.

As we shall see in the first part of this chapter, Wittgenstein no doubt *seems* to favour the compatibilist's answer to the Compatibility Question, i.e. the view that we may *not* say that a decision was lacking freedom simply because it was causally determined. However, against this must be weighed Wittgenstein's stated intention *neither* to attack nor defend belief in the freedom of the will; an impartial stance that is no doubt reflected in his simultaneous criticism of compatibilism as a defence of such a belief.⁷ In the second half of this chapter, I will demonstrate how Wittgenstein's opposition to incompatibilism (and any perceived defence of the conceptual compatibility of freedom of the will and determination by natural laws) can be conceived as distinct from a *defence* of belief in freedom of the will. In order to pursue this question, the second part of this chapter will be taken up with a contrast between the LFW and Kai Nielsen's article, "The Compatibility of Freedom and Determinism". As a philosopher who articulates a putatively Wittgensteinian compatibilism, and whose article predates the publication of the LFW, Nielsen's paper is representative of a view that occludes the distinctiveness of the approach that stands to be illuminated by a retrospective analysis of Wittgenstein's 1939 lectures.

In subsequent chapters, I will show that Wittgenstein's intention *neither* to attack nor defend belief in the freedom of the will is a part of a wider methodology that seeks to promote an experience of the existential problem of moral agency; an experience that, he argues, is hampered by certain ways of framing the theoretical problem, e.g. in terms of compatibilism and incompatibilism. These ways of framing

⁷ LFW, p. 436; 'All these arguments might look as if I wanted to argue for the freedom of the will or against it. But I don't want to.'

the problem in theoretical terms influence, but more decisively are influenced by, certain imagistic uses of language that can come to have a grip on human beings. It is by loosening the grip of these images that we can come to experience, as a genuine ethical struggle, the question of whether and how we are responsible. It is this last which prevents Wittgenstein from either attacking or defending freedom of the will, and yet why it is that he is able to offer a strong critical perspective on both viewpoints.

First of all, however, I shall introduce the LFW with reference to a compressed but important passage from the *Lectures on the Foundations of Mathematics* (LFM).

The Lectures on the Foundation of Mathematics

In 1939, the year that arguably Wittgenstein gave his two lectures on freedom of the will, he also gave a series of lectures on the nature of mathematics. In the course of the latter, Wittgenstein digresses from his main topic of mathematical necessity to discuss briefly the freedom of the will. Before we go on to examine the LFW, there are good reasons for beginning our analysis with this passage from the LFM. I shall argue that it serves to summarise ideas that are central to the LFW and is therefore useful, not only in dating the lectures, but in interpreting them as well.

In the context of the LFM, Wittgenstein's investigation is focused on a certain use of the term 'necessarily'.⁸ He envisages a mathematician who wants to say that five times five *necessarily* equals twenty-five, but without giving us any clear sense of what sort of necessity he has in mind. Wittgenstein is evidently worried here about the danger that such a mathematician's use of the term 'necessity' might amount to

⁸ LFM, p. 242.

nothing more than a pleonasm. Specifically, the worry is that saying five times five *necessarily* equals twenty-five might fail to say anything other or more than that twenty-five is the result of multiplying five by five. For our purposes here, however, the important point is the connection that Wittgenstein sees between this danger of pleonastic uses of the word ‘necessarily’ in mathematical contexts and a parallel danger, in philosophical contexts, surrounding the word ‘compulsion’:

We have an idea of compulsion. If a policeman grabs me and shoves me through the door, we say I am compelled. But if I walk up and down here, we say I move freely. But it is objected: “If you knew all the laws of nature, and could observe all the particles etc., you would no longer say you were moving freely; you would see that a man just cannot do anything else.” –But in the first place, this is not how we use the expression “he can’t do anything else”.⁹

Why, then, does Wittgenstein compare the mathematician’s use of the word ‘necessarily’ with this use of the word ‘compulsion’?¹⁰ He appears to think that philosophers who hold that the laws of nature are incompatible with human freedom have a tendency to think that we might be ‘compelled’ in some undisclosed, and potentially pleonastic, sense; and that this may lead them to overlook our familiar use of the word ‘compulsion.’ In the case of the person bullied by the policeman, Wittgenstein observes that we have a very clear idea of what contributes to his being compelled, i.e. he is pushed. This use of the term ‘compulsion’ is capable of being

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid; the two ideas are related, as we shall see when it comes to the LFW, since, for Wittgenstein, thinking either in terms of compulsion against one’s will or in terms of natural laws is not *necessitated* by any argument. One doesn’t say “I *must* look at it this way”; it is more *correct* to say “I look at it *this* way.” On this basis, both defenders of freedom of the will and their critics can fail to account for the depth and scope of each other’s positions.

contrasted with the person walking freely into the room, without being pushed. To use the word ‘compulsion’ to refer to an action that is determined by natural laws is different, if for no other reason than that, in this case, we are ‘compelled’ *whether or not we are pushed*.

It remains to be shown that any such use of the word ‘compulsion’ is pleonastic. However, we need to consider the way in which our existing use of the term ‘compulsion’ is very clearly linked to our being considered free and responsible. We might say that the existing use of the term denotes compulsion *against one’s will* whereas any sense in which we might be compelled by the laws of nature is not straightforwardly connected with an interruption of one’s will. That is, even if the incompatibilist can supply an answer to the question “compelled as opposed to what?”, it is not clear that he will be able to appeal to a contrast with freedom *of the will*. This, I take it, is Wittgenstein’s point when he says ‘this is not how we use the expression “he can’t do anything else”’.¹¹ He is denying, in other words, that natural laws threaten our freedom of the will *in the same way* that our being pushed does, i.e. such that we might say “he can’t do anything else” in both connections.¹²

Wittgenstein’s apparently straightforward opposition to compulsion by the laws of nature is immediately complicated, however, by a crucial qualification:

Although it is *conceivable* that if we had a mechanism which would show all this [i.e. the laws of nature and all the particles etc.], we would change our terminology—and say, “He’s as much compelled as if a policeman

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Cf. Dennett 1984, pp. 555-556; Dennett points out that Martin Luther said “Here I stand, I can do no other” in such a way as to take full responsibility for his actions. See also Dennett 2003, p. 117.

shoved him.” We’d give up this distinction then; and if we did, I would be very sorry.¹³

Wittgenstein here suggests that the time *may* come when we are made fully aware of the causal history of our actions, prior to our having acted, and that this *may* lead us to abandon our familiar contrast between being free and being compelled. It is important to remember, both here and in the LFW, that Wittgenstein is far from saying that he thinks this eventuality is likely; in fact, he states in the LFW that he thinks it is very unlikely.¹⁴ Even so, in the above passage, he commits himself to the claim that such eventualities are ‘conceivable’ and therefore that the discovery of natural laws that describe human behaviour might result in our no longer distinguishing between the two cases, i.e. between the laws of nature and the policeman-bully. In this regard, Wittgenstein’s stance is puzzling and perhaps surprising. On the one hand, he appears to reject the central, incompatibilist claim that “If you knew all the laws of nature, and could observe all the particles etc., you would no longer say you were moving freely...” On the other hand, he appears to affirm the possibility that belief in determinism is capable of leading us to abandon our very distinction between being free and being compelled.

In the following examination of the LFW, I will attempt to square Wittgenstein’s opposition to the idea that we might be compelled by the laws of nature with his claim that it is ‘conceivable’ that we should ‘give up’ the distinction between freedom and compulsion against one’s will. To do so I believe we must pay careful attention to the fact that Wittgenstein wishes neither to defend nor deny

¹³ LFM, p. 242.

¹⁴ LFW, p. 432.

freedom of the will.¹⁵ Wittgenstein's express impartiality goes hand-in-hand with his claim that the potential loss of the distinction between freedom and compulsion against one's will need not, by itself, constitute a denial of freedom of the will. To begin with, the loss of the distinction would mean that any talk of compulsion might equally be 'given up', along with any talk of freedom of the will. Moreover, in recognising its conceivability, he does not grant that the loss of this distinction is a certainty or even justified in the face of the 'threat' posed by determination by natural laws. The crucial point Wittgenstein is making is that, whilst the contrast we currently employ between acting freely and compulsion against one's will is entirely compatible with the discovery of nature laws, this does not rule out our giving up the contrast altogether, and that our doing so might have something to do with our discovery of the laws of nature. I believe that giving equal weight to the compatibilist's and incompatibilist's positions lies at the heart of the distinctiveness of Wittgenstein's approach. But I also hope to show that any appearance of inconsistency in this regard is mere appearance.

One final point to note concerning the passage from LFM is that, on this occasion alone, Wittgenstein expresses his sorrow at the thought of our giving up the distinction between freedom and compulsion against one's will. Not only is this a rare instance of Wittgenstein expressing his first-personal feelings concerning a philosophical problem, but also the remark raises further doubts concerning his avowed neutrality in the debate between opposing viewpoints. Given that he is making his feelings known without prejudice to his argument, we might say that the remarks are reminiscent of his closing words in "A Lecture on Ethics" wherein

¹⁵ LFW, p. 436.

Wittgenstein maintains that the ‘science’ of ethics tells us nothing about the world, but instead reflects a ‘tendency in the human mind’ that ‘[he] would not for [his] life ridicule’.¹⁶ We should therefore not be too quick to conclude that Wittgenstein is simply being charitable to the incompatibilist by taking seriously any threat natural laws might pose to our belief in freedom of the will. Rather, what we must grasp is the separation between i) Wittgenstein’s very clear rejection of the claim that we cannot be free if our decisions/actions are determined by natural laws and ii) his respect for a ‘tendency in the human mind’ to think that we cannot be free if we are determined. By expressing his sorrow, Wittgenstein is deliberately separating these two aspects of his approach, even if he does so in a way that appears ultimately to betray his own commitment to the existing distinction between freedom and compulsion.

The “Lectures on Freedom of the Will”

I shall now begin my two-part analysis of the LFW. In the first part I will set out Wittgenstein’s opposition to incompatibilism and consider the evidence in favour of a compatibilist interpretation of the LFW. As I have already indicated, I believe that the lectures take up two discrete, yet related, endeavours. The first comprises Wittgenstein’s opposition to incompatibilism, e.g. his arguments against the thesis that, if our decisions/actions are determined by natural laws, then our decisions/actions cannot be free. The second seeks to demonstrate the limits of this first, negative argument for a defence of the belief in freedom of the will. I have accordingly separated my analysis into two distinct parts, which in turn are made up

¹⁶ LE, p. 12.

of six crucial arguments from the LFW. I shall deal with each argument in turn, following the ordering of the lectures:

- i) The idea of compulsion by the laws of nature is not built into the idea of the laws of nature.
 - ii) The idea of compulsion by the laws of nature cannot be made intelligible in terms of the idea of one's being compelled to act *abnormally*.
 - iii) The idea of compulsion by the laws of nature cannot be made intelligible in terms of the idea of one's being compelled to act *normally*.
 - iv) Belief and disbelief in freedom of the will as rival 'ways of acting'
 - v) The ways in which belief in freedom of the will can be undermined.
- and
- vi) The contrast and relationship between prediction and active deliberation.

Arguments under i) to iii) represent Wittgenstein's critique of incompatibilism and therefore supply the strongest evidence in favour of the impression that Wittgenstein is some sort of compatibilist. Arguments under iv) to vi), on the other hand, significantly undermine this impression of Wittgenstein's views and mark the limitations of any compatibilist interpretation of the LFW. An analysis of i) to iii) requires a straightforward examination of Wittgenstein's arguments against incompatibilism. With respect to iv) to vi), however, it will be strategically useful to develop our analysis of the LFW alongside Kai Nielsen's 1971 defence of compatibilism in *Reason & Practice*, one which is evidently inspired by Nielsen's reading of Wittgenstein in general.

Part One: Wittgenstein's Opposition to Incompatibilism

(i) The idea of compulsion by the laws of nature is not built into the idea of the laws of nature.

The principal claim that Wittgenstein makes in the passage we have already introduced from LFM is that the incompatibilist is in danger of using the word “compulsion” in a pleonastic way. That said, nothing Wittgenstein says in LFM constitutes a formal argument against incompatibilism. At most, he recognises that we cannot take for granted that the incompatibilist use of the word “compulsion” is comparable to its everyday use, viz. compulsion against one's will. This is different in the LFW, where Wittgenstein expands on his critique of the incompatibilist's use of the term “compulsion” in cases where a person's actions are taken to be determined by the laws of nature. To begin with, Wittgenstein's criticism is focused on a certain understanding of natural laws:

What on earth would it mean that the natural law compels a thing to go as it goes. [sic.] The natural law is correct, and that's all. Why should people think of natural laws at all as compelling events? If what I say is correct people would seem to have made a blunder.¹⁷

By ‘people’, Wittgenstein means those whom we might now call incompatibilists, i.e. anyone who thinks that the decision of a person is *not* free if it is determined by natural laws.¹⁸ In responding, Wittgenstein criticises, not only the idea that natural

¹⁷ LFW, p. 430.

¹⁸ Ibid. Immediately prior to the quoted passage above Wittgenstein states that thinking that our ‘decisions follow natural laws’ gives us ‘no reason’ for thinking that they are ‘therefore in some way compelled’.

laws compel our actions, but also the broader claim that natural laws *in any way* cause events to unfold. By saying that an observed regularity merely demonstrates that a natural law is ‘correct, that’s all’, Wittgenstein means that the least contentious way of thinking about natural laws is as a means of observing regularities.¹⁹ He thus stands opposed to any understanding of natural laws as causing, and therefore preceding, events since ‘If I say the law of gravitation holds, this means nothing less than that the body moves according to the law of gravitation.’²⁰

Given this general view of natural laws—which it is beyond the remit of this thesis to assess as such—Wittgenstein is interested primarily in *why* the incompatibilist should come to think that natural laws compel events to unfold. Wittgenstein remarks that ‘There is a convention that the laws of nature must be found simple’ and adds that it is a ‘very queer idea indeed’.²¹ According to Wittgenstein, the ‘convention’ that laws are simple and found *in* nature corresponds with the same mistaken thinking that leads the incompatibilist to think that the laws of nature cause events to unfold as they do. In this case, the more specific thought is that simple laws are there to be found. Wittgenstein typifies this as an idea that the laws of nature ‘were laid down by a Deity’ or ‘written in a book’²²; the postulation of

¹⁹ By this, I do not wish to align Wittgenstein with a view of natural laws that places them within a deductive system of “suitability and strength”; the main virtue (for some the main weakness) of which is that natural laws are not mysterious entities but conventional. E.g. Lewis, 1994, p. 478. Those who criticise the deductive systems approach do so because it is “mind-dependent” and does not *necessarily* reflect the world as it is. E.g. Armstrong 1983, 66–73; van Fraassen 1989, 40–64; Carroll 1990, 197–206.

²⁰ LFW, pp. 429–30. See, Shanker 1993, pp. 218–220; ‘The most striking feature of Wittgenstein’s ‘A Lecture on the Freedom of the Will’ is not how different but rather, how similar it is to ... Russell’s account of natural laws.’

²¹ LFW, pp. 430–1. Cf. TLP 6.371; CV, p. 61.

²² LFW, p. 430.

a natural law is a ‘guess’ at what is contained within the book’s pages.²³ Wittgenstein is quick to acknowledge that this picture of natural laws, as laid down by a Deity or written in a book, is a way of looking that we may find natural.²⁴ Nonetheless, he evidently thinks it is a serious ‘blunder’ to suppose that this picture is somehow built into the very idea of a natural law.

Wittgenstein develops a similar line of criticism against the thought that natural laws offer a *complete* account of natural events, by which I mean the thought that everything that happens (including human actions) are determined by natural laws. This thought is not essential to incompatibilism and so any criticism Wittgenstein makes of this thought should be directed at what we now call hard determinists. (Of course Wittgenstein himself does not use the terms ‘incompatibilism’ or ‘hard determinism’.) Hard determinists argue that freedom of the will is indeed incompatible with determination by natural laws, and that our actions/decisions *are* so determined. Hard determinists can therefore be distinguished from those we now call libertarians precisely because the latter do not deny freedom of the will but argue instead that human actions alone are exempt from determination by the laws of nature. To the hard determinist, Wittgenstein effectively asks why we should even think that all events in the world are lawful. The kind of thinking Wittgenstein has in mind is when someone, a scientist for instance, notices a discrepancy in his results and says “well, there must be *some* law that explains it”.

Wittgenstein objects to this kind of thinking and asks what it would mean to deny that a certain state of affairs was governed by natural laws. He imagines a

²³ LFW, p. 431.

²⁴ This will be discussed at length in the second part of Chapter Three of this thesis.

scenario in which a scientist discovers a slight variation in his expected results. In such a case, he says, it is not unreasonable to suppose that, whilst we do not know *exactly* what law holds, we know roughly where we have gone wrong and what we need to modify to get more accurate predictions.²⁵ In this case, Wittgenstein admits, saying “there must be *some* law”, means ‘it is some law pretty near to that’ and that this is ‘making a statement.’²⁶ But Wittgenstein says that in a case where we find a gross discrepancy in our results all we can say is ‘it is not *this* law’ and leave it at that. Wittgenstein says we must therefore resist the tendency to say, “there must be *some* law”; or, at least, that to say that there must be would not be to genuinely ‘make a statement.’ For Wittgenstein argues that in this case there is no difference between saying ‘there must be *some* law’ and saying ‘there is no law’ or ‘it is lawless’. What he means is that, without some way of differentiating between ‘this law’ and ‘no law’, asserting that there is ‘some law’ is tantamount to saying ‘it goes as it goes,’ - which, like all tautologies, is an empty claim.²⁷ Ultimately, if the assumption of lawfulness is to be distinguished from lawlessness, then the assumed law must be capable of being meaningfully distinguished from ‘any law whatsoever’ and from ‘no law at all’. As Wittgenstein states, saying “it is some other law” amounts to saying there is no law at all.²⁸

To this, it might be objected that it is not unreasonable to think that the world follows general patterns, and that these general patterns might be focused to

²⁵ LFW, p. 430.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Cf. LFW, p. 439; in the same way, an appeal to God’s will as the explanation of events ‘means nothing at all’ since it is impossible to say when an event is *not* God’s will.

²⁸ LFW, p. 430.

something approximating ‘laws of nature’. From the point of view of this line of objection, it is implausible to insist that we must abandon any sense in which natural laws are *in* nature and order events in the world. To this, it must first be said that Wittgenstein does not deny that, in many scientific contexts, saying ‘it is some other law’ may indeed make a genuine statement about the world. What he wants to expose, however, is the utterly general character of such ‘statements’ in the form in which they might serve to shore up incompatibilist intuitions. Wittgenstein’s aim in this regard is to expose an implicit (and typically non-explicit) tendency to think *in a certain way*, viz. in the light of the picture of the laws of nature as laid down by a Deity or written in a book.

Partly in order to explain this tendency, Wittgenstein puts some of what the incompatibilist [sic. physiologist, scientist, etc.] says down to ambiguities in the ‘surface grammar’ of the language being used. In particular, the use of the word ‘law’ which, as Wittgenstein points out, already ‘suggests more than an observed regularity which we take it will go on.’²⁹ What Wittgenstein means is that there is most certainly a sense in which *legal* laws bring about, or proscribe, our actions; you might say that is the purpose of a legal law, i.e. to bring about conformity with the law. Where the incompatibilist goes wrong is in co-opting these proscriptive elements into our understanding of *natural* laws. Arguably, the same problem is encountered with words such as ‘cause’, ‘force,’ and ‘power’ that can be used descriptively as well as anthropomorphically as metaphors; for example, the ‘force’ of an idea is metaphorically related to a magnetic force of attraction. The suggestion that we are dealing here with metaphors seems to capture what it is that Wittgenstein thinks

²⁹ LFW, p. 430.

‘bewitches’ the incompatibilist into thinking that natural laws are inherently compulsive.³⁰ I shall more on this in due course, but it suffices here to say that the fact that we are dealing with metaphors and not arguments goes some way towards explaining Wittgenstein’s avowed neutrality in the face of his otherwise bold statements against incompatibilism.

Another way to put this is to say that the incompatibilist’s claims, e.g. that we lack freedom of the will, can be explained with reference to reasons other than that there is an observed regularity:

There is no reason why, even if there was regularity in human decisions, I should not be free. There is nothing about regularity which makes anything free or not free. The notion of compulsion is there if you think of the regularity as compelled; as produced by rails. If, besides the notion of regularity, you bring in the notion of: ‘it must move like this because the rails are laid like this.’³¹

Now it might be further objected at this point that Wittgenstein’s criticism misrepresents the incompatibilist’s view by tying it so closely to a certain picture of the laws of nature. In the following two points, I will examine two alternative ways of presenting the incompatibilist’s views that focus instead on the mistaken use of the term ‘compulsion’.

³⁰ Cf. PI, §109.

³¹ LFW, p. 431.

(ii) The idea of compulsion by the laws of nature cannot be made intelligible in terms of the idea of one's being compelled to act abnormally.

Even if we accept the premise that natural laws determine our actions and that this constitutes a form of compulsion, it remains to be shown, by the incompatibilist, that this constitutes or contributes to a denial of freedom of the will. This debt of explanation is what leads me to make explicit the question, left implicit by Wittgenstein, viz. “compelled as opposed to what?” That is, in indicating his agreement with the compatibilists—that being ‘compelled’ by the laws of nature does not, by itself, threaten our freedom of the will merely our freedom not to be determined by the laws of nature—Wittgenstein emphasises the question of whether or not freedom of the will entails the freedom not to be determined by the laws of nature.

This is where Wittgenstein's analogy with being pushed enters the scene. We naturally accept that being pushed against one's will, for example, constitutes a paradigmatic negation of one's freedom. We might suppose, therefore, that the incompatibilist might seek to interpret the idea of one's being determined by natural laws through the analogy of one's being ‘pushed’ by another agent. If so, the incompatibilist is obviously vulnerable to the criticism advanced in LFM; namely, that even if one's decisions are determined by natural laws, there remains a meaningful distinction to be made between compulsion against one's will and being caused to act. We can say, therefore, that a person's decision was free even if it was determined because, and for no other reason, he willed it so. Nothing the incompatibilist says rules out our taking *this* freedom (from being compelled against one's will) as the basis for a belief in freedom of the will.

As we shall see, this is the classical compatibilist definition of freedom of the will that others, including Kai Nielsen, often appeal to in defence of compatibilism.³² At the same time, however, incompatibilists are alive to the idea that an individual can lack freedom of the will without having it taken away; i.e. without being pushed. For this reason, mental or physical incapacity can be taken to be a more fitting comparison to determination by natural laws. Not only does incapacity of this kind not require any outside form of agency, but so too might we be unaware of its influence prior to its ‘discovery’. For example, conditions such as kleptomania seem to involve a discrete means of causation that is unlike being pushed into a room—one can hardly be unaware of being pushed against one’s will, whereas kleptomania requires diagnosis. These need not be the only reasons to favour comparing determinism with incapacity, but it can be said that the incompatibilist has reason to prefer the alternative comparison.

Under a detailed examination of the LFW, it will become clear that Wittgenstein too is alive to this alternative comparison. For instance, his worry about a pleonastic use of the term ‘compulsion’ extends, not just to the suggestion that we might all be being pushed around by the laws of nature, but also to the suggestion that we might all be compelled in the way that the kleptomaniac is compelled, i.e. as the result of an abnormal condition. The worry about the latter comparison is bound up with Wittgenstein’s insistence in LFM that the term ‘compulsion,’ like the term ‘necessarily,’ requires a conceptual foil, i.e. a meaningful contrast. Again, we must be

³² In its simplest form, the classical compatibilist definition of freedom of the will consists in a positive freedom *to* will and a negative freedom not to be hindered; e.g. for Hobbes, freedom of the will consists in not being hindered in doing what one has a will to do (*Leviathan*, p. 117).

able to ask, “compelled as opposed to what?” Likewise, in the LFW, Wittgenstein insists:

In general, one doesn't wish to say: he ought not to be punished because he couldn't have chosen otherwise. *Unless* you distinguish cases in which you could say ‘He could have chosen otherwise’ and cases in which you say ‘he couldn’t have chosen otherwise’.³³

The relevance of the ‘in general’ only becomes clear in light of the objection that not everyone can be compelled as the kleptomaniac is compelled. Wittgenstein in no way rules out our saying, in the kleptomaniac’s case, “he ought not to be punished because he couldn't have chosen otherwise” and therefore that mental incapacitation can be a reason for denying an individual’s freedom of the will. What Wittgenstein rules out, in the above cited passage, is associating the phrase “he ought not to be punished because he couldn’t have chosen otherwise” with determinism *in the same way* that we associate it with a condition like kleptomania; thereby using abnormality as a grounds for denying *everyone’s* freedom.

It is true that Wittgenstein does not explicitly identify a condition like kleptomania with mitigating a person’s responsibility. Although, the list of mitigating factors that he offers seems likely encompass conditions like kleptomania. The list of mitigating factors he provides includes being drunk, having a headache, or being engaged in a particularly tedious conversation with someone.³⁴ I do not mean to suggest that Wittgenstein considers these states to be in any way similar to kleptomania. But his list is far from exhaustive and he does not circumscribe what

³³ LFW, p. 437; these two sentences are two discrete paragraphs in Smythies’ notes, but the ‘unless’ makes the continuation of the idea plain. Emphasis added.

³⁴ Ibid.

might or might not be added to it, *provided* ‘you can distinguish cases in which you may say “the man is free” and “the man is not free”.’ Neither does anything on the list constitute an excuse for any and all malfeasance. Wittgenstein admits that we might disagree about what should or should not go on the list, and it is partly for this reason that it is important to be able to distinguish cases in which we say “the man is free” and “the man is not free.” Therefore, Wittgenstein grants that one person might say ‘[if] you choose the one or the other... you are responsible’ whilst another might say ‘If you are drugged, that is too much’.³⁵

It might still be objected that, if the requirement for being able to distinguish cases is the ability to disagree about individual cases, then a condition like kleptomania must be excluded from the list of mitigating factors. For instance, it might be argued that, in the kleptomaniac’s case, there is no room for disagreement about whether or not to hold the individual responsible; or rather there is no way in which two people who agreed about the diagnosis and the nature of the condition could then disagree about whether or not to hold the kleptomaniac responsible for acting compulsively. In other words, it is not a matter of being partial or impartial to the responsibility a person (in this case the kleptomaniac) has for his actions; perhaps *anyone* would say, without equivocation, that the kleptomaniac moves as ‘inevitably as a stone falling.’³⁶

This objection is mistaken for the simple reason that, even in the case of kleptomania, it *is* possible to ‘distinguish cases in which you may say, “the man is free” and “the man is not free.”’ To begin with, it is only in certain circumstances that

³⁵ LFW, p. 437.

³⁶ LFW, p. 431.

the kleptomaniac can be said to be acting compulsively. And even if this were not the case, and a person's actions could be said to always follow a compulsive path, it would still be possible to distinguish these compulsive individuals from individuals who are held responsible. What could certainly *not* be included in this list of mitigating factors is some perfectly general sense in which a human being might be said to be compelled, e.g. by his own nature or by the laws of nature. This is because, if we are so compelled, then we are all compelled in the same way and without exception and without any room for disagreement or discrimination between cases.

One possible objection to this line of argument might be that the incompatibilist *does*, in fact, leave open the possibility of our not being compelled, viz. if some libertarian theory of contra-causal freedom turns out to be true. Libertarian incompatibilists maintain that human beings are free to the extent that they can contravene the laws of nature and act spontaneously. I shall not attempt here a critical discussion of various libertarian proposals.³⁷ Yet it can at least be noted that, even if a contrast between actions that are uncaused (i.e. spontaneous) and actions that are compelled (by the laws of nature) could be upheld, this would not lead to situations in which we could say *either* "the man is free" *or* "the man is not free". This is because the hard determinist's position is premised on the claim that, in the event that we are determined by the laws of nature, "the man is not free". The libertarian incompatibilist would only reinforce the exclusivity of the disjunction by interposing that we *could* say "the man is free" provided only that the thesis of determinism is false. Wittgenstein premises the distinction between the two

³⁷ E.g. van Inwagen 1983 in Watson 2005, pp. 38-57; Searle, 2001, pp. 283-288; Kane 1999 in Watson 2005, pp. 305-309.

statements on an inclusive disjunction, i.e. under no circumstances can we preclude the possibility of either statement being true.

This shows itself in the kinds of mitigating circumstances Wittgenstein describes—e.g. having a headache, being tired/drunk/drugged, etc.—a list that, I have said, might also include conditions like kleptomania. It is clear, however, that being able to distinguish between circumstances in which we say, “the man is free” or “the man is not free” does not, by itself, legitimate the inclusion of determination by natural laws to this list of mitigating factors. Wittgenstein’s is the more subtle claim that, distinguishing between cases in which we say “the man is free” or “the man is not free” is not ‘black and white’ but a question of ‘degree’.³⁸ Wittgenstein makes this point earlier in the LFW to emphasise that thinking that it is ‘only a question of degree’ between what we know now and knowing the laws of a human being is mistakenly to assume that the difference between two extremes is always one of degree. In alluding to the analogy in connection with Wittgenstein’s inclusive disjunction and the incompatibilist’s exclusive one, I am merely highlighting the danger of making the same assumption: that he and the incompatibilist are providing similar answers to the question ‘compelled as opposed to what?’ That they are not is evident in the way that Wittgenstein defends saying either “the man is free” or “the man is not free” whereas the incompatibilist defends saying either “*all* men are free” or “*no* men are free.” The latter conflicts, not only with Wittgenstein’s inclusive approach, but also with an understanding of the mitigating circumstances for which the statement “the man is not free” is appropriate, circumstances that include being physically or mentally incapacitated.

³⁸ LFW, p. 432.

It is worth remembering that Wittgenstein's inclusivity extends only so far as his compatibilist sympathies. That is, for Wittgenstein, it is evidently possible to say *either* "the man is free" *or* "the man is not free" since the truth of determinism need have no bearing on either statement's validity. To the extent that this line of objection is forceful, then, we may conclude that Wittgenstein has ruled out, not one but two, ways of interpreting the incompatibilist's use of the word 'compulsion,' as meaning either against our will or as the result of an abnormality. We shall return to look more closely at the forcefulness of the objection from pleonasm, especially with reference to abnormal cases, in Chapter Two.

iii) The idea of compulsion by the laws of nature cannot be made intelligible in terms of the idea of one's being compelled to act normally.

If Wittgenstein is right to maintain that the sense of compulsion involved in being determined by the laws of nature is not equivalent to being compelled either against one's will or because of some abnormality, then it might be argued that the compulsion inherent in natural laws is the norm for human behaviour. This too seems to adequately capture certain aspects of the incompatibilist's views; not least that, if the thesis of determinism is true, then *everyone* is so determined; and that we are determined by virtue of the fact of who, and more importantly *what*, we are. It might be that we can formulate these aspects of the incompatibilist's understanding of compulsion such that we are understood to be compelled, not to act against our will or abnormally, but in accordance with our typical behaviour. Compulsion, then, is not an aberration, but the norm; it is how we must be.

In the LFW, Wittgenstein considers this final suggestion by using a thought-experiment to highlight the difference between being forced to act against one's will

and being compelled to act as one would have anyway. Wittgenstein imagines the following unlikely scenario:

Suppose in the room below, there is a man, and he has certain people with him, and he says: ‘Look, I can make Wittgenstein go exactly where I want.’ He has a mechanism, and he regulates it with the crank, and you see (with a mirror) that I walk exactly as the man wants me to. Then someone comes up to me and says ‘Were you dragged about? Were you free?’ I say: ‘Of course I was free.’³⁹

In the experiment, the Downstairs Crank manipulates Wittgenstein’s (W’s) movements in such a way that W himself is unaware. Other people *are* aware of the manipulation, however, so that the Downstairs Crank shows his manipulation by modifying W’s behaviour so that he acts atypically—others would say that W’s actions were ‘queer,’ i.e. out of character. What Wittgenstein means is that, by showing his manipulation of W, the Downstairs Crank invalidates W’s responsibility. For instance, if W were made to kill someone, the Law Court would find him innocent, even if his own testimony was that he was free.⁴⁰ Despite the bizarre nature of the envisaged scenario, Wittgenstein acknowledges that we encounter cases similar to this on a daily basis, i.e. cases where a person thinks he is acting freely but is really the subject of someone’s manipulation.⁴¹ Whilst it might seem that Wittgenstein is lending credence to the incompatibilist’s point of view, he recognises that this version of the Downstairs Crank analogy is *not* an accurate representation of determination

³⁹ LFW, p. 434. In 1989 publication of Smythies’ notes, Wittgenstein is referred to as ‘W.’ For the sake of clarity, I will revert to this shorthand in my analysis.

⁴⁰ LFW, p. 435.

⁴¹ LFW, p. 434; Wittgenstein also uses the example of a card sharp who can make us choose the card *he* wants us to choose.

by natural laws, the main difference being that W is forced to act against his will. W may not be aware of this, but others are, and these others are able to guard against W being held responsible for his actions.

Wittgenstein therefore modifies the analogy in order to bring it closer into line with determination by natural laws. He imagines instead that the Downstairs Crank manipulates W's behaviour in such a way that W acts typically, to the extent that:

Suppose I had had violent quarrels with a particular gentleman every day.

Every reasonable person was expecting me to quarrel anyhow. I, who acted according to what they did, did only what everyone would have expected me to do. This is different from the case where I would have done something alien to my ordinary character. (If, for instance, the people downstairs moved their apparatus so as to make my actions [in]compatible with the actions I did every day.)⁴²

The difference between the two variations of the thought-experiment can be put as follows: in the former case, W is either forced to act against his will or else he has no will of his own. In the latter case, W is no longer manipulated against his will but is 'railroaded' to act in accordance with what can be considered to be his own wishes and desires, i.e. he has the freedom to do what he wants to do and not otherwise. The importance of this difference is keenly felt if we consider that most compatibilists argue that the freedom to do as one wishes is the apotheosis of a freedom of the will. On the other hand, incompatibilists often argue that, in order to be free, we must be "able to do otherwise (than we in fact do)". From what we have said so far, we might suppose that Wittgenstein would deny that the latter kind of freedom is required.

⁴² LFW, p. 435.

Whilst it is true that, for Wittgenstein, the image of natural laws as ‘rails’ along which we travel is by no means inevitable, he accepts that the doctrine of determinism may be true and that determinism may well mean that events take a single course. Yet Wittgenstein at no point envisages that this in any way implies that our actions are compelled. As we noted during my analysis of i), Wittgenstein is beholden to the view that regularity, or causation, does not imply compulsion. Why then does Wittgenstein admit that there are good reasons for saying that W is not responsible for his actions? An impartial reader, even a compatibilist, can accept that, in the initial formulation of the experiment, W is not responsible. Compatibilists are able, even committed, to accepting that our freedom can be lost, if for instance we are compelled against our will or have an underlying condition. But the suggestion in the second instantiation of the Downstairs Crank analogy is that we might lack freedom whatever we do. The key to why Wittgenstein supposes that this is true lies in the difference between the above experiment and so-called Frankfurt-style cases.⁴³

Harry Frankfurt famously expounded a series of thought-experiments in which an agent, like W, is unwittingly ‘railroaded’ into a single course of action which, it just so happens, is the course he would have taken *without intervention*.⁴⁴ Frankfurt-style cases also often involve a malevolent controller, like the Downstairs Crank, who remotely restricts an agent’s ability to choose anything other than his current course of action. The difference between these cases and Wittgenstein’s experiment—and the problem from a compatibilist point of view—is that W’s

⁴³ Frankfurt 1969, pp. 829–39.

⁴⁴ To take one such Frankfurt-style case: a participant in an election places his vote entirely unaware that, should he change his mind and vote for someone else, he will be impelled to vote the way he initially intended. On this particular occasion, it just so happens, the implant is never activated because the voter does not change his mind. Frankfurt argues that this supports a compatibilist interpretation of freedom of the will since the voter acted freely and responsibly despite not being able to do otherwise.

behaviour, even in the modified example, is still to be contrasted with a ‘freedom’ possessed by W had the Crank never existed. The difference is not hard to explain, and is the result of the different ways in which the thought-experiments play out. In Frankfurt-style cases, the malevolent controller plays no active part in the manipulation; the controller’s involvement is only potential, not actual. In the Downstairs Crank example, however, the crank is necessarily active in W’s manipulation. For this reason, the Downstairs Crank example is a truer comparison with determinism which, however discrete, is nevertheless thought by the incompatibilist to be an actively controlling force. This is important, given that both Frankfurt and Wittgenstein wish to reflect the incompatibilist’s position accurately and not merely approximate it. In any case, the incompatibilist seems justified in claiming that the analogy with determinism is lost if there is no *active* link between an individual’s actions and the determining force. In short, any success we might have in using these examples is lost if we fail to entertain, as the incompatibilist does, that the Downstairs Crank is doing *something*.

Unlike Frankfurt, who is undeniably a compatibilist, Wittgenstein entertains the view that W may not be responsible for his actions even though he would have carried out those actions without any intervention from the Downstairs Crank. Wittgenstein admits no certainty in this judgement, however; he merely presumes that the Law Court would not hold W responsible in either version of the Downstairs Crank experiment. It is important, however, not to overestimate Wittgenstein’s admitting that such cases *might* mitigate an individual’s responsibility for he points out that:

We are comparing the case of a human being with those special cases where we *would* say that a man was decided: where we would say that he thought he was deciding freely, but was actually compelled. Why should anyone be inclined to compare ordinary cases with such a very special case?⁴⁵

Wittgenstein's argument against the incompatibilist is therefore that, if the second instantiation of the Downstairs Crank example does make use of an intelligible sense of compulsion, it can only be made intelligible as a rare and desultory variation of the sort of manipulation illustrated by the first version of the thought-experiment. This point is worth emphasising, specifically that it is *only* as a very rare example that we can compare the two sorts of manipulation at all. This is because, if the first instantiation of the Downstairs Crank example establishes a principal case of compulsion (i.e. against one's will), then the second instantiation, which is a modification of this general principle, represents a modification of the general rule that compulsion means being manipulated against one's will. Only in this way can we make sense of such examples.

If this were not the case then we may have to envisage that compulsion might always mean being forced to act in line with what one would have done anyway. Such a concept would, it could be argued, have few contexts of application even if it were not pleonastic. That is, if all instances of compulsion—coercion, constraint, manipulation, etc.—were not unwelcome or surprising then we should likely have no idea of compulsion at all. But even if we did, it would be of an altogether different and unfamiliar sort. As in LFM, Wittgenstein's point is that the idea of compulsion

⁴⁵ LFW, p. 435.

associated with being forced to act against one's will is not relevant in the second Downstairs Crank experiment and is therefore not to be associated with our being determined by the laws of nature. At the very least, it is wrong to assume that we can *take for granted* the similarities offered here between a man who is forced to act against his will, and a man who is forced to act as he would anyway.

For Wittgenstein, even if we assume that the incompatibilist's characterisation of the laws of nature is correct and that therefore we cannot act otherwise than we in fact do act, this would still not equate to a denial of the belief in freedom of the will. If we allow the incompatibilist his mistaken views of natural laws, what would result is a dissolution of the meaningful distinction between freedom and compulsion. It would therefore make no sense to speak *either* of freedom or compulsion. In LFM we can see how Wittgenstein treats this as an essential juxtaposition: that is, freedom is understood in contrast with compulsion and vice versa. If, however, we are compelled, not against our will, but in accordance with our natures, then it once more demonstrates the ill-fit between the familiar use of these terms, 'freedom' and 'compulsion,' and the incompatibilist's notion of compulsion by natural laws.

The limited scope of the arguments we have considered so far—concentrating on the term 'compulsion' in the incompatibilist's lexicon—all relate to the incompatibilist's inability to give a satisfactory answer to the question "compelled as opposed to what?" This criticism is behind each of the three arguments I have outlined: that the idea of compulsion in this context is not built into the idea of the laws of nature and that it cannot be rendered intelligible in terms of being compelled to act either abnormally or normally. Now, the indeterminist might try to respond to Wittgenstein's objection from pleonasm in one of three ways. First, s/he might try to

make clear a non-metaphorical sense in which the laws of nature really do ‘compel’ events. Second, s/he might defend the analogies with pushing or conditions like kleptomania against Wittgenstein’s criticisms. But third, s/he might simply give up any commitment to conceiving of determinism in terms of any kind of *compulsion*. This third dialectical possibility is especially significant given that, as we have already noted, Wittgenstein admits the conceivability of a state of affairs in which, because of our commitment to determinism, we give up altogether the distinction between freedom *and compulsion*. And this raises a puzzle. For how are we to reconcile the following two claims, both of which appear to be central to Wittgenstein’s approach?

- 1) Determination by natural laws is not incompatible with a belief in freedom of the will.
- and
- 2) The discovery that we are determined by natural laws might lead us to no longer believe we are free.

Clues to what it is that reconciles these two claims lie both inside and outside of the LFW. During a conversation on Freud only a year or so prior to the LFW, Wittgenstein objects to it being said that “Determinism applies to the mind as truly as to physical things”. He has in mind Freud’s argument that, unless feelings and thoughts follow laws of their own, then “mental phenomena are guided by *chance*”. In words strikingly reminiscent of his remark in the LFW concerning ubiquitous laws of nature, Wittgenstein asserts that this amounts to saying no more than “There *must* be some law” which, *pace* his earlier assertion in the LFW is only ‘making a

statement' if one has in mind a slight change in one's experiment.⁴⁶ Since, as Wittgenstein puts it, we 'think of *experiments*' only in relation to 'physical things', Freud's words are at best 'obscure'; and therefore amount to saying no more than 'it goes as it goes'.⁴⁷

More importantly, that statements concerning feeling and motivation are judged by Wittgenstein to be non-empirical helps to explain why, in the LFW, he should say that 'it is most misleading and out of the question in fact' to suppose that we might 'forecast a man's actions'.⁴⁸ It might be felt that such a bold statement—that there are, and can be, no laws of a human being—brings Wittgenstein's impartiality to an end. Despite the allusive nature of the remark, his implication is likely that the thesis of determinism is false (or at least unprovable); perhaps he thinks that it is *impossible* that we will find the laws of a human being or else that freedom of the will is *essentially* lawless. However, whatever significance the remark has vis-à-vis his own rejection of compatibilism, it can have little bearing on the opening question of the LFW: 'Could one say that the decision of a person was not free because it was determined by natural laws?' This question presumes, at least, the 'conceivability' (as it is called in LFM) of our coming to know these laws, and of our being (in some sense) determined.

For this reason, a more incisive interpretation of the remark would be that, for Wittgenstein, 'the fact that there *aren't* actually any such laws' is 'important' precisely because this 'fact' does not prevent the incompatibilist from denying freedom of the will on the strength of such laws. At least part of his point, then, is that the question

⁴⁶ LC, p. 42.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ LFW, p. 430.

of compatibility is not, and may never be, primarily concerned with the truth of determinism. It is for this reason that Wittgenstein remains similarly opposed to a compatibilist interpretation; that is, his views are not premised on the truth of determinism. The incompatibilist's arguments are 'blunders', however, precisely because they depend upon the truth of the deterministic thesis. Nevertheless, Wittgenstein falls short of arguing in favour of either view, perhaps because he sees no point in defending freedom of the will from an, at best, obscure thesis of determinism.

It is therefore crucial to ask what Wittgenstein *does* wish us to understand. In what follows, I shall argue that his primary aim in the LFW is *not* to answer the Compatibility Question on the compatibilists' side of the debate, but rather to identify and understand the true source of the way in which attention to the laws of nature is capable of undermining our belief in the freedom of the will. That is to say, what is 'important' for Wittgenstein is uncovering, as he puts it in LE, a 'tendency in the human mind'.⁴⁹ His opposition to incompatibilism is not intended, therefore, as a defence of compatibilism, but as a way of highlighting the incompatibilist's tendency, viz. to think of natural laws as though they were rails along which events move. As we shall see in the next part, however, Wittgenstein goes to similar lengths to uncover a tendency in the compatibilist's thinking: that freedom of the will consists in a freedom of action.

⁴⁹ LE, p. 12.

Part Two: The contrast with Kai Nielsen's compatibilist defence of freedom of the will

For all we have said so far, one might try to define compatibilism about freedom of the will solely in terms of a *denial*; namely the denial of the claim that, if we are determined by natural laws, then a person cannot be held responsible since s/he could not do otherwise. However, one potential problem with defining compatibilism in this way—merely as ‘anti-incompatibilism’—is that compatibilists typically present their claim as having a more positive import. For instance, Kai Nielsen, whose account of compatibilism interests us now, equates compatibilism with ‘soft-determinism’.⁵⁰ A soft-determinist is a compatibilist in so far as each maintains that, even if the thesis of determinism is true, people are capable of acting freely and responsibly. However, a soft-determinist makes the further, stronger claim that human beings *are* determined and *do* act freely and responsibly.

By using the label ‘soft determinism’ ‘to refer to the view that maintains that determinism and freedom are logically compatible’ Nielsen exemplifies a certain readiness to go beyond an anti-incompatibilist’s answer to the Compatibility Question.⁵¹ I suggest that any readiness to equate compatibilism with soft-determinism is due, in part, to the assumption that the compatibilist represents the ‘default’ point of view; i.e. that the burden of proof is on the incompatibilist to demonstrate that we lack freedom of the will. If, however, compatibilism is understood as anti-incompatibilism, then strictly speaking the most that a compatibilist can demonstrate is that it is *possible* to believe in freedom of the will

⁵⁰ Nielsen 1971, pp. 55-64.

⁵¹ Nielsen 1971, p. 56.

even if determinism is true. This is one potential way to understand what it is that separates Wittgenstein from other compatibilists, like Nielsen.

In order to begin to bring out the significance of the fact that Wittgenstein refuses to infer directly from anti-incompatibilism a compatibilist defence of freedom of the will, we can return to the passage on freedom of the will in LFM. A crucial theme there is the idea of reaction against any impression of *uncertainty* or *fragility*. Thus, the mathematician that Wittgenstein envisages in LFM is one who uses the term ‘necessarily’ to insist that there is no uncertainty in his results; the usage reflects a desire to think of the practice of mathematics as something fixed, immutable, certain. In a similar way, the compatibilist, no less than the incompatibilist, demonstrates a tendency to look for answers to the Compatibility Question that are fixed and certain. I want to show that, for Wittgenstein, on the other hand, it is the uncertainty or fragility of our practices that is at the heart of what he wishes to say concerning freedom of the will. Thus, whilst the incompatibilist is still wrong to claim that we might all be compelled if the doctrine of determinism is true, the compatibilist is equally wrong to think that the correction of this mistake is sufficient to shore up our belief in the freedom of the will.⁵² Due to the uncertainty or fragility of our practices of ‘freedom and resentment’, in P. F. Strawson’s summary phrase, we must acknowledge the conceivability of the threat that the idea of compulsion *together with* our understanding of freedom of the will might be abandoned altogether.

My aim now is to show that, because of its central recognition of the fragility of our belief in freedom of the will and the contingency of its basis in our ways of

⁵² Cf. Wittgenstein’s opposition to thinking *only* in ‘black and white’ terms. LFW, p. 432. See p. 25 above.

acting, Wittgenstein's own approach is quite different from the putatively Wittgensteinian form of compatibilism exemplified by Kai Nielsen. It shall emerge that, in Wittgenstein's view, the Compatibility Question only takes us so far. For there is a deeper, more human problem of how we are to come to terms with the fragility of our beliefs and practices regarding freedom of the will and our feelings of *Angst* regarding the threat of determinism.

Reason and Practice

Before turning to points iv) to vi), it is instructive to consider the extent to which points i) to iii) can be accommodated within Nielsen's approach. These points were:

- i) The idea of compulsion by the laws of nature is not built into the idea of the laws of nature.
- ii) The idea of compulsion by the laws of nature cannot be made intelligible in terms of the idea of one's being compelled to act *abnormally*.
- iii) The idea of compulsion by the laws of nature cannot be made intelligible in terms of the idea of one's being compelled to act *normally*.

Ostensibly at least, these ideas reveal a shared basis for Wittgenstein's and Nielsen's respective accounts. However, our main focus in what follows is the difference in the way each thinker understands the relationship between reason and practice. I use the words 'reason' and 'practice' for several reasons, not least because Nielsen's introduction to philosophy bears this title, *Reason & Practice* (1971).⁵³ This book—written roughly half-way through the fifty year period spanning the inauguration of

⁵³ I am principally interested in Chapter 6 of Nielsen's book, entitled "The Compatibility of Freedom and Determinism"; Nielsen 1971, pp. 55-64. This chapter was later reprinted (with minor revisions) in Kane 2002, pp. 39-46.

Wittgenstein's LFW in 1939 and their publication in 1989—is concerned primarily with the problem concerning freedom of the will, and with demonstrating the compatibility of freedom and determinism. Nielsen's suitability for our comparison derives principally from his broadly 'Wittgensteinian' approach to the problem; despite the fact that Nielsen barely references Wittgenstein throughout and then only to distance himself from Wittgenstein's other 'disciples'.⁵⁴ It is nevertheless fair to say that Nielsen's allegiance remains towards a post-Wittgensteinian philosophy that is a version of ordinary language philosophy. Because of when *Reason & Practice* was written, however, we can assume that Nielsen was unaware of the content of the LFW and therefore of Wittgenstein's specific views on the freedom of the will. Moreover, Nielsen readily associates his view with other dyed-in-the-wool compatibilists, such as Hume, Mill and Ayer. Not least because of its proximity both to Wittgenstein's philosophy in general and to the mainstream tradition of compatibilism, Nielsen's work is therefore especially well placed to help us to bring into relief the distinctive significance of Wittgenstein's own approach specifically to the problem of freedom of the will.

The specific brand of compatibilism that Nielsen defends is what I propose to call 'categorical compatibilism'. Categorical compatibilism is premised upon the idea that talk of reasons, motivations, etc. and talk of causes belong to two incommensurate 'spaces' or categories of description. For instance, I can describe a person's decision wholly in terms of its causal influences *or* I can describe that same decision as correct or incorrect, just or unjust, hateful or empathetic, free or compelled. There is no inconsistency in describing the same decision in these

⁵⁴ Nielsen 1971, p. 462.

different ways since each description belongs to a different category of description, i.e. each relates to a different aspect of the decision. Such a view is not unique to Nielsen, and we might already see how much of what we have said concerning Wittgenstein's LFW fits in with a compatibilism based on a difference in category. Many compatibilists are in tacit support of such a view and the view has other advocates besides Nielsen and Wittgenstein.⁵⁵ For my purposes, however, I am simply concerned with how these two thinkers are able to reach such different conclusions from such similar premises.

Much of what Nielsen has to say chimes with what we have said so far concerning points i) to iii). For instance, in a succinct summation of his views, Nielsen says:

There is...a persistent confusion between laws of nature and legal laws ... Legal laws *prescribe* a certain course of action. Many of them are intended to constrain or coerce you into acting in a certain way. But laws of nature are not prescriptions to act in a certain way. They do not constrain you; rather, they are statements of regularities, of *de facto* invariable sequences that are parts of the world.⁵⁶

There is a clear affinity between what Nielsen says here about legal laws and Wittgenstein's concern, pointed out in i) above, that 'the idea of compulsion already lies in the word "law"'.⁵⁷ Not only this, but Nielsen shares Wittgenstein's cautious

⁵⁵ Cf. Kenny 1976, p. 13. Kenny defends a categorial compatibilist position when he argues that the meaning of the words I speak are not to be conflated with the movement of my larynx, even if the words I utter only come about as a result of that movement. Cf. Lowe 1989; Lowe also blocks reductivist attempts to reduce the concept of "person" to that of "organism". In a similar way, we can avoid reductivist attempts to reduce concepts such as "reason" to the same category as "cause."

⁵⁶ Nielsen 1971, pp. 57-8.

⁵⁷ LFW, p. 420.

approach towards the question of what a natural law consists in. Nielsen calls a natural law a *de facto* description of observed regularities but concedes that some further element(s) may be required for causation. However, he is clear that compulsion is not one of those elements.⁵⁸

For Nielsen, incompatibilists exhibit a tendency to ‘mistakenly infer’ that an ‘event or effect is somehow contained within the cause.’⁵⁹ Nielsen has in mind here the move from efficient to final causation, which Wittgenstein also invokes with his reference to the incompatibilist’s ‘peculiar’ and fatalistic ‘way of looking at things’, e.g. as though natural laws are written in a book or laid down by a deity. Quoting A. J. Ayer, Nielsen reiterates that ‘from the fact that my action is causally determined it does not follow that I am constrained to do it.’⁶⁰ That is, both Nielsen and Ayer recognise, as Wittgenstein does with respect to natural laws, that compulsion is not built into the idea of a cause.

Furthermore, Nielsen argues in favour of Wittgenstein’s claim that the incompatibilist’s idea of ‘compulsion’ is a misappropriation of our existing notion of *compulsion against one’s will* since to be free means to act ‘without constraint or compulsion’.⁶¹ In light of this familiar definition of freedom and compulsion, Nielsen forcibly argues that the only way to render the concept of freedom of the will intelligible, and for it not to be pleonastic, is for it to have a conceptual foil:

⁵⁸ Nielsen 1971, p. 62.

⁵⁹ Nielsen 1971, p. 57.

⁶⁰ Nielsen 1971, p. 59.

⁶¹ Nielsen 1971, p. 57.

The conceptual facts we need to clarify are these: if the word ‘freedom’ is to have a meaning, it must be contrasted with something, for otherwise it is quite unintelligible.⁶²

Nielsen says the same must be true of any descriptive term. For example, to understand the word ‘wok’ we must be able to distinguish it from any other term, e.g. ‘frying pan’. The acid test Nielsen proposes is to ask for ‘some *conceivable* situations’ in which the word is used correctly and situations in which it cannot so be used.⁶³ Anything failing this test can then be said to be unintelligible nonsense. Such failure, argues Nielsen, is exactly what we find in the case of the incompatibilist’s understanding of ‘freedom’.

It is worth pausing at this juncture to consider some problems with Nielsen’s specific formulations of the points he broadly shares with Wittgenstein. To begin with, there seems to be a leap from talking about the need for a conceptual foil to talking specifically about a conceptual contrast or *opposite*. Using Nielsen’s own example, we know what the word ‘wok’ means because it can be distinguished from ‘frying pan,’ ‘sock,’ ‘sunset’ etc. (in fact anything that is not itself a wok). Yet, Nielsen maintains that the relevant conceptual foil to ‘freedom’ is ‘compulsion’ since the two ideas are opposed to each other. If the two cases are to be analogous, however, why look for an opposite at all? What, for instance, is the opposite of ‘wok’? On the other hand, ‘Freedom’ *can* be contrasted with ‘compulsion’ but *also* with ‘wok’. While it is true that supplying a different contrast gives a different *sense* to the word, it is not clear that this is what Nielsen intends to say. Nielsen wants

⁶² Nielsen 1971, p. 59.

⁶³ Ibid.

instead to say that freedom can *only* be made sense of in contrast to being compelled against one's will. This is why he slips from talk of meaningful contrasts to talk of *an* opposite.

In this respect, Nielsen's position appears far more vulnerable than Wittgenstein's to counter-objection. To begin with, Wittgenstein focuses on the word 'compulsion,' not 'freedom'. 'Freedom' is thereby granted multiple possible meanings but is introduced only in its familiar contrast with 'compulsion'. Accordingly, Wittgenstein does not rule out the possibility of finding an intelligible sense of the term 'freedom', one that is opposed to determinism. Nielsen, on the other hand, infers directly from the incompatibilist's lack of specificity vis-à-vis the meaning of the term 'freedom' that the incompatibilist is speaking nonsense. But there is arguably a lack of subtlety involved in thinking that a prolonged inability to articulate an idea means that the idea is unintelligible; it might simply mean that the idea must be *shown* or that the idea corresponds with a certain picture.

Nielsen evidently concurs with Wittgenstein, however, in judging the incompatibilist's 'blunder' to have a grammatical dimension, i.e. the incompatibilist is led astray by the 'surface grammar' of the words he is using.⁶⁴ One of Nielsen's examples involves the conflation of causal and logical necessitation; in particular the way the word 'must' is used in each case. Nielsen considers the difference between:

- 1) If you cut off his head, he must die.

And

- 2) If it is a square, it must have four sides.

⁶⁴ PI, §664.

Nielsen appears to have in mind precisely the same analogy as the one that Wittgenstein develops in LFM; namely, the analogy between the mathematician's use of such terms as 'must' and 'necessarily', and an incompatibilist's use of such terms. Nielsen wants to show that the incompatibilist is mistaken if he thinks that causal necessity equates with logical necessity. We should, however, keep in mind the possibility that, for his part, Wittgenstein ultimately has a rather different aim in drawing the same comparison, namely to highlight the fragility of our practices; both in the contexts of the philosophy of mathematics and the freedom of the will.

Nielsen proceeds to argue that the words 'can' and 'cannot' are similarly misunderstood by the incompatibilist. Specifically, the incompatibilist betrays his conflation of causal and logical language, by defining freedom as the 'ability to do otherwise (than we did)'. According to Nielsen, the incompatibilist mistakenly infers that, if we are determined by natural laws, then we *can't* act differently than we do: we are 'railroaded' into a definite course of action. If this is true, Nielsen asks, then how can it be said that an individual *can*, for example, live without a head; is there some contradiction involved in imagining the headless horseman? There *is* of course a contradiction involved in the idea of a five-sided square.

Again, however, Nielsen is open to counter-objection on this score. For the incompatibilist is not obviously committed to saying that human beings couldn't have been otherwise than they are now *by nature*. The incompatibilist wants to say that we are no freer, in our determined state, than a falling stone would be, *however it might fall*. As Wittgenstein puts it, the incompatibilist's sentiment that "the thief who steals

a banana moves as inevitably as a stone falling” is ‘nothing more than comparing his action with a stone.’⁶⁵

The real gulf between Nielsen’s and Wittgenstein’s approaches, however, begins to emerge in the light of Nielsen’s use of the example of the kleptomaniac. In Nielsen’s case, this is part of his attempt to make room for denials of freedom of the will in particular cases, even when the reason for such a denial is that a person’s actions are causally determined. This reflects Nielsen’s view that part of what it means to defend the compatibility of freedom and determinism is to provide for a distinction between those situations in which the word ‘freedom’ can be used correctly and those situations in which it cannot. Cases of abnormality pose a particular threat to *categorical* compatibilism in so far as the categorical difference Nielsen relies upon (between reasons and causes) appears to be refuted by the fact that we both can and do withhold responsibility in certain cases, including when a physical anomaly has been discovered. For this reason, it appears that a strict categorical difference between the ‘space of reasons’ and the ‘space of causes’ cannot be upheld.

It is therefore telling that Nielsen responds to the kleptomaniac’s case in a very different way to Wittgenstein. For Wittgenstein, it is *reasonable* to say either “he is to blame” or “no, in this case it is too much” and that we can do so for a variety of reasons. Nielsen, on the other hand, purports to provide an account of *precisely* what the difference is between the kleptomaniac and an ‘ordinary thief’:

The ordinary thief goes through a process of deciding whether or not to steal, and his decision decisively effects his behaviour. If he actually

⁶⁵ LFW, pp. 431-2.

resolved to refrain from stealing, he could carry out his resolution. But this is not so with the kleptomaniac. Thus, this observable difference between the ordinary thief and the kleptomaniac, quite independent of the issue of determinism, enables us to ascertain that the former is freer than the latter.⁶⁶

For Nielsen then, the kleptomaniac is unlike the thief because, although the kleptomaniac might decide not to steal, this decision does not ‘decisively effect his behaviour’. The kleptomaniac therefore lacks the requisite capacity that, according to Nielsen, defines freedom of the will, i.e. the ability to act in accordance with his rational deliberations. Thus, whilst the kleptomaniac is not compelled by an external agent to act *against* his will, he lacks a will of his own.

However, there are problems with Nielsen’s explanation of why the kleptomaniac’s ‘thefts’ do not belong to the ‘space of reasons’. To begin with, it is unclear what it means to say that the ordinary thief’s decisions ‘decisively effect his behaviour’. According to Nielsen’s own acid test, in order for this to be intelligible we must be able to specify instances when a person’s decision is not decisive. But what is an ‘indecisive decision’ except mere indecision? I can only suggest that it reflects either i) the kleptomaniac’s failure to go through a process of deciding, or else ii) the fact that his decision does not affect his behaviour. The latter option is less problematic than the former since in the case of i), we have no reason to assume that the kleptomaniac does not go through a process of deciding. Moreover, we have no reason to assume that the ‘ordinary thief’ *does* go through a process of deciding. That there is a difference in criminal law between an ‘opportunistic’ crime (or a ‘crime of

⁶⁶ Nielsen 1971, p. 61. As cited in Kane 2002, p. 44.

negligence’) and a ‘premeditated crime’ implies that criminal acts can be committed without prior consideration, but remain crimes nonetheless. Moreover, quite generally we may suppose that whether or not *any* act requires a prior act of will or volition is far from clear. In the LFW, Wittgenstein is critical of those who argue that freedom of the will is *constituted* by an ability to choose to choose (or will to will). More specifically, Wittgenstein takes issue with Bishop Barnes’ assertion that ‘[c]onstant and inevitable experience teaches me that I have freedom of choice’. Wittgenstein objects that:

No-one would say: ‘Now I choose to choose so and so’. ‘I chose to choose to go for a walk’—I take it this would come to exactly the same thing as to say ‘I chose to go for a walk.’⁶⁷

This remark clearly conflicts with Nielsen’s positive definition of freedom as ‘the ability and opportunity to do what one wants to do in accordance with one’s own rational deliberations.’⁶⁸ Nielsen evidently holds that every free act is preceded by an act of will (a choice or decision) or a process of deliberation. But just as Wittgenstein says in §622 of the *Investigations* that ‘ordinarily, when I raise my hand I do not *try* to raise it,’ it would be equally wrong to maintain that, ordinarily, when I walk into a room, I will to do so.⁶⁹ The point is that sometimes ‘willing’ and ‘acting’ are conceptually, rather than causally related; i.e. that ‘normally, “willing” simply is “acting”’.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ LFW, p. 442.

⁶⁸ Nielsen 1971, p. 57.

⁶⁹ Cf. LFW, p. 438.

⁷⁰ Phillips 2004, p. 28.

Still, we might go even further in contradiction of Nielsen's reliance upon 'decisive decisions': it may be that the 'darker, savage, and non-rational aspects of ourselves are equally—if not more—important' in identifying the actor with the action.⁷¹ Like Irving Thalberg, whose words I am quoting, the Wittgensteinian response, to associating the will so completely with cognitive states of mind, is that it must first be explained 'why I cannot be acting on my own desires, and freely to boot, at any time that non-rational factors prevail.'⁷²

Unlike some compatibilists, however, Nielsen is not committed to saying that all free actions are preceded by an act of volition; he states clearly that freedom rests in the *opportunity* to act in accordance with one's rational deliberations.⁷³ In this way, Nielsen might seek to accommodate the objection that not every action is preceded by an act of volition, in the same way that Wittgenstein might accommodate the same objection by acknowledging that I do *sometimes* try to raise my arm. The problem is that, unlike Wittgenstein, Nielsen commits himself to showing that we *always* have an opportunity to deliberate. But it is far from clear that the thief's impromptu act of stealing, or my walking into a room, are the kinds of situations in which I might feasibly be said to have had the opportunity to deliberate. Certainly, there are all sorts of assumptions bundled up with any such claim that, prior to *every* free act there is an opportunity to deliberate and so act upon the deliberation.

One alternative suggestion to Nielsen's interpretation of the case of the kleptomaniac is this. Perhaps we need not suppose that the kleptomaniac lacks the

⁷¹ Thalberg 1978, pp. 224.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Wittgenstein's criticism of Bishop Barnes can be levelled at any hierarchical account of willing; e.g. Frankfurt 1971, pp. 5-20. Frankfurt contrasts the 'freedom of action' (to do what one wills) with a 'freedom of the will', viz. the ability to will what one wants to will. the LFW allow for no such distinction based on hierarchy.

opportunity to act in accordance with his deliberations, but that *we* lack the ability to understand and make sense of whatever deliberations might have taken place. We might recall in this connection Kierkegaard's parable of the escaped patient from a mental asylum, who convinces himself that the best way to avoid being captured is to convince everyone of the objective truth of his statements, and thereby his sanity. He therefore puts a ball into the tail of his coat, and on each stride, as the ball hits his backside, he shouts "Bang, the Earth is round!" There is a certain rationale to the madman's deliberations that is disquieting, yet the rationale and the deliberation are there. As Kierkegaard notes: 'it was clear to the physician that the patient was not cured; though it is not to be thought that the cure would consist in getting him to accept the opinion that the earth is flat.'⁷⁴ Similarly, a kleptomaniac may have a pathology of deciding what to steal, but what he steals is then immediately thrown away. In this case, what separates the kleptomaniac from the thief is less clear, but a 'cure' to the kleptomaniac's condition would not consist in convincing him to keep what he steals.

Turning now to ii) – an appeal to the fact that the kleptomaniac's decision does not affect his behaviour – it appears as if we can avoid (or lessen) the above objections to Nielsen's view if we take him to be arguing that the kleptomaniac *does* go through a process of deciding but that he *fails* to act on it. Wittgenstein, however, is evidently critical of this idea as well when he says in the LFW:

⁷⁴ Kierkegaard in Oden, T. C. (ed.) 1989, p. 50.

Suppose a man makes a resolution and says ‘I shall from now on be more charitable’, and then throws the next person he is talking to out of the room—does his action affect what he meant?⁷⁵

Here the uncharitable man is making a decision and failing to act on it. As a result, the meaning of his resolution is, I would suggest, most certainly altered, perhaps even empty. The appeal made in ii) is similar if only because the kleptomaniac too makes a resolution that he fails to act on. But there is a very clear difference, I should say, between a kleptomaniac who steals despite deciding not to and a kleptomaniac who fails in his resolution to be more charitable. I want to say that the difference comes down to the kleptomaniac having no *excuse* to fail in his resolution to be more charitable and hence to our expecting that he should succeed. Wittgenstein’s point is that, at least part of what it means to make a resolution, is that we should then expect the individual to act accordingly; if we were always in a position to doubt that a resolution will be kept, we would cease making resolutions. A similar process of mitigating one’s expectations takes place in the case of the kleptomaniac, but in his case his failure to decide does *not* affect the meaning of his words since what he says is already coloured by his diagnosis. Admittedly, one might only arrive at this diagnosis after the kleptomaniac’s repeated failure; in which case the meaning of his words have been altered by repeated failure. Even so, the supposition—that it is the kleptomaniac’s decisions which are faulty—can also be challenged on the grounds that, were we to mitigate the kleptomaniac’s actions in cases where he repeatedly fails to carry out his decision not to steal, we can imagine cases in which the kleptomaniac pathologically forms a decision *to steal*; or, in line with an earlier objection, where no

⁷⁵ LFW, p. 439.

decision takes place whatsoever. Not in every case then, can the kleptomaniac's failure to form decisive decisions be the mitigating factor in not holding him responsible.

From the perspective of Wittgenstein's LFW, we may therefore frame the following line of criticism against Nielsen. In the same way that the incompatibilist mistakenly thinks that all forms of compulsion boil down to the same thing, i.e. that all abnormalities have determination by natural laws in common, Nielsen is mistaken in thinking that freedom of the will boils down to a freedom of action, viz. an ability to make decisive decisions. It might be presumed that Nielsen's positive characterisation of freedom is called for due to his strict categorial separation of cause and constraint. That is, Nielsen wishes to establish a clear distinction between a freedom that is certain, on the one hand, and an equally certain lack of freedom on the other. Yet by highlighting the incompatibilist's conflation of cause and constraint, Nielsen merely demonstrates that freedom is not an impossibility. To make the further claim that freedom of the will itself is assured requires us to look beyond a difference in categories; to determine, in other words, what freedom of the will amounts to. The alternative approach exemplified by Wittgenstein's LFW, is that we uphold the strict categorial difference *simpliciter*. What uncertainty or fragility is left over once this minimal compatibilism is provided for is accounted for elsewhere in the LFW.

iv) Belief and disbelief in freedom of the will as rival 'ways of acting'

Notwithstanding the substantial points of divergence that we have noted, we can take it that, on points i) to iii), Wittgenstein and Nielsen are in broad agreement. They agree that natural laws are not inherently compulsive (in the familiar sense of that term) and that we cannot make the idea of compulsion intelligible in this context by

the idea of one's being compelled to act abnormally or normally. As we have begun to see, Wittgenstein's more nuanced approach to the conceptual foil argument and to cases of abnormality is indicative of a more fundamental disagreement between the two; namely, whether or not anti-incompatibilism is sufficient to defend freedom of the will against the threat of determinism. Whilst Wittgenstein shares with Nielsen the view that being determined by natural laws does not constitute a necessary or sufficient basis for denying freedom of the will, he accepts that we might, due to our increased awareness of the causes of our actions, 'give up' our existing beliefs and practices that are based on a distinction between freedom and compulsion. As I have suggested, this reflects Wittgenstein's sense of the uncertainty or fragility of our current practices of attributing freedom. This, in turn, is based on Wittgenstein's argument that our current practices are based in nothing more robust than a 'way of acting'.

Consider a further analogy that Wittgenstein develops in the LFW. He invites us to imagine a Driverless Car that is set in motion along a level surface which, despite being rigged to drive in a straight line, nevertheless 'describes a queer path.'⁷⁶ The reasons for the car's erratic movements are, at least for the time being, unknown. Wittgenstein does not mean that the car's movements are inscrutable; the car is a perfectly ordinary mechanism, or so we can assume. By saying that the reasons for the car's movements are unknown, Wittgenstein means simply that we do not yet have an explanation.⁷⁷ Now, Wittgenstein acknowledges, *one* response to this situation is to look for some law, such as to explain the car's erratic movements. But

⁷⁶ LFW, p. 433.

⁷⁷ Cf. LC, p. 42.

he also wants to emphasise another possibility. Rather than look for the cause of the car's erratic movement we might 'give up entirely and say the steering wheel is free.'⁷⁸ This last course of action might suggest that we make up our mind whether to see the car as free or as fixed. This is not Wittgenstein's understanding of either course of action; indeed, it would be impossible to choose one way of acting over another without betraying a prior commitment to looking or not.⁷⁹ But what *could* inform such a choice apart from a prior commitment, either to looking (for the regularity) or to giving up (and saying it moves freely)?

Wittgenstein rules out that we might rely on what appears, at the time, to promise best results. He says that even if some regularity in the car's movement had been found we might still say, "It is free, but now it *chooses* to move regularly."⁸⁰ This is not simply a stubborn refusal to face facts. To begin with, Wittgenstein has pointed out that nothing about the discovery of a regularity provides a sufficient justification for thinking of anything as free or unfree, even in so obvious a case of mechanism as the car.⁸¹ If this claim of Wittgenstein's holds muster, then it must also be granted that, in cases where a regularity is all we have to go on, we *cannot* talk of proving or disproving freedom of the will: the evidence simply underdetermines whether we should think of the regularity as 'caused' or 'free' (or both).

Wittgenstein's emphasis on the way our talk of freedom relies on our 'ways of acting' is not a stance that Nielsen, and other likeminded compatibilists, can easily

⁷⁸ LFW, p. 433.

⁷⁹ LFW, p. 431.

⁸⁰ LFW, p. 433. Cf. CV, p. 86: 'Imagine someone watching a pendulum and thinking: God makes it move like that. Well, doesn't God have the right even to act in accordance with a calculation?'

⁸¹ LFW, p. 431.

countenance. Even so, perhaps more than any other compatibilist, Nielsen *is* committed to taking seriously the possibility that our current ways of going on with the terms ‘freedom’ and ‘compulsion’ rests on nothing more than a ‘way of acting’ since he uses a closely related hypothesis as an initial premise in a further argument *against* the incompatibilist. Nielsen states boldly that the incompatibilist’s doubts are self-inflicted:

The part about compulsion or constraint is metaphorical. It is because of the metaphor, and not because of the fact, that we come to think that there is an antithesis between causality and freedom. It is the *manner* here and not the *matter* that causes the trouble.⁸²

One can see how Nielsen is here deploying some of the same notions as Wittgenstein. Yet for Nielsen, the incompatibilist’s manner, i.e. his ways of acting, e.g. looking for regularities, etc. are simply an epiphenomenon of his conceptual confusion. For Nielsen, the basis for the incompatibilist’s anxious way of thinking about natural laws is just a mistake. The compulsion the incompatibilist describes is merely metaphorical; the metaphysics is taken care of by the conceptual argumentation Nielsen levels against incompatibilism. I want to show that, from the point of view of the LFW, Nielsen’s position is questionable in this regard, due to his a) too readily discounting the incompatibilist’s ‘manner’ as a mere symptom of his conceptual confusion and b) failing to recognise his own ‘manner’.

It is especially telling in this regard that Nielsen flatly denies that there is or need be any real ‘*Angst*’ in the face of the threat of determinism:

⁸² Nielsen 1971, p. 58. The passage as quoted includes a line of text that appears only in an edited version of his article. See Nielsen in Kane (ed.) 2002, p. 42.

There is no *Angst* over the ubiquitousness of causal laws. There is no feeling that life would be meaningless and man would be a prisoner of his past if determinism is true. Holbach is wrong. Even if determinism is true freedom is not an illusion.⁸³

It may seem that Nielsen has here contradicted himself by saying that the ‘manner,’ e.g. the incompatibilist’s angst, is at once the ‘trouble’ *and* entirely absent. What connects these two states of affairs, however, is the introduction of the ‘compatibilist thesis’ as it is defended by Nielsen himself.

With such philosophers as Thomas Hobbes, David Hume, John Stuart Mill, Moritz Schlick, and A. J. Ayer—all staunch defenders of the compatibility thesis—there is a vast shift not only in argument but also in *attitude*.⁸⁴

The implication here is that the compatibilist perspective effects a ‘shift in attitude’ that invariably removes any feelings of *Angst* associated with the threat of determinism; Nielsen uses Dostoevsky as his example of someone who, whilst profoundly concerned with the responsibility a person has for his actions, thought that human nature made that kind of responsibility impossible. What we are to imagine is that Dostoevsky lacks the argumentative expertise that Hobbes, Hume, and Nielsen demonstrate.⁸⁵ This expertise allows the compatibilist to separate the causal and the

⁸³ Nielsen 1971, p. 56. The ‘Holbach’ referred to is Baron Holbach the enlightenment thinker and early supporter of causal determinism who, Nielsen says early in his book, describes the feeling accompanying scientific discoveries as Angst-laden.

⁸⁴ Ibid. Emphasis added.

⁸⁵ In Chapter Four, I will consider Dostoevsky’s own treatment of the problem in *The Brothers Karamazov*.

spiritual—human freedom, responsibility and action on the one hand, and human nature, psychology and behaviour on the other.

By contrast, Wittgenstein recognises that anti-incompatibilism is not in itself sufficient to answer the threat of determinism to our current practices of discriminating between cases of freedom of the will and cases of compulsion, i.e. our current ways of acting. While he is, like Nielsen, manifestly opposed to incompatibilism *as a thesis*, Wittgenstein acknowledges that this may have no impact on our deep-seated feeling of *Angst* in the face of the threat of determinism. This is because Wittgenstein has a different understanding of the relationship between the incompatibilist's *Angst*—as reflected in what Wittgenstein calls his 'peculiar' 'way of looking at things,' e.g. thinking of events as 'moving on rails'—and the theoretical commitments that offered in its defence, e.g. the hypothesis that freedom is an illusion if our decisions are determined by natural laws. Wittgenstein understands the directionality here quite differently to Nielsen: the incompatibilist's theoretical position flows *from* his deep-seated feelings of *Angst*; the latter are not just 'symptoms' of the former.

Returning to Wittgenstein's Driverless Car analogy, we may say that the compatibilist is analogous to the one who gives up looking for the cause of the car's motion. The Driverless Car analogy is intended to demonstrate that, even in the case of something that is quite clearly a mechanism and nothing else, we are able to say 'it moves freely' or 'it is caused'. Neither of these statements is incompatible with the other, in the sense of ruling the other out, and yet we are perhaps inclined to say that we cannot (or *do* not) say both at once. Doubtless, Nielsen would take this as further vindication of the categorial difference that separates each view. From Wittgenstein's

point of view, this fails to specify which comes first, the conceptual argumentation or the way of acting. For Wittgenstein, that we do not say both ‘the car is free’ and ‘the car is caused’ means that the better explanation is that the act—of looking for a regularity or giving up—comes first, followed by the argumentation.

In a Wittgensteinian perspective, Nielsen is therefore wrong to assume that the incompatibilist only feels Angst as a *result* of his failure to attend to the categorical difference between causes and reasons. Wittgenstein offers a more comprehensive interpretation of both the compatibilist’s and incompatibilist’s feelings, whether sanguine or anxious. With this in mind, let us now consider a further suggestion: that, despite one’s being convinced by anti-incompatibilist arguments, one may still be converted *to* the incompatibilist’s ‘peculiar way of looking’.

v) The indirect role that natural laws can play in undermining a belief in freedom of the will

I have argued that the intended upshot of Wittgenstein’s Driverless Car analogy is that it is wrong to think that the discovery of laws of nature, i.e. of observed regularities, constitutes direct proof of the incompatibilist’s thesis; and that, conversely, it is wrong to think that the lack of such a discovery constitutes proof of our freedom. Implicit in these claims, however, is the suggestion that we *might* come to see things as the incompatibilist does by following his course of action. I have suggested that, far from trivialising the disagreement, Wittgenstein’s approach looks beyond the ‘surface grammar’ to the deeper existential problem at its heart. I shall have much more to say about what this deeper problem amounts to in subsequent chapters. For now, I will focus on the way in which this deeper problem is introduced.

The context of this deeper problem is provided for by the question

Wittgenstein repeatedly asks during the LFW

You might say this is a very queer idea indeed. Where did people get it?

Somewhere the rules are laid down. ... What would encourage one to use

this metaphor? To think about natural events in this way? ...⁸⁶

And again.

‘We shall find these regularities out too?’ Who will? In 1,000 or in 10,000

years? - Is there really any reason to say they will find these out?⁸⁷

In Nielsen’s vernacular, Wittgenstein wishes to disclose the ‘manner’ that implicitly underlies the incompatibilist’s interpretation of the ‘matter’.⁸⁸ As Wittgenstein observes there is a tendency to ‘become ever so optimistic, saying “It is only a question of time...”’, i.e. before we know the laws of a human being.⁸⁹ He adds that there are, in fact, ‘two camps, optimists and pessimists’ who, in the case of a ‘new discovery’, are both equally guilty of making a mistake; you might say that both are mistaken in so far as they see the discovery as either benign or malevolent when it is neither. Whilst I shall continue to refer mainly to the incompatibilist’s ‘manner’ it is at least worth noting that Wittgenstein’s observation is that ‘*Two* mistakes are made in such a case (of a new discovery)’ and that the second mistake concerns those, like

⁸⁶ LFW, pp. 430-1.

⁸⁷ LFW, p. 432. See also, LFW, pp. 439-440.

⁸⁸ Cf. Winch 1997, p. 60; Winch notes that it was characteristic of Wittgenstein’s approach to shift ‘attention away from the object to which a problematic concept is applied towards the person applying the concept’.

⁸⁹ LFW, p. 441. Cf. LFW, p. 432.

Nielsen, who don't see anything in the hypothesis at all.⁹⁰ In any case, Wittgenstein distinguishes himself from both camps—and therefore in effect from Nielsen—by recognising that both sides are mistaken and yet both can reasonably have their say:

It seems as if, if you are very strongly impressed by the responsibility which a human being has for his actions, you are inclined to say that these actions and choices can't follow natural laws. Conversely, if you are very strongly inclined to say that they do follow natural laws, then you are inclined to say 'I can't be made responsible for my choice.' That you are inclined in this way, I should say, is a fact of psychology.⁹¹

This passage sheds crucial light on Wittgenstein's impartiality with regards the defence or denial of freedom of the will; in particular, the way he affords both the compatibilist's and the ('hard') determinist's views equal weight. In seeking to understand what Wittgenstein means by a 'fact of psychology' in this context, it is important to foreclose a possible misunderstanding. For it might seem as if he is simply begging the question. By remarking that, as a matter of psychological fact, we are 'inclined in this way' might be taken to imply that our beliefs are a symptom of our already determinate natures; believing that we are free, despite being determined by natural laws, might just be a case in point of one's being compelled by natural laws. Of course, however, this has been ruled out by Wittgenstein on the grounds that being determined by natural laws does not entail that we lack freedom of the will. By speaking of a 'fact of psychology' here, Wittgenstein plausibly means rather to

⁹⁰ LFW, p. 441. Emphasis added.

⁹¹ LFW, p. 433.

register the contingency of our ways of thinking/acting, and their contingent basis in our human form of life.

Now, again, one may object that Wittgenstein's stance here reduces to an implausible kind of voluntarism: viz. that it is simply a matter of fiat whether or not one holds on to belief in freedom of the will. But it is very clear that he does not view our 'inclinations' in this context as matters of choice or fiat. On the contrary:

I want to impress upon you that given a certain attitude, you may be, for reasons unknown, compelled to look at it a certain way. A certain image can force itself upon you. Imagine, for instance, that you are not free; or that you are compelled.

Must you look at looking for something in this way? No. But it is one of the most important facts of human life that such impressions sometimes force themselves on you.⁹²

Nowhere else in the LFW does Wittgenstein make his intentions as explicit as he does here. His express intention is to impress upon us that we needn't look at things the way the incompatibilist does, but that it is one of the 'most important facts' about human psychology—'for reasons unknown'—that we find certain images—for example, of our lives as going along 'rails'—all but inevitable. Part of Wittgenstein's point here is in this way to impress on us the inscrutability of the incompatibilist's starting position, i.e. the *Angst* that Nielsen reduces to a mere symptom of conceptual confusion. By way of comparison, Wittgenstein offers an example in which, when he has 'looked frantically for a key,' he has thought to himself 'If an omniscient is looking at me, he must be making fun at me. What a joke for the Deity, seeing me

⁹² LFW, p. 435.

look when he knows all the time.’ Wittgenstein asks: ‘Is there any good reason for looking at it in this way?’⁹³ No doubt, this question is partly intended to show that ‘looking at it in this way’ is only one way in which we might look at it, and one that is radically underdetermined by the evidence. But *pace* Nielsen’s account of such thoughts as mere symptoms of conceptual confusion, Wittgenstein evidently thinks of it as a deeply important feature of human psychology that such thoughts ‘force themselves on you’.

If Wittgenstein’s approach in this regard is to be compelling, however, we need to ask how exactly certain forms of scientifically oriented attention are capable of undermining belief in freedom of the will. Accordingly, I shall now consider a more detailed account of one way in which freedom of the will might come to be forsaken on the grounds that we are determined by natural laws.

vi) How predicting a person’s actions is capable of undermining the person’s attitude towards their own actions as free.

Perhaps the most novel and surprising aspect of Wittgenstein’s approach to the problem of freedom of the will, both in LFM and in the LFW, is his commitment to the conceivability that we might forsake talk of freedom and compulsion altogether. In the case of the LFW, it is towards the end of the LFW that Wittgenstein returns to the question of whether we might, at some future time, abandon all talk of freedom *and* compulsion and speak only in terms of causes. This suggestion is in keeping with everything we have said so far about the compatibility of freedom and determination by natural laws. It has emerged from our discussion so far that the principal point of divergence between Wittgenstein and Nielsen is that, for Wittgenstein, opposition to

⁹³ Ibid.

incompatibilism need not, in any way, motivate a belief in freedom of the will. At most, we can say that it is possible, in light of the categorial difference between spaces, for us to speak meaningfully about freedom of the will. Equally, however, it is possible for us to give up talking about freedom, and to talk instead solely in terms of causes. This eventuality is not the same as that typically envisaged by both sides to the debate between compatibilism and incompatibilism; i.e. the eventuality that we deny freedom of the will by affirming that our actions are compelled by the laws of nature. The eventuality that Wittgenstein entertains, rather, is one in which we can no longer speak in terms of freedom *or* compulsion.

In particular, Wittgenstein imagines that we might, at some future time, be able to know, with a high degree of accuracy, what the outcome of our decisions might be. In LFM this takes the form of a mechanism that, not so much predicts, but describes the underlying causes of our actions in real time. In the LFW, this image resurfaces but now in connection with our ability to predict what people will do. Early on in the LFW, Wittgenstein separates this ability to predict what a person will do from the kind of knowledge we might acquire from the aforementioned mechanism:

It is in one way rubbish to say ‘If my actions can be predicted I can’t choose.’ ... The idea that you can connect predicting what a man will choose with materialism is rubbish. Prediction doesn’t mean you will predict from *material* data.⁹⁴

The initial point Wittgenstein wishes to make is that there is no reason to infer, “If my actions can be predicted I can’t choose.” I will return to this point in a moment. I wish

⁹⁴ LFW, p. 442.

to consider first Wittgenstein's separation of prediction from materialism, which he does by acknowledging the fact that predicting what someone will do next does not entail that we 'knew all the laws of nature, and could observe all the particles' leading up to their action.⁹⁵ The sorts of things Wittgenstein has in mind are when we might say, "she knows me better than I know myself" or "he doesn't know it yet, but he'll agree in the end". Neither of the two scenarios just hinted at presume that the speakers have any insight into the physical causes underpinning the subject's intentions. For Wittgenstein, the specific 'problem of prediction' is not just another aspect of 'the problem of determinism'. He *does* accept, however, that prediction can be a problem irrespective of whether or not the prediction uses material data, in cases when it is the *agent* who knows what it is he will do:

Prediction is incompatible with choice in the case where you yourself predict what you will choose, or I predict and then tell you... [T]he situation in which the difficulty lies is that in which when choosing I remember the fact that I predicted my choice.⁹⁶

This brings me back to the initial point Wittgenstein is making: that predictability is not, by itself, incompatible with choice. This problem only arises when we are made aware of the prediction. For this reason, he initially casts it as an epistemic problem:

The difficulty I feel comes to something like this: Can there be both certainty and uncertainty? One might say: Aren't you in your description

⁹⁵ LFM, p. 242.

⁹⁶ LFW, p. 442.

presupposing two contradictory states of mind in this person at the same time, that of not knowing and that of knowing?⁹⁷

The epistemic problem would be that deliberation and decision require a level of uncertainty about what one is going to do, and yet the prediction implies that one already knows what it is one will do. We might say this is a straightforward contradiction or make the weaker claim that there is just no point in going through a process of deciding. Wittgenstein is indeed initially taken with this problem, but he goes on to weaken the claim so that knowing what I will do next is not *always* in conflict with my choosing what to do, that ‘it is possible we know the whole time what we are going to choose and that nevertheless a process of choice is going on’.⁹⁸ Wittgenstein gives several examples of when our knowing what we will choose does not interfere with choosing. I may, for instance, predict what I will do and then remember only at the moment of choice. In this case, there are grounds for saying I knew what I will choose and for saying that I went through a process of choosing.

Yet, in this case it might be objected that I didn’t *know* what I will choose—I *knew* and then forgot—and that we have therefore merely avoided, rather than tackled, the epistemic problem outlined above. More interesting, therefore, is an example Wittgenstein raises of ‘reading a novel and applying it to a situation in your own life.’⁹⁹ The image this conjures up is of our reading a book and, seeing our thoughts laid out like stepping stones across a river, our acting on the basis of the author’s “prediction” of what the character does in similar circumstances to our own.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ LFW, p. 443.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

This does not seem to raise the same difficulty associated with our having our thoughts and choices predicted for us—perhaps because it is we who draw the inference between the thoughts contained in the book and our own situation. Of course, this is a rarefied example and different from the case where we are told outright that we will do x and then try to decide to do x .

Recognising this, Wittgenstein continues that it is not the epistemic problem *per se* that leads prediction to undermine choice. Rather, the undermining comes from the fact that, having one's actions predicted seems to undercut any *purpose* for deliberation; it seems to rob deliberation and decision of their *point*.¹⁰⁰ And quite generally, if scientific discoveries lead to increasingly successful predictions of our action, our practices based around the distinction between freedom and compulsion might likewise seem to lose their point. What we are being asked to consider is not a concession to the incompatibilist's thesis that a belief in freedom of the will is logically incompatible with our decisions being causally determined. Rather, what we are being asked to consider is a process in which, through our ever-increasing attention on the successes of scientific explanation and prediction, our practices of freedom and resentment start to lose their point for us.

Characteristically, Wittgenstein portrays the relationship between an increased awareness of the causes of our actions and our ceasing to draw distinctions (or deliberate), in terms of our playing a game.¹⁰¹ Whilst it remains implicit in what he says here, it is evident that he is hinting at choice being a language-game that we

¹⁰⁰ LFW, p. 443; 'One might say: "If I had prophesied to Mr. Malcolm what he was going to choose tomorrow and he had read my prophecy, then he would not deliberate."'

¹⁰¹ Cf. Bouwsma 1986, p. 18; 'the real puzzle is that our attitudes, holding people responsible, praising, blaming, might be quite different from what they are, if we could actually *see* the succession of causes at work.'

could stop playing. To begin with, Wittgenstein uses the analogy with a game of chess or roulette in order to explain that, if we could predict the outcome, we might stop playing the game.¹⁰²

Wittgenstein anticipates the objection that this shows that roulette is ‘no game of chance at all’ and that we only ‘think that it is a game of chance [in] our ignorance.’¹⁰³ Wittgenstein says he would contradict this by saying: “No. It is a game of chance now that we are ignorant; if in the future we were no longer ignorant it would no longer be a game of chance.”¹⁰⁴ It may seem as if this is no contradiction at all. He calls it one, however, based on an argument we have already considered; namely, that denying freedom of the will is not the same as affirming that we are compelled, since compulsion requires a foil, i.e. we must be able to answer the question “compelled as opposed to what?” Similarly, playing roulette as a game of chance means playing it without knowledge of the outcome. At the same time this explains how someone can cheat at roulette, i.e. by knowing or rigging the result. It is this contrast, and our ignorance, that makes our playing the game matter (i.e. meaningful, intelligible, etc.). Wittgenstein is therefore right to say that the former claim, if taken as an absolute claim (i.e. “there are no games of chance”), is contradicted by the fact that the game *is* a game of chance if it is played in ignorance of the outcome.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² LFW, p. 443.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. TLP, 5.1362; ‘Freedom of the will consists in the fact that future actions are now not known.’ (Cf. NB, 27.4.15)

Now, a natural objection to Wittgenstein's view in this respect is that holding people responsible is not a game like roulette; that is, it matters in a completely different way. It is not enough for us to say it is meaningful, now we are ignorant, to punish people for their wrongdoings if we are, by some objective standard, wrong to do so. Wittgenstein's response to this line of objection is scarcely clear; I will address the issue in subsequent chapters. What is of first importance, however, is to understand the upshot that is drawn from his analogy with games in this context:

We can't even say that if prediction was possible Moore and I would not play the game. You might say: The point of the game would then be different. And the point of choosing would be changed if we had a prediction of it.¹⁰⁶

Wittgenstein argues that the loss of our ignorance, i.e. the knowledge of the laws that govern our actions, would simply 'change the business'.¹⁰⁷ In other words, we would have a *different* way of thinking/acting. Wittgenstein keeps an open mind whether, in the scenario he entertains, a heightened awareness of the causes of our own actions would lead to a revolution or an evolution of our practices. The LFW end on this thought: that whether or not this 'change in the business' would amount to us playing a *new game* or rather *the same game in a new way* is a moot point. Wittgenstein closes by saying: 'I would say: You can call it a different game, or not call it a different game.'¹⁰⁸ In any case, Wittgenstein clearly thinks that our ways of going on with terms like 'freedom' and 'compulsion'—our ways of 'playing the game'—are

¹⁰⁶ LFW, pp. 443-4.

¹⁰⁷ LFW, p. 443.

¹⁰⁸ LFW, p. 444.

capable of being fundamentally changed by our increased awareness of the causes of our actions.

Thus, to the straightforward question of whether or not Wittgenstein is a compatibilist, we can answer in the affirmative *provided* only that we assume the minimal definition of compatibilism as anti-incompatibilism. That is, whereas Wittgenstein explicitly denies that we could say that a person's decision was not free because it was determined by natural laws, he falls short of claiming that the freedom of a person's decision is compatible with being determined by natural laws. Furthermore, as we have also seen, it is central to Wittgenstein's approach to acknowledge that an increased awareness of natural laws might erode the categorical difference upon which the compatibilist's arguments rest. Accordingly, to the question of whether or not Wittgenstein thinks that anti-incompatibilism is sufficient to provide a defence of freedom of the will, I believe we must answer in the negative. The explanation for this consistent, if distinctive, combination of claims is that Wittgenstein regards a compatibilist answer to the Compatibility Question as being, at most, a way of defending the *possibility* of freedom of the will, i.e. a defence of the view that determinism underdetermines the conclusion that we lack freedom of the will. In the standard sense of the label, Wittgenstein is *not* a compatibilist.

In this chapter, I have shown how Wittgenstein's own approach to the question of the freedom of the will, as developed primarily in the LFW, comes apart from that of an avowed compatibilist like Nielsen, despite important common ground between the two thinkers. In the next chapter, I shall further bring out the distinctive contributions that the LFW stand to make by showing how Wittgenstein's own approach diverges at crucial junctures from that adopted by another thinker whom it

is natural to associate with a broadly Wittgensteinian approach to freedom of the will; namely, P. F. Strawson. Like Wittgenstein, and in a way quite different from Nielsen, Strawson also puts a characterisation of our ‘attitudes’ and practices at the forefront of his analysis. However, I shall show how Wittgenstein’s approach continues to distinguish itself by the fact that he seeks neither to defend nor deny belief in freedom of the will. Specifically, I hope to show how Wittgenstein’s apparent impartiality vis-a-vis this belief makes him better placed than is Strawson to respond to the often-levelled charge that an approach that falls back on the entrenched nature of our existing ‘practices’ and ‘attitudes’ only ducks the ‘real’ question of whether or not we are *right* to believe in freedom of the will.

Chapter II

Reactive Attitudes in Wittgenstein's “Lectures on Freedom of the Will”

The human beings around us exert just by their presence a power which belongs uniquely to themselves to stop, to diminish, or modify, each movement which our bodies design. A person who crosses our path does not turn aside our steps in the same manner as a street sign, no one stands up, or moves about, or sits down again in quite the same fashion when he is alone in a room as when he has a visitor.

—Simone Weil, ‘*The Illiad*: Poem of Might’

I turn now to consider how Wittgenstein's "Lectures on Freedom of the Will" (LFW)—as we have described this approach in a preliminary way in Chapter One—stands in relation to a lecture given by a near-contemporary of Wittgenstein's; namely P. F. Strawson's seminal essay, "Freedom & Resentment" (FR).¹⁰⁹ As we shall see, there are close affinities between the two approaches. It is therefore unsurprising that Wittgenstein's account appears, on the face of it, to be vulnerable to some of the same major lines of criticism that have been levelled against Strawson's more widely-discussed contribution. As in the preceding chapter, my first aim here is to assess Strawson's own line of defence of the practice-based framework that, I shall argue, is closer to the approach of the LFW than standard forms of compatibilism. However, I will show that the two approaches diverge in a way that makes Wittgenstein's better placed to withstand the 'Systematic Concern' that, as we shall see, threatens to undermine Strawson's practice-based approach to the problem of freedom of the will. Ultimately, this reflects the way in which Wittgenstein's own practice-based approach is put to very different philosophical ends than Strawson's aim to defend what he calls a 'radically modified optimism' about freedom of the will. Wittgenstein's own development of a practice-based approach is part of a wider therapeutic methodology that I will bring to light in the final chapter.

I shall begin by identifying the general framework that, as I shall argue, has a bearing on both Wittgenstein's overall approach in the LFW and Strawson's defence of our primitive commitment to a system of interpersonal, 'reactive attitudes', e.g. feelings of resentment and gratitude, praise and blame, and the like. I shall

¹⁰⁹ Strawson, P. F. 2008, pp. 1-28.

characterise the general framework that both Wittgenstein and Strawson develop as a *practice-based approach*. I shall initially make this characterisation convincing by demonstrating the centrality in both the LFW and Strawson's essay of the idea that our attitudes towards other human beings as free and responsible can be understood in terms of practices that are fundamentally shaped by primitive and spontaneous expressions of human nature. I shall then consider Strawson's claim that these primitive expressions of human nature are too 'deeply-rooted' for us to contemplate repudiating them entirely. This claim I will consider alongside what McKenna and Russell, following Fischer and Ravizza, call a Systematic Concern that any defence of the commitment to act *as if* people are free and responsible overlooks the 'real' question of whether or not we are *actually* free and responsible.¹¹⁰ Given their comparative approaches, the question of what resources are available to Strawson to respond to the Systematic Concern is pivotal for our assessment of Wittgenstein's position as well. I will conclude that Wittgenstein is better placed than Strawson to respond to the Systematic Concern: for, in Wittgenstein, human practices and institutions, primitive reaction and facts of human nature, are not supposed to play the justificatory role that Strawson's critics are worried they cannot possibly fulfil. From the perspective of the LFW, Strawson's practice-based approach indeed inevitably falls short of a *defence* of our attitudes of freedom and resentment.

¹¹⁰ McKenna & Russell 2008, p. 12. See also, Fischer & Ravizza 1993, p. 18.

Part One: Wittgenstein on the primacy of practice

It is widely recognised that, in a general way, Strawson's FR bears the marks of Wittgensteinian influence.¹¹¹ But the precise conceptual relationship between Wittgenstein's own approach to the problem of freedom of the will and Strawson's seminal essay on the topic needs closer scrutiny. In what follows, I shall explain the sense in which I think Wittgenstein's LFW connect with a certain eschewal of theoretical justification in favour of an appeal to the primacy of practice. I will shortly come to show how and in what sense Strawson's framework is practice-based but first I should like to examine how a practice-based approach manifests itself in the LFW.

Consider, first, a passage from *The Yellow Book* (1933), in which Wittgenstein articulates his general misgivings about a certain style of explanation of phenomena:

There is one type of explanation which I wish to criticise, arising from the tendency to explain a phenomenon by *one* cause, and then to show the phenomenon to be “really” another. This tendency is enormously strong. It is what is responsible for people saying that punishment must be one of three things, revenge, a deterrent, or improvement ... Other examples of it are the explanation of striking a table in a rage as a remnant of a time when people struck to kill ...

The idea which underlies this sort of method is that *every* time what

¹¹¹ E.g. Strawson, P. F. 1985, pp. 3, 10, 14-19, 24-27, etc.; Strawson, P. F. 1954, pp. 70-99. See also, Snowdon, P. “Foreword” in Strawson, P. F. 2008, pp. vii-ix.

is sought is *the* motive ... [Yet] striking an object may merely be a natural reaction in rage.¹¹²

Wittgenstein opposes any assumption that spontaneous (re)actions must *in every case* be the expression of a single, particular motive, e.g. the desire to do something useful. The danger he associates with this method is that it misrepresents that which it seeks to capture; in Wittgenstein's words, 'to show the phenomenon to be "really" another'. In the above, Wittgenstein gives the example of someone striking a table, not out of a primeval desire to kill, but simply as 'a natural reaction in rage'. In his view, the quality of the act may well be distorted if we try to explain it in terms unconnected with the circumstances of the act, e.g. "He may say it was because I didn't ask permission, but it's "really" just because he's an alpha male". Wittgenstein has no objection to such modes of explanation *per se*, merely to its being a universal explanation of human practices. What he wants to insist on is that it is at least *possible* that striking a table, perhaps in anger at something someone has just said, need not be performed in order to get revenge, or to deter the individual from saying more, or as an improvement to someone's character, or as a consequence of his being an 'alpha male' or whatever. The alternative possibility he proposes is that striking the table is simply a spontaneous reaction, e.g. an expression of rage.

It is for similar reasons that Wittgenstein rules out attempts to explain freedom of the will as, say, decisive decision-making. To begin with, Nielsen's methodology—of seeking some cognitive basis for why some people are held responsible and others not—presumes that *every* time (a person acts freely) *the* motive can be sought. As in his own case of explaining punishment as 'revenge, a deterrent, or improvement',

¹¹² AWL, p. 33. Cf. LC, p. 50; "Why do we punish criminals? Is it from a desire for revenge? Is it in order to prevent a repetition of the crime?" And so on. The truth is that there is no one reason.'

Wittgenstein objects to claims, such as Nielsen's, on the grounds that we ought not to unduly disregard spontaneous reaction as a form of free agency. Furthermore, as the above passage illustrates, there is no imperative to seek *the* motive behind a 'natural reaction in rage'; the further implicit suggestion being that the person who strikes the table need not seek his antagonist's motive either. This represents an altogether different picture to the one offered by soft-determinists, like Nielsen.

At the same time, however, Wittgenstein does not dispense with the picture altogether; it is not his wish to see *one* picture replaced with *one* other. For instance, he does not preclude our explaining spontaneous (re)actions in terms of an underlying motive. As Brian Clack observes, with respect to Wittgenstein's more widespread remarks on James Fraser's tendency to 'every time seek *the* motive', it can hardly be denied that often the motive for a given practice *is* usefulness.¹¹³ Wittgenstein is perfectly prepared to accept that the burning of an effigy, for example, *might* be a mere remnant of early attempts to punish.¹¹⁴ The point, however, is that the 'destruction of an effigy may have its own complex of feelings without being connected with an ancient practice, or with usefulness'.¹¹⁵ Clack is right, then, to note that where Wittgenstein's approach can be called anti-intellectualist, he is taking what I think we may characterise as a practice-based approach.¹¹⁶ In short, he thinks that our actions and reactions can sometimes simply be expressive of our rage, for example—or our pain or joy or fear or whatever—and that there is therefore no need in general to search for a form of explanation of the practice which explains away the

¹¹³ Clack 2001, pp. 13-18. Cf. RFGB, pp. 4, 12.

¹¹⁴ Cf. RFGB, p. 125.

¹¹⁵ AWL, pp. 33-34. Cf. RFGB, p. 106.

¹¹⁶ Clack 2001, pp. 18-21.

phenomena these practices immediately express. As Wittgenstein summarised the thought in *On Certainty*, ‘the practice has to speak for itself’.¹¹⁷

This conception of the primacy of practice—and Wittgenstein’s opposition to intellectualising accounts of the foundations of our practices—are crucial for our understanding of the LFW. Specifically, it illuminates why, in the LFW, statements about an individual’s responsibility (e.g. “the man is responsible” or “the man is not responsible”) are said not to be substantive claims, i.e. ‘not corrected by experience’.¹¹⁸ For Wittgenstein, saying “the man is responsible” or “the man is not responsible” cannot be taken solely or primarily as an opinion or reflectively endorsed judgement about the individual or the action in question. Generally, what is expressed in statements concerning an individual’s responsibility is an attitude toward that person; e.g. feelings of love, resentment, remorse, etc. The primacy of these attitudes comes out most famously in §178 of the *Investigations*:

‘I believe that he is suffering.’——Do I also believe that he isn't an automaton? It would go against the grain to use the word in both connections ... ‘I believe that he is not an automaton,’ just like that, so far makes no sense.

My attitude towards him is an attitude towards a soul. I am not of the *opinion* that he has a soul.¹¹⁹

The difference between an attitude and an opinion is here brought down to a difference in the way the word ‘belief’ is used to refer to examples of each.

¹¹⁷ OC, §139.

¹¹⁸ LFW, p. 440.

¹¹⁹ PI, §178.

Wittgenstein does not think it is *wrong* to say, “I believe that *P* is suffering” or “I believe that *P* is a person”. Rather, in Wittgenstein’s phrase, ‘it goes against the grain to use the word in both connections’. I take this to mean that it would be wrong to use the word ‘belief’ *in the same way* in both contexts. That is, we can regard someone *as* suffering, so to speak, ‘just like that’, as a natural reaction, perhaps, to seeing *P* in pain. By contrast, believing that ‘*P* is a person’ (or that ‘*P* is not an automaton’) cannot occur ‘just like that’. In short, the belief that ‘*P* is a person’ is not to be identified with any specific reaction, e.g. to console, to resent, to flee. Believing that ‘*P* is a person’ might instead be thought of as justifying *any* (or all) of these ‘natural reactions’. But Wittgenstein wants to show that there is a certain sense in which our natural reactions are, and must be, without justification or ground; for they are primitive expressions of our form of life and enter into the conditions for anything counting as a justification or ground.¹²⁰

Of course, much more needs to be said about how we can regard someone as suffering ‘just like that’. As the above passage attests, the distinction between having an attitude towards a soul and having the opinion that someone has a soul is bound up with Wittgenstein’s rethinking of, amongst other things, what it means to believe that someone is suffering. A full appraisal of Wittgenstein’s well-known arguments in this regard is beyond the remit of this thesis. Suffice it to say here that, for Wittgenstein, seeing the pain on someone’s face need only involve reacting to the other’s suffering. For Wittgenstein, this means that expressions of pain—a grimace, a wince, or weeping—and any reaction on the part of another—a kind word, disgust, passivity—

¹²⁰ That is not to say that the attitudes we express towards other human beings cannot be formed, or *informed* rather, on the strength of a belief, e.g. concerning an individual’s cognitive abilities, only that the attitudes themselves should be placed, as David Cockburn puts it, ‘at the centre of the picture.’ Cockburn 1990, p. 7.

are not based on an inference about an inner mental state or metaphysical property. Accordingly, statements that express feeling—e.g. “I am in pain”, “I’m no hero”, etc.—are not descriptions of mental states since they are not describing *anything*.¹²¹ Saying “my tooth hurts” does not invite, even as a possibility, a dentist (or anyone else) responding “maybe, maybe not”.¹²²

As I shall argue, it is Wittgenstein’s distinction between an attitude towards a soul and an opinion that someone has a soul that relates his overall approach to such questions to Strawson’s practice-based approach in FR. For instance, just as a reaction to seeing someone in pain does not entail anything beyond a reaction to a flinch, a cry, a grimace, etc., neither does the belief that “*P* is to blame” entail a further belief that ‘*P* is not an automaton’ (or that ‘*P* is a person’). All it does entail, as Wittgenstein elsewhere attests, is a primitive form of agreement, not in opinions, but in ‘judgments’. The remark in §178, concerning a primitive attitude towards some *as* suffering, therefore needs to be understood in the light of a more general point made later in the *Investigations* (§241-2). Wittgenstein states that ‘if language is to be a means of communication there must be agreement not only in definitions but also (queer as this may sound) in judgements’.¹²³ Very generally, his suggestion that judgements are as essential as definitions in making language possible sounds queer because of the worry that, on this picture, the necessary truths of logic turn out to be contingent on human consensus; as though the truth of ‘*p* or not-*p*’ for example is contingent on enough people agreeing with it. Thus, Wittgenstein anticipates the concern that this ‘seems to abolish logic’ since ‘human agreement decides what is

¹²¹ PI, §304.

¹²² Cf. PG, p. 220.

¹²³ PI, §242.

true and what is false'.¹²⁴ But Wittgenstein goes on to counter this worry by clarifying that the kind of agreement he has in mind is emphatically not agreement in the contents of judgements; agreement in definitions, opinions, assertions and the like. Rather, he has in mind agreement in a form of life: human beings' 'mutual attunement' to the world as this is inflected, first and foremost, in the language they share.¹²⁵ Thus: 'It is what human beings say that is true and false; and they agree in the language they use. That is not agreement in opinions but in form of life.'¹²⁶

In the context of the LFW, I take Wittgenstein therefore to be saying that agreements or disagreements in definition, e.g. over what constitutes freedom, cannot be divorced from the attitudes and feelings that are constitutive of those definitions, e.g. feelings of resentment. What is being talked about is a shared framework which, precisely because of its often primitive, non-reflective, and non-rational character, is not to be explained in terms of further grounds.¹²⁷ Notably, this is not to say that peoples' attitudes, feelings etc. are a separate condition for our practices of freedom and resentment. Rather, it is to say that these attitudes and feelings are constitutive of these practices, part and parcel of them.

An important corollary of the claim that agreements in definitions also presuppose agreements in (primitive, non-reflective) judgements is that we can more readily account for disagreements in opinion than we can disagreements in

¹²⁴ PI, §241.

¹²⁵ Cf. Cavell 1979, pp. 32, 79, 115, 168. '...Wittgenstein's relation of grammar and criteria to "forms of life", and ... the sense in which human convention is not arbitrary but constitutive of significant speech and activity ... depends upon nothing more and nothing less than shared forms of life, call it our mutual attunement or agreement in our criteria.'

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Rush Rhees notes in this regard that Wittgenstein does not intend that we ask 'What facts make language possible?' as if we could determine what facts are unshakeable. Rhees acknowledges rather that there are simply some facts that we do not question.

judgement. A pertinent example of this is given in *On Certainty* where it is said that a disagreement in judgement might ‘drag everything with it and plunge [everything] into chaos.’¹²⁸ The example Wittgenstein uses is my doubting that the person standing before me is my friend whom I have known for years. He contrasts such a doubt with the, hardly less baffling, discovery that the pan set on the stove has frozen rather than boiled. The reason why, by contrast with the former, the latter sort of doubt does not threaten to ‘plunge us into chaos’ is that we are still left with the ‘sureness of the game’.¹²⁹ We would, in the case of the frozen pan, ask questions about variables, attempt to recreate the same results, etc. In this case, a scientific or empiricist methodology is what constitutes the ‘sureness of the game’. This sureness is ‘torn away’, however, in cases where the most primitive expression of an attitude is called into question. What is lost in such cases is agreement in form of life.

It must be conceded that what it means to agree/disagree in a form of life is not captured solely (or exclusively) by the distinction between an attitude towards someone (e.g. as a friend) and a reflectively endorsed opinion (e.g. that water boils when heated). At most, the distinction between an attitude and an opinion conveys the way in which, when disagreements in judgement arise, there is no ready-to-hand methodology for coping with the resulting uncertainty.¹³⁰ On the other hand, one’s consternation at finding that a heated pan of water has frozen solid is tempered by an expectation, or the hope, that some explanation can be found to explain it. There is undoubtedly a connection to be made between this expectation, and any accompanying methodology, and what Wittgenstein describes in the LFW as a feeling

¹²⁸ OC, §613.

¹²⁹ OC, §617.

¹³⁰ This is not to say that no methodology can be presented.

that “there *must* be some law” to explain that which is, for all intents and purposes, lawless.¹³¹ In this way, Wittgenstein can be taken to be alerting us to a still greater danger, viz. that in presuming that the only ‘real’ problems are those that involve disagreements in opinions, and thereby taking the ‘sureness of the game’ for granted, we run the even greater risk of plunging *everything* into chaos.

These general points bear directly on Wittgenstein’s approach to the question of the freedom of the will in the following way. The ‘complex of feelings’ associated with a belief in freedom of the will, i.e. feelings of rage, resentment, pity, gratitude etc., are arguably all a part of the ‘*sureness* of the game’. The existence of this complex of feelings is, in Wittgenstein’s view, constituted by our attitudes towards each other, e.g. our holding an individual responsible for their actions (or our not holding them responsible) in any given case.¹³² Our ‘natural reactions’ are not, therefore, something that can be doubted, according to Wittgenstein, *in the same way* that we question a practice that is deployed on the basis of a reflective judgement, e.g. of its *usefulness*. That is, the feelings and attitudes concerned have a sureness that is bound up with what each is taken to be an expression *of*.

Once again, this is not to say which practices do and do not constitute agreement in a form of life. Neither, as we shall see, does Wittgenstein deny that reflectively endorsed opinions have a significant, albeit indirect, role to play in shaping the attitudes we express towards ourselves and others, i.e. as persons. Accordingly, Wittgenstein’s approach to the problem of freedom of the will takes a practice-based line in so far as he sets out to show that our practices of holding

¹³¹ LFW, p. 430/1.

¹³² I will say more on the parenthetical possibility, i.e. not holding people responsible, in the next chapter.

responsible (or our not holding them responsible) are not exclusively, or most fundamentally, a matter of our reflectively endorsed judgements. On the contrary, he thinks that how we treat others must, to some degree, be expressive of our primitive natural reactions.

This aspect of Wittgenstein's thinking is, like his opposition to incompatibilism, consistent with certain defences of freedom of the will. Nevertheless, as was the case in the preceding chapter, these similarities are misconstrued if they are taken as providing evidence in favour of a compatibilistic or practice-based defence of freedom of the will. In order to demonstrate that, for Wittgenstein, a practice-based approach cannot serve as a *defence* of freedom of the will, I will now introduce P. F. Strawson's defence of the so-called reactive attitudes before contrasting it with Wittgenstein's approach in the LFW.

Part Two: P. F. Strawson's "Freedom & Resentment"

Shortly after the publication of the *Investigations*, P. F. Strawson sets out, in FR, to defend the commitment to the reactive attitudes against a certain tendency to think in terms of a single explanation. Strawson, too, is interested in providing an account of the 'sureness' with which a belief in freedom of the will is expressed. The passage from *The Yellow Book*, in particular, foreshadows Strawson's defence of a 'complex of feelings' that he associates with a belief in freedom of the will.¹³³ In Strawson's own terms, this is 'that complicated web of attitudes and feelings which form an essential part of the moral life as we know it' and that is not founded on a judgement

¹³³ AWL, p. 33.

about its usefulness, e.g. in promoting certain behaviour.¹³⁴ For Strawson, as for Wittgenstein, usefulness cannot be *the* motive, for two reasons. Firstly, the evidence speaks against it in many cases. From the outset, Strawson is critical of those who defend freedom of the will by appealing to its usefulness as a measure of social control, partly because such defences fail to capture all we should have to say concerning freedom of the will. It is also partly due to the second reason why usefulness cannot be *the* motive, namely that there is no one, homogeneous justification for a commitment; and not one that makes possible a primitive and spontaneous commitment, i.e. *prior* to any opinion. This last corresponds, as we shall see, with Strawson's own defence of the reactive attitudes and is a reply to those who object that, since usefulness does not justify a commitment to the reactive attitudes, the commitment is unjustifiable.

Before considering objections to Strawson's position, it is worth pausing to emphasise further the methodological common ground he shares with Wittgenstein. In the LFW, Wittgenstein observes that 'Normally, unless we philosophise, we don't talk this way', i.e. we do not talk about a belief in freedom of the will or about justifications for such a belief; rather, 'we talk of making decisions.'¹³⁵ To bring out the implausibility of thinking of our 'belief in freedom of the will' purely as a matter of ratiocination, Wittgenstein envisages a person coolly walking about a room and saying, "yes. I can do this. I can do that", as if this would prove that they are acting freely.¹³⁶ This portrays clearly what both Wittgenstein and Strawson think is lacking from metaphysical attempts to justify belief in freedom of the will; namely, a proper

¹³⁴ Strawson, P. F. 2008, p. 24.

¹³⁵ LFW, p. 434.

¹³⁶ LFW, p. 438.

sensitivity to the role that this belief *actually* plays in our everyday form of life.

Strawson accordingly calls for a more ‘heated’ discussion, i.e. one that remains in close contact with the attitudes and feelings we express everyday:

[We must] try and keep before our minds something it is easy to forget when we are engaged in philosophy, especially in our cool, contemporary style, viz. what it is actually like to be involved in ordinary interpersonal relationships, ranging from the most intimate to the most casual.¹³⁷

Strawson’s aim is to stay close to the ‘ordinary interpersonal relationships’ that, for him, are inextricably linked with the ‘natural reactions’ (Strawson: ‘reactive attitudes’) he defends; ‘being involved in inter-personal relationships as we normally understand them precisely is being exposed to the range of reactive attitudes and feelings that is in question.’¹³⁸

The *interpersonal* nature of the reactive attitudes is characterised by the demands we impose on others (and ourselves) to demonstrate ‘some degree of goodwill’ towards others.¹³⁹ Strawson contrasts the reactive attitudes with an ‘objective attitude’ that involves seeing another human being ‘as an object of social policy; as a subject for what, in a wide range of sense, might be called treatment.’¹⁴⁰ He accepts that we often appropriately treat people objectively, but that we do so ‘in a wide range of sense’. Indeed, as we shall see, it is precisely the *variety* of ways in

¹³⁷ Strawson, P. F. 2008, p. 3. Cf. LFW, p. 438: ‘If I am quite cool, I am inclined to walk about in my room and move my head in various ways, and say ‘Yes. I can do this. I can do that’ etc. ... This is a trivial and in a way a stupid case I have described.’

¹³⁸ Strawson, P. F. 2008, p. 12.

¹³⁹ Strawson, P. F. 2008, p. 3.

¹⁴⁰ Strawson, P. F. 2008, p. 4.

which we treat people objectively that Strawson thinks gives the lie to the ‘pessimist’s’ claim that it follows from the supposition that the thesis of determinism is true that we ought to adopt—and can therefore make sense of the idea of—a *universal* objective attitude, i.e. that we ought to treat everyone objectively, all of the time.

Strawson sets himself against not only such a pessimist but also against a traditional sort of optimist regarding the prospect of holding onto our practices of freedom and resentment even if it turns out that determinism is true.¹⁴¹ The traditional philosophical ‘optimist’ in this connection is therefore the soft-determinist who, like Nielsen, argues that nothing about our being determined by natural laws gives us reason to doubt the freedom of our decisions and that we may therefore defend the latter, for example, on the grounds of its utility.¹⁴² Despite ultimately defending an optimist line, Strawson initially criticises *both* camps, on the grounds that each displays the same tendency to ‘over-intellectualise the facts’.¹⁴³ More specifically, the traditional optimist is criticised for an ‘incomplete empiricism’ or ‘one-eyed utilitarianism’ with respect to the utility of the reactive attitudes; i.e. by a ‘one-eyed utilitarianism’ Strawson means the belief that holding people responsible for their actions is beneficial in curbing undesirable behaviour.¹⁴⁴ This is markedly similar to the criticism from *The Yellow Book*, i.e. against usefulness being *every time the*

¹⁴¹ LFW, p. 441. Wittgenstein also refers to ‘optimism’ and ‘pessimism’ and in a markedly similar way. Even so, Wittgenstein reverses the definitions; e.g. an ‘optimist’ is someone who thinks that ‘is is only a matter of time...’ before we know all the laws of a human being, whereas the pessimists ‘don’t see the point of the hypothesis at all’.

¹⁴² In Nielsen’s case ‘utility’ might be taken to mean its usefulness in diagnosing mental illness, abnormality, etc.

¹⁴³ Strawson, P. F. 2008, p. 25.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

motive.¹⁴⁵ This is what Strawson's refers to as the optimist's *and* pessimist's tendency to 'over-intellectualise the facts'; i.e. to reduce all human behaviour, or a certain kind of behaviour, to an explanation in terms of hidden psychological processes.¹⁴⁶

Wittgenstein's addendum to this—that the same tendency 'is responsible for people saying that punishment must be one of three things, revenge, a deterrent, or improvement'¹⁴⁷—is equally prescient of Strawson's condemnation of the optimist's position as an 'incomplete empiricism' or 'one-eyed utilitarianism'.¹⁴⁸ Moreover, Strawson maintains that usefulness is not merely an insufficient basis for feeling resentment towards someone, it is 'not even the right sort' of basis.¹⁴⁹ The right sort of basis is presented alongside Strawson's attempt to 'reconcile' the optimist and pessimist, i.e. his attempt to fill in that which the pessimist rightly finds to be lacking from the optimist's account, namely some account of the first-personal involvement of the agent.

Having conceded this point to the pessimist, what Strawson asks in return is that the pessimist give up the 'panicky metaphysics' that is traditionally taken to epitomise the first-personal involvement of the agent as a *causa sui*.¹⁵⁰ Strawson's objection again turns on a disagreement with 'the facts as we know them'. It is not only that the definition of 'freedom of the will' as the agent's ability to manifest his/her actions is overly restrictive. It is also that, like the optimist, the pessimist

¹⁴⁵ AWL, p. 33.

¹⁴⁶ Strawson, P. F. 2008, p. 25.

¹⁴⁷ AWL, p. 33.

¹⁴⁸ Strawson, P. F. 2008, p. 25.

¹⁴⁹ Strawson, P. F. 2008, p. 4.

¹⁵⁰ Strawson, P. F. 2008, p. 27.

demonstrates a propensity to ‘over-intellectualise the facts’. That is, the pessimist relies on a cognitive explanation, even when confronted with examples of spontaneous (in the sense of immediate, non-reflective) action.¹⁵¹ Once again, the method is to explain disparate phenomena with reference to a single cause, namely the agent. Thus, both the optimist and the pessimist seek (and fail) to grasp, through the defence of an opinion, that which we know can also be grasped by the primitive and spontaneous expression of an attitude.

This brings us close to identifying what is, for Strawson, the right ‘sort of basis’ for the maintenance of the reactive attitudes, viz. the reactive attitudes themselves:

Only by attending to this range of attitudes can we recover from the facts as we know them a sense of what we mean, i.e. of *all* we mean, when, speaking the language of morals, we speak of desert, responsibility, guilt, condemnation, and justice. But we *do* recover it from the facts as we know them. We do not have to go beyond them.¹⁵²

For Strawson, then, we can recover ‘all we mean’ with respect to freedom and resentment without resorting to either the optimist’s or the pessimist’s definitions of freedom of the will, as a means of improving society or as the manifestation of a *causa sui*. These definitions do not circumvent or in any way add to an understanding of the commitment to ‘that complicated web of attitudes and feelings which form an

¹⁵¹ Strawson, P. F. 2008, p. 25.

¹⁵² Strawson, P. F. 2008, p. 24.

essential part of the moral life as we know it'.¹⁵³ Certainly, for Strawson, the 'web of attitudes' (compare Wittgenstein's 'complex of feelings') can exist without going 'beyond them' to an 'external, 'rational' justification'. This is because we already have, at the outset, agreement in a form of life. That is, responsibility is a function of the practices of praising, blaming, resenting, etc. which we understand collectively and ostensibly as being held responsible. As Gary Watson puts it:

It is not that we hold people responsible because they *are* responsible; rather, the idea (*our* idea) that we are responsible is to be understood by the practice, which itself is not a matter of holding some propositions to be true, but of expressing our concerns and demands about our treatment of one another.¹⁵⁴

In ultimately siding with the optimist, Strawson does not lessen his opposition to the thought that the reactive attitudes are 'devices we calculatingly employ for regulative purposes'.¹⁵⁵ On the contrary, the 'radically' modified optimism he defends is vehemently opposed to this thought.¹⁵⁶ Strawson is more critical of the pessimist only because the optimist 'over-intellectualises the facts' in order to *reinforce* the expression of the reactive attitudes; subtracting the optimist's 'external, 'rational' justification' does nothing to undermine that expression, therefore.¹⁵⁷ By contrast, the removal of the pessimist's 'external, 'rational' justification' would, at least for the

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Watson 1987, in McKenna & Russell 2008, p. 121.

¹⁵⁵ Strawson, P. F. 2008, p. 27.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid; 'What is wrong is to forget that these practices, and their reception, the reactions to them, really are expressions of our moral attitudes and not merely devices we calculatingly employ for regulative purposes'.

¹⁵⁷ Strawson, P. F. 2008, p. 25.

pessimist, remove the *only* reason we have for expressing freedom and resentment.

This, I submit, is what Strawson means when he says that '[o]ur practices do not merely exploit our natures, they express them'; i.e. the reactive practices can often come first and are not therefore premised on an 'external, 'rational' justification'.¹⁵⁸

This last reference to human nature brings me to one final, and most important, point I wish to make before assessing the so-called 'Systematic Concern' regarding Strawson's defence of the reactive attitudes. The expression of the reactive attitudes is, for Strawson, most intimately an expression of human nature; he calls the commitment to the 'framework of attitudes and feelings' a 'natural fact, something as deeply rooted in our natures as our existence as social beings'.¹⁵⁹ In FR he makes the further claim 'that it is, for us as we are, practically inconceivable' that a 'general theoretical conviction', such as determinism, could 'so change our world that, in it, there were no longer any such things as inter-personal relationships'.¹⁶⁰ As indicated by the above analysis, Strawson is not simply making the naturalistic claim that human beings just are this way, i.e. reactive members of a moral community; he is also, and more specifically, purporting to diffuse any perceived threat to the maintenance of the reactive attitudes posed by the thesis of determinism. Yet it is Strawson's seemingly naturalistic claim that draws the most fire from his critics who argue that this overlooks the 'real' question of whether or not we are *actually* responsible.

¹⁵⁸ Strawson, P. F. 2008, p. 27.

¹⁵⁹ Strawson, P. F. 1985, p. 33. Cf. Strawson, P. F. 2008, p. 12; 'the human commitment to participation in ordinary inter-personal relations' is 'too thoroughgoing and deeply rooted ... to take seriously the thought.'

¹⁶⁰ Strawson, P. F. 2008, p. 12.

Part Three: A Systematic Concern regarding P. F. Strawson's naturalistic claim

In what follows, I will argue that, despite potential misreadings of Strawson's naturalistic claim, there is an intuitive and compelling case to answer associated with the Systematic Concern. Later, I shall reassess this concern by demonstrating the relative position of Strawson's naturalistic claim with respect to his overall argument, as well as to Wittgenstein's own account. In the latter case, my aim is to demonstrate that the objection raised by the Systematic Concern, that is compelling in Strawson's case, lacks teeth when it comes to Wittgenstein's own project.

For now, however, I shall take Strawson's naturalistic claim—that the attitudes and feelings expressed by human beings are too 'deeply rooted' to give up—at face value. The Systematic Concern this raises is based on a dichotomy between the practice of holding someone responsible, which Strawson defends, and the knowledge or certainty that the individual in question is actually responsible, which he does not defend. Fischer and Ravizza therefore highlight the following:

Strawson's theory may reasonably be said to give an account of what it is for agents to be held responsible, but there seems to be a difference between being *held* responsible and actually *being* responsible.¹⁶¹

The dichotomy between being *held* responsible and actually *being* responsible corresponds to the realisation that, even if the practical inconceivability of ceasing to treat one another reactively is assumed, this leaves the 'real' question unanswered, i.e.

¹⁶¹ Fischer & Ravizza 1993, p. 18. See McKenna & Russell 2008, p. 18; 'The problem that [Fischer & Ravizza] are concerned with is the possibility that there could be a systematic lack of correlation between our reactive attitudes and their appropriate and legitimate objects.'

of whether or not we are *right* to hold people responsible. The implication is that, even if successful, Strawson's naturalistic claim, like the optimist's appeal to utility, is the wrong sort of basis for a defence of our reactive attitudes. The lacuna in the optimist's original position therefore reasserts itself, now with respect to Strawson's 'radically modified' optimism. This is because the pessimist, far from settling for a measure of the first-personal manifestation of freedom, demands instead that the manifestation of freedom correspond with 'actual' freedom, and that holding people responsible be a function of 'real' responsibility. Any appeal to that to which human beings are, by nature, committed necessarily falls short of answering this concern:

By understanding responsibility primarily in terms of our actual practices of adopting or not adopting certain attitudes towards agents Strawson's theory risks blurring the difference between [holding and being responsible].¹⁶²

One way in which Fischer and Ravizza make clear this risk is by indicating the possibility of error when making judgements based solely on the reactive attitudes.¹⁶³ There is no doubt that we can be wrong in judging someone responsible, or in not judging someone who is responsible.¹⁶⁴ The worry at the heart of the Systematic Concern is therefore that our practices of freedom and resentment might, quite

¹⁶² Fischer & Ravizza 1993, p. 18.

¹⁶³ Ibid. 'Surely it is possible that one can be held responsible even though one in fact is not responsible, and conversely that one can be responsible even though one is actually not treated as a responsible agent.'

¹⁶⁴ A similar, yet different, problem is faced by the sort of optimist whom Strawson opposes, who (may) inadvertently justify punishing the innocent if this were as 'useful' as punishing the guilty. A rich collection of works have been published concerning this, mostly in response to the "Sheriff Example" in Smart & Williams 1973, p. 70

systemically, come adrift from the actual facts about whether or not people are responsible for their actions.

We must bear in mind that the Systematic Concern, as Fischer and Ravizza describe it, has less to do with potential mistakes made *in practice*, and more to do with the theoretical basis for these mistakes. That is to say, the spectre they raise of individual mistakes in holding this or that person responsible is but a stepping-stone to a wider criticism of Strawson's theoretical response to the pessimist. Thus, the scope of this concern widens with respect to the manifest differences in how the reactive attitudes come to be expressed in different communities. Here, the criticism is that differences in how the reactive attitudes play out in different communities is evidence that at least some communities are largely or wholly mistaken in holding or not holding certain kinds of people responsible. The point is not merely that a given community may turn out to be wrong with respect to whom they deem responsible or not responsible, but in the implication that, because of this possibility, there may be 'a *systematic* lack of correlation between our reactive attitudes and their appropriate and legitimate objects'.¹⁶⁵ What leads Fischer and Ravizza to wonder about 'situations in which communities hold people responsible who intuitively are not' is that there are manifest differences in the attitudes expressed by members of a certain community, not just with regard to shared linguistic practices themselves, but also with regard to who is eligible to participate in them.¹⁶⁶

It could be, for example, that an entire community has its reactive attitudes switched on or off in the wrong way and at the wrong

¹⁶⁵ McKenna & Russell 2008, p. 12

¹⁶⁶ Fischer & Ravizza 1993, p. 18.

times. The very possibility of this suggests that there is more to being responsible than what is generally targeted by our reactive attitudes and feelings.¹⁶⁷

As in the case of more specific errors of judgement, these wide-scale differences raise fundamental questions regarding whether or not there can be such a thing as a ‘responsible agent’, i.e. an appropriate object for the reactive attitudes. I will come to what I take to be the fullest extent of this concern in a moment, since I dispute that this ‘*systematic* lack of correlation’ conveys the full force of Fischer’s and Ravizza’s concern. That is to say, I agree with McKenna and Russell that we must be careful how we interpret the Systematic Concern, but I do not think that they take sufficient care to bring out what surely must be the basis for the concern we began with, viz. the dichotomy between holding and being responsible.

How, then, should we assess the Systematic Concern as a criticism of Strawson? To begin with, we may note that what his naturalistic claim purports to immunise from rational criticism is not a certain kind of reactive practice but a *commitment* to those practices. McKenna and Russell are therefore wrong to suggest that Strawson makes criticism of existing practices impossible.¹⁶⁸ It is true that Strawson’s position in FR rules out ‘external’ criticism, but he accepts ‘that there is endless room for modification, redirection, criticism, and justification’ from ‘*inside* the general structure or web of human attitudes and feelings’.¹⁶⁹ By ‘internal’, we

¹⁶⁷ McKenna & Russell 2008, p. 12.

¹⁶⁸ McKenna & Russell 2008, p. 18.

¹⁶⁹ Strawson, P. F. 2008, p. 25. Emphasis added.

need not, and indeed should not, take him to mean inside a particular community, but within shared linguistic practice, i.e. ‘the web of *human* attitudes’.

This helps to downplay the significance of ‘situations in which communities hold people responsible who intuitively are not’ since Strawson is in no way immunising practices from rational criticism across (or between) communities. We might say that the difference involved is as great as the difference between a moral disagreement and moral scepticism. That Strawson allows for radical moral disagreement is made evident by his acknowledgement that his own account is temporally and locally situated, and that the attitudes he describes are those of, what he calls, a ‘civilised’ society.¹⁷⁰ That he opposes moral scepticism is made evident by his opposition to the possibility of a universal objective attitude. Thus, Strawson’s defence of the ‘entire web of human attitudes’ is a defence, not of the practices to which a certain human being or community is committed, but rather of the commitment to a *particular* set of practices that express human nature. No mention need be made, therefore, of communities failing in their ‘approximation’ of ‘true’ responsibility. No attempt need be made, either, to promote an idealised community in which this dichotomy is resolved. In its most general form, the Strawsonian response to McKenna and Russell is that they are wrong where they seek to locate the force of Fischer’s and Ravizza’s criticism in the actual application of the reactive attitudes with respect to people who intuitively are not responsible.

Nevertheless, it can still be objected that Strawson, perhaps unwittingly, overlooks the way in which behaviour can, and should, be rationally scrutinised from the inside out. Derk Pereboom objects that opposition to racist or sexist behaviour

¹⁷⁰ Strawson, P. F. 2008, p. 26.

demonstrates just how the reactive attitudes can come to ‘be subject to justificatory pressures from highly general theoretical beliefs.’¹⁷¹ The thrust of Pereboom’s criticism is that the condemnation of a practice or set of practices can arise *out of* contemplation of those practices. That is to say, the practices are not theoretical to begin with but can be set aside in line with a mature view of those practices; not least in the guise of a general, theoretical principle, e.g. that it is wrong to discriminate against people based solely on their race or sex. What this objection means is that, whilst Strawson prevents the move from the theoretical to the practical, he cannot prevent the move from the practical to the theoretical.

What is more, Strawson can provide no justification of his own—beyond the practical inconceivability of the move—to preclude an equally mature view of our practices forming on the basis of a general, theoretical belief in determinism. For instance, Strawson’s assertion that the pessimist necessarily relies on an ‘over-intellectualised’ version of the facts (a charge that he says the optimist can avoid) loses credibility if it is intended to cover racist and sexist attitudes as well. It would be naïve to presume that racist or sexist viewpoints correspond only with an objective attitude, and hence that racist or sexist views are never primitively, i.e. reactively, expressed. Strawson is perhaps more likely to respond that *opposition* to racist or sexist views is also, and often at the same time, internal to ‘the general structure or web of human attitudes and feelings’.¹⁷² However, such a response does not vitiate a mature view of our web of attitudes and feelings wherein our reactive practices come to be subjected to ‘justificatory pressures from highly general theoretical beliefs’.

¹⁷¹ Pereboom 2008, pp. 153-154.

¹⁷² Strawson, P. F. 2008, p. 25. Emphasis added.

For this reason, Fischer's and Ravizza's initial Systematic Concern can be served by looking to specific examples of reactive malpractice; not as *evidence* of the widespread impropriety of reactive attitudes (as McKenna and Russell's treatment shows) but as evidence of the explanatory gap in Strawson's account. That is, Strawson is *not* committed to defending all instantiations of the reactive attitudes, since what he defends is a commitment to the 'entire web of human attitudes and feelings'—that incorporate both civilised *and uncivilised* elements.¹⁷³ In this, he is in agreement with Wittgenstein's earlier response to the question of whether 'human agreement decides what is true and what is false', viz. that 'It is what human beings say that is true and false; and they agree in the language they use. That is not agreement in opinions but in form of life.'¹⁷⁴ What is lacking from at least Strawson's version, however, is an understanding of how this agreement in 'form of life' comes to be altered, quite purposefully, in light of what we can agree is true and false. The explanatory debt owed by Strawson, then, is how the reactive attitudes come to be altered in light of what we regard to be appropriate and inappropriate feelings (of resentment, etc.), i.e. whether or not we *ought* to think as comes naturally.

Given Strawson's opposition to thinking about human behaviour purely in cognitive or motivational terms, we can be sure that any further response to the Systematic Concern will avoid the sort of explanation favoured by optimists such as Nielsen, i.e. an attempt to explain what it is that makes someone an appropriate target for the reactive attitudes, e.g. the ability to make decisive decisions. The pressing question, if we are to assess properly the Systematic Concern from Strawson's point

¹⁷³ Strawson, P. F. 2008, p. 12.

¹⁷⁴ PI, §241.

of view is whether, in making his naturalistic claim, he is able to confront the above dichotomy. This is, and will remain, a question about whether or not the reactive attitudes *simpliciter* can be disclosed in such a way as to avoid the alleged ‘difference between being *held* responsible and actually *being* responsible.’¹⁷⁵

It may be that Strawson confronts the dichotomy by providing an account of what he calls ‘self-reactive attitudes’, i.e. personal feelings of remorse or pride.¹⁷⁶ This is not a response Strawson directly offers to resolve this dichotomy, although it is commensurate with his naturalistic claim. It might be argued, along these lines, that an individual can legitimately be held responsible by virtue of his having corresponding feelings of *personal* responsibility. Upon being pronounced guilty, a perpetrator might feel that the outcome is no more than he deserves. It must be admitted straightaway, however, that such a self-reactive attitude certainly cannot overcome the above dichotomy by itself. Moreover, to no lesser extent than interpersonal reactive attitudes, self-reactive attitudes are liable to be incorrect. Survivor’s guilt is a definitive example of a self-reactive attitude that need have nothing to do with actually being responsible for surviving when others did not. The proposal we might consider, however, is that the *combination* of interpersonal and self-reactive attitudes may serve to strengthen the ties between being held responsible and actually being responsible in a way that either alone does not.

The above proposal fails, however, because it provides no reason to think that the combination of interpersonal and self-reactive attitudes would be mutually correcting. For instance, there is no reason to think that someone with survivor’s guilt

¹⁷⁵ Fischer & Ravizza 1993, p. 18.

¹⁷⁶ Cf. ‘Self-reactive attitudes’ see Strawson, P. F. 2008, p. 16, 23-24.

will be comforted to know that no-one else holds them responsible, or that someone's self-righteous attitude will be assuaged by being found guilty of a crime. Moreover, someone can be held responsible *as well as* feel personally responsible and nonetheless still lack responsibility.

As I have said, the appeal to self-reactive attitudes is not a response Strawson himself makes to the Systematic Concern. He does, however, directly respond in FR to the, at least related, concern that, for some, his naturalistic argument leaves the 'real' question unanswered. He adds that:

For [those with this concern] the real question is not a question about what we actually do, or why we do it. It is not even a question about what we would in fact do if a certain theoretical conviction gained general acceptance. It is a question about what it would be rational to do if determinism were true, a question about the rational justification of ordinary inter-personal attitudes in general.¹⁷⁷

Here, Strawson himself raises a similar concern to the Systematic Concern, as I shall continue to call it, which is 'not a question about what we actually do, or why' but about the theoretical basis for the commitment. In short, those with the Systematic Concern feel that there is no basis for the commitment, that the commitment to the reactive attitudes is a law unto itself. What is disputed is whether something further is required to explain or justify that commitment. On the basis of the naturalistic claim alone, I should say that more *is* required. So far, I have limited myself to an analysis of Strawson's naturalistic claim. In what follows, I shall turn to Strawson's non-naturalistic arguments which, I shall argue, go some way towards bridging the

¹⁷⁷ Strawson, P. F. 2008, p. 14.

explanatory gap between holding people responsible and being responsible; all without resorting to an ‘external, ‘rational’ justification’.

Part Four: An initial response to the Systematic Concern based on P. F. Strawson’s explicit arguments for the irrationality of repudiating the reactive attitudes

Strawson’s arguments in FR are chiefly directed at the pessimist’s proposed repudiation of the reactive attitudes on the basis of a general, theoretical belief in determinism. Where Strawson does directly attack the Systematic Concern, he does so by alluding to an implicit aspect of these arguments. In what follows, my primary aim shall be to make explicit that which remains implicit in Strawson’s arguments against the pessimist; and, in particular, against using a general, theoretical belief in *determinism* as a justification for pessimistically denying freedom of the will. Crucially, we shall see that what lies implicit in Strawson’s account is wholly independent of his naturalistic claim. Strawson writes:

A sustained objectivity of inter-personal attitude, and the human isolation this would entail, does not seem to be something of which human beings would be capable, even if some general truth were a theoretical ground for it. *But this is not all.* There is a further point, implicit in the foregoing, which must be made explicit.¹⁷⁸

To determine the extent to which Strawson relies upon the initial naturalistic claim, I shall examine two, further arguments, which I propose to call the Quick and Ramified

¹⁷⁸ Strawson, P. F. 2008, p. 12. Emphasis added.

arguments respectively. I shall then consider a response to the Systematic Concern based upon what Strawson says remains ‘implicit’ in these explicit arguments, namely the true depth and scope of his opposition to ‘external, rational justifications’ of our practices of freedom and resentment. I shall then turn to Wittgenstein’s response to a similar objection—that the ‘feeling of freedom’ is an insufficient basis for the belief that we are free—and how this prefigures, and at the same time broadens, Strawson’s response to the Systematic Concern.

By anticipating that there will be those, like Fischer and Ravizza, who will be inclined to think that ‘the real question has gone unanswered,’ Strawson concedes that, at the very least, his account has the potential to be misunderstood.

Unfortunately, he offers few directions as to how to respond *directly* to the Systematic Concern. As I hope to show, however, a detailed analysis of Strawson’s arguments reveals that the true basis for his opposition to the pessimist’s proposed repudiation of the reactive attitudes is far from reducible to what we have called the naturalistic claim. These arguments against the supposition that determinism entails the repudiation of the reactive attitudes weigh against a purely naturalistic reading of FR.

Strawson supposes that, in order to repudiate the reactive attitudes on the basis of a general theoretical belief, the pessimist has only two potential strategies:

1. Scaling up the objective treatment of ‘abnormal’ individuals on the grounds that determination by natural laws is a universal form of incapacitation.

OR

2. Scaling up the use of the objective attitude with respect of ‘normal’ individuals, on the grounds that any, and therefore all, human behaviour can be objectified.

To a certain extent, we are already familiar with these strategies since both are considered and responded to by Wittgenstein during the LFW. The phraseology employed is different, but the strategies are markedly similar.

The Quick Argument:

Strawson's first line of argumentation comprises what I call the Quick Argument against the pessimist's claim that it follows from the supposition that determinism is true that we should suspend the reactive attitudes *in the way* that we currently suspend them in local cases of incapacitation, e.g. upon diagnosis of an underlying physical or mental condition, albeit *universally*. According to Strawson, the pessimist maintains that we should treat *all* behaviour as we currently treat what we take to be abnormal cases if the deterministic thesis is true since, if this thesis is true, then *all* human behaviour is arguably a form of physical incapacitation. An individual's behaviour is, in other words, equally (and merely) demonstrative of that individual's underlying physical condition, i.e. the capacity, or incapacity, to act in certain ways. As such, there is no difference between a thief whose actions are physically determined and the compulsive behaviour of a kleptomaniac.

Strawson does not deny that we come to treat specific forms of incapacitation in this way, i.e. objectively. What he specifically rules out is the *quantitative* claim the pessimist might make, viz. the scaling up, as it were, of the objective attitude from its use in specific cases to a universal application, i.e. to all human behaviour. Strawson wants to show that the theoretical basis for adopting the objective attitude in specific cases precludes a universal application:

[T]he personal reactive attitudes in general, tend to give place, and it is judged by the civilized *should* give place, to objective attitudes,

just in so far as the agent is seen as excluded from ordinary adult human relationships by deep-rooted psychological abnormality—or simply by being a child. But it cannot be a consequence of any thesis which is not itself self-contradictory that abnormality is the universal condition.¹⁷⁹

The self-contradiction to which Strawson refers is similar to that which both Wittgenstein and Nielsen refer: that for a concept to have meaning it must be possible to specify conditions in which the term is used correctly as well as incorrectly; to fail with respect to the latter is to render the term a pleonasm. Accordingly, a prerequisite for deeming any state of affairs ‘abnormal’ is the capacity to judge what states of affairs would be considered ‘normal’. This is something the pessimist fails to do when entertaining the application of a *universal* objective attitude. The point is well made when we reflect on the kinds of terminology we have already used in connection with adopting the objective attitude in specific cases of *incapacitation* and *immaturity*, all of which involve the manifestation of an *abnormality* not otherwise to be found in participants of inter-personal relationships. To universalise the treatment of a condition of being physically determined would, if it mirrors these specific uses, appear to lead us to an incoherent idea of ‘universal abnormality’.

Even were the pessimist to argue instead that incapacitation by determinism is the ‘normal’ condition for a human being, it would come to the same thing. That is, in order for it to be said that normally human beings lack freedom of the will it should still have to be said in what circumstances human beings *are* able, perhaps only with an extreme effort of will, to act ‘abnormally’, i.e. freely and responsibly. Otherwise,

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

we should say that the pessimist gives with the one hand, what he takes with the other, viz. the requisite conditions for normality. On the basis of the pessimist's own assessment of the requirements for adopting the objective attitude, then, we must recognise the inherent contradiction involved in scaling up the objective attitude from its specific everyday use to a universal attitude.

To this, the pessimist might respond that, instead of an extreme effort of will, what is required for someone *not* to lack freedom of the will is for their actions to be *self*-determined, i.e. not determined by the laws of nature. In this case, to say, "abnormality is the universal condition" means that 'normality' is a potential state only, that might only be realised if the thesis of determinism is false. The same problem persists, however, given that to say, "abnormality is the universal condition" cannot explain why we *now* differentiate between cases, e.g. by not treating children in the same way that we do adults. It is this differentiation that makes possible treating *some* people differently; one cannot keep the differentiation and yet treat *everyone* similarly. What is perhaps more pertinent is the fact that, on Strawson's account, children are not treated differently as a result of prior embracing the distinction between mature and immature. Rather, maturity and immaturity are defined by how human beings treat those around them, i.e. one's attitude towards them.

Strawson resolves the difficulty by saying that we do not currently employ the objective attitude in specific cases because we think the individuals in those cases are determined, in any univocal sense of being determined. Rather, the objective attitude is made use of because they are deranged, immature, or generally ill-equipped to manage the rigours of the inter-personal relationships we otherwise subject each other

to. There is no need for recourse, in other words, to what Strawson calls the pessimist's 'panicky metaphysics'—e.g. a contra-causal freedom or *causa sui*—for the simple reason that, in order to motivate the move to metaphysics, the pessimist must first show that the reactive attitudes *can* be displaced by a general, theoretical belief in determinism.¹⁸⁰ This is precisely what Strawson denies when he argues that the objective attitude does not correspond with a general, theoretical belief in determinism.

Strawson's move is once again reminiscent of what, in *The Yellow Book*, Wittgenstein calls the 'tendency to explain a phenomenon by one cause', in this case the phenomenon is the objective attitude which Strawson likewise claims to be multifarious in its application.¹⁸¹ For example, a parent does not refrain from chastisement of a child because s/he suddenly realises that the child's actions are the consequence of an underlying mental condition. More spuriously still, a doctor does not treat a patient in a similar fashion because s/he holds the same opinion as the parent. There is no one thing, in other words, that explains the use of the objective attitude even across these two instances.

Strawson makes the further point that an examination of the requisite conditions for adopting the objective attitude in most cases of incapacitation evinces a simple truth; that the objective attitude is more intimately involved in returning an individual to reactive participation than it is to ending that participation. He notes that the sort of objective attitude we adopt towards those with 'abnormalities' is bound up with notions of treatment and care that, wherever possible, are only temporary. In

¹⁸⁰ Strawson, P. F. 2008, p. 27.

¹⁸¹ AWL, p. 33.

many cases (if not most) the grounds upon which someone is recognised as ‘abnormal’ presumes, or is directed towards, the possibility of normalising that behaviour, i.e. of returning the individual concerned to participation in inter-personal relationships. This clearly isn’t merely a reiteration of the points just made, i.e. that ‘universal’ abnormality is a contradiction in terms or that not all cases of abnormality come down to the same thing.¹⁸² Strawson is also making the point that the strategy proposed on behalf of the pessimist is indicative of the same ‘one-eyed utilitarianism’ (or ‘incomplete empiricism’) that the optimist was accused of.¹⁸³ In the pessimist’s case, what is overlooked is the usefulness of the objective attitude and, more importantly, what it *is* used for, namely to further the reactive attitudes. Strawson introduces this as a premise in the following argument.

Whatever sense of ‘determined’ is required for stating the thesis of determinism, it can scarcely be such as to allow of compromise, border-line style answers to the question, ‘is this bit of behaviour determined or isn’t it?’ But in this matter of young children, it is essentially a border-line, penumbral area that we move in.¹⁸⁴

That is, if by saying that a given type of behaviour is ‘determined’ we mean that it is determined in the same way as all behaviour is determined in virtue of the truth of the thesis of determinism, and if, for example, young children are treated objectively temporarily, then children cannot count as determined *in that same sense*. We must

¹⁸² Strawson, P. F. 2008, p. 12.

¹⁸³ Strawson, P. F. 2008, p. 25.

¹⁸⁴ Strawson, P. F. 2008, p. 21.

think of them, therefore, as treated objectively for another reason, e.g. due to their immaturity.

Moreover, there is an expectation that the child's behaviour will come to be treated reactively *on the basis of* our having treated them objectively. Part of the suggestion here is that, if there is indeed a tendency for attitudes to 'migrate' in one direction or the other, i.e. towards or away from the reactive attitudes, then it is evidently the opposite direction to the one being proposed on behalf of the pessimist. In other words, even when the objective attitude is called for, it is in order that it should no longer be called for. Again, this is clear from the kind of counter-examples that Strawson is providing, e.g. cases of abnormality, incapacitation, etc. In all these cases, the various reasons we might have for adopting the objective attitude all tend towards returning the individual concerned to reactive participation.¹⁸⁵ Thus, the fact that we can adopt an objective attitude in such cases speaks more to the fact that human beings are inclined towards reactive participation, than it does the possibility of using such cases as a template for treating everyone objectively. This is not to say that the Quick Argument simply falls back on the claim that we are naturally predisposed towards reactivity (i.e. the naturalistic claim); merely that the reasons why we currently adopt the objective attitude speak in favour of the optimist's position rather than the pessimist's.

To pay due diligence to the pessimist's point of view, however, there are cases where the objective attitude comes to be sustained more generally. There are cases, that is, which exemplify a tendency to migrate from applying the objective attitude in

¹⁸⁵ This is not to say that there are no cases in which someone might permanently adopt the objective attitude. The point is rather that the objective attitude is not meant to last indefinitely, even if it sometimes does.

some cases to using it all the time. For instance, someone who adopts the objective attitude, e.g. towards patients, might come to objectify the behaviour of those who are not patients, e.g. friends or loved ones. The reproach “are you analysing me *Doctor?*” invokes the image of a medical professional coming home, as it were, with the wrong ‘hat’ on. This phenomenon is neither a contradiction in terms nor evidence of the tendency to give up the objective attitude as soon as possible. As such, examples like these demonstrate the opposite tendency indicated by Strawson, i.e. that the reactive attitudes can lapse into objectivity in *any* circumstance—e.g. we needn’t be in a doctor-patient relationship in order to adopt a doctor-like relationship to others.

What Strawson might say in response is that what often brings the wayward professional back from an objective attitude is the reproach just mentioned. In other words, it is only if the ‘patient’ is complicit in the treatment that the objective *relationship* can be sustained. There may be a call for an apology and, it is unlikely that the wayward professional will, in the cold light of day, defend the objective attitude as one that is appropriate, i.e. that the attitude could be adopted towards *anyone*, including one’s spouse. These points I have made all lack the rigidity of Strawson’s own arguments, however, and the examples I have listed certainly demonstrate that, where complicit, anyone *can* be an appropriate subject for the objective attitude. It may be for this reason that Strawson admits the Quick Argument ‘might seem altogether too facile’.¹⁸⁶

That Strawson calls his own argument facile is less a reflection of the weakness of the Quick Argument, and more a reflection of the weakness of the strategy proposed on behalf of the pessimist, the point being that the Quick Argument

¹⁸⁶ Strawson, P. F. 2008, p. 12.

rules out only the least plausible of the pessimist's two potential strategies. In my view, however, Strawson's Quick Argument does have genuine probative force. For the argument serves to highlight the essentially temporary nature of the objective attitude as it is applied in cases of abnormality. And once we recognise this point we are able to appreciate to a far deeper line of reasoning than the self-contradiction involved in the notion of 'universal abnormality'. By highlighting that the objective attitude often lapses into, and is *meant* to lapse into, the reactive attitudes, Strawson places significant emphasis on a commitment to the reactive attitudes even when asking what it means to *be* responsible. That is, objective questions of what responsibility consists in are held in check by questions of whether or not specific individuals should, or should not, be held responsible. The priority of questions about whether we should hold or not hold *P* responsible is not merely incidental, since it remains an essential aspect of what it is to ask, objectively, what *P*'s responsibility consists in; at least in cases of abnormality. Moreover, it would be question-begging to assume, from the outset, that the objective attitude offers a repudiation of the reactive attitudes. Instead, Strawson shows how the objective attitude is instead a function of, rather than a threat to, the reactive attitudes.

The Ramified Argument:

Strawson's Quick Argument ought not to be dismissed as simply 'facile'. Nonetheless, he evidently thinks there is a more fruitful, and more plausible, avenue for the pessimist to explore. Turning, then, to the Ramified Argument, Strawson supposes that the pessimist might respond to the Quick Argument by arguing that, whilst 'abnormality' presumes 'normality,' the term 'incapacitated' does not presume

a corresponding capacity that one, normatively speaking, *should* possess.¹⁸⁷ For example, a dog's inability to have expectations of what tomorrow may bring, whilst it can be called a lack, does not correspond to an abnormality.¹⁸⁸ For the same reason, a human being can be incapacitated by an abnormality, but all human beings are incapacitated in so far as they are subject to the 'normal' limitations on human capacity. In order to rule out this renewed assault on the reactive attitudes Strawson must, as he puts it, show that whatever is 'too quickly' dismissed by the Quick Argument is also excluded as grounds for adopting the objective attitude. In particular, he argues that, whilst *anyone* can be an appropriate object for the objective attitude, it does not follow that *everyone* can be such an object all the time. As I say, Strawson concedes that:

We can sometimes, and in part, I have remarked, look on the normal (those we rate as 'normal') in the objective way in which we have learned to look upon certain classified cases of abnormality.¹⁸⁹

This concession forces Strawson to consider the second of the two proposals I have listed: namely, the proposal to scale up the use of the objective attitude with respect of 'normal' individuals, on the grounds that any, and therefore all, human behaviour can be objectified. Crucially, the above remark frees the pessimist of any obligation to say in what way human beings are incapacitated—however, Strawson assumes, quite fairly given his working definition of pessimism, that coming to look objectively upon those we rate as 'normal' involves a general, theoretical belief in determinism.

¹⁸⁷ See, Russell, P. 1992 in McKenna & Russell 2008, pp. 153-154.

¹⁸⁸ PI, §650.

¹⁸⁹ Strawson, P. F. 2008, p. 12.

As we shall see, Strawson concedes that, since the pessimist might (and in fact does) look upon *anyone* objectively, it is not self-contradictory to do so.

People, of various professions, might objectify a person's behaviour or character in order to better understand what makes them 'tick'; e.g. an author might objectify someone for a character profile, an employer might do so to interview prospective employees, or a sportsman might analyse the competition. Moreover, the example in the LFW of someone saying "I am no hero" as he might say "this is a cake. How could it be anything else?"¹⁹⁰ is an everyday example of someone objectively analysing their own character. We can concede along with Wittgenstein, therefore, that it does seem that the objective attitude can be taken up with respect to *anyone*, even oneself. This not only overcomes the self-contradiction involved in the notion of 'universal abnormality,' it also demonstrates that the objective attitude need not be aimed towards rehabilitation, i.e. towards reactive re-engagement.

Of course, granting that we can adopt an objective attitude towards anyone is some way from admitting that we can adopt the objective attitude towards *everyone*. As in the Quick Argument, it is this remaining quantitative gap in the pessimist's proposal that once more leads Strawson to develop the second of his two explicit arguments against the pessimist which is presented in two parts. The first, and to my mind least, part of this Ramified Argument is the naturalistic claim that closes off the 'practical space' available to the pessimist. Strawson argues that, whilst 'it is not absolutely inconceivable' that we should adopt the objective attitude universally, such an eventuality is '*practically* inconceivable.'¹⁹¹ As we have seen, it is this claim, in

¹⁹⁰ LFW, p. 440.

¹⁹¹ Strawson, P. F. p. 12.

particular, that gives rise to the Systematic Concern that what matters is not whether or not we happen to hold people responsible, but whether we are right to do so.

Fischer and Ravizza are not wrong to argue that the practical inconceivability Strawson is referring to corresponds with the *act* of holding people responsible. They are also right to say that there is a clear dichotomy between holding someone responsible and their being responsible. They are wrong, however, in thinking that Strawson fails to recognise this dichotomy by defending a belief in freedom of the will on the basis of the practical inconceivability of ceasing to hold people responsible. As I have said, Strawson does respond *directly* to the Systematic Concern and he does so principally by arguing against the rationality of the pessimist's claim. This takes place in the second, and more fruitful, part of the Ramified Argument.

Strawson goes on to argue that, whilst it is not self-contradictory to defend a universal objective attitude on the basis that anyone can be treated objectively, he nonetheless maintains that we can have no coherent grasp on what it would mean to adopt such a stance and that, even granted the truth of determinism, we have no good reason to try to take it up. Strawson objects that the many and varied reasons there are for choosing to look at someone objectively preclude, by virtue of being multifaceted, there being a single, unitary reason for looking at everyone in this way. He argues that, because it is true that we can look upon anyone in this way, and for many different reasons, this indicates that 'there is something else which, *because* this is true, is equally certainly *not* true':

And that is that there is a sense of 'determined' such that (1) if determinism is true, all behaviour is determined in this sense, and
(2) determinism might be true, i.e. it is not inconsistent with the

facts as we know them to suppose that all behaviour might be determined in this sense, and (3) our adoption of the objective attitude towards the abnormal is the result of a prior embracing of the belief that the behaviour, or the relevant stretch of behaviour, of the human being in question *is* determined in this sense.¹⁹²

Strawson's argument is that a general, theoretical belief in determinism cannot be taken to uniformly stand in for the many other reasons someone might have for taking up an objective attitude, i.e. that there is, and can be, no *one* explanans, common to all instantiations of the objective attitude, that justifies banding them together under the standard of a general, theoretical belief in determinism. Even allowing that which we already have been given reason to doubt, viz. that these rationalisations are all aimed at the repudiation of the reactive attitudes, it misrepresents the phenomena to say they all come about for the same reason. Most importantly what rules out a single, unitary reason for repudiating the reactive attitudes is that this one reason does not encompass all the others. In order to undermine the proposed strategy, Strawson need only identify a single reason for taking up the objective attitude that does not correspond to a single, unitary sense of 'determined'. In both abnormal and normal cases, this point has already been made: that the kinds of abnormalities that might reasonably be appealed to by the pessimist are such things as immaturity, derangement, or temporary insanity. With regard to normal cases, Strawson is served by the example Wittgenstein gives of the man who says "I am no hero" as he might say "this is a cake. How could it be anything else?" As he says at the time, saying 'What do you want? He just is this way' fails to specify anything—'He is *what*

¹⁹² Strawson, P. F. 2008, p. 13.

way?’¹⁹³ Far from expressing a general, theoretical belief, saying ‘I just am this way’ is a way of managing people’s expectations, avoiding blame, etc. As such, Wittgenstein would no doubt agree with Strawson that there is nothing in the ‘facts as we know them’ to indicate there is, or could be, a single, unitary sense of ‘determined’ such that ‘all behaviour might be determined in this sense’. To suggest otherwise, and to attempt to explain the facts by reference to a single cause or reason, gives a false account of the ‘facts as we know them’.

According to Strawson’s overall argument, then, in neither of the proposed strategies can the pessimist hope to find amongst the ‘facts as we know them’ some practice or attitude that, by envisaging a scaling up to a global deployment of this practice or attitude, we can make sense of the idea of a universal objective attitude. This is not because our nature happens to be such that it is practically impossible for us to adopt such an attitude; or rather, it is not *simply* because of this. Rather it is, more fundamentally, because we lack any coherent idea of what it would actually mean to sustain an objective attitude towards everyone, all of the time; and because, even granted the truth of determinism, we lack univocal grounds for doing so.

Part Five: A final response to the Systematic Concern based on what is implicit in P. F. Strawson’s arguments

As noted earlier, Strawson does not directly raise the Systematic Concern until after introducing the Quick and Ramified Arguments. At this juncture, however, Strawson

¹⁹³ LFW, p. 440.

redirects us back to what he has already said about the concern (sic. ‘question’) about ‘what it would be rational to do if determinism were true’.¹⁹⁴

Such a question could seem real only to one who had utterly failed to grasp the purport of the preceding answer, the fact of our natural human commitment to ordinary inter-personal attitudes. This commitment is part of the general framework of human life, not something that can come up for review as particular cases can come up for review within this general framework.¹⁹⁵

It may be thought, especially by those with the Systematic Concern, that ‘the preceding answer’ Strawson is referring to is his naturalistic claim. After all, this would tie in with his saying that ‘our *natural* commitment’ is ‘not something that can come up for review’. But if this is so, why does Strawson consider the above to be a *response* to those who feel the ‘real’ question has gone unanswered by what has gone before? The answer to this question comes with what Strawson says concerning the rationality of the question:

If we could imagine what we cannot have, viz, a choice in this matter, then we could choose rationally only in the light of an assessment of the gains and losses to human life, its enrichment or impoverishment; and the truth or falsity of a general thesis of determinism would not bear on the rationality of *this* choice.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁴ Strawson, P. F. 2008, p. 14.

¹⁹⁵ Strawson, P. F. 2008, p. 14.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

Strawson is clear that a general, theoretical belief ‘would not bear on the rationality’ of a choice between maintaining and jettisoning our practices of freedom and resentment, supposing—from Strawson’s point of view, *per impossible*—that we can make sense of such a choice. This, I take it, is why, whilst ‘a sustained objectivity of inter-personal attitude ... does not seem to be something of which human beings would be capable, even if some general truth were a theoretical ground for it’, he is keen to stress that ‘this is not all’.¹⁹⁷ The ‘further point, implicit in the foregoing’ is rather that ‘a sustained objectivity of inter-personal attitude ... does not seem to be something of which human beings would be capable’ *especially if* ‘some general truth were a theoretical ground for it.’¹⁹⁸ Strawson’s position must therefore be that the pessimist’s ‘choice’ is both inconceivable from the practical point of view and that, were it conceivable, it would be without basis from a theoretical point of view. Neither of these claims can be reduced to the naturalistic claim, viz. that human nature happens to be such that we are incapable of living out a universal objective attitude. As I hope to have shown, the Systematic Concern, by focusing on Strawson’s naturalistic claim, misses the place of this claim in his overall account.

Returning, then, to Strawson’s assertion that we can ‘recover from the facts as we know them a sense of what we mean, i.e. of *all* we mean, when, speaking the language of morals’, we can perhaps see more clearly what it is that he thinks fills in the lacuna in the optimist’s account.¹⁹⁹ I noted earlier that the intention behind this statement was to fill the lacuna in the optimist’s account by introducing some

¹⁹⁷ Strawson, P. F. 2008, p. 12.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid. I have emphasised what I take to be the main point of Strawson’s original statement that ‘a sustained objectivity of inter-personal attitude ... does not seem to be something of which human beings would be capable, even if some general truth were a theoretical ground for it.’

¹⁹⁹ Strawson, P. F. 2008, p. 24.

measure of first-personal freedom. This is true, and yet the lacuna reappears in connection with the Systematic Concern that what is in fact required is for manifestations of first-personal freedom to correspond with ‘actual’ freedom and with ‘real’ responsibility. That is to say, there must be more to an individual’s responsibility than whether or not s/he is held responsible, be it inter-personally or self-reactively. Strawson’s real response, as we are now in a position to see, is that there is more to these attitudes than is accounted for by the naturalistic claim alone:

These practices, and their reception, the reactions to them, really *are* expressions of our moral attitudes and not merely devices we calculatingly employ for regulative purposes. Our practices do not merely exploit our natures, they express them. Indeed the very understanding of the kind of efficacy these expressions of our attitudes have turns on our remembering this.²⁰⁰

By saying that ‘these practices do not merely exploit our natures, they express them’, Strawson means that any attempt to explain the reactive attitudes in terms of an underlying instrumental motive—in Wittgenstein’s phrase, ‘to show the phenomenon to be “really” another’—must premise itself upon the expression of those attitudes. Failure to appreciate this point is, for Strawson, the fundamental mistake that is common to both pessimists and (unmodified) optimists.

The full force of Strawson’s arguments against the pessimist do, therefore, lie in his demonstrating the impracticality of the pessimist’s position. That is, despite emphasising the impracticality of the pessimist’s position Strawson does not, whether intentionally or by accident, concede rationality to the pessimist. On the contrary, it is

²⁰⁰ Strawson, P. F. 2008, p. 27.

by demonstrating the impracticality of the pessimist's position that Strawson makes his strongest case against the rationality of repudiating the reactive attitudes.

The problem for Strawson is that, in showing that there is no imperative to provide any intellectual *foundation* for the reactive attitudes, he still does not demonstrate the impracticality of repudiating the reactive attitudes. Whereas Strawson is successful in undermining intellectualist demands for an external justification for holding people responsible, he does not succeed in presenting a practice-based *defence* of the reactive attitudes. This is similar to the point I made in the preceding chapter, that it is wrong to equate anti-incompatibilism with a compatibilist defence of freedom of the will. In this case it is equally mistaken to presume that undermining the optimist's and pessimist's tendency to 'over-intellectualise the facts' shows the facts as they must be; to do so is to conflate opposition to intellectualism with a practice-based defence of the reactive attitudes. This is most clear in relation to Pereboom's aforementioned criticism, viz. that the lack of an intellectualist foundation for the reactive attitudes does not rule out our repudiating *ex post facto* the reactive attitudes on the basis of a general, theoretical belief.²⁰¹ The most we can say is that it need not be on the strength of any such belief that we come to express attitudes of freedom and resentment *to begin with*. Strawson's explicit and implicit arguments therefore fail to eliminate altogether the Systematic Concern.

In the final part of this chapter, I shall begin to explain why it is that the same failure cannot be as easily assigned to Wittgenstein's LFW.

²⁰¹ Pereboom 2008, pp. 153-154.

Part Six: Wittgenstein's response to a version of the Systematic Concern

I have shown that the marked similarities between the LFW and FR most fundamentally reflect opposition to a pessimistic denial of freedom of the will; a denial that is rooted in the natural (i.e. primitive) way in which our attitudes of freedom and resentment are expressed. That is, both Wittgenstein and Strawson maintain that it is mistaken to presume that holding someone responsible, i.e. praising and blaming them, etc., requires an intellectual foundation, i.e. an 'external, 'rational' justification'. It is unsurprising, therefore, that Wittgenstein also faces a version of the Systematic Concern during the LFW. Toward the end of the second lecture, Cassimir Lewy asks 'Is the feeling of being free a sufficient ground for saying you are free?'²⁰² The question appears to be a response to the following example.

Suppose I were about to do something of great consequence to myself and to someone else. I may get a very strong sense of what I may call freedom of will. I may say: 'I can't say that I am forced to do this or not to [do] it. I choose freely to do it if I do do it.' ... what actually am I saying to myself? Am I saying something about scientific law, or about what will probably be found when they discover more about the human mind?²⁰³

The above exemplifies Wittgenstein's opposition to thinking that a 'very strong sense' of freedom of will necessarily involves making claims about 'scientific law' or the 'human mind'. The question he asks vis-à-vis the suitability of any scientific

²⁰² LFW, p. 438.

²⁰³ Ibid.

interpretation of these words is therefore meant to be rhetorical. Rather than constituting a substantive statement, the affirmation expresses a feeling; a feeling that coincides with doing ‘something of great consequence’; i.e. it is one of those propositions which, in the LFW, Wittgenstein is inclined to say express a feeling, and which are generally ‘said with feeling’.²⁰⁴

Lewy takes Wittgenstein to be saying that this ‘very strong sense of freedom of the will’ thereby provides the justification for thinking ‘I choose freely to do it if I do do it’.²⁰⁵ This, I suggest, is his reason for asking whether or not ‘the feeling of being free [is] a sufficient ground for saying you are free’.²⁰⁶ In responding to this question, however, Wittgenstein seems to anticipate, what I take to be, Strawson’s own response to the Systematic Concern. Wittgenstein replies to Lewy’s question by asking what ‘feelings’ Lewy is talking about; the implication being that Wittgenstein alluded to no such feelings. Wittgenstein qualifies this response by adding that, ‘instead of these words “He had the feeling” I might just as well say “he had the thoughts”’.²⁰⁷ In the first instance, Wittgenstein’s response indicates that we needn’t interpret a ‘very strong sense’ of what we might call freedom of will as an expression of a background of ‘inner sensation’. Indeed, Wittgenstein is careful, following Lewy’s question, to criticise Bishop Barnes’ thinking that ‘constant and inevitable experience [e.g. of making conscious decisions] teaches me that I have freedom of choice’.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁴ LFW, p. 441.

²⁰⁵ In this regard, Lewy’s question is reminiscent of the interlocutor in the *Investigations* who asks, ‘So you are saying that human agreement decides what is true and what is false?’; PI, §241.

²⁰⁶ LFW, p. 438.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ LFW, p. 442.

A second, important upshot of this response is that any such ‘feeling of freedom’ need provide us with no more suitable a basis for thinking that we are free than would any statement concerning scientific law. Following his exchange with Lewy, Wittgenstein points to various cases where an individual’s behaviour contradicts what s/he has said; for instance, it is here that Wittgenstein brings up the example of a man who makes a resolution to be more charitable and yet throws the next person he sees through a window.²⁰⁹ The relevance of these examples to a ‘very strong sense’ of freedom of the will can be seen through the same practice-based lens that I employed in analysing FR. This becomes evident in the LFW when Lewy makes one last attempt to secure an answer from Wittgenstein—‘Suppose I ask: what are the grounds for his conviction of being free?’²¹⁰ Here, the emphasis is on there being some ground, any ground, to the conviction. Wittgenstein’s response has a note of finality to it. He responds, ‘There are no grounds. And as for feelings, you can choose whatever you consider most interesting.’²¹¹ On Wittgenstein’s view, saying “I choose freely to do it if I do do it” is not *necessarily* supported by anything beyond the phenomena itself—no general, theoretical belief or justification and no special feeling of freedom. For this reason, we might as well specify those thoughts and feelings that appear to us to be ‘most interesting’.

This captures, the sentiment at least, of Strawson’s closing remarks in FR, i.e. that our attitudes express, and do not merely exploit, our natures. Wittgenstein’s response indicates a certain level of agreement for Strawson’s further claim that, if the pessimist wants there to be more to freedom than the expression of a reactive

²⁰⁹ LFW, p. 439. See also, Chapter I, Part Two of this thesis.

²¹⁰ LFW, p. 438.

²¹¹ Ibid.

attitude, then he should look more closely at the attitudes themselves, at the form of life of which they are an essential part. By denying that there are grounds for believing (or denying) that you are free Wittgenstein also rules out our identifying any *one* kind of explanation as *the* ground for thinking that you are free, which in turn reiterates his opposition to the ‘tendency to explain a phenomenon by one cause’.²¹²

The central importance of this idea to the LFW cannot be underestimated, and I suggest that it is this idea which underlies Wittgenstein’s only avowed aim in the LFW ‘to impress upon you that given a certain attitude, you may be, for reasons unknown, compelled to look at it a certain way.’²¹³ By adding that ‘it is one of the most important facts of human life that such impressions sometimes force themselves on you’, Wittgenstein evidently wishes to make room for *multiple* impressions.²¹⁴ For both Wittgenstein and Strawson, therefore, it is wrong to insist upon there being an external, ‘rational’ foundation for our thoughts and feelings concerning freedom and resentment. But more than this. It is also right that we should *allow* to be expressed more than those attitudes and feelings that might otherwise be given an external, ‘rational’ foundation.

Nevertheless, this shared opposition to imposing only one way of thinking also helps to explain why, ultimately, the two come apart. This comes out most clearly in the way each thinker responds to the question of whether or not the reactive attitudes might, at some future time, come to be repudiated. For Wittgenstein, the impressions he speaks of above specifically include the impression ‘that you are not

²¹² This passage is similar, in this regard, to Wittgenstein’s opposition to the philosopher’s ‘craving for generality’; PI, §66.

²¹³ LFW, p. 435.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

free; or that you are compelled'. In addition to his prior acknowledgements, in LFM and the LFW, that we might give up the distinction between free and compelled, this last suggests that we might come to do so, not on the basis of a general, theoretical belief (e.g. in determinism) but simply by being compelled to look at things a certain way, i.e. in accordance with a forceful impression and given a certain, pessimistic attitude. With regards his prior acknowledgements in LFM and the LFW, Wittgenstein seems already to deny the suggestion that repudiating the reactive attitudes is 'practically inconceivable'.²¹⁵ Moreover, the simultaneous suggestion that this might come about due to an increased awareness of the causes of our actions indicates that a general, theoretical belief in determinism has *some* role to play in undermining the reactive attitudes.²¹⁶

In fairness to Strawson, it is not immediately clear as to whether or not he takes the practical inconceivability of repudiating the reactive attitudes on the basis of a general, theoretical belief in determinism to be a blanket imposition on repudiating the reactive attitudes. As well as the possibility of internal redirection, modification and change *within* the framework of attitudes and feelings, Strawson also acknowledges the locality and temporality of the attitudes he defends.²¹⁷ Strawson is willing, at least, to concede that the framework itself might change beyond all recognition, or at least to some significant degree. However, he denies that anything we might call human beings could exist 'in the absence of *any* forms of these attitudes'.²¹⁸ This last certainly conflicts with Wittgenstein's claim that, not only

²¹⁵ LFM, p. 242.

²¹⁶ LFW, p. 443; see also LFW, pp. 431, 440.

²¹⁷ Strawson, P. F. 2008, p. 26.

²¹⁸ Strawson, P. F. 2008, p. 36.

might we come to play the game differently, but that we might stop playing altogether.²¹⁹

A more promising way to reconcile the LFW and FR, therefore, would be to say that Wittgenstein and Strawson both maintain that ending the game is altogether unlikely.²²⁰ This is not to say that Wittgenstein contradicts Strawson's opposition to a general, theoretical belief in determinism forming the basis for denying freedom of the will. Nevertheless, Wittgenstein evidently denies that this opposition constitutes grounds for an optimistic defence of the reactive attitudes, even if such optimism is radically modified. Thus, for much the same reason that I said Wittgenstein does not defend freedom of the will by opposing incompatibilism, neither can it be said that he defends the reactive attitudes by opposing demands for an external, 'rational' foundation for their practice. As such, it cannot be said that the LFW support Strawson's 'radically' modified optimism.

The question I wish now to ask is whether, by neither defending nor denying freedom of the will (or the reactive attitudes), Wittgenstein is better placed than Strawson to incorporate the Systematic Concern. At the very least, it seems as that Wittgenstein looks with greater sensitivity upon the criticism that any practice-based defence of the reactive attitudes fails to come to terms with the 'real' question, i.e. of what one *ought* to say concerning freedom and resentment. This, I suggest, is a direct consequence of his remaining alive to the possibility that human beings might one day cease to behave reactively towards each other and that such a change can be

²¹⁹ The difference, I should say, is not simply that Wittgenstein concedes the possibility of forsaking these attitudes altogether. Unlike Strawson, Wittgenstein emphasises the change in relation to changes made to the "rules of the game"; as opposed to changes that might or might not be made to human nature itself.

²²⁰ Cf. LFW, p. 430: 'we may, though it is most misleading and out of the question in fact, forecast a man's actions'.

affected, if only *indirectly*, by a heightened awareness of the causes of our actions. I shall discuss these elements of the LFW in the next chapter.

I have shown that, in the way that they anticipate and seek to diffuse ‘the Systematic Concern’, Wittgenstein and Strawson remain in close alignment. However, what has yet to be considered is a crucial respect in which Strawson’s approach diverges from that pursued by Wittgenstein. This divergence emerges most clearly in the light of the observation made a moment ago: that a defence of a practice-based approach need not equate to a defence of the reactive attitudes. As was the case in Chapter One, we need to confront Wittgenstein’s acknowledgement that, at some future time, human beings might forsake the reactive attitudes and no longer hold each other responsible. Furthermore, Wittgenstein remains sensitive to the way in which the pessimist’s position too can express as well as exploit our natures. As shall become clearer in the next chapter, this last point renders questionable whether Wittgenstein can be said to offer a practice-based defence of the reactive attitudes. The question I shall answer in the next chapter is whether or not Wittgenstein thinks that non-reactive attitudes, i.e. attitudes towards others which preclude holding each other responsible, are also primitively expressed, and can be therefore equally expressive of human nature. Importantly, Strawson clearly does not contemplate this eventuality.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that this does not detract from what I have so far established concerning Wittgenstein’s opposition to an incompatibilist or pessimistic *denial* of freedom of the will, i.e. a denial founded on a general theoretical belief in determinism. In this respect, as we have emphasised, Wittgenstein’s approach is mirrored by Strawson’s own. But as I have also shown, the reason the

two come apart is due to the additional steps taken by Wittgenstein that simultaneously cast doubt on the extent to which he relies on the practice-based approach to the question of the freedom of the will as a *defence* of the reactive attitudes. My forthcoming analysis of these steps will take us up to and beyond contemporary discussions of freedom of the will.

Chapter III

Non-Reactive Attitudes in Wittgenstein's “Lectures on Freedom of the Will”

Each of us, in our own personal Factory, may believe we have stumbled down one corridor, and that our fate is sealed and certain (dream or nightmare, humdrum or bizarre, good or bad), but a word, a glance, a slip—anything can change that, alter it entirely, and our marble hall becomes a gutter, or our rat-maze a golden path. Our destination is the same in the end, but our journey—part chosen, part determined—is different for us all, and changes even as we live and grow.

—Iain Banks, *The Wasp Factory*

Having established the important ways in which P. F. Strawson's *Freedom & Resentment* (FR) emulate Wittgenstein's "Lectures on Freedom of the Will" (LFW), my aim now is to clarify the differences in their respective approaches, in particular the way that Wittgenstein treats the pessimist's attitude as equally expressive of human nature. I will do so by outlining what I take to be a forceful objection to P. F. Strawson's position that, as I shall argue, Wittgenstein is better placed to respond to. The objection comes from Galen Strawson who argues that what is overlooked by any practice-based defence of the optimist's affirmation of our practices of holding responsible is the equally natural way in which the pessimist's denials of responsibility come to be expressed.²²¹ At first glance, Galen Strawson's objection does not appear to contradict the approach taken by P. F. Strawson, or those elements of the LFW that can be considered practice-based. Instead, the objection broadens the framework of attitudes and practices so as to incorporate the pessimist's, as well as the optimist's, attitudes. As we shall see, however, this broadening of the framework leaves open the possibility of a more sustained attack on the justificatory value of the practice-based approach, as providing a defence of our practices of holding responsible.

In the first part of this chapter, I will refine and defend Galen Strawson's objection to P. F. Strawson's defence of the optimist's position on the grounds that it is equally natural, i.e. no less primitive, to take up a pessimistic, i.e. non-reactive, attitude towards oneself and others. I shall then consider the extent to which this broadening of the practice-based framework can be considered an objection to any

²²¹ Strawson, G. 1986, in McKenna & Russell 2008, pp. 85-114.

practice-based approach. In Part Two I shall turn to those aspects of the LFW that support Galen Strawson's substantive claim that the pessimist's attitude too, expresses human nature; in particular, Wittgenstein's references to 'fatalism' as a 'peculiar' but eminently human attitude. Having explored these aspects in detail, I will conclude that the LFW are not open to the same objection(s) as FR. On the contrary, I will show that Wittgenstein offers us an interpretation of the 'major tensions' of which Galen Strawson speaks that allows us to incorporate them into a significant, and more ethically nuanced, understanding of our attitudes to freedom and resentment.

Part One: Galen Strawson and the possibility of a global non-reactive attitude

In "On Freedom & Resentment" Galen Strawson objects to the claim that a commitment to the reactive attitudes is the only conceivable outlet for human thoughts and feelings concerning freedom of the will. He argues that, by P. F. Strawson's own lights, the pessimist can be equally committed to refusing to hold people responsible, and therefore that a denial of freedom of the will can be no less expressive of human nature. The crux of Galen Strawson's objection is that, contrary to P. F. Strawson's Ramified Argument, it *is* practically conceivable for the pessimist to cease behaving reactively towards others and thereby to adopt, what I shall call, a global, non-reactive attitude without the necessity of an external, 'rational' justification. I will say more on this in due course, but by 'non-reactive' attitudes I am referring to those thoughts and feelings which, rather than bolster a commitment to holding others responsible, give rise to a non-committal or detached way of treating others. This is not *simply* a negation of feelings like resentment. The non-reactive

attitudes can also be positively expressed, e.g. through pity, and such attitudes can take a global form, e.g. someone can express an attitude in line with thinking of human beings as essentially frail or wretched.

The expression of such attitudes is explicitly ruled out by P. F. Strawson's denial of the practical conceivability of repudiating the reactive attitudes; and whatever else the non-reactive attitudes are they do at least negate the reactive. By offering a competing account of human nature and human possibilities, Galen Strawson outwardly denies naught but this injunction. His objection is not therefore merely a reiteration of the Systematic Concern.²²² No doubts need be raised as to whether Galen Strawson accepts the claim that human beings are primitively committed to expressing certain attitudes and feelings, and that it is practically inconceivable to imagine forsaking these commitments (whatever they may be) on the basis of a general, theoretical belief. What he does dispute, however, is the further, substantive claim that *what* human beings are committed to are a set of *reactive* practices only, e.g. feelings of resentment, gratitude, etc. that have, irrespective of their primitive expression, come to be associated with belief in freedom of the will.

The specific target of Galen Strawson's criticism can be clarified if we distinguish between the following two claims advanced by P. F. Strawson:

(S1) Human attitudes to freedom and responsibility are expressive of human nature and therefore 'neither call for nor permit external, rational justifications.'

²²² Galen Strawson does come close to raising this concern by suggesting that no commitment can fill the 'lacuna' in the optimist's position. This particular argument is not fully realised, but can be responded to as before, by pointing out that a practice-based approach need not take the form of a naturalistic defence of primitive commitments. Strawson, G. 1986, in McKenna & Russell 2008, p. 88.

(S2) Human nature is evidently such that *what* is expressed is, at the most primitive level, a reactive engagement with other persons.

These two claims are indeed distinct—accepting S1 does not commit one to S2. S1 establishes the anti-intellectualist principle that often one can be committed to the expression of a certain attitude towards others that is prior to any reflectively endorsed belief or opinion about freedom of the will. S2, on the other hand, demonstrates the optimistic view that human nature is such that, prior to any reflectively endorsed belief, human beings are committed to treating one another reactively.

An important strand of Galen Strawson's criticism can concede for the sake of argument the truth of S1; the focus is on S2. That is, it is open to him to argue that, if S1 commits us to the principle that, prior to a general theoretical belief, we must be committed to a certain attitude, then the simplest way to account for the pessimist's own attitude is by way of a similar commitment. This step is explicitly laid out in Galen Strawson's response:

The fact that the incompatibilist intuition [that determinism is incompatible with freedom] has such power for us is as much a natural fact about cognitive beings like ourselves as is the fact of our quite unreflective commitment to the reactive attitudes.²²³

In P. F. Strawson's view, the strongest evidence in favour of the optimist's position being the 'right one' is the optimist's own primitive reactions, i.e. that these reactions do not merely exploit, but also express, the optimist's nature.²²⁴ But there is no reason

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Strawson, P. F. 2008, p. 27.

to assume that this is any different in the pessimist's case where an expression of an attitude in accordance with S1 results in a commitment to the non-reactive attitudes. According to P. F. Strawson, what may well differentiate the pessimist's attitude is that its expression is premised upon a general, theoretical belief; i.e. the pessimist's attitude may be affected *only* on the strength of an endorsed opinion or belief about freedom of the will. Unlike the reactive attitudes, then, the non-reactive are a negation *after the fact*, i.e. the general fact given with the existence of human society. But it remains to be shown that the pessimist's commitment to the non-reactive attitudes is not, as Galen Strawson says, 'as much a natural fact' as is a commitment to the reactive attitudes. We are obliged, therefore, to consider a contradictory substantive claim as an alternative to S2, namely:

(S3) It is evidently *no more* natural to express a commitment to interpersonal, reactive attitudes than it is to express a commitment to non-reactive attitudes.

To determine which of these substantive claims, S2 or S3, is correct, I will first test the suitability of S3 as a potential counter argument to both P. F. Strawson's Quick and Ramified arguments. Whilst this will not prove conclusively that S2 is false, it will enable me to consider evidence in favour of S3. For my own purposes, I do not need to demonstrate that Galen Strawson succeeds in proving the falsity of S2 since my aim is to show that, according to Wittgenstein, S3 is true.

Regarding P. F. Strawson's claim that a universal objective attitude is 'practically inconceivable' Galen Strawson is able to offer not one, but two lines of response, corresponding to P. F. Strawson's Quick and Ramified arguments respectively. In the first instance, it is crucial to explain the difference between what I

am calling a global non-reactive attitude and what P. F. Strawson calls a ‘universal objective attitude’. The latter is what, in the Quick Argument, P. F. Strawson introduces as resulting from the repudiation of the reactive attitudes. He argues that since the objective attitude (i.e. treating others as objects of social policy) is, for the pessimist, the appropriate attitude to take towards someone who is physically determined, and since the pessimist maintains a *general*, theoretical belief in determinism, it follows that a *universal* objective attitude is the *only* appropriate attitude. A global, non-reactive attitude is really quite different in the first instance because a non-reactive attitude can be, like a reactive attitude, primitive and unreflective; it is therefore unlike the objective attitude which involves a suspension of the reactive attitudes. Secondly, a global attitude is, for both the reactive and non-reactive attitudes, characteristic of an attitude an individual might adopt towards everyone, but not necessarily as one that everyone ought to adopt, e.g. by externally, rationally justifying that attitude as appropriate. The difference between these two is akin to the difference between an unconditional outpouring of sympathy and an endorsement of something like the categorical imperative (to treat others as you would like to be treated); i.e. one person can express the former without endorsing the latter. In light of the differences between a universal objective attitude and a global, non-reactive attitude, the Quick Argument (i.e. that not *everyone* can be ‘abnormal’) cannot but fail to engage with a potentially unreflective commitment to not holding others responsible.

Turning to the Ramified Argument, P. F. Strawson appears to have a much stronger case against a global, non-reactive attitude. His naturalistic claim that it is ‘practically inconceivable’ for human beings as they are to repudiate the reactive

attitudes directly contradicts the claim that we can express a *global*, non-reactive attitude; even if, a temporary or partial suspension of those attitudes can be accommodated by his naturalistic claim. To begin with, we might see P. F. Strawson's naturalistic claim as a symptom of his juxtaposition of reactive and objective, i.e. his denial of the possibility of our repudiating the reactive attitudes is premised on his understanding that which he supposes must replace a global, *reactive* attitude, viz. a universal *objective* attitude. This amounts to no more than saying that the repudiation of *any* primitive, i.e. natural and unreflective, commitment on the basis of a general theoretical belief is 'practically inconceivable'. We might suppose, then, that P. F. Strawson defends S3 all along, or that the two Strawsons can be reconciled to each other. The problem with this supposition is that the claim that human beings *as they are* cannot refrain from holding each other responsible rules out *both* a universal objective attitude *and* a global, non-reactive attitude. Galen Strawson certainly presumes that his alternative claim (S3) is inconsistent with P. F. Strawson's (S2), since he evidently entertains the weaker claim that *both* reactive and non-reactive attitudes can be primitive and natural.

One thing that someone who adopts [P. F. Strawson's] position may simply underestimate, however, is the equal naturalness of the pessimist's position, when they insist that determinism is incompatible with freedom. Secure in theoretical indefeasibility, the reconciler may tend to mistake for a failure of subtlety in his opponent what is in fact a proper sensitivity to the basic power of the incompatibilist intuition that determinism is incompatible with freedom.²²⁵

²²⁵ Ibid.

In my view, Galen Strawson's objection is better formulated as a claim not about the power of the pessimist's theoretical intuitions but about the possibility of there being primitive attitudes which, as global, non-reactive attitudes, underwrite the pessimist's theoretical stance. So construed, the criticism appears to have real force.²²⁶

With regards the second part of the Ramified Argument—that there can be no one *explanans* for the suspension of the reactive attitudes consistent with a general, theoretical belief in determinism—it is evident that, here too, Galen Strawson's objection has teeth. He maintains that, not only do (what I am calling) the non-reactive attitudes not rely on the maintenance of a general, theoretical belief tying them all together, but they arise in a similar, even identical, way to the reactive attitudes.

The roots of the incompatibilist intuition lie deep in the very reactive attitudes that are invoked in order to undercut it. The reactive attitudes enshrine the incompatibilist intuition.²²⁷

Galen Strawson's own explanation of this statement, whilst brief, suggests that what he has in mind is that the reactive attitudes are themselves grounded in an understanding of 'true responsibility', by which he means the kind of *moral* responsibility that underwrites the reactive attitudes themselves. Were this to be his suggestion, the obvious flaw in it would be that, in accordance with S1, the reactive attitudes need be no more beholden to a general, theoretical belief in 'true responsibility' than the non-reactive attitudes need be beholden to a general, theoretical belief in determinism. Given his earlier appeal to a more charitable and

²²⁶ I return to Galen Strawson's own motivations towards the end of Part 1 of this chapter.

²²⁷ Ibid.

subtle interpretation of the pessimist's attitude, however, it is important not to get sidetracked by this issue. By saying that the pessimist's attitude is 'enshrined' in the reactive attitudes that are 'invoked to undercut it', Galen Strawson already indicates a more subtle origin of non-reactive attitudes than a general, theoretical belief in determinism.²²⁸ As was mentioned earlier, it is not implausible to suppose that a global, non-reactive attitude might result either i) from a profound sense of pity for the weaknesses of character that human beings, according to their nature, are susceptible to, or ii) from a fatigue brought about by a kind of over-exposure to reactive feeling. i) is perhaps more understandable than ii)—even if it is not a successful excuse for misbehaviour, we understand what it means to say, "He's only human". I am aware that neither of these strategic steps are explicitly taken by Galen Strawson, and yet either might suggest itself as a way of articulating a more charitable and subtle interpretation of the pessimist's attitude that is also indicative of how the non-reactive attitudes might 'enshrine' the reactive.²²⁹ I will say more on this later since, whether or not i) and ii) fit in with Galen Strawson's citing the reactive attitudes as a potential source for the non-reactive, both are influential in the LFW.

By interrupting both the Quick and Ramified arguments, Galen Strawson also casts doubt on P. F. Strawson's reason(s) for favouring the reactive attitudes. One of these is that the pessimist, unlike the optimist, actively undermines an existing set of practices. This is similar to the compatibilist's assumption that the 'burden of proof' rests with the incompatibilist, i.e. to prove conclusively that we lack freedom. It is also to think on the pessimist as, in some way, the antagonist in the debate, as

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Ibid.

threatening the status quo of the established, and entirely reactive, practices. In its simplest form, Galen Strawson's response on behalf of the pessimist is an objection to this unguarded and undefended assumption. Far from presenting a threat to the existing status quo, the 'equal naturalness' of the non-reactive attitudes demonstrates either that the status quo is as much in their favour as the optimist's or else that no status quo exists. Given what Galen Strawson says elsewhere, the suspicion must be that he favours the latter.

It is crucial to realise that what Galen Strawson establishes, first and foremost, is not what human beings do *by default* but rather that human beings can, spontaneously and non-reflectively, express non-reactive attitudes. A defence of S3, for instance, does not imply that human beings are committed to expressing non-reactive attitude but that, given the right circumstances, anyone, or indeed *everyone*, is capable of adopting a global, non-reactive attitude. For Galen Strawson, that these circumstances already pertain in the pessimist's case can be taken as conclusive evidence that anyone can adopt such an attitude and, as we know, he also argues elsewhere that everyone ought to adopt a global, non-reactive attitude (or something like it). We also know, or have strong cause to believe, that Wittgenstein also envisages a time when *all* people might 'give up' the distinction between freedom and compulsion and cease holding people responsible.

The possibility of a global, non-reactive attitude

Despite his agreement with Wittgenstein that people may 'give up' the reactive attitudes, Galen Strawson accepts that adopting a global, non-reactive attitude is a feat which, for the vast majority of human beings, would be practically inconceivable.

Perhaps because of this, the only example he gives of a global, non-reactive attitude *in practice* refers to a small, and devout, group of individuals.

Consider certain Buddhist philosophers who argue, on a variety of metaphysical grounds, that our natural notion of the persisting individual self is a delusion. Having reached this conclusion, they set themselves a task: that of overcoming the delusion.²³⁰

The example is premised on an understanding of the Buddhist doctrine of *satkāyadrsti*—the denial of self through recognising the self as delusion—which presumably he thinks bears comparison with the pessimist’s ‘intuition’. In truth, the denial of self provides a more than suitable comparison for the pessimist’s repudiation of the reactive attitudes; at least part of what is involved in overcoming the self is relinquishing one’s sense of personal responsibility as well as any expectation one might have for being treated reactively. As such, it is clear that the ‘task’ in each case is similar: i.e. to overcome a primitive commitment to, amongst other things, the reactive attitudes.

For Galen Strawson, there is perhaps a further similarity between the two tasks that relates to how the monks’ overcome their commitment to self, by turning *inward*. This connects with the priority he gives to the commitment to the self-reactive attitudes, as opposed to any commitment to the framework of attitudes and feelings common to the moral community at large—something he thinks P. F. Strawson underestimates.²³¹ This is another way in which Galen Strawson’s focus on

²³⁰ Strawson, G. 1986, in McKenna & Russell 2008, p.111.

²³¹ Strawson, G. 1986, in McKenna & Russell 2008, pp. 85, 86, & 94-97. A second line of Galen Strawson’s argument is that P. F. Strawson ‘mislocate[s] the true centre of our commitment in our inter-personal rather than in our self-regarding attitudes’.

‘true responsibility’ ceases to be a question of a general, theoretical belief, but rather a matter of feeling the reactivity of one’s own actions. By reflecting on the monks’ overcoming of self, we are reminded forcibly of the natural way in which one already, i.e. primitively, thinks of oneself *as a self*. That we would not call this non-reflective commitment to self-hood a belief in ‘true self’ only serves to bolster my interpretation of his references to ‘true responsibility’ as implying nothing more nor less than a primitive commitment to the reactive attitudes, in particular *self*-reactive attitudes. This is the more important point from Galen Strawson’s perspective: that by associating the pessimist’s task with the monks’ self-directed task, we avoid the mistake, made by P. F. Strawson, of underestimating the importance of the *self*-reactive attitudes. This is less of a motif in the LFW, but it will be worth considering this point from Wittgenstein’s perspective in the next chapter.

But this raises an obvious initial difficulty in taking the monks’ denial of self as an instantiation of the pessimist’s similarly motivated denial of responsibility. It may appear that Galen Strawson has inadvertently undermined his appeal to the ‘equal naturalness’ of the pessimist’s attitude by insinuating that, like Buddhist philosophers, philosophers in general have a rationally motivated duty to take steps in overcoming the non-reactive attitudes. This would imply, not only that the rational motivation (external, ‘rational’ justification) is once more key, but also that it is only through the denial of S1 that S3 can be achieved. Moreover, even were we to forgo acceptance of S1, it is not clear that the example provides sufficient evidence for a denial of S2 since what the monks’ overcome is a primitive commitment to the *reactive* attitudes; if anything, this would prove S2 correct by rendering a commitment to the non-reactive attitudes posterior and reflective.

In fact, Galen Strawson does not overlook these dangers and emphasises that ‘one cannot simply abolish one’s sense of individuality, by some sort of effortless, rationally motivated, self-directed intellectual fiat’.²³² In acknowledging that the monks too are beholden to this as much as anyone, Galen Strawson looks elsewhere for an explanation of the monks’ practiced denial of self. By focusing instead upon the monks’ practice of meditation he thinks he can show that, whilst the ‘adoption of the practice of meditation was rational..., it is now (practically speaking) non-rational, and it is so as a result of that practice’.²³³

It might still be felt, wrongly as I shall argue, that since the practice was rational to begin with, it cannot now be said to be entirely primitive or natural. This is wrong for the reason that the rationality in question need not be the monks’ own, or if it is (or rather *was*), then this was a pre-meditative state.²³⁴ Saying that the ‘practice of meditation *was* rational’ can be taken literally to mean that, when the practice was first adopted, it may have been because the monks thought they had good reasons to do so, but that now we just point to their practice of meditation. Galen Strawson can be open about the rational basis for the monks’ practice of meditation, because he wants to hold onto the idea that the pessimist, like P. F. Strawson’s optimist, can have his position sufficiently, that is to say ‘radically’, modified. That is, P. F. Strawson says the optimist holds people responsible by default, but goes wrong in seeking to legitimise that behaviour via an ‘external, rational justification’. Conversely, the pessimist, whom he says upholds an ‘external, rational justification’ for *not* holding

²³² Strawson, G. 1986, in McKenna & Russell 2008, p.111.

²³³ Strawson, G. 1986, in McKenna & Russell 2008, p.112.

²³⁴ I am aware that the term ‘own’ is problematic in this context, but in any case I use it here to signify their pre-meditative, i.e. rational, state.

people responsible, might instead, on Galen Strawson's view, forsake the rational motivation but keep the practice.

Rather than a rational motivation, it is in-keeping with a practice-based approach, as well as S1, that the non-reactive attitudes should arise unreflectively; e.g. through a fatigue resulting from overexposure to the reactive attitudes. This possibility, more than any 'intuition', makes up for any possible 'failure of subtlety' in Galen Strawson's account of the pessimist's position. That is, whether through fatigue or some equally unreflective nullification of the reactive attitudes, it can be accepted that a lack of commitment to the reactive attitudes can be considered, minimally at least, as a commitment to non-reactivity; we can simplify this by saying that someone must either be committed to interpersonal reactive attitudes or not. This might be taken to imply an absurdity. For example, I do not express reactive attitudes while sleeping, but then neither am I expressing a non-reactive attitude. However, I am not saying that all human behaviour is either reactive or non-reactive, merely that someone must either hold or not hold people responsible for their actions. In fact, the suggestion of the absurdity is itself evidence that not expressing the reactive attitudes is a necessary requirement for expressing a non-reactive attitude; it is just not a sufficient requirement for doing so.

It is worth remembering that when Wittgenstein says, with regards to cases where one can say either "the man is responsible" or "the man is not responsible", that 'In this case, an argument is alright if it converts you' he means that whether someone defends or denies freedom of the will is a function of whether or not they hold people responsible.²³⁵ Furthermore, he means that one can fail to be 'converted'

²³⁵ LFW, p. 437.

by either being unwilling or unable to ‘convert’. This explains why Galen Strawson need not argue in favour of a commitment to non-reactivity, i.e. a failure to be ‘converted’ is enough. In order to invalidate S2 and advance S3 all he need do is demonstrate that an individual need not be committed to expressing the reactive attitudes, i.e. that there are equally primitive attitudes and feelings that do not commit someone to holding people responsible. For this reason, the intimation that non-reactivity is ‘enshrined’ within—i.e. might primitively, and naturally, arise together with—the reactive attitudes is worthy of serious consideration.²³⁶ I shall return to this point later, and in connection with the LFW.

Another way in which Galen Strawson ingratiate the non-reactive attitudes into P. F. Strawson’s account of the reactive attitudes is by arguing that the pessimist’s ‘notion of true responsibility comes easily to the non-philosophising mind, and is not found only in (or behind) what Strawson calls the ‘panicky metaphysics’ of philosopher libertarians.’²³⁷ To begin with, this demonstrates clear opposition, on Galen Strawson’s part, to thinking of the pessimist’s attitude in terms of the ‘cool’ and ‘contemporary’ style of philosophy that P. F. Strawson argued leads philosophers to forget ‘what it is actually like to be involved in ordinary interpersonal relationships’.²³⁸ Furthermore, it may well be these aspects of the pessimist’s attitude that are overlooked by P. F. Strawson, and which may therefore lead him to incorrectly associate the pessimist’s attitude solely with objectivity.

This leads me back to Galen Strawson’s suggestion that non-reactivity is not so much a suspension of reactivity, so much as ‘enshrined’ therein. Another way to

²³⁶ Strawson, G. 1986, in McKenna & Russell 2008, p. 88.

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ Strawson, P. F. 2008, p. 7.

couch this is to say that, whereas resentment, gratitude, praise and blame, etc. correspond to the expression of the reactive attitude, pity, benevolence, humility, etc. correspond to the expression of a non-reactive attitude. The former group of feelings are typified by an interpersonal engagement with others, whilst the latter group indicate an estrangement or detachment with regards the actions or attitudes of others. Crucially, taking pity on someone (or everyone) in response to a perceived frailty or weakness is not, initially at least, a cool or contemporary way to treat others; even if it involves a similar degree of detachment seen in the utilisation of the objective attitude. The suggestion here is that resentment, gratitude, praise and blame, etc. can, through fatigue of these emotions, ‘spill over’ or ‘lapse’ into non-reactivity; such an outpouring of feeling need not conflict with the Quick or Ramified arguments since it is neither a universal attitude—i.e. one can feel pity without expecting others to do so—nor does it constitute a single *explanans* for not holding people responsible—i.e. even if someone were to pity another person based on their frailty *as a human being*, this would not imply that this is their *sole* reason for pitying other people.²³⁹

This last, i.e. an appreciation of the frailty of human beings generally indicates one way in which non-reactivity might ‘come easily to the non-philosophising mind’.²⁴⁰ This is important since, Galen Strawson admits, that in his own example of the monks’ denial of self, their behaviour is ‘certainly inhuman, in some way’.²⁴¹ He means by this merely that the denial of self would, for most human beings, be

²³⁹ Neither can frailty be attributed to a single human trait whether it is being egocentric, short-sighted, or determined by natural laws.

²⁴⁰ Strawson, G. 1986, in McKenna & Russell 2008, p. 88.

²⁴¹ Strawson, G. 1986, in McKenna & Russell 2008, p.112.

‘practically inconceivable’.²⁴² What would be more conceivable would be an account of the monks’ denial of self as owing to a primitive attitude or feeling; e.g. the denial of self may be a reaction, like shutting one’s eyes in fear, to the responsibility, felt as a burden, of being absolutely responsible for one’s own actions.²⁴³ This is just more grist to Galen Strawson’s mill, however, and I need not speculate about which specific feelings or attitudes give rise to any specific course of action. The point is that the mere possibility of this range of expression demonstrates the falsity of S2. Accepting this possibility and the further truth of S3, requires only that we agree with the following: that the framework of attitudes and feelings, whether reactive or non-reactive, need not result in holding people responsible. That is, it cannot be the claim of anyone, who is not unduly biased in favour of reactivity, that these attitudes and feelings *necessarily* perpetuate holding people responsible.

Whatever scope remains for human beings to express other attitudes must, therefore, fall outside the scope of the reactive and inevitably fall into the non-reactive. Again, this does not mean that all human attitude and feeling is either reactive or non-reactive, merely that, in so far as the reactive attitudes correspond with a particular ‘way of acting’, it is a way of acting that human beings need not be committed to. Accepting this, and hence accepting the truth of S3 is not the end, either for myself or for Galen Strawson. With regards the latter’s account of the pessimist’s equally natural attitude there is one final aspect that must be taken into account.

²⁴² Strawson, P. F. 2008, p. 12.

²⁴³ This is not to say that the monks, unlike the pessimist, are not *rationaly* justified in trying to overcome their primitive commitments.

Galen Strawson on the existence of ‘major tensions’

In setting out to demonstrate the truth of S3, I have so far avoided drawing attention to Galen Strawson’s ‘more general point’: that this claim threatens to overturn the claim made in S1. This ‘more general point’ could not be made earlier since, in order to demonstrate the truth of S3, it was necessary to presuppose the truth of P. F. Strawson’s principle S1. With this now clearly demonstrated, we are in a position to reflect on Galen Strawson’s real reason for arguing this point.

A more general point is this. There appear to be powerful lines of reasoning available, within what Strawson calls our ‘general framework’ of attitudes and ideas, which question the correctness of the framework—or of paramount aspects of it—from within. There are, to say the least, some major tensions in it.²⁴⁴

The ‘more general point’, then, is this: that any view that takes account of the truth of S3, and therefore supports a practice-based approach broad enough to incorporate both the reactive and non-reactive attitudes, must thereby incorporate tensions between those attitudes. At their highest point these tensions, he says, ‘question the correctness of the framework’. At the least, these tensions threaten ‘paramount aspects of it’—and make the expression of *either* attitude questionable, even dubious.²⁴⁵ It is not just that questioning the framework, to which we are primitively committed, from within appears to be self-contradictory; i.e. that we cannot ‘question the correctness of the framework’ since it is from within the framework that such questions arise. It is rather that to ‘question the correctness of the framework’ *as a*

²⁴⁴ Strawson, G. 1986, in McKenna & Russell 2008, p.112.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

whole, yet from *within*, is to sacrifice the accusation of self-contradiction levelled at P. F. Strawson. The strength of Galen Strawson's objection derives, at least in part, from its acceptance of P. F. Strawson's methodology, including his claim that 'questions of justification are internal to the structure or relate to modifications internal to it'.²⁴⁶ It is the internal modifications, and not the internal questions that press in upon this 'more general point', narrowing its focus and dulling its point.

Yet the weaker 'more general point'—i.e. that these inherent tensions threaten 'paramount aspects' of the framework—can be objected to on similar grounds. As the above shows, P. F. Strawson already acknowledges the possibility of 'internal modification, redirection and change', which may or may not include the modification of 'paramount aspects' of the framework.²⁴⁷ In either case, it is not clear that he fails to anticipate this objection. What he does not, and indeed cannot, anticipate is the broader framework upon which this internal modification appears to be based. It is this broadening of the framework, and the 'major tensions' that result, that connects both the stronger and the weaker points being made. It is also these tensions which most threaten P. F. Strawson's position, in particular his conclusion that a 'radically' modified optimism is the 'correct' position. As Galen Strawson demonstrates, not only can we reach a similar conclusion vis-à-vis the pessimist's position (provided it too is 'radically' modified), but since both the optimist and the pessimist are secured in 'theoretical indefeasibility,' a lasting commitment to *either* attitude is rendered, not just indefeasible, but 'practically inconceivable' as well.²⁴⁸

²⁴⁶ Strawson, P. F. 2008, p. 25.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ Strawson, G. 1986, in McKenna & Russell 2008, p. 88; and Strawson, P. F. 2008, p. 25.

Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that either attitude is mutable, and hence practically *untenable*. It is this mutability that leads to the tensions described.

What the objection demonstrates is that, on P. F. Strawson's account, an individual can never be certain of whether or not to hold someone responsible since whichever way s/he is committed, s/he could be committed otherwise. Galen Strawson seems, in part, to be objecting that it is impractical to imagine someone taking up two contradictory attitudes or ways of acting simultaneously, e.g. both holding *and* refusing to hold people responsible. Even if the expression of the reactive and non-reactive attitudes is not simultaneous, there is no means of resolving the tensions that must exist between two equally natural, but directly contradictory, attitudes; that is perhaps instead experienced as an endless vacillation between the two viewpoints. In any case, he says, 'Our commitments are complex, and conflict'.²⁴⁹ What is perhaps more damaging is that these tensions are there 'in the beginning'—they are a primitive expression of human nature.²⁵⁰ There is therefore no possible way to resolve the tensions without exploiting, as opposed to expressing, one's nature. This is what leads Galen Strawson to conclude that, at a methodological level, the practice-based approach of FR leaves us, at best, uncertain and, at worst, hopelessly confused about how to treat others.

In what follows I shall argue that, whilst these 'major tensions' do indeed undermine P. F. Strawson's defence of a modified optimism, the same need not be said of Wittgenstein's position in the LFW. Like Galen Strawson, Wittgenstein readily accepts the possibility of one's primitively expressing a non-reactive, pessimistic

²⁴⁹ Strawson, G. 1986, in McKenna & Russell 2008, p. 89.

²⁵⁰ Cf. CV, p. 31.

world-view. Moreover, he is well aware of the tensions arising from the defence of a framework of attitudes and feelings that incorporates both reactive and non-reactive attitudes. Yet, his acknowledgement of the tensions is accompanied by a comprehensive account of how these tensions come about; something that is conspicuously absent from Galen Strawson's own account. It is notable that the only concrete example of non-reactive attitudes to come from him so far is less preferable to one which I myself have suggested, i.e. a feeling of pity for the frailty of human beings generally. As we shall see, this suggestion gains added veracity from a reading of the LFW, wherein Wittgenstein shows due deference to the fact that holding people responsible, or not doing so, can be 'the result of a struggle'.²⁵¹ This he says in light of the fact that life itself is precarious, and that human beings are susceptible to falling, in an ethical sense, through no fault of their own. Accepting these tensions, then, may well be a means of greater understanding concerning, not just the pessimist's attitude, but the optimist's as well.

Part Two: Wittgenstein's Broader Framework of Attitudes

In light of the success Galen Strawson has in giving equal priority to the non-reactive attitudes, my aim now is to establish Wittgenstein's defence of the same. I will argue that Wittgenstein is not susceptible to the same challenge as P. F. Strawson because he is willing and able to concede the possibility of a global, non-reactive attitude. Nevertheless, Wittgenstein's defence of the equally natural way in which both a global, reactive attitude and a global, non-reactive attitude are expressed is due to his defending a broader framework than *either* P. F. Strawson or Galen Strawson.

²⁵¹ LFW, p. 439.

Moreover, by giving a phenomenological description of the optimist's/pessimist's different ways of looking at things, Wittgenstein is able to give a more complete description of the 'major tensions' that Galen Strawson has said exist between them. Far from undermining the defence of a broader framework of reactive and non-reactive attitudes, however, I will consider the suggestion, implicit in the LFW, that the tensions are essential to the expression of *any* attitude.

There is strong evidence in favour of thinking that Wittgenstein supports the claim made in S3: that a global, reactive attitude and a global, non-reactive attitude are equally natural. This evidence comes, not from the LFW, but from a comparable remark written less than a decade later, in 1947.²⁵²

Life is like a path along a mountain ridge; to left and right are slippery slopes down which you slide without being able to stop yourself, in one direction or the other. I keep seeing people slip like this and I say "How could a man help himself in such a situation!" And *that* is what 'denying free will' comes to. That is the attitude expressed in this "belief". But it is not a *scientific* belief and has nothing to do with scientific convictions.

Denying responsibility is not *holding* people responsible.²⁵³

This remark is central to Wittgenstein's recognition, not just of the possibility of a global, non-reactive attitude, but also to his own practice-based approach more generally. I shall expand on my reasons for thinking this as we progress, but in the first instance I will limit my focus to Wittgenstein's recognition of the possibility of what I am calling, a global, non-reactive attitude. It is this attitude which, I contend,

²⁵² See, fn. 3 of this thesis.

²⁵³ CV, p. 63.

distinguishes Wittgenstein's approach from P. F. Strawson's. The view Wittgenstein embodies is that 'denying free will' is above all else a certain way of acting, a certain practice—'not *holding* people responsible'. This view is entirely consistent with my earlier account of the similarities between Wittgenstein's and P. F. Strawson's respective accounts since all that is being added to this account is the further claim that it need be no less expressive of human nature to repudiate the reactive attitudes.

To begin with, it may not be clear at first glance that the embodied view sketched above constitutes a defence of a *global*, non-reactive attitude. By speaking of certain situations—"How could a man help himself in such a situation!"—Wittgenstein seems to be referring to *specific* instances of his own non-reactivity. That he keeps 'seeing people slip like this' merely contributes to the idea that people do not *always* slip, i.e. that he is simply describing a reaction to those particular 'circumstances by which people are defeated'.²⁵⁴ And yet, his saying that the attitude expressed by this reaction 'is not a *scientific* belief and has nothing to do with scientific convictions' might be taken to suggest that his own non-reactive attitude might otherwise be mistaken for the theoretical views held by incompatibilists/pessimists. That is, we are evidently meant to take it that we are dealing with the expression of an 'attitude' that can be mistaken for a 'scientific belief', e.g. in determinism.²⁵⁵ However, Wittgenstein also argues, as P. F. Strawson does, that 'denying free will' is not a hypothesis, and therefore that it is not a hypothesis that

²⁵⁴ Rush Rhees, who may or may not have attended the LFW, but who was nonetheless influenced by discussions he had with Wittgenstein on this topic, gives an account of just such a view in precisely these terms. Rhees 1997, p. 149.

²⁵⁵ The use of scare quotes around the word "belief" is yet a further indication that Wittgenstein thinks the pessimistic denial in question is something other than a general, theoretical belief.

can be universalised.²⁵⁶ For this reason, we need not assume, from the existence of such an attitude, that all people slip in this way.

Despite, or rather in light of, the above arguments against taking the above denial to be constitutive of a universal denial of free will, it remains a possibility that ‘Denying responsibility [by] not holding people responsible’ might still involve denying responsibility globally. I am not denying that Wittgenstein is, in his own case, describing specific instances of non-reactivity. The question is rather whether or not, in words I used in the preceding chapter, we might “scale up” these specific instances Wittgenstein is describing so that they are seen to be constitutive of a person’s world-view (*Weltbild*), i.e. a view which inclines one to look at ‘a given case differently’ but which nevertheless conveys one’s view of “it all”.²⁵⁷ Certainly nothing prevents a person from maintaining the non-reactive towards every other person; i.e. it is a view that a person can maintain towards everyone without it being seen as a view that everyone must adhere to.²⁵⁸ That is, P. F. Strawson’s Quick and Ramified arguments against scaling up the objective attitude do not apply if we consider the attitude Wittgenstein is describing to be constitutive of non-reactivity—and *not* objectivity. That is, the non-reactive attitudes skirt the Quick and Ramified arguments against a universal objective attitude by corresponding more closely to the reactive attitudes inasmuch as they might provide a way of acting in the vast majority

²⁵⁶ This interpretation is corroborated by Wittgenstein’s (CV, p. 63.) use of scare quotes around the word “belief”; the insinuation is that what is often worked up into a system of belief is, on the contrary, simply part of the framework of human attitudes and feelings.

²⁵⁷ Cf. Z, §461.

²⁵⁸ It worth noting a parallel with the asymmetry between a hard determinist’s belief that it is mistaken to hold *anyone* responsible, and a soft-determinist’s belief that a person *can* be held responsible. I noted this asymmetry in Part One of this chapter. We can say that a global, non-reactive attitude differs from the hard determinist’s belief in the same way, i.e. it is not contradictory for an individual who is, on the whole, pitying to, at some point, hold someone responsible.

of cases. That is, when Wittgenstein says in the LFW that ‘propositions of which one is inclined to say that they express feeling are generally said with feeling’, he is not limiting the description to reactive statements.²⁵⁹ He is referring equally to propositions such as ‘How could a man help himself in such a situation!’²⁶⁰ That is, provided both kinds of statement are ‘said with feeling’, it can be understood that they are, in fact, the same *kind* of statement.

This is not to say that statements of this kind are, *in all cases*, attributed to a particular ‘feeling’. Whilst it may be that *sometimes* one’s attitudes concerning freedom of the will can be explained by reference to a feeling, such attitudes are not just feelings, they are actions, e.g. holding (or refusing to hold) people responsible. The fact that these statements are *sometimes* ‘said with feeling’ can be adduced further to explain what Wittgenstein means when he says that ‘these statements are not used as scientific statements at all, and no discovery in science would influence such a statement.’²⁶¹ That is, the non-scientific character of propositions that ‘express feeling’ (and not how often they are expressed) is what serves to distinguish a global, non-reactive attitude from a theoretical belief in determinism or from the defence of incompatibilism. Wittgenstein at no point rescinds his theoretical opposition to incompatibilism, but neither does he make a further theoretical claim, e.g. that, without exception, (not) holding people responsible expresses a particular feeling. At most, we can take it that ‘not holding people responsible’ need be a no less primitive practice than holding people responsible.

²⁵⁹ LFW, p. 441.

²⁶⁰ CV, p. 63.

²⁶¹ LFW, p. 440.

What ultimately explains this equally natural expression of feeling is that both attitudes belong to the same framework of attitudes. For this reason, we might reconsider Wittgenstein's statement—that he is neither defending nor denying freedom of the will²⁶²—as being in favour of the potential to *either* defend *or* deny freedom of the will. That is, whilst he remains opposed to any theoretical defence or denial of responsibility—i.e. on the basis of a general, theoretical belief—practically speaking, he makes no declaration concerning the range of feeling that is to be considered expressive of human nature.

At the same time, the non-reactive attitude described above differs from the mere negation, or *non-expression*, of the reactive attitudes. This was a criticism I levelled at Galen Strawson's example of the Buddhist monks who more accurately represented what it would be like to suppress, rather than express, an attitude; or else the monks resent what it is to express an indifferent attitude. For the same reason, as I have said, a person can be said to be 'not holding people responsible' without their 'denying free will', e.g. whilst asleep I am 'not *holding* people responsible' and yet it is absurd to suggest that I am also 'denying free will'. This is clearly different from the description Wittgenstein offers of his own attitude towards people: as susceptible to 'falling' or as 'helpless'. Saying 'How could a man help himself in such a situation!' is clearly a heartfelt expression of pity or sympathy for the one who has 'fallen'. That the upshot of this expression of pity is that one ceases to express other kinds of attitudes towards that person is altogether innocuous; in so far as the expression of almost any attitude can be accounted for in terms of the negation of its opposite. For instance, against a feeling of pitiless resentment, can be juxtaposed a

²⁶² LFW, p. 436.

feeling of unresentful, pitying, forbearance, etc.²⁶³ It is a simple move to make, therefore, to subsume the *non*-expression of an attitude or an expression of *non*-feeling under the blanket term of a non-reactive attitude; an attitude that is still expressive of human feelings including, but not limited to, feelings of pity.

Problems arise for Wittgenstein only when we, as it were, introduce into this broader framework of attitudes the ‘major tensions’ to which Galen Strawson refers. By ‘introduce’ I do not mean that the tensions are not already part of this broader framework; neither, as we shall see, is Wittgenstein unaware of this fact. On the contrary, alongside the equal priority given to reactive and non-reactive statements, he gives an account of the manifest ways in which scientific discoveries *indirectly* influence the expression of these attitudes, i.e. incline one towards denying freedom of the will by not holding people responsible. Before I consider what impact this has on the broader framework of attitudes, it is necessary to understand how this influence is made manifest.

The indirect role scientific discoveries play in influencing a global, non-reactive attitude

On two subsequent occasions in the LFW, Wittgenstein qualifies his claim that statements concerning responsibility ‘are not used as scientific statements at all’ by reflecting that ‘this is not quite true’.²⁶⁴

²⁶³ It is noteworthy that P. F. Strawson makes no mention of pity in giving an account of the reactive attitudes, or indeed in giving an account of the objective attitude.

²⁶⁴ LFW, pp. 440-441.

What I mean is: we couldn't say now 'if they discover so and so, then I'll say I am free'. This is not to say that scientific discoveries have no influence on statements of this sort.

Scientific discoveries partly spring from the direction of attention of lots of people, and partly influence the direction of attention.²⁶⁵

The above qualification is not a retraction of his arguments against incompatibilism since Wittgenstein maintains his opposition to thinking that any statement concerning responsibility *must* follow from any particular discovery, i.e. there is no circumstance in which freedom of the will could be either proven or disproven. What the qualification in fact concedes is that a change in attitude (e.g. no longer holding people responsible) can result *indirectly* from a change in the 'direction of attention of a lot of people'. This is not to suggest that it is only through prolonged or repeated exposure to scientific discoveries that one gains a scientific outlook.

For this and other reasons, we must resist the temptation to associate this remark too closely with Wittgenstein's now famous assertion in the *Blue Book* that 'philosophers constantly see the method of science before their eyes'.²⁶⁶ This is not simply because Wittgenstein would likely agree with Galen Strawson that pessimistic thoughts 'come easily to the non-philosophising mind'.²⁶⁷ On the contrary, Wittgenstein states in the LFW that it is a 'fact of psychology' that people (generally) are inclined to think that you can't be held responsible for one's actions if those

²⁶⁵ LFW, p. 440.

²⁶⁶ BB, p. 18.

²⁶⁷ Strawson, G. 1986, in McKenna & Russell 2008, p. 88.

actions follow natural laws.²⁶⁸ Nevertheless, that Wittgenstein thinks this inclination has an adverse influence on philosophers (if indeed he does think this) in no way implies that the influence is adverse in the case of non-philosophers. For instance, Carl Elliott infers that, since ‘for Wittgenstein, philosophical confusion is not something that afflicts only philosophers’, that the LFW are therefore part of a more general attempt to prevent ‘the method of science’ from getting before everyone’s eyes.²⁶⁹ The problem remains a ‘philosophical disease’, but one affecting everyone.

Elliott is mistaken if he assumes that Wittgenstein treats philosophers and non-philosophers alike in this regard. That is, we can interpret his warning to philosophers (if that is what it is) as a specific requirement to recognise that there are *different* ways of looking at things, e.g. that both the reactive *and* non-reactive attitudes are equally natural. That is, *constantly* seeing ‘the method of science’ before one’s eyes would be objectionable for the philosopher, according to Wittgenstein, because it prohibits, or at least hinders, a full and complete description of *all* points of view. The same requirement does not impose itself on the ‘direction of attention of a lot of people’, where there is (currently) no requirement to recognise different viewpoints.²⁷⁰

Moreover, were this requirement to apply specifically to philosophers it would be further evidence in favour of presuming Wittgenstein’s support of Galen Strawson’s objection to P. F. Strawson’s defence of a suitably modified optimism. On these terms, it would be wrong for philosophers to presume, as P. F. Strawson and

²⁶⁸ LFW, p. 433.

²⁶⁹ Elliott 1999, pp. 75-90.

²⁷⁰ As I shall argue in the subsequent, and final, chapter, Wittgenstein does perhaps think that a philosophical approach to the problem is the only way to make sense of the ethical demands placed on us by a broader framework.

Elliott both seem to, that we must employ the ‘method of science’ only in exceptional cases.²⁷¹ I shall say more on this in the next chapter but, presumably, the same objection can then be adduced in support of the claim that Wittgenstein has no objection to scientific discoveries directing the ‘attention of a lot of people’ provided i) there is no specific requirement on those people to go beyond a scientific way of looking at things and that, ii) those people do not seek an external, rational justification and thereby seek to *directly* influence the ‘direction of attention’ of *everyone*.

A further reason not to associate Wittgenstein’s defence of a global, non-reactive attitude with seeing ‘the method of science’ before one’s eyes, is that it is not only scientific discoveries that influence the ‘direction of attention of a lot of people’.²⁷² Wittgenstein’s analysis includes economic, historical and statistical discoveries, e.g. ‘What the newspapers now say is nothing at all. It is the economic condition of the people which is important’, as well as observations of patterns of behaviour, e.g. ‘[c]old nearly always produces a reaction of wanting to get warm’.²⁷³ By offering such examples Wittgenstein is not simply reiterating that there is a ‘tendency to explain a phenomenon by one cause.’²⁷⁴ Although this is the purpose of his saying that it is ‘very natural to think that *all* explanations should be given like economic explanations of historical states of affairs’.²⁷⁵ More importantly, he is describing a tendency to think that a particular discovery has ‘explained

²⁷¹ Elliott 1999, pp. 81-82.

²⁷² LFW, p. 441.

²⁷³ Ibid.

²⁷⁴ AWL, p. 33.

²⁷⁵ LFW, p. 441.

everything'.²⁷⁶ As was clearly demonstrated in my first chapter, Wittgenstein's typical refrain to those with this tendency is to deny that there is any good reason (i.e. external, rational justification) for thinking this way. For instance, he dispels the illusion that everything is explained by pointing out that 'all that you have done is get hold of an explanation which may not have explained anything at all'.²⁷⁷

By saying that, in getting hold of a particular explanation, you 'may not have explained anything at all', Wittgenstein is not downplaying the significance of these discoveries. On the contrary, it is discoveries just like these which incline even Wittgenstein to feel that 'life is like a path along a mountain ridge'.²⁷⁸ At the same time, however, Wittgenstein denies that these discoveries justify feeling this way. It is this subtlety that escapes Lewy when he asks Wittgenstein whether or not 'the feeling of freedom' is 'a sufficient ground for saying you are free'.²⁷⁹ Wittgenstein's response—that 'There are no grounds. And as for feelings, you can choose whatever you consider most interesting'—indicates that, whilst these discoveries are not grounds for 'denying free will', they do express feelings that might otherwise be overlooked or else attributed to a general, theoretical belief, e.g. in determinism. I should say that, for Wittgenstein, by no longer thinking of the feelings as grounds the philosopher, in particular, opens up to the full range of feelings that can be expressed. It is wrong, then, to impose restrictions on the range of 'interesting' feelings that might otherwise be expressed.

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

²⁷⁸ CV, p. 63.

²⁷⁹ LFW, p. 438.

Having ruled out one mistaken way of thinking about the indirect role (scientific) discoveries play in repudiating the reactive attitudes, I must now do more to clarify the partial role scientific discoveries play in influencing, what Wittgenstein calls, the ‘direction of attention’ of lots of people. I will do so now through several related remarks from a series of Wittgenstein’s notes entitled “Cause & Effect: Intuitive Awareness” (CE).²⁸⁰ As with other sources I have made use of in carrying out a comparative analysis of the LFW, the notes were written around the same time as the LFW. The main reason for this comparative analysis, however, is that in the LFW we get only a very brief account of the pessimist’s ‘way of acting’, e.g. ‘looking for the cause’, and we understand even less about how this way of acting contributes to not holding people responsible.²⁸¹ The closest we have come to an analysis of the different ways that optimists and pessimists act is Wittgenstein’s analogy of the Driverless Car; i.e. the pessimist resembles someone who might go on looking for a regularity in the car’s erratic movements, whereas the optimist will simply give up and say it moves freely. During CE, however, Wittgenstein elaborates on what he takes to be the difference between speculating as to the cause of a particular phenomenon by looking for the cause, and giving up this practice entirely.²⁸²

Today, in case we actually discovered two seeds which we could not distinguish, but one producing a poppy and the other rose, we should look frantically for a difference.—But in other circumstances we might give

²⁸⁰ CE, pp. 371-426.

²⁸¹ Brenner 2001a, p. 54. Brenner makes use of a similar comparison in his analysis of the LFW.

²⁸² Once again, ‘primitive’ here refers to a reflexive or immediate way of acting. Cf. ‘Suppose someone said: “I’m immediately aware of the cause of lifting my arm when I will to do it.”—No one ordinarily says he “wills” to do something. He lifts his arm, that’s all. But one can generally predict the movements of one’s body.” CE, p. 410.

this up—give up looking for a difference. This would be a tremendous thing to do—as great as recognising indeterminacy. We would no longer *look* for the difference, and so we would no longer say there *must* be a difference. *Now* (today) we would have every reason to say there must be a difference. But we can imagine circumstances where we would break with this tradition.²⁸³

The above prefigures still another illustration in the LFW that Wittgenstein uses to clarify why it is that the pessimist is inclined to seek a causal explanation of a person's actions, rather than simply ask the person concerned for their reasons.

Had the case always been that of the apple tree with the leaves dancing about, don't you think we would have had a different idea?—As things are now, you might say: if only we knew the velocity of the wind, the elasticity of the leaves etc. then we could forecast the movement of the leaves. But we would never dream of saying this if we hadn't already been successful, and colossally so.²⁸⁴

Aside from the obvious similarities in each case—the references i) to natural phenomena, ii) to how things stand today/now, and iii) to similar methodologies, measuring, experimenting, etc.—there are less obvious similarities. In both cases, for instance, no longer looking for the cause/difference is associated with 'recognising indeterminacy'. In the LFW, shortly after the above passage, Wittgenstein conjectures that we might ask "Why don't we regard it in the light of indeterminism? Why do we

²⁸³ CE, p. 411.

²⁸⁴ LFW, p. 431.

still stick to determinism?”²⁸⁵ In asking this, his point is not, *pace* certain Libertarian incompatibilists, that indeterminism can serve as an external, rational justification for our reactive attitudes.²⁸⁶ Rather, Wittgenstein is impressing on us that the *indirect* influence scientific discoveries have over these practices can be reversed, and in precisely the same way, viz. by subtly influencing the ‘direction of attention’. This is the significance of his suggesting that we might ‘regard it *in the light of* indeterminism’. That is, assuming that certain discoveries have such an influence, it can be of the greatest import whether we ‘look at it from the point of view of the bronchial hair or from the point of view of the falling stone’—i.e. from the point of view of indeterminism or determinism.²⁸⁷ Wittgenstein’s point, as ever, is that we learn more about the attitude of the individual who makes use of the example than we do about that which the example is intended to show.²⁸⁸

It is worth noting that in the above instances the more active role is given to, what I am assuming we should call, the pessimist/incompatibilist, i.e. *looking* for the cause/difference is associated (indirectly) with recognising determinism whereas *giving up* looking is associated with recognising indeterminism (again, indirectly). Whilst the context of the earlier statement calls for just such an emphasis, i.e. on looking for the cause, the same need not be said of the later discussion in the LFW. As a result, this adds to the response I gave to the potential objection that, in defining a global, non-reactive attitude in negative terms (as not *holding* people responsible),

²⁸⁵ LFW, p. 432.

²⁸⁶ E.g. van Inwagen 1983 in Watson 2005, pp. 38-57; Searle 2001, pp. 283-288; Kane 1999 in Watson 2005 pp. 305-309.

²⁸⁷ LFW, p. 432; the bronchial hair is distinguished from a falling stone by virtue of its unpredictability at the macroscopic level.

²⁸⁸ As we shall see in the next chapter, this works both ways—i.e. the example can also be used to influence the ‘direction of attention’.

Wittgenstein is describing the non-expression of the reactive attitudes, or else an expression of non-feeling. However, it might be suggested that what he is in fact describing is the act of *looking* for the cause, which, for reasons yet to be explained, results in not *holding* people responsible; conversely, and for the same reasons, holding people responsible results in not looking for the cause.

Most importantly, both the LFW and CE relate the subtle influence scientific discoveries have over different ways of looking at things. Nevertheless, in both cases—looking for the difference in the two seeds or for the cause of the leaves’ movements—Wittgenstein anticipates circumstances in which we might ‘break with this tradition’ or, as he puts it in the LFW, ‘change the business’.²⁸⁹ By ‘change the business’, Wittgenstein actually has in mind the opposite move—that knowledge of natural laws might lead us to no longer ‘play the game’, i.e. of giving and asking for reasons, holding people responsible, etc. Nevertheless, that he recognises the potential to move in *both* directions is demonstrated by how he responds to the above examples. Shortly after describing the situation with the apple tree, he makes the elliptical remark that ‘If the exceptions were the rule...’—to which we are now able to interpolate the conclusion—‘[then] we would no longer *look* for the difference’. For all these reasons, the description Wittgenstein offers of the practice of ‘looking for the difference/cause’ is a sound basis for our understanding of the indirect influence scientific discoveries have in bringing it about that we no longer see the leaves as ‘dancing’ or, as the illustration is intended to represent, the pessimist’s no longer holding people responsible.

²⁸⁹ LFW, p. 443.

Before I consider the pessimist's attitude in particular, however, I wish to briefly explain a distinction Wittgenstein draws between the 'practice' or 'method' of 'looking for the cause' and what we might call doubt or uncertainty.

The game of 'looking for the cause' *consists* above all in a certain practice, a certain method. Within it something that we call doubt and uncertainty plays a role, but this is a second-order feature. In an analogous way, it is characteristic of how a sewing machine functions that its parts may wear out and get bent, and its axles may wobble in their bearings, but still this is a second-order characteristic compared with the normal workings of the machine.²⁹⁰

The analogy of a machine's malfunction appears to coincide with what P. F. Strawson has said is the *most* natural reason for treating human beings objectively, i.e. instances of abnormality.²⁹¹ That is, we might come to associate a global, non-reactive attitude (or what P. F. Strawson calls the 'objective attitude') with a 'second-order characteristic' of the machine, i.e. with the 'doubt and uncertainty' that the individual is truly responsible. However, in order to continue the analogy with P. F. Strawson's account we would have to assume that this 'second-order characteristic' is to be contrasted with the reactive attitudes, i.e. with the 'normal workings of the machine'.²⁹²

²⁹⁰ CE, p. 395.

²⁹¹ Strawson, P. F. 2008, p. 12.

²⁹² This is true despite P. F. Strawson's recognition that we can take up the objective attitude towards *anyone*, since in accordance with the Ramified Argument this rules out doing so both in *every* case and 'in the light of' determinism.

For Wittgenstein, however, the above analogy is intended to show how ‘looking for the cause’ might itself be attributed to the ‘normal workings of the machine’. That is, ‘the game of looking for the cause’ does not always, or even in general, involve ‘something that we call doubt and uncertainty’. One way of putting this is to say that, whether or not the machine is working normally, it is still a machine. Consequently, Wittgenstein shows his support for Galen Strawson’s objection to P. F. Strawson’s Ramified Argument: that the pessimist’s way of looking at things, e.g. ‘looking for the cause’, is no less natural than holding people responsible.²⁹³

Saying this, however, does not, by itself, demonstrate conclusively that ‘looking for the cause’ coincides with the expression of a global, non-reactive attitude. Nevertheless, the two coincide when, having looked for the cause, we latch onto a specific cause as being *the* cause. As Wittgenstein puts it: ‘calling something “the cause” is like pointing and saying: “*He’s to blame!*”’²⁹⁴ The two actions are alike in so far as ‘calling something “*the* cause”’ involves (in most cases) exaggerating a particular discovery; this is what Wittgenstein means when he says that there is a tendency to be ‘dazzled’ by a particular discovery when ‘all that you have done is get hold of an explanation which may not have explained anything at all’.²⁹⁵ In such cases, the denial of responsibility is affected by latching onto a particular explanation/cause as, not just the only kind of explanation/cause, but as *the* explanation/cause.

More generally, ‘looking for the cause’ coincides with the expression of a global, non-reactive attitude when it comes to cases in which no cause or law of

²⁹³ Strawson, G. 1986, in McKenna & Russell 2008, p.88.

²⁹⁴ CE, p. 373

²⁹⁵ LFW, p. 441.

nature can be identified to explain a certain behaviour; whether it is the erratic movements of a Driverless Car or the actions of a human being.²⁹⁶ In such cases, Wittgenstein says that we ‘might go on looking’ for some law or else ‘give up entirely and say [it] is free’.²⁹⁷ The former precludes the latter in the way that looking for the cause of the leaves’ movements precludes seeing the leaves as dancing; or that we might look for *the* cause of a person’s actions and yet continue to hold that person responsible. Neither can any limit be set on how long, or in what circumstances, an individual could or should go on ‘looking for the cause’ (or resist doing so).

Preserving a broader framework of attitudes despite the ‘major tensions’ within it

I have outlined *one* way in which the act of holding people responsible, and by extension the reactive attitudes, come to be conflicted, viz. via an equally natural tendency to ‘look for the cause’. In this respect, Wittgenstein’s account of a global, non-reactive attitude is already more comprehensive than anything we find in Galen Strawson’s account of the ‘major tensions’ that exist ‘within’ a broader framework, of reactive and non-reactive attitudes. Nevertheless, what Galen Strawson *does* say, appears at least, to be consistent with the account I have given of different ways of looking/acting. For instance, Galen Strawson recognises that, in the case of the Buddhist monks, the denial of self cannot be affected ‘by some sort of effortless, rationally motivated, self-directed intellectual fiat’; instead it follows, as he puts it, ‘non-rationally’ and ‘as a result of [a] practice’ of meditation.²⁹⁸ Conspicuously

²⁹⁶ LFW, p. 433.

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

²⁹⁸ Strawson, G. 1986, in McKenna & Russell 2008, p.112.

absent from Galen Strawson's account of this transition, however, is any mention of the 'major tensions' that he later says are inherent 'within' the monks' framework of attitudes. Therefore, whilst Galen Strawson maintains that such tensions exist, he does not connect either the reactive attitude or a global, non-reactive attitudes with the 'major tensions' at their heart.

In giving an account of the same 'major tensions' that, for Galen Strawson, threaten to undermine this broader framework, Wittgenstein not only demonstrates the relevance of these tensions to the expression of the reactive and non-reactive attitudes, he also demonstrates the resilience of a broader framework to those tensions. Central to Wittgenstein's demonstration of both of these points is his analysis of those cases in which holding someone responsible (or not holding someone responsible) is 'the result of a struggle.'

If you want to characterise the meaning of these words ('I am responsible' etc.), you've got to say, for one thing, whether the words are the result of a struggle. Isn't this part of saying what the meaning of these words is?²⁹⁹

To augment his account of this 'struggle', Wittgenstein outlines several cases in which, to understand what is being said, it is necessary to give an account of this 'struggle'. Wittgenstein imagines hearing a man, who has been 'brooding about something he had done', and, 'to dispel his discomfort say "My God, I am like a falling stone"'.³⁰⁰ Here, the expression of a non-reactive attitude is a salve to his otherwise reactive feelings. Wittgenstein says the same of the struggle to affect a reactive attitude in the case of a man who, having 'been under a pressure', exclaims

²⁹⁹ LFW, p. 439.

³⁰⁰ Ibid.

‘Now I am free to do what I want’ and ‘I shall do what I choose myself’. Here also, Wittgenstein wants to say that the meaning of the words cannot be conveyed by a purely declarative understanding of the words, i.e. the man is not ‘giving himself the information that he is free’.³⁰¹ The man is expressing, rather than declaring, that, like the brooding man, he is no longer discomforted. It might even be said that the expression *itself* lessens the discomfort, that the statement is performative; although, this last is perhaps more the case with the brooding man who is affecting his change in attitude through or via the exclamation itself.

Having established that the brooding man’s statement is not declarative, but performative, Wittgenstein shows that he is no longer interested in what way(s), if at all, a man (sic. ‘thief’) is ‘like a falling stone’.³⁰² On the contrary, Wittgenstein is only interested in asking what the point of the man’s words is, to which the answer is ‘to dispel his discomfort’; having gone through this ‘process of describing what he means in this case’, Wittgenstein states simply ‘I see exactly what he means’. This explains why the principal reason Wittgenstein gives for someone’s making use of analogies like that of the falling stone is ‘not to be made responsible’.³⁰³ I shall turn to the second reason Wittgenstein gives in a moment, namely ‘a particular attitude of seeing what is tragic in a human being’.³⁰⁴

Before I come to this, however, the important point to grasp about the first reason he gives is that it shows that a commitment to either the reactive or non-

³⁰¹ Ibid.

³⁰² At an earlier point, during the first lecture, Wittgenstein questions what the ‘points of similarity’ are between the man (sic. ‘thief’) and the falling stone. LFW, p. 432.

³⁰³ LFW, p. 440.

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

reactive attitudes is not diminished by its being conflicted. On the contrary, at least ‘part of saying what the meaning of these words is’ involves saying whether or not they are so conflicted. The upshot being that the expression of either attitude can be made more acute by the lack of its opposite, i.e. a yearning for the pressure to be lifted deepens the discomfort, and therefore the relief, involved. Logically, this implies that the expression of either the reactive or non-reactive attitudes is not *always* the result of a struggle. Only *part* of what it means to say the words (‘I am responsible’ etc.), is conveyed by ‘whether [or not] they are the result of a struggle’.³⁰⁵ At the other end of the spectrum from the brooding man, Wittgenstein muses that saying ‘I am responsible’ might simply be a turn of phrase, i.e. the repetition of something one heard as a child.³⁰⁶ Again, Galen Strawson seems willing to make the same concession when he says that, rather than ‘question the correctness of the framework’ as a whole, the tensions threaten only ‘paramount aspects of it’.³⁰⁷ As he puts it: ‘There are, to say the least, some major tensions in it’. Even if this is ‘the least’ we might say, the concession might be enough to downplay the significance of these tensions.

What Wittgenstein indicates is wrong with Galen Strawson’s assessment of the tensions lies in the latter’s thinking that the tensions weaken, or diminish, our commitment to either the reactive or non-reactive attitudes; since one cannot be committed to both. For Wittgenstein, the expression of either the reactive or non-reactive attitudes is, if anything, made more vital by these tensions. That is, to the objection that the tensions threaten a broader framework from ‘within’, Wittgenstein

³⁰⁵ LFW, p. 439.

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

³⁰⁷ Strawson, G. 1986, in McKenna & Russell 2008, p. 112.

is able to respond by demonstrating that far from undermine the expression of either attitude—i.e. saying ‘I am responsible’ or ‘I am not responsible’—the tensions are responsible, at least in part, for the meaning we attribute to either utterance. Despite the boldness of the claim being made—i.e. that the tensions strengthen, rather than weaken, commitment to the reactive or non-reactive attitudes—we are not asked to concede anything that has not already been conceded. What it does ask for is an appropriate modification of how these tensions are to be interpreted. To that end, I shall now turn to a more ethically nuanced understanding of how the reactive attitudes ‘enshrine’ the non-reactive.

Understanding the ethical character of tensions through an account of ‘fatalism’

As well as failing to connect the tensions with the expression of either the reactive or non-reactive attitudes, Galen Strawson also fails, for the same reason, to explain how a global, non-reactive attitude comes to be expressed. That is, just as P. F. Strawson rejects the optimist’s ‘one-eyed utilitarianism’ for not being the ‘right sort’ of basis for expressing the reactive attitudes,³⁰⁸ Galen Strawson fails to draw upon the ‘right sort’ of basis for the non-reactive attitudes; despite having argued, quite convincingly, that the reactive attitudes ‘enshrine’ the non-reactive attitudes.³⁰⁹ In Part One, I argued that a better way to understand the way in which a global, non-reactive attitude might come to be enshrined in the reactive, is through a profound sense of pity for the weaknesses of human beings. This is very similar to the second reason Wittgenstein gives, in the LFW, for appealing to the analogy of the ‘falling stone’—aside from ‘not to be held responsible—viz. ‘a particular attitude of seeing what is

³⁰⁸ Strawson, P. F. 2008, p. 4.

³⁰⁹ Strawson, G. 1986, in McKenna & Russell 2008, p. 88.

tragic in a human being.’³¹⁰ This attitude, I shall argue, connects with what, in the LFW, Wittgenstein calls ‘fatalism’. I shall conclude that it is through his account of fatalism, that Wittgenstein is better able to capture that which Galen Strawson does not, viz. how a global, non-reactive attitude comes to be expressed.

By introducing Wittgenstein’s account of fatalism here my aim is to supplement my analysis of what, in *Culture and Value*, Wittgenstein says ‘denying free will’ comes to. That is, in respect to the description Wittgenstein gives of his own attitude towards life—as ‘like a path along a mountain ridge’—it is evident that, whatever cannot be accounted for by the indirect influence scientific discoveries have over the expression of this attitude, can be accounted for by ‘seeing what is tragic in a human being’.³¹¹ For instance, in saying ‘How could a man help himself in such a situation!’ Wittgenstein is not stating an opinion, i.e. that the man is incapable of altering his circumstances; rather he is emphasising the precariousness of the man’s existence, without making any specific factual claim.³¹²

But what is ‘fatalism’, as it is understood in the LFW? To begin with, ‘fatalism’ ought not to be conflated with a stoic resignation to those things that lie outside of our control. As his remarks in the *Tractatus* show, for instance, Wittgenstein is opposed to the idea of resignation to fate on the grounds that a belief that inaction leads to harmony with reality presumes knowledge of future events—our ignorance of the future is, on the contrary, our basis for thinking that we have

³¹⁰ LFW, p. 440.

³¹¹ Ibid.

³¹² By placing this specific claim in the context of ‘seeing what is tragic in a human being’, it is evident that Wittgenstein’s practice-based approach incorporates a *global* non-reactive attitude. For this reason, we need no longer suspect that Wittgenstein refers only to specific instances of non-reactivity.

freedom of the will.³¹³ Equally, the early Wittgenstein's emphasis on agreement with the world—in the *Notebooks*, 'doing the will of God'—is not conditional upon our choosing to act or not to act.³¹⁴ Unlike the stoics, then, Wittgenstein would say that any happiness derived from contracting one's will (i.e. to those things over which one has control) would be, no less than its opposite, a 'gift of fate'.³¹⁵ Wittgenstein does not reverse this position in the LFW. That is, the incompatibilist's/pessimist's attitude, in so far as it is referred to as fatalistic, is not a resignation to that upon which we are dependent; neither is it necessarily directed towards a surmounting of that dependency. On the contrary, a fatalistic attitude is, for Wittgenstein, a primitive way of acting *in the light of* certain images, e.g. of natural laws as rails.

For instance, Wittgenstein's only other reference to 'fate' (outside of the LFW) identifies it as 'the antithesis of a natural law'.³¹⁶ This is in some way closer to what, in the LFW, Wittgenstein calls 'fatalism' since, in both contexts, fate (and fatalism) are linked with the image of natural laws as 'laid down by Deity'.³¹⁷ Any apparent inconsistency in Wittgenstein describing, on the one hand, fate as the antithesis of a natural law and his describing, on the other hand, a view of natural laws as fatalistic is accounted for by his opposition to treating the latter as a meaningful *hypothesis*. As we have seen, however, Wittgenstein's opposition to incompatibilism is limited to identifying the incompatibilist's 'peculiar way of

³¹³ TLP, 5.1362.

³¹⁴ TLP, ; see also, NB, 8.7.16.

³¹⁵ TLP 6.374. See also Dragona-Monachou 2010 pp. 112-139; *contra* Dragona-Monachou the TLP does not support a stoic interpretation for the reason I have given here, viz. Wittgenstein does not promote resignation to fate as a way of gaining independence from those things beyond our control.

³¹⁶ CV, p. 61. See also, TLP, 6.371.

³¹⁷ LFW, pp. 430-1.

looking at things', which includes shedding light on the tendency to 'bring in the notion of compulsion' when discussing natural laws.³¹⁸ This tendency does not exhaust what Wittgenstein has to say concerning an attitude of fatalism, however. That is, just as the belief that '*some* law of nature forces the thing to go as it does' is incidental to the expression of a global, non-reactive attitude, so too is any appeal to a divine will, or to an ethereal book in which all future events are recorded.³¹⁹ That is, the form a belief takes does nothing to impinge upon the principle, employed by Wittgenstein, that 'denying free will' is not a belief but a way of acting, e.g. 'not *holding* people responsible'. That is, a belief in fate, like a belief in ubiquitous natural laws, is not grounds for denying free will; rather, each belief is, in its *manner*, expressive of a pessimistic attitude towards the sustainability of our practices of holding responsible. Wittgenstein's references to fatalism need not, therefore, imply a return to the Compatibility Question or to the search for an 'external, 'rational' justification'.

Alternatively, the answer to the question of what an 'attitude of fatalism' consists in—i.e. aside from resignation or inaction in the face of those things we cannot change, and beyond a belief in ubiquitous natural laws or a divine book or deity—could well lie in what, in the LFW, Wittgenstein calls 'a particular attitude of seeing what is tragic in a human being.'³²⁰ We have, or so it seems, already encountered just such an attitude in Wittgenstein's account of situations in which he

³¹⁸ LFW, p. 431.

³¹⁹ Although he makes no mention of Wittgenstein or the LFW, Robert Solomon (2003) also argues that fatalism can be understood in isolation either from scientific beliefs (e.g. in determinism) or from a belief in Fate. For Solomon, the fatalist 'does insist on an explanation, but not necessarily a scientific or causal one'; neither must the fatalist 'invoke mysterious causes'. The fatalist and the scientist do not disagree over the 'facts of the matter' but over 'the significance of what happens', which is down to 'the optics, the lens through which they view these facts'. See, Solomon 2003, pp. 435-454.

³²⁰ LFW, p. 440.

has seen people ‘slip’ and said, “How could a man help himself in such a situation!”

In the LFW, as we have seen, Wittgenstein offers the example of a man who describes *himself* as being “no hero” in the same way that he might say “this is a cake.”³²¹ This example is, perhaps, not as clear about what is ‘tragic in a human being’, but it does at least show how a global, non-reactive attitude might come to be expressed without any need to appeal to natural or divine laws. The alternative conception is instead one of appreciation for the helplessness of the individual, which can be as much a part of the individual’s own frailty, including (but not limited to) a weakness of character.

Understanding this, it might begin to be understood how the reactive attitudes might be said to ‘enshrine’ the non-reactive attitudes. One tentative suggestion is that a fatalistic attitude is one way of responding to the fear and trepidation accompanying a profound sense of angst concerning one’s responsibility. The suggestion comes from the LFW where Wittgenstein suggests that his having the idea that ‘[w]hat will happen is laid down somewhere’, or ‘written down’, is simply an ‘expression of my lack of fear.’³²² In saying this, Wittgenstein is not describing the act of mentally steeling oneself to some perceived danger—hence why ‘it isn’t necessary that the picture of its being written down should be connected with courage’.³²³ Instead he is inferring that a lack of fear can be affected by simply having the thought. Again, it is unimportant whether or not the thought constitutes a declarative statement; it is enough that, like the brooding man who says to himself “My God, I am like a falling stone”, the idea relieves one’s discomfort.³²⁴

³²¹ LFW, p. 440.

³²² LFW, p. 436.

³²³ Ibid.

³²⁴ LFW, p. 439.

To further understand how the reactive attitudes might be said to ‘enshrine’ the non-reactive attitudes, it is important to realise that Wittgenstein’s various references to fatalism refer not just to the act of not holding oneself or others responsible, but also to a way of living life generally. This explains why he refers to thinking of natural laws as compelling events as a ‘certain *kind* of fatalism’, i.e. it participates in (shares a family resemblance towards) a broader, or at least more varied, web of attitudes and feelings.³²⁵ The suggestion is, in other words, that there can be other kinds of fatalism, or different ways in which a fatalistic attitude can come to be expressed. The tableau of non-reactive attitudes may be, therefore, just as rich as any reactive form of life.

For instance, in the same way that P. F. Strawson exemplifies the reactive attitudes through a feeling of resentment, it is possible to exemplify the non-reactive attitudes—or fatalism—through a feeling of *pity*.³²⁶ As has been attested already, pity is consistent with a primitive reaction, e.g. to seeing someone in pain, and is therefore to be contrasted in this context with forgiveness, i.e. to express a pitying attitude one does not, first, have to feel resentment. Moreover, a primitive reaction to someone as frail and wretched seems to involve just the kind of commitment to not holding them responsible that is characterised in the LFW and elsewhere as ‘seeing what is tragic in a human being’. Finally, a feeling of pity fulfils the potential to be expressed globally, i.e. towards everyone, without it simultaneously being expected that everyone *should* feel that way. Again, this should not be taken to mean that the expression of a global, non-reactive attitude (or any attitude) is conditional upon one’s feeling pity (or any

³²⁵ LFW, p. 430. Emphasis added.

³²⁶ It is notable that pity does not prefigure in P. F. Strawson’s account of the *reactive* attitudes; it suggests that pity and reactivity are incongruous.

feeling). Rather, it is to say that it is part of what it means to express a global, non-reactive (or fatalistic) attitude that one should feel pity for the frailty, wretchedness, tragedy, etc. of a human being.

For this reason, the expression of a fatalistic attitude is, for Wittgenstein, engrained in an altogether more *human* form of life than has hitherto been considered. This goes some way to explaining the problem I experienced with Galen Strawson's account of the Buddhist monks' expression of a non-reactive attitude, viz. that the monks' practice was described as being 'inhuman, in some way'.³²⁷ As I said earlier, Galen Strawson means that the practice is inhuman only in the way that it can be contrasted with our existing, *reactive* practices; at least, he rules out any 'pejorative' use of the term 'inhuman'.³²⁸ Nevertheless, he is admitting that it no longer 'comes easily to the non-philosophising mind' to imagine what it might be like to adopt a global, non-reactive attitude.³²⁹ Through an account of fatalism, Wittgenstein describes an altogether more human form of life in which 'denying free will' is no less fitting of the description used in *Philosophical Investigations* §178 of an 'attitude towards a soul'; merely that it is a soul that is only *too* human, i.e. frail, weak, and susceptible to falling. To my mind, there is no clearer way in which, as Galen Strawson puts it, the reactive attitudes *already* 'enshrine' the non-reactive' attitudes.

At the same time, it is important not to overlook the ethical or religious significance of Wittgenstein's references to fatalism. His analogy of a 'slip' (from 'a path along a mountain ridge') conjures easily to mind the idea of a 'fall' in an ethical sense; as does the analogy of the falling stone. During his analysis of the LFW, Ilham

³²⁷ Strawson, G. 1986, in McKenna & Russell 2008, p. 112.

³²⁸ Ibid.

³²⁹ Strawson, G. 1986, in McKenna & Russell 2008, pp. 88 & 113.

Dilman argues that Wittgenstein's insistence that the use of these analogies is nothing other than a way of comparing oneself to a falling stone in no way inhibits a more ethically nuanced understanding of this 'fall'.³³⁰ We may go further and observe that, especially when speaking in his own voice in *Culture and Value*, the ethical significance of the picture Wittgenstein offers is heavily implied. This is why the passage is so central to my attempt to disclose how this ethical dimension completes Wittgenstein's account of the pessimist's global, non-reactive attitude.

In order to supplement my claim that there are other kinds of fatalistic attitude, and also in order to draw a line between 'an attitude of seeing what is tragic in a human being' and the apparent role resignation or inactivity *can* play in expressing such an attitude, I shall consider briefly the way in which Wittgenstein elsewhere uses the term 'fate' to refer to an 'attitude' to the future and the past. In this case, Wittgenstein's use of the word 'fate' *does* impinge upon our understanding of fatalism and, more importantly, shows how someone can express a fatalistic attitude by resigning oneself to those things one cannot change. More specifically, Wittgenstein gives an account in *Culture and Value* of not seeking an explanation for events, but accepting them for what they are. When referring to a use of the word 'fate' in relation to 'our attitude to the future and the past', Wittgenstein asks:

To what extent do we hold ourselves responsible for the future? How much do we speculate about the future? How do we think about past and future? If something unwelcome happens:--do we ask "Who's to blame?",

³³⁰ Dilman 1999, p. 252. Dilman compares Wittgenstein's use of the analogy with similar analogies used by Plato, Spinoza and Simone Weil to convey precisely this ethical sense of 'a fall'; what Weil calls 'moral gravity'.

do we say “Someone must be to blame for it”?,--or do we say “It was God's will”, “It was fate”?³³¹

Wittgenstein is seeking to capture a sense of acquiescence in the face of what can't be changed. For example, in situations where we are brooding about a past misdeed or anxiously facing an uncertain future, we might understandably want to dispense with futile thoughts about who is (or will be) to blame. In words reminiscent of, but unconnected with, his early comments on fate, Wittgenstein says that we can do this by appealing to fate or to God's will. In this case, whilst the statements—“It was God's will”, “It was fate”—have the appearance of declarative sentences that are aimed at explaining events in terms of a divine will, the same effect of the words can be had by a ‘command’ one gives oneself, e.g. “Don't be resentful” or “Don't grumble”.³³²³³³

William Brenner captures something of what it means to express a fatalistic attitude to the past and future—i.e. the removal of discomfort—when he highlights the ethical significance of Wittgenstein's words.³³⁴ Brenner maintains that Wittgenstein's appeal to ‘fate’ (or to a fatalistic attitude) is an attempt to curb, what in the revised edition of *Culture and Value*, is (tentatively) called ‘the over-estimation of science’.³³⁵ That is, Brenner interprets the remarks in both *Culture and Value* and the LFW, as a wish not to set limits on the variety of language or on the extent to which

³³¹ CV, p. 69.

³³² CV, p. 61.

³³³ However, it should not be understood from this that Wittgenstein is, after all, aligning himself with Epictetus and the stoics. He does not, in specifying a role for these commands, encourage or in any way promise their success. It is rather that an examination of the pessimist's/fatalist's words uncovers a more accurate description of them as consolatory.

³³⁴ Brenner 2001a, p. 62.

³³⁵ CV (1998), p. 70.

we can express different attitudes.³³⁶ Brenner is right to do this, and yet it must not go unnoticed that the variety of attitudes is made possible in connection only with the fatalist's own 'peculiar' attitude. That is, we must not overlook those aspects of the fatalist's attitude that differentiate it from any other attitude. Wittgenstein says as much in highlighting 'the way in which asking a question, insisting on an answer, or not asking it, expresses a different attitude, a different way of living' which, in the fatalist's own case, is exemplified by the declaration "We are not masters of our fate".³³⁷

From this, however, I do not wish to give the impression that differentiation between attitudes, and the variety of attitudes it is possible for someone to express, come to an end at 'asking a question, insisting on an answer, or not asking it'. For instance, Peter Winch recognises that an utterance like "It was God's will" or "It was fate" 'neither pretends to provide any explanation ... nor seeks to find one' but he also manages to convey a more positive, life-affirming possibility. He maintains that, for Wittgenstein in particular, such utterances convey 'an attitude of *gratitude* for life'.³³⁸ This understanding of fatalism, as 'an attitude of gratitude for life', might appear to contradict my own analysis of what Wittgenstein calls fatalism; as involving, at one time, a tendency to explain events by 'looking for the cause' and, at other times, 'a particular attitude of seeing what is tragic in a human being'. However, whilst I recognise the difficulty (though not the impossibility) of

³³⁶ Brenner 2001a, p. 62.

³³⁷ CV (1998), p. 70. In the earlier iteration of *Culture and Value* this same remark less clearly discerns asking a question from not asking it; CV, p. 61.

³³⁸ Winch, P. in Malcolm 2002, p. 113.

harmonising these various accounts of fatalism, neither Wittgenstein nor myself have a wish to.

Like Brenner, my principal aim in reconstructing Wittgenstein's account of fatalism is 'to keep the variety of language in view'; as well as to demonstrate the full scope of attitudes and feelings that are to be associated with fatalism itself; and thereby to avoid limiting, without excluding, the indirect influence scientific discoveries—and 'looking for the cause'—have on a global, non-reactive attitude.³³⁹ What is most germane about Brenner's interpretation of fatalism, in particular, is that he links it with the kind of 'struggle' that, for Wittgenstein, is a prerequisite for staying 'within the religious sphere'.³⁴⁰ Furthermore, Brenner maintains that it is evidently 'a distinctly philosophical struggle' 'to keep the variety of language in view'.³⁴¹ This includes ways of acting that Brenner calls 'paltry and neglected'; to which we might also add those ways of acting that Wittgenstein calls 'peculiar' or 'ugly'.³⁴² The more general point is this, however: that in order to come to terms with the broader framework Wittgenstein defends, we must struggle come to terms, ethically, with the *full* range of attitudes available to us; this might involve our seeing what is tragic in a human being even as we express gratitude for life. Connected with this struggle, I suggest, is Wittgenstein's account in the LFW of the 'struggle', in certain cases, to come to terms with the responsibility we have for our actions—that it

³³⁹ LFW, p. 440.

³⁴⁰ CV, p. 86.

³⁴¹ Brenner 2001a, p. 62.

³⁴² The former, 'peculiar' way of acting I have already referred to, viz. refusing to hold people responsible on the basis of a fatalistic understanding of natural laws. I shall introduce, in the next chapter, a further way of acting that Wittgenstein described as 'ugly', viz. blaming people despite, or even *because*, of their inherent weakness.

is ‘part of saying what the meaning of the words [“I am responsible”] is’ to say whether or not they are ‘the result of a struggle.’³⁴³

As I shall show, the idea of a ‘struggle’ indicates one potential line of response to the objection that, since the optimist’s and pessimist’s positions are equally natural, we must either be committed to taking up two contradictory attitudes or ways of acting simultaneously, e.g. both holding *and* refusing to hold people responsible, or else we are doomed to vacillate between the two viewpoints; the objection being that little or nothing is gained by keeping ‘the variety of language in view’. It is not altogether clear whether or not this objection is implicit in Galen Strawson’s opposition to P. F. Strawson’s defence of the reactive attitudes. Nonetheless, the wider inference is that a description of our attitudes, no matter how detailed, fails to establish what it is we *ought* to say concerning freedom and responsibility. In the next chapter, I will demonstrate the extent to which Wittgenstein’s treatment of this *ethical* struggle undermines the supposition that, in giving a highly detailed description of our attitudes, Wittgenstein overlooks the more pressing question of how we should act. This will involve taking a closer look at how Wittgenstein’s ideas about freedom of the will and his treatment of some key themes in the philosophy of religion speak to, and exemplify, his wider, methodology.

³⁴³ LFW, p. 439.

Chapter IV

Freedom & Fatalism in Wittgenstein's “Lectures on Freedom of the Will”

Do I contradict myself? / Very well then I contradict myself, / (I am large, I contain multitudes.)

— Walt Whitman, *Song of Myself*.

A picture that is firmly rooted in us may indeed be compared to superstition, but it may be said too that we *always* have to reach some sort of firm ground, be it a picture, or not, so that a picture at the root of all our thinking is to be respected & not treated as a superstition.

— Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, (revised edition).

I have argued so far that Wittgenstein's "Lectures on Freedom of the Will" (LFW) ought not to be read as putting forward either a compatibilist or a practice-based defence of freedom of the will. Instead, the LFW can be taken as defending a broader framework of attitudes and feelings that encompass *both* reactive and non-reactive attitudes. I have further argued that this enables Wittgenstein to provide a descriptively richer account of our ethical practices than can be provided by a compatibilist like Nielsen or an optimist like P. F. Strawson. In addition, I have demonstrated that Wittgenstein is able to provide a descriptively richer account of how tensions in a broader framework of attitudes and practices come about. However, further questions remain about what, if anything, Wittgenstein can provide in this connection beyond a mere description of the difference between reactive and non-reactive attitudes and of the fundamental tensions that exist between them. Any mere description of our actual practices, however rich, looks to fall short of an answer to the question of how one should respond to these tensions as they arise. Here, the question is not whether or not one *can* say that 'the decision of a person is not free because it was determined by natural laws'; rather, the question is of what one *ought* to say. I have argued that, for Wittgenstein, this question presents us with a distinctly ethical problem, rather than a primarily metaphysical or theoretical one.

In what follows, I will maintain that this ethical problem is best understood as arising from the forcefulness of certain pictures or images; images that Wittgenstein is himself impressed by; images such as the image of life as a path along a mountain ridge.³⁴⁴ I shall also show how Wittgenstein's endorsement of different modes of

³⁴⁴ CV, p. 63.

representing freedom of the will contribute towards a more complete, and less problematic understanding of our practices. Wittgenstein's own practice-based approach can therefore be seen as part of a wider methodology aimed at preventing us from thinking in terms of only *one* mode of representation, e.g. in terms of either images of freedom or images of determination.

Furthermore, I shall show that a similar response can be offered to the ethical problem of freedom of the will as it arises in our own lives. By exposing our susceptibility to fatalistic and non-fatalistic images *as* images, Wittgenstein's helps us work through the tensions in our ethical practices. Specifically, I want to show how Wittgenstein advances two strategies for loosening the grip these images have over our attitudes and thereby over our ethical practices. The first strategy is to expose the way in which, in our thought and talk about freedom of the will, we find ourselves gripped by certain absolute or unqualified images or similes: the image, for example, of the events in one's life moving inexorably, i.e. 'as if on rails', or the image of one's being damned.³⁴⁵ By exposing these images *qua* images, and placing alongside them 'intermediate cases', the strategy is to free up our thinking from simply being in the grip of a false dichotomy: between unqualifiedly fatalistic pictures and unqualifiedly non-fatalistic pictures. This strategy fits within Wittgenstein's broader aim to bring to light the typically unnoticed metaphors by which, he thinks, we are always in danger of being bewitched; and to provide 'perspicuous representations' of various domains of our discourse. But I want also to explore the way in which Wittgenstein begins to take up a further and rather different aim. On this second strategy, the aim is to make it intelligible how we can continue to find a use in our lives for the pictures associated

³⁴⁵ E.g. LFW, pp. 429, 439; 'How would you characterise the meaning of "I am damned if I shall do such and such"?"

with both an unqualified freedom and an unqualified fatalism. In particular, I will draw in this connection on Wittgenstein's philosophy of religion, focusing especially on his response to St. Paul.

This chapter is divided into four sections. The first two sections demonstrate the therapeutic and ethical dimensions of Wittgenstein's wider methodology. The third and fourth sections deal, respectively, with the first and second strategies.

Part One: Understanding the LFW in the Context of Wittgenstein's Wider Methodology

It is part of Wittgenstein's express aim in the LFW to impress on us the fact that 'given a certain attitude ... a certain image can force itself upon you'.³⁴⁶ In order to better understand this aim, we need an account of why this fact is, for Wittgenstein, 'one of the most important facts of human life'.³⁴⁷ I shall argue that this aim is central to the LFW because it is part of a methodology that is to some extent therapeutic. That is, it is Wittgenstein's express aim to disclose to us that we are in the grip of certain images, and *through this disclosure*, loosen their grip. To begin with, I shall demonstrate how this therapeutic arm of Wittgenstein's wider methodology is related to his opposition to incompatibilism; doing so will help us to better situate his suggestion that incompatibilist responses to the problem of freedom of the will may rest on a 'blunder', i.e. by conflating the notions of cause and constraint.

In calling a certain aspect of Wittgenstein's methodology 'therapeutic', I am not suggesting that the LFW seek to provide ways of coping with psychological problems. Neither are the LFW an attempt merely to outline the peculiarities of our

³⁴⁶ LFW, p. 435.

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

thought. That we might come to think this is what Wittgenstein is doing might well be due to his identifying specific inclinations or tendencies—e.g. to say either that one is responsible or else that one's choices follow natural laws but not both—as 'facts of psychology'; facts which, I have said, are indeed nothing more or less than observations of human behaviour.³⁴⁸ At no point, however, does Wittgenstein work up any such 'facts of psychology' into a methodology for dealing with, or resolving, the tensions in our own attitudes. On the contrary, Wittgenstein actively undermines any attempt to fit all relevant cases into any particular mode of representation; he does not, therefore, maintain that a particular mode of representation, e.g. the facts of our psychology, captures all that we might say about a phenomenon.³⁴⁹ I suggest that this is why Wittgenstein advances many *different* modes of representation in the LFW as objects of comparison, including (but not limited to) 'facts of psychology', which he uses to bring into sharper focus the relevant cases under examination.

Notably, Wittgenstein's examination of the incompatibilist's grammatical 'blunder', i.e. the unjustified conflation of natural and legal laws, is, in the LFW, juxtaposed with a description of the same behaviour as expressive of a 'peculiar', yet not unjustified, 'attitude of fatalism', i.e. one in which natural laws are associated with the image of events moving 'as if on rails'.³⁵⁰ He goes on to say that it is 'one of the most important facts of human life' that such an image should 'force itself upon you'; in particular (albeit not exclusively) the image 'that you are compelled'.³⁵¹ As

³⁴⁸ LFW, p. 433. See, Chapter One, Part II: v).

³⁴⁹ Immediately after describing the inclination to say either that one is responsible or else that one's choices follow natural laws as 'a fact of psychology' he goes on to say that '*for reasons unknown* ... a certain image can force itself upon you'. LFW, p. 435. Emphasis added.

³⁵⁰ LFW, p. 430.

³⁵¹ LFW, p. 435.

such, Wittgenstein's methodology has rather more to it than that he should avoid passing 'ridicule' on the incompatibilist's 'tendency', i.e. to think that natural laws are like rails.³⁵² That we (i.e. Wittgenstein's students) should be impressed by this 'important' fact is no less a central (and perhaps a rather more central) component of his methodology. We can suppose, then, that Wittgenstein's aim in exposing the incompatibilist's 'blunder' is also to highlight this 'important fact', the true significance of which is not made explicit in the LFW.

The general methodology at work here is perhaps first made explicit, and is said to be of critical importance for philosophy in *The Blue Book*, where Wittgenstein explains that a certain picture holds sway over our understanding of time.

Wittgenstein writes:

When people talk of the direction of time, precisely the analogy of a river is before them. Of course a river can change its direction of flow, but one has a feeling of giddiness when one talks of time being reversed. The reason is that the notion of flowing, of *something*, and of the direction of the flow is embodied in our language.³⁵³

In saying that our understanding of time is, in words he uses on another occasion,³⁵⁴ 'indissolubly linked' with the picture of an 'ethereal river' (e.g. 'the flow of time', 'time passes by', etc.) Wittgenstein draws attention to a typically unnoticed aspect of our language—something so engrained in our ways of talking that it passes undetected—namely the propensity to extend the use of certain pictures (similes,

³⁵² LE, p. 12. Cf. the section on *The Lectures on the Foundations of Mathematics* in Chapter One of this thesis.

³⁵³ AWL, §13. Cf. EPB, p. 156; BB, p.107f.

³⁵⁴ EPB, p. 156. Cited in Schroeder 2006, p. 159.

allegories, metaphors, and so forth) beyond their practical application. It is the bringing to light of this undisclosed “grammar” of our thought that corresponds with what, in the LFW, is less obviously being aimed at, viz. that we should be mindful that our own thinking is bound up with certain images, and that these images are embodied in what we have to say concerning, amongst other things, freedom of the will. For instance, the LFW disclose the way in which concepts associated with freedom of the will are ‘indissolubly linked’ with other similes, e.g. of natural laws as rails along which events move.

Wittgenstein does not think that the fact that these images, similes, metaphors, etc. are ‘embodied in our language’ is, by itself, problematic. A remedy must be sought, however, when we ‘extend’ the similes beyond any ‘practical use’, i.e. when they come to ‘captivate our thinking’.³⁵⁵ For instance, whilst it makes sense to ask how fast a river flows and in what direction, it is a mistake to think that the same questions can be asked about time; more precisely, it is a mistake to ask these questions *merely on the strength of the simile*.³⁵⁶

The same form of criticism can be seen in Wittgenstein’s opposition to what has come to be known as incompatibilism, i.e. where the simile of natural laws as rails is extended so that natural laws come to be thought of as the causes of events (‘compelling events’) or as already in existence (‘laid down’)—neither of which need enter into our conception of natural laws, given that natural laws are the sorts of things that are corrected by new evidence, that they do not proscribe certain events (like legal laws might be said to), and that saying natural laws are ubiquitous fails to

³⁵⁵ AWL, §13; ‘Philosophical troubles are caused by not using language practically but by extending it on looking at it. We form sentences and then wonder what they can mean.’

³⁵⁶ Cf. PI §109.

say anything beyond ‘it goes as it goes’.³⁵⁷ That is, just as the simile of time as a river is extended by asking in what ‘direction’ time flows, so too the incompatibilist extends the simile of natural laws as rails by stipulating that, where no law has yet been found, ‘*some* law of nature forces the thing to go as it does’—as Wittgenstein says, this would be to compare a natural law ‘with a rail which had changed its shape’.³⁵⁸ What difficulty we have in imagining this has little to do with what we know about natural laws and more to do with thinking about natural laws *through* the fatalistic picture of life moving on rails. Yet again, the methodology employed by Wittgenstein is to use other modes of representation as points of comparison between, say, the incompatibilist’s thinking and someone else’s—not so as to refute or remedy the incompatibilist’s thinking, but rather to clarify it, as much as for the incompatibilist as for anyone else.

It is for this reason that the LFW highlight mistaken ways of thinking on *both* sides of the debate over freedom of the will. The compatibilist too unduly extends those pictures associated with non-fatalistic notions of freedom and responsibility. In the same way that he draws attention to the largely unnoticed simile of time as a river, Wittgenstein casts light on the, not false so much as extended, representation of freedom of the will through a ‘freedom of choice’.³⁵⁹ As Wittgenstein points out, saying that I have freedom of choice amounts to no more than saying that I make choices. For this reason, ‘the idea of someone deciding for themselves’, i.e. of making a conscious decision to act, is also extended beyond its practical use by being

³⁵⁷ LFW, p. 430.

³⁵⁸ LFW, p. 429.

³⁵⁹ E.g. Nielsen 1971, p. 61; Nielsen speaks in a similar way of a person’s decisions being decisive.

thought to apply in *all* cases of responsible action.³⁶⁰ What is overlooked is the ability to act freely *without* a prior act or volition, such that ‘when I raise my arm, I do not normally *try* to raise it.’³⁶¹ In both cases, then, the error lies in ‘extending [the simile] on looking at it’; i.e. in coming to think a certain way in light of the simile and without appreciation for, what he calls, its ‘pictorial character’.

In a pivotal section of the *Investigations*, Wittgenstein explains that ‘our failure to understand’ is the result of our not having a ‘clear view’ of our words generally. This is particularly relevant to the way in which we fail to take heed of the essentially ‘pictorial character’ of many of our expressions. Famously, Wittgenstein writes:

A main source of our failure to understand is that we do not *command a clear view* of the use of our words—Our grammar is lacking in this sort of perspicuity. A perspicuous representation produces just that understanding which consists in ‘seeing connexions’. Hence the importance of finding and inventing *intermediate cases*.

The concept of a perspicuous representation is of fundamental significance for us. It earmarks the form of account we give, the way we look at things.³⁶²

The difficulty Wittgenstein is describing is, once again, not a difficulty that has to do with the fact that certain similes come to be ‘embodied in our language’, but that they captivate our thinking. In order that we should no longer be captivated by these

³⁶⁰ LFW, p. 442.

³⁶¹ PI, §622. It should not be overlooked that simply raising one’s arm, i.e. without trying to raise it, is another image or picture.

³⁶² PI, §122.

similes, Wittgenstein introduces what he calls a perspicuous representation to do the work of shedding light on the underlying grammar of our words; i.e. the connections which, if unseen, provide the meaning but not the understanding of our words but which, if seen, provide both meaning and understanding. In due course I will explain why it is that ‘finding and inventing intermediate cases’ should, for Wittgenstein, provide us with a ‘clear view of the use of our words’. In doing so, however, I shall rely largely on what Gordon Baker has to say concerning the central importance of section §122 of the *Investigations* in coming to understand the therapeutic aspects of Wittgenstein’s methodology.³⁶³

Baker notes, with a due sense of irony, that the idea of a perspicuous representation is itself less than entirely perspicuous. Very roughly, Baker determines that ‘the defining characteristic’ of a perspicuous representation is that it ‘condense something complex into a simple and manageable symbol’ that can then be ‘reproduced’.³⁶⁴ Nevertheless, Baker is quick to distinguish a perspicuous representation from either a definition or an analogy and settles instead for a definition of the term as ‘anything which has the function of introducing ‘perspicuity’ into some aspects of the use of some of ‘our words’’.³⁶⁵

Baker’s functional definition is, in part, due to a lack of direction on Wittgenstein’s part—the only definitive example of a (more or less³⁶⁶) perspicuous

³⁶³ Baker 2004, pp. 22-52.

³⁶⁴ Baker 2004, p. 31.

³⁶⁵ Baker 2004, p. 23.

³⁶⁶ PR, §1; ‘An octahedron with the pure colours at the corner-points e.g. provides a *rough* representation of colour-space, and this is a grammatical representation, not a psychological one.’

representation Wittgenstein offers *explicitly* is the colour-octahedron.³⁶⁷ As Baker puts it, ‘the colour-octahedron is a *representation* (or even ‘picture’) of the grammatical rules’ surrounding colour relationships, i.e. ‘what ‘red’, ‘green’, ‘yellow etc. mean’; so that, whilst ‘reddish-blue’ is seen to make grammatical sense, we can see that ‘reddish-green’ does not. By stressing the representational character of the example, Baker concludes that *any* perspicuous representation (or ‘picture’) of grammatical rules ‘*must* have the characteristic that the representation is distinct from what is represented’.³⁶⁸ Nevertheless, a perspicuous representation remains distinct from an analogy or metaphor since, as in the case of the colour octahedron, the perspicuous representation is intimately related to what is being represented; i.e. they are metonymic or synecdochical representations.

One upshot of Baker’s functional definition of perspicuous representations is that one can *only* make use of perspicuous representations where our grammar is unclear. That is, a perspicuous representation is meant to make plain the usefulness and, more importantly the dangers, involved in using other images, metaphors, similes, etc. That is, just as the colour octahedron gives us a perspicuous representation that exposes the confusion involved in ‘reddish-green’, so too a perspicuous representation of the grammar of temporal concepts makes clear the inherent, and unnoticed dangers of thinking that time flows, that *something* is flowing, and that it flows in a particular direction. Baker therefore maintains that just as the colour octahedron gives us a perspicuous representation of the grammar of

³⁶⁷ Baker (2004, p. 23-24) acknowledges that the paucity of explicit examples of perspicuous representations presents a quandary, viz. that Wittgenstein’s use of perspicuous representations can hardly be fundamental if it is so rare. Baker responds, however, by saying that, once alert to their presence, we can locate perspicuous representations throughout the *Investigations*, and in Wittgenstein’s other writings.

³⁶⁸ Baker 2004, p. 24.

colours so we need, for philosophical purposes, a perspicuous representation of the grammar of temporal concepts. It is for this reason that Baker focusses on the specialised function to which these perspicuous representations are put.

For the same reason, I am principally interested in Baker's analysis of perspicuous representations for the way it serves to perspicuously represent Wittgenstein's methodology in dealing with philosophical problems in general. Of particular note is Baker's acknowledgement that, for Wittgenstein, 'The tyranny of a system of expression is to be broken ... by our affecting a change of *aspect* through juxtaposing ... other systems of expression'.³⁶⁹ The 'tyranny' referred to is any system of expression that, due to its 'simplicity and familiarity', remains 'imperceptible' due to its being 'unacknowledged'.³⁷⁰ It is this 'tyranny', notes Baker, that leads to philosophical disputes taking the form, cited in *Investigations* §112, of 'But this isn't how it is!' versus 'Yet this is how it *must* be!'.³⁷¹

This form of dispute is, I suggest, what leads Wittgenstein, in LFM, to compare a mathematician's pleonastic use of the word 'necessary' with a certain use of the term 'compulsion', that is used by the incompatibilist to deny belief in freedom of the will if human beings are physically determined.³⁷² That is, Wittgenstein supposes that, by denying a belief in freedom of the will on the grounds that we are determined, it is necessary to be tyrannical in one's use of the term 'compulsion'; to think of compulsion only in terms of being pushed, i.e. against one's will. The

³⁶⁹ Baker 2004, p. 33.

³⁷⁰ *ibid.*

³⁷¹ PI §112; 'A simile that has been absorbed into the forms of our language produces a false appearance, and this disquiets us. "But *this* isn't how it is!"—we say. "Yet *this* is how it has to *be*!".'

³⁷² LFM, p. 242.

response Wittgenstein gives—‘this is not how we use the expression “he can’t do anything else”’—mirrors that of the compatibilist in so far as it takes the form of responding, “But this isn’t how it is!” However, where Wittgenstein differs from the compatibilist is in criticising this response for overlooking the possibility that ‘how it is’ could change if we were to adopt another system of expression, e.g. by giving up the distinction between freedom and compulsion altogether. In both instances, what is ‘neutralised’ is the inclination to say how things *must* be.³⁷³ For Wittgenstein, this inclination is the result of seeing things in only one way, i.e. thinking in terms of just one picture or analogy.³⁷⁴

Furthermore, this is why, in the LFW, Wittgenstein finds and invents various ‘intermediate cases’, such as the Downstairs Crank and Driverless Car analogies, viz. in order to perspicuously represent the kinds of pictures that captivate our thinking.³⁷⁵ In addition, the cases are aimed at preventing us from thinking that only one way of looking at things is possible, even if the intermediate cases include, as in the second Downstairs Crank analogy, ‘such a very special case’; or rather *especially* if they include very special cases.³⁷⁶ That is, in specifying its very special character, Wittgenstein is able to ask rhetorically why it is that anyone should be ‘inclined to compare ordinary cases with such a very special case’. Here, ‘seeing the connexion’ means recognising the peculiarity of its being used at all. That is, the connection, whilst not a ‘blunder’, is nonetheless shown to be a ‘very special case’, i.e. it is not

³⁷³ Baker 2004, p. 34.

³⁷⁴ Ibid.

³⁷⁵ In the case of the Downstairs Crank, what is represented is the same ‘tyrannical’, and ‘pleonastic’, use of the term ‘compulsion’ that is indicated in LFM, p. 242.

³⁷⁶ LFW, p. 435.

merely a reiteration of the *first* Downstairs Crank example involving compulsion against one's will.

For this reason, Baker's interpretation of Wittgenstein's methodology is entirely consistent with what the latter goes on to say immediately after his remarks about perspicuous representations—that 'in the end' philosophy can only describe the language we use, and that it 'leaves everything as it is'.³⁷⁷ That is, it is wholly compatible with 'finding and inventing intermediate cases', i.e. interposing 'other systems of expression', that the systems of expression themselves should remain unchanged. This is because Wittgenstein is 'teaching us to understand the concepts we have' by 'constructing fictitious ones'.³⁷⁸ At its most general, then, Wittgenstein's claim is not merely that certain pictures, metaphors, analogies, etc. are 'embodied in our language' but that our ways of thinking are unnecessarily dogmatic in the way that they adhere blindly to these modes of representation.³⁷⁹ Most importantly, it is by making visible these modes of representation (similes, metaphors, pictures, etc.)—and the way in which they come to be extended—that we have the chance to loosen their grip, the purpose of which is to make plain the analogies that we unconsciously buy into in order that we should enjoy making use of, what Baker calls, 'conscious analogies and comparisons'.³⁸⁰

For this reason, 'extending [the picture] on looking at it' is not the only, nor even the most common, mistake we can make—there is a more persistent failure we

³⁷⁷ PI, §124.

³⁷⁸ CV, p. 74

³⁷⁹ AWL, §13.

³⁸⁰ Baker 2004, p. 34. 'Conscious analogies and comparisons are useful tools for curing diseases of the intellect, whereas unconscious ones generate insoluble problems by exercising an imperceptible tyranny over our thinking.'

must respond to as well, namely the failure to recognise these images *as* images. The threat posed by this failure is that we will remain, as Baker puts it, ‘blind to “the philosophically most important *aspects* of things” because of their simplicity and familiarity.’³⁸¹ To be aspect-blind is to be unawares to the fact that a picture can serve as the expression of an attitude without revealing the ‘essence of things’; that not all images are employed to justify a claim.³⁸² To illustrate this fact, Wittgenstein provides a further perspicuous representation of how, with particular attention paid to our ethical practices, an image associated with the expression of a particular attitude can unconsciously be mistaken for a justification of that expression.

Rules of life are dressed up in pictures. And these pictures can only serve to *describe* what we are to do, not *justify* it. Because they could provide a justification only if they held good in other respects as well. I can say:

"Thank these bees for their honey as though they were good people who have prepared it for you"; that is *intelligible* and describes how I should like you to conduct yourself. But I cannot say: "Thank them because, look, how kind they are!"—since the next moment they may sting you.³⁸³

For Wittgenstein, thanking the bees ‘as though they were good people’ is an *expression* of thanks. This is contrasted with thanking the bees *on the basis of* how kind they are, in which case the image is serving as a putative justification for one particular way of thinking about the bees’ behaviour; a way of thinking that obscures other, less gratifying, aspects of the bees’ behaviour (which in turn refutes any such

³⁸¹ Baker 2004, p. 34. Baker is paraphrasing PI §129. Cf. LFW, p. 435; ‘it is one of the most important facts of human life that such impressions sometimes force themselves on you.’

³⁸² Baker 2004, p. 157. See also, Schulte 2011, pp. 190-1.

³⁸³ CV, p. 29.

justification). The above passage relates, once again, to Wittgenstein's express aim in the LFW: to impress on us 'that a certain image can force itself upon you.'³⁸⁴ By saying that the 'rules of life are dressed up in pictures' Wittgenstein is impressing on us the forcefulness of images that are, in their everyday way, abundantly familiar and yet, due to this familiarity, unnoticed. The perspicuous representation of the honey bees is, in Baker's vernacular, a 'conscious analogy' that can be used to make apparent both the forcefulness and limitations of these images. This also explains why Wittgenstein concludes his point about the forcefulness of certain images by asking, and negatively responding to, the question: '*Must* you look at [things] in this way?''³⁸⁵ His denial that we *must* look at things according to a specific image, is a denial that a certain image justifies a particular way of looking at things; if this were not the case, then we would be unable to understand the limitation Wittgenstein imposes on the image being used to make claims about the bees' kindness.

As well as avoiding *unconscious* analogies, we must therefore also avoid turning them into conscious *justifications*. As Baker explains, Wittgenstein's proposed alternative is that we make conscious use of these images *as* images, i.e. that we make conscious the otherwise unconscious steps taken when looking at things through these images (similes, metaphors, etc.). This understanding serves also to loosen the grip these images have over our ways of thinking. Consequently, this explains why Wittgenstein's only stated aim in the LFW is to 'impress' on us that certain images sometimes 'force themselves on you'; his 'wish' being for us to

³⁸⁴ LFW, p. 435.

³⁸⁵ Ibid.

consciously acknowledge the otherwise unconscious influence these images have over our ways of thinking.

It might be objected that using perspicuous representations to make conscious the analogies to which we are *already* committed may well give us a clear view of ‘our words’, but it gives us no clear sense as to their *value*—the objection being that we are still no closer to answering the question of what one ought to say concerning, amongst other things, freedom of the will. I should say that what this objection fails to take into account are the practical uses to which perspicuous representations can be put. That is, getting a ‘clear view of the use of our words’ is not simply in aid of freeing us from the ‘blunders’ that inevitably follow from being tethered unconsciously to certain images; understanding that one is thanking the bees *as though* they were kind people wards off thanking the bees for their kindness despite, or oblivious to, the fact that they may just as soon sting you. Yet, the principal reason in favour of making these images (similes, metaphors, etc.) conscious, is in order that it should serve as a first step towards a deeper ethical self-understanding. One may, for instance, too quickly overlook that the image serves as a description of how to one *ought* to conduct oneself.³⁸⁶

Even so, *describing* how one thinks one ought to conduct oneself, i.e. offering ‘rules for life’, does not appear to provide us with anything *like* a justification for thinking or acting a particular way. Wittgenstein offers no guidance as to whether the picture presented above is true or false. This is hardly surprising, of course, since it is precisely this kind of unintelligibility that he wishes to turn us away from. That is, Wittgenstein’s opposition to both incompatibilism and compatibilism, as well as his

³⁸⁶ CV, p. 29.

defence of both reactive and non-reactive attitudes, are an attempt to evince in us the fragility of our attitudes to freedom and responsibility and thereby to demonstrate the essentially ethical character of the problem at hand. The alternative methodology outlined above—of describing how to conduct oneself through different modes of representation—can be fully appreciated only in the light of a profound uncertainty over how one ought to think or act, i.e. as ‘the result of a struggle.’³⁸⁷ For these reasons, the LFW are part of a philosophic tradition stretching back to Socrates, the aim of which is not merely to dispel illusions but to grant insight into our immediate involvement in the images and ideas that contribute to the meanings of what is said concerning freedom and responsibility.

The two strategies I shall consider in the final sections are both attempts to negotiate our way around the fragility, and resilience, of these images and ideas; to thereby provide the basis for an ethical self-understanding; and to ultimately divulge ways of taking up, first-personally, agreement in a form of life that comprises both reactive and non-reactive elements. In the next section I will disclose more fully, what Wittgenstein takes to be the ethical nature of the problem—as owing to a familiar sense of uncertainty arising from the tensions in our attitudes to both freedom and fatalism—and why it remains a problem that we must respond to first-personally.

Part Two: The ethical character of the problem of freedom of the will

In order to demonstrate the distinctly ethical nature of the problem for Wittgenstein, I will examine his last recorded remarks on freedom of the will made during a conversation with Norman Malcolm and O. K. Bouwsma in August 1949; the latter’s

³⁸⁷ LFW, p. 439.

journal comprising the only extant record of what was said. During their conversation, Wittgenstein gives what we might call a crystallised account of his views on freedom and responsibility.³⁸⁸ What strikes one first is how closely the conversation follows the line of the LFW—the conversation moves from talk of familiar and unfamiliar usages of phrases (e.g. ‘he can’t help it’ etc.) to talk of attitudes (e.g. ‘holding oneself responsible’, praising, blaming, etc.), and finally to a profound ‘uncertainty’ or ‘agony of spirit’.³⁸⁹ It is this last which speaks to the roots of the distinctly ethical character of the problem at the heart of the LFW, but which is otherwise left implicit in the LFW.

We may speculate that this difference in emphasis reflects Wittgenstein’s expectation, in the context of the LFW, that his students must glean for themselves the deeper significance of his ‘finding and inventing intermediate cases’. This pedagogical aspect carries through into his 1949 conversation with Bouwsma but here the effort to understand this deeper significance is made visible to us. In addition, the uncertainty that is represented, in the LFW, as a doubt as to whether or not knowledge of the causes of our actions will eventually mean that we ‘play a different game’ is, in the 1949 conversation, expressed as a more personal sort of anxiety around one’s own status as an ethical agent. Recalling the conversation, Bouwsma describes the profound sense of jeopardy that he comes to feel concerning his own freedom.

W. said, I think, that the problem is crucial—he maybe, [sic.] meant serious and not simply speculative—when in respect to something which you yourself have done, you cannot now make up your mind whether you

³⁸⁸ The informal nature of the conversation makes it a far more tendentious source of information than the LFW. However, the informal and heavily abridged nature of the conversation serves to highlight what are, for Wittgenstein, the most important aspects of the LFW.

³⁸⁹ Bouwsma 1986, pp. 15-17, & 18.

could help it or not, whether you were responsible. In this case your attitude towards your own self as, I suppose, a small horror, might make you anxious. Here the uncertainty, the problem, invades one's own personality. But I do not now understand this. I need some illustrations.

Ivan doesn't know whether he is guilty or not. He decides. I suppose that in respect to the universe or in respect to another human being this question may be left in suspense. But in respect to oneself the issue is suffered, is an agony of spirit. Am I a living horror?³⁹⁰

Bouwsma is safe in assuming that in calling the problem 'crucial' Wittgenstein means that it is not a merely speculative question, that it is existentially 'serious'. What seriousness this problem has can, I think, be connected with a distinction Wittgenstein makes elsewhere between important problems and trivial ones; the key difference being that an important problem cannot be dissolved simply by being 'trained in abstruse matters'.³⁹¹ As in the preceding section, it is not a question of discovery, e.g. of indeterminism or of an as yet unknown or elusive formula, but of overcoming one's unconscious attachment to a way of acting, i.e. in accordance with a certain picture. Bouwsma is right, then, to suppose that the 'agony of spirit' invades one's personality in such a way that no speculative answer, such as whether freedom of the will is metaphysically possible, *could* fully resolve it.

Bouwsma also identifies rightly the locus of this 'agony' in the self, i.e. 'spirit'. Any response to this agony must therefore originate from this first-personal perspective. This is what Bouwsma means when he says that, 'in respect to something

³⁹⁰ Bouwsma 1986, p. 17.

³⁹¹ CV, p. 17.

which you yourself have done', the problem 'invades one's own personality'.³⁹² In making this claim, it seems to me, Bouwsma is suggesting that the simplest expression of the problem can be whether or not I ought to hold *myself* responsible for my own actions. This is not to say that I ought to suspend my uncertainty over the responsibility of *others*. Rather it is to say that, since the problem is self-contained and self-directed, I am uniquely placed to alleviate my own suffering, i.e. *I* can unilaterally decide to take responsibility for *my* actions (or not to do so).³⁹³

William Brenner is also quick to suggest that the problem being 'crucial' relates, in particular, to one's sense of *personal* responsibility. Brenner points to William James's suggestion that even a very strong religious duty to 'judge not' must be applied sparingly, if at all, to one's own case.³⁹⁴ He argues, in agreement with Bouwsma, that this is not because, in my own case, I *know* that I am responsible, but because I *take* responsibility and do not hold myself responsible as I might (or might not) hold others responsible.³⁹⁵ The point here is not that one can be made certain of one's own responsibility but not of the responsibility of others. To presume this would be to overlook why the problem is felt as 'an agony of spirit' and why, *in my own case*, the problem is 'crucial'. Moreover, whilst the problem being 'crucial' means Brenner is right to say that any uncertainty with regards one's sense of personal responsibility 'will have to be resolved', there is no reason why this imperative does not also extend to our *inter*-personal attitudes. One might argue that the New Testament (*Matthew* 7:1) imperative Brenner appeals to, i.e. to 'Judge not!', is

³⁹² Bouwsma 1986, p. 17.

³⁹³ *ibid.*

³⁹⁴ Brenner 2001b, pp. 255-6.

³⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

already self-regarding since the biblical reference continues ‘*lest ye be judged*’.

Therefore, the command not to judge others is as much a warning not to judge others too harshly, to cast them in an unfavourable light, or to think that one is immune to the same treatment.

It is worth pausing to reflect on the deeper significance of this example. In particular, the common standing between “sinners” from a religious point of view—i.e. as all equally liable to be judged—does not give rise to the non-reactive attitudes only.³⁹⁶ Wittgenstein demonstrates the reverse view in the LFW where the same picture serves to describe *reactive* feeling: “Yes, he is a rascal and so am I. I am to blame and so is he.”³⁹⁷ In taking responsibility for our own actions, therefore, we do not remove the tensions or resolve the problem. On the contrary, the persistence of the tensions, between reactive and non-reactive attitudes, is what appears to make the problem ‘crucial’ for Wittgenstein. That is, in emphasising that the *problem* is ‘crucial’, he is surely drawing attention to the need to properly engage with it *as a problem*. That is, in order to take seriously the problem as an existential one, we must be engaged in taking up *both* sides. The problem is crucial, in other words, precisely because one can be made acutely aware of one’s guilt *and* innocence.

In a remark written shortly after his 1949 conversation with Bouwsma, and suggestive of the same ‘agony of spirit’, Wittgenstein describes this sense of aporia.

Look at human beings: one is poison to the other. A mother to her son,
and vice versa, etc. But the mother is blind and so is her son. Perhaps they
have guilty consciences, but what good does that do them? The child is

³⁹⁶ As was discussed in the preceding chapter, the images associated with not judging others are non-reactive in that they encourage one to think that human beings are sinful by nature, i.e. prone to falling.

³⁹⁷ LFW, p. 437.

wicked, but nobody teaches it to be any different and its parents spoil it with their stupid affection; and how are they supposed to understand this and how is the child supposed to understand it? It's as though they were *all* wicked and *all* innocent.³⁹⁸

From the above it is clear that, for Wittgenstein, there is no possibility of the parent(s) or child *deciding* to look at things a certain way, since their innocence derives from their being 'blind' to those aspects of themselves that, for those who can see, lead to an aporia. It may be unclear, therefore, in what sense I can possibly engage, first-personally, with the problem, i.e. as a problem.

Baker's analysis of Wittgenstein's method once again helps to explain why the problem being 'crucial' should mean that it is a problem that must be taken up first-personally and, at the same time, what Bouwsma means by saying that we must respond to our 'agony of spirit' *by deciding*.³⁹⁹ According to Baker, there is a commonplace sense in which the response to the problem can be said to be 'voluntary'.

The point of calling aspect-seeing 'voluntary' (and in this respect contrasting it with perception) is *not* to claim that it can be brought about on a whim, but rather that it *makes sense* to ask somebody to look at things differently, to say that a person has complied with this request, or equally that he has *refused* to see an aspect which is perfectly visible to others. We might say that changing one's way of seeing things is difficult

³⁹⁸ CV, p. 86.

³⁹⁹ We should recall Kai Nielsen's similar difficulty in arguing that those who lack a freedom of the will do so because their decisions are indecisive.

because it is voluntary, because one has to surrender what one has always
wanted to see.⁴⁰⁰

For Baker, the purpose of making the analogies conscious, is not to weigh up which analogies, or aspects of analogies, we make use of; e.g. by deciding to think of life as ‘a path along a mountain ridge’.⁴⁰¹ On the contrary, the purpose is to disclose the full range of available images (similes, metaphors, etc.) and to thereby *avoid* thinking in terms of only one analogy. For this reason, it would be wrong to think that we can choose, i.e. ‘on a whim’, which analogies we are conscious of. Baker’s account is therefore consistent with the Wittgenstein’s statement in the LFW that ‘you may be, for reasons unknown, compelled to look at it a certain way’.⁴⁰² Moreover, given the primitive way in which an attitude comes to be expressed, we cannot speak of deciding to express (or not to express) a certain way of looking at things; even if one could make a decision not based on one’s existing way of looking at things, any response to the problem would be contiguous with the tensions under discussion. That is, any decision not to see aspects would be just another form of ‘aspect-blindness’ and would therefore constitute a failure to come to terms with the *problem*.

In her introduction to the French translation of the LFW, Antonia Soulez argues similarly that the sense in which it is up to us to perspicuously represent to ourselves our attitudes to freedom and responsibility is not about making choices.⁴⁰³ On the contrary, she argues that ‘conversion’ (to a new way of seeing things) is, for Wittgenstein, made possible by a contraction of one’s will. For Soulez, the problem

⁴⁰⁰ Baker 2004, p. 46.

⁴⁰¹ See my earlier point in Chapter One, Part Two, p. 49 concerning LFW, p. 431.

⁴⁰² LFW, p. 435.

⁴⁰³ Soulez 2000, pp. 131-134.

being ‘crucial’ means that we should eschew ‘a theoretical overcoming leading to a synthetic neutralization of opposing forces’.⁴⁰⁴ Instead, the existential problem calls for ‘surmounting’ what, in *Culture and Value*, Wittgenstein calls the ‘resistances of the will’.⁴⁰⁵ For Wittgenstein, we are already engaged in a process of willing to see things a certain way, and that, as a result, we actively resist other ways of looking at things. It is therefore ‘up to us’ to lower that resistance. For this reason, Soulez’s interpretation is conducive to the methodology under examination, viz. to make conscious those images (similes, metaphors, etc.) to which we are *already* committed and thereby take on both sides of the existential problem at once. Soulez formulates her own understanding of the therapeutic aspects of this methodology as follows:

There is, on the one hand, what holds us captive in language—the striking image embedded in its net—and on the other what we put there when we discover a new connection. We are thus affected by a change through the effect of a different comparison. But the more the comparison is stretched, the more language holds unexpected analogies in reserve, the more chance there is that the method will lead us to this pacified view of the whole.⁴⁰⁶

Like Baker, then, Soulez connects the conscious use of *different* analogies (connections, comparisons, images) with a clarity of vision, i.e. a ‘pacified view of the whole’. For Soulez, change—what in Wittgenstein’s vernacular she calls ‘conversion’—to a new, hopefully more perspicuous, way of looking at things is

⁴⁰⁴ E.g. the kind of theoretical solution sought by Kai Nielsen et. al.

⁴⁰⁵ Soulez 2000, p. 132. Soulez is referring to what, in CV, p. 17, Wittgenstein describes as a resistance, or ‘difficulty’, of the will in coming to see what it does not *want* to see.

⁴⁰⁶ Soulez 2000, p. 136.

affected by the very thing which captivates us, viz. the forcefulness of the images themselves.

It might be objected that this interpretation is still question-begging since it presupposes that we have sufficient freedom of the will *not to will*. That is, the same difficulties present in connection with a contraction of the will as present in connection with the will to will.⁴⁰⁷ However, it can be responded that the kind of freedom required to stop ourselves from doing something we are committed (primitively) to doing is unlike the will to will, unassuming. As Baker puts it: ‘it *makes sense* to ask somebody to look at things differently’ or to say that somebody ‘has *refused* to see an aspect which is perfectly visible to others’; one must therefore ‘surrender what one has always *wanted* to see’.⁴⁰⁸ This is because that person is *already* looking at things a particular way. For the same reason, Soulez insists that, for Wittgenstein, there is ‘no originary will, but a will which emerges out of a conquered inhibition’.⁴⁰⁹ This is not to say this requirement is easy, far from it, but it is not question-begging.

The real difficulty we have is also captured by Bouwsma. In the previously cited passage, Bouwsma expresses his own difficulty in understanding Wittgenstein as a need for illustrations. The image from *Culture and Value* of life as ‘a path along a mountain ridge’, or the image from the LFW of being ‘damned if I shall do such and such’, are by no means exhaustive of the available images. Bouwsma’s offers his own apt illustration, namely Ivan Karamazov. To begin with, the illustration confirms my

⁴⁰⁷ Cf. Wittgenstein’s remarks concerning Bishop Barnes in Chapter One, Part Two, p. 44 of this thesis; also LFW, p. 442.

⁴⁰⁸ Baker 2004, p. 46.

⁴⁰⁹ Soulez 2000, pp. 132-133; ‘the Wittgensteinian language therapy is powerless over systems of beliefs’ because, for Wittgenstein, ‘there is nothing already in place to allow or prevent human freedom.’

claim that, in responding to our ‘agony of spirit’ by deciding to take responsibility, this needn’t involve taking *personal* responsibility only; an individual can be just as intimately connected with taking responsibility *for others*. One of the key themes explored in *The Brothers Karamazov* concerns whether or not, and to what extent, I am to consider myself “my brother's keeper”. Like *Matthew* 7:1, whatever response is given to this question, it cannot fail to be intimately related to the responsibility we feel for ourselves and others.

In Ivan’s case, I think, there can be said to be a progression towards an appreciation of the problem under discussion. It is true that, to begin with, Ivan resists any imputation that he might be responsible for the actions of another; he thinks only of the responsibility that each of us, himself included, have for our *own* actions. This viewpoint is most vividly captured in Ivan’s recitation of the parable of *The Grand Inquisitor*, but the same viewpoint is in evidence when Ivan is confronted with his brother Dmitri’s alleged guilt.⁴¹⁰

‘You are always harping upon it! What have I to do with it? Am I my brother Dmitri’s keeper?’ Ivan snapped irritably, but then he suddenly smiled bitterly. ‘Cain’s answer about his murdered brother, wasn’t it?’⁴¹¹

Ivan’s viewpoint above is contrasted pointedly and repeatedly with his younger brother Alyosha’s beliefs, represented by the teachings of Father Zossima, viz. that ‘every one of us is undoubtedly responsible for all men—and everything on earth’.⁴¹² What Father Zossima is describing, it seems to me, is a way of treating others that at

⁴¹⁰ Dostoevsky, F. *The Brothers Karamazov*. Book V, Chapter V. Garnett, C. (trans).

⁴¹¹ Dostoevsky, F. *The Brothers Karamazov*. Book V, Chapter III. Garnett, C. (trans).

⁴¹² Dostoevsky, F. *The Brothers Karamazov*, Book IV, Chapter I. Garnett, C. (trans).

once recognises people as both all innocent and all sinful. It is arguably the fatalistic aspect of this teaching that Ivan, in the preceding passage, is closed to, i.e. he denies that responsibility can be meted out to all and for everything. Instead Ivan can be said to in the grip of an entirely non-fatalistic idea that each is responsible for his own actions alone. For this reason, it can hardly be said that Ivan is in the grip of an ‘agony of spirit’ to that he takes seriously, even for a moment, the suggestion that he might lower his resistance to taking responsibility for his brother.⁴¹³

However, as we know, Ivan does ultimately open his heart to the possibility that he is his brother’s keeper, culminating in his attempt to wrest responsibility away from his brother and onto himself. There is no clear indication given in the text that Ivan lowers his resistance to taking responsibility for his brother in light of the religious (and largely fatalistic) picture presented by Father Zossima; although it might be said that the picture is given just this significance *by the author*. In any case, the important aspect of the illustration is that, in opening his heart to the responsibility that he has for his *brother’s* actions, Ivan can now be said to engage with the problem *as a problem*; i.e. that ‘Ivan doesn’t know whether he is guilty or not. He decides.’

It may still be felt that, in responding to this ‘agony of spirit’, it is still unclear whether Ivan is more or less fortunate than he was before, i.e. prior to lowering the ‘resistances of the will’. It can be argued that this development in Ivan’s character is instrumental (or at least influential) in bringing about his descent into madness.⁴¹⁴

Those who wish to know what it is that Wittgenstein promises, beyond a mere

⁴¹³ The irritability and bitterness with which Ivan expresses his initial viewpoint might be taken to indicate that he is at least aware of this possibility, and that he resists it.

⁴¹⁴ Dostoevsky, F. *The Brothers Karamazov*. Book XII. Garnett, C. (trans).

description of the tensions in our attitudes, are liable to be put off, rather than comforted, by the illustration. Such a judgement would be overly hasty, however, since, on an alternative reading of *The Brothers Karamazov*, it could be said that Ivan is indeed worse off for being, as it were, ‘superficially certain’ of his lack of responsibility. On this reading, Ivan’s ethical enlightenment can be considered his most vital undertaking.⁴¹⁵ Nevertheless, it might be objected further that the illustration only has this significance if the reader too is open to both Ivan’s original position (as represented by the *Parable of the Grand Inquisitor*) as well as the alternative point of view he embraces later (as represented by the teachings of Father Zossima). That is, a reader who is, in their own self, resistant to either image is liable to think that Ivan is mistaken—either for resisting taking responsibility for his brother’s actions or else for lowering that resistance. To this it can be responded that, whether or not one continues to resist, it remains a possibility that one will, like Ivan, come to ‘surrender what one has always *wanted* to see’.⁴¹⁶ For this reason, Bouwsma’s illustration can, at the very least, serve as a warning: that failing to take up the tensions that could one day manifest themselves in our own lives, might well lead us to the same impasse as Ivan.

Bouwsma’s illustration helps therefore to clarify why it is that the problem is ‘crucial’ for Wittgenstein; and why it cannot simply be ‘suspended’.⁴¹⁷ That is, when Bouwsma supposes ‘that in respect to the universe or in respect to another human being this question may be left in suspense’, he means that *as a speculative question*,

⁴¹⁵ The novel also ends on a hopeful note, suggesting that, through Alyosha’s administrations Ivan will recover—symbolic, perhaps, of the healing power of faith.

⁴¹⁶ Baker 2004, p. 46.

⁴¹⁷ Bouwsma 1986, p. 17.

i.e. as a matter of idle curiosity, the question of whether or not I am responsible ceases to have any pull. At least for Wittgenstein, whatever significance the problem has must be accounted for by the potential gains or losses to one's self-understanding. That the problem should 'invade one's own personality' is not what Wittgenstein hopes for, i.e. it is not a risk one takes in seeking the potential benefits. On the contrary, it is a threat one perpetually faces whether or not one is conscious of the fact, and which we would be wise, therefore, to respond to.

To that end, I can now turn to the question of how the above method—of making conscious use of certain images *as images*—can help us to tackle the problem of the freedom of the will against this background of his perception of the ultimately ethical character of the problem. As we shall see, a continued resistance to certain images is one possible method whilst seeking to lower one's resistance to those same images is yet another.

Part Three: Exposing the false dichotomy: finding intermediate cases

The notions of perspicuity, aspect-seeing and of the requirement to recognise images as images all speak to the way in which Wittgenstein seeks to expose the images that 'captivate' our thinking. As we shall see, at least one aspect of this disclosure involves exposing the false dichotomy being drawn between unqualifiedly fatalistic pictures and unqualifiedly non-fatalistic pictures. That is, one of the reasons Wittgenstein has for 'finding and inventing *intermediate* cases' is that they can be interposed between these unqualified, and perhaps more obvious, examples, thereby exposing other qualified, but equally valid, images. This process of moderation, if not an intentional side-effect of 'finding and inventing *intermediate* cases', is nonetheless

useful in mitigating the tensions inherent within an ethical life that incorporates both reactive and non-reactive elements—which is to say, a life that is lived in accordance with both fatalistic and non-fatalistic images.

One initial obstacle to interposing a suitable alternative between fatalistic and non-fatalistic images is that, in the LFW, Wittgenstein describes the debates surrounding freedom of the will as owing to extreme, polarised points of view.⁴¹⁸ That is, the ‘agony of spirit’ Bouwsma refers to is experienced as a primitive commitment to two, equally meaningful, and yet diametrically opposed, images, e.g. of life as ‘a path along a mountain ridge’ or of my being, what Bouwsma calls, ‘a living horror’. This is what makes it possible for one person to say “All are responsible” whilst another person might say “None are responsible”; this is what it means for either view to be unqualified. However, it can be objected that there is no basis for the assumption that adopting a fatalistic or non-fatalistic attitude must be done unqualifiedly.

In an analogous way, Wittgenstein introduces, in the LFW, the intermediate case of ‘the difference (in greatness) between [himself] and Kant’ as being ‘one of degree’; the aim here is to dispel thinking of things only in terms of ‘the difference between black and white’.⁴¹⁹ It is not unreasonable to seek now to contrast the ‘black and white’ difference between unqualifiedly fatalistic and unqualifiedly non-fatalistic attitudes with a difference between fatalistic and non-fatalistic attitudes that is ‘only one of degree’. In deference to the pictorial representation of the colour octahedron, and to Wittgenstein’s mention of a black-and-white difference, an alternative colour-

⁴¹⁸ LFW, p. 437.

⁴¹⁹ the LFW p. 432.

analogue for the difference between the use of fatalistic and non-fatalistic images might be a ‘grey area’ in which my uncertainty is diffused and a matter of ‘degree’. For this reason, it may be that Wittgenstein opposes the initial inclination to think only in terms of unqualified images of freedom and fatalism. That is, our attitudes need not change ‘just like that’, and there may be suitable room in-between the unqualified images associated with freedom and fatalism to interpose a different image.

One such ‘intermediate case’ is used by Wittgenstein in conjunction with the Downstairs Crank example, namely the image of the Law Court. As we saw in my first chapter, Wittgenstein initially concedes that someone who was compelled to act against his will would not be held responsible and he supports this conclusion by appealing to the image of the Law Court.

What would they say in a Law Court? Would they say I was responsible or not? Would the people downstairs be punished or would I; or both? The Law Court gives us some idea of what we call ‘free’, ‘responsible’.⁴²⁰

In the second Downstairs Crank example—where an individual is forced to do what he would have done anyway—the image of the Law Court still resonates. In this case, however, there is no clear answer to the question of whether the man, who would have acted in exactly the same way, is responsible in this sense. That this is a ‘very special case’ is relevant to why Wittgenstein thinks that it undermines the incompatibilist’s supposition that we might all be so compelled. Nevertheless, this does little to clarify what they would say in a Law Court concerning just such a ‘very special case’. This should not be taken to imply a deficiency in how the image of

⁴²⁰ LFW, pp. 434-5.

the Law Court represents ‘what we call ‘free’ and ‘responsible’’.⁴²¹ On the contrary, it indicates very clearly that Wittgenstein remains alive to, what P. F. Strawson called, ‘penumbral areas’, i.e. cases where we look at and judge someone but not in terms that are ‘black and white’. Such cases are common in a Law Court, for instance, where someone is judged to be guilty or not guilty and yet is punished in a more or less quantifiable manner. For these reasons, the kind of responsibility one has in a Law Court might serve as a suitable alternative to, so-called, ‘heaven-and-hell’ responsibility.

‘Heaven-and-hell’ responsibility is one side of a ‘black and white’ conception of responsibility that is arguably a necessary requirement for being judged *morally* responsible. Famously, Galen Strawson defends this necessity, adding that a lack of belief in ‘the story of heaven and hell’ does not mean the kind of responsibility required in order for someone to be thought *worthy* of eternal damnation or reward is not of fundamental importance to the expression of the reactive attitudes. However, by associating ‘true’ responsibility with an image of heaven-and-hell responsibility, and then by arguing that any such responsibility is an ‘impossibility’, Galen Strawson concludes that all feeling of responsibility (personal or otherwise) is misplaced; it is necessary, therefore, to deny freedom of the will and refuse to hold people responsible.⁴²²

As a proponent of the ‘black and white’ dichotomy I am seeking to expose as false, Galen Strawson is representative of a large number of commentators who

⁴²¹ Ibid.

⁴²² Strawson, G. 1994, p. 5; In line with his ‘Basic Argument’—that since nothing is a *causa sui*, nothing can be truly responsible—Galen Strawson argues that any optimistic defence of freedom of the will, and therefore of the reactive attitudes, falls short of a defence of this, heaven-and-hell responsibility.

defend or deny a freedom of the will unqualifiedly. Wittgenstein's claim—to be neither defending nor denying freedom of the will—is, in large part, a rejection of this dichotomy between an unqualified freedom or an unqualified fatalism. One way to avoid this dichotomy, as I have said, is to interpose a more moderate, or 'intermediate', image in-between these two unqualified images. It may be that Wittgenstein has in mind the same sort of cases that P. F. Strawson refers to as a 'penumbral area' in which the reactive attitudes, whilst not obviated by the objective attitude, are mitigated.⁴²³ As was discussed in Chapter II of this thesis, the penumbral areas P. F. Strawson identifies play an important role in his criticism of the pessimist's claim that we might all be equally incapacitated if determinism is true. I maintain that these same cases might also be used to demonstrate a willingness to compromise that, in Galen Strawson's case at least, is too readily dismissed. Galen Strawson recognises that there are those who defend a freedom of the will that, in his eyes, is over qualified; e.g. an account that concedes the impossibility of an eternal reward or punishment, but nevertheless defends a freedom of the will premised on temporal rewards and punishments. Galen Strawson's real target is any compatibilistic account of freedom and responsibility that is premised on a familiar picture of responsibility, e.g. the Law Courts. For instance, a compatibilist account is able to account for why, in the first Downstairs Crank example, the Law Court would say W is not responsible, viz. W was pushed. The sticking point for Galen Strawson remains the Law Court's inability to determine guilt in the *second* example, i.e. where W is forced to do what he would have done anyway. On anyone's definition of determinism, this

⁴²³ Strawson, P. F. 2008, p. 21; 'Whatever sense of 'determined' is required for stating the thesis of determinism, it can scarcely be such as to allow of compromise, border-line style answers to the question, 'is this bit of behaviour determined or isn't it?' But in this matter of young children, it is essentially a border-line, penumbral area that we move in.'

second example comes closer to what we understand to be the influence of determinism, and yet the Law Court is, on this occasion, no guide at all to what we should say concerning W's actions. We might think, therefore, that Galen Strawson is right to stick with the 'black and white' dichotomy between unqualified images of freedom and fatalism.

However, the strongest reason for thinking that Galen Strawson too quickly dismisses qualified images, such as the Law Court, is one that he gives himself. At the same time as arguing that a 'true', i.e. heaven-and-hell, responsibility is a necessary requirement for our existing practices of praising and blaming, etc., he nonetheless concedes that the image is not always present in cultures where people hold themselves and others responsible.⁴²⁴ Assuming this to be true, why must we assume that our attitudes to freedom of the will are dependent upon an idea of heaven-and-hell responsibility at all? Might it not even be the other way around? Wittgenstein suggests as much when he argues that unqualified images of responsibility and punishment are rightly derivative of more general, everyday concepts.

Could you explain the concept of the punishments of hell without using the concept of punishment? Or that of God's goodness without using the concept of goodness?

If you want the right *effect* with your words, certainly not.⁴²⁵

⁴²⁴ For instance, Galen Strawson speaks of a difference between 'guilt cultures' and 'shame cultures'. Firstly, it can be suggested that the existence of different cultures, one preoccupied with guilt and the other with shame, evinces just the opportunity I am seeking to take advantage of, i.e. a subtle alteration of how we internalise reactive/non-reactive feelings. Crucially, Galen Strawson states explicitly that neither culture 'presupposes a conception of oneself as truly morally responsible for what one has done'. Strawson, G. 1994, p. 9.

⁴²⁵ CV, p. 80.

The effect Wittgenstein wishes to avoid is any understanding of the concepts of divine justice or divine goodness that are categorically distinct from how we understand the concepts of justice and goodness. He does not deny that one *could* explain the punishments of hell without using the concept of punishment, yet the effect this would have on those we were explaining it to would be ethically dubious.⁴²⁶ I shall later clarify why Wittgenstein considers this explanation of religious beliefs ethically dubious. For now, however, I am interested in his assertion that the communication of religious concepts is dependent upon our understanding of everyday concepts; i.e. that the priority runs in the other direction to that which is indicated by Galen Strawson.

This priority indicates one way of extricating ourselves from a false dichotomy between unqualified, perhaps religious, images of freedom and fatalism. That is, it can be argued that Galen Strawson is wrong to associate everyday concepts, such as are employed in the Law Courts, with the concepts associated with ‘true’ responsibility, e.g. that we might be worthy of eternal punishment. He is right to insist that not all these images are religious, and yet the move from the eternal to the everyday is, for Wittgenstein at least, unnecessary. For this reason, the decline in the use of unqualified images of freedom and fatalism need not demonstrate a decline in the frequency with which the reactive attitudes are expressed. Rather, the decline may simply indicate a change in the feelings themselves. Perhaps this decline is the result of our being more greatly influenced by other images, e.g. the Law Court.

⁴²⁶ Rhees 1997, p. 36. ‘Is the reason for not worshipping the devil instead of God that God is stronger than the devil? God will get you in the end, the devil will not be able to save you from his fury, and then you will be for it. ‘Think of your future, boy, and don’t throw away your chances.’ What a creeping and vile sort of thing religion must be.’

It is worth noting that, for Galen Strawson et. al., such a decline is not unwelcome. What gets in the way of their welcoming it, however, is their assumption that one is either free and responsible or not. By interposing the image of a responsibility that is ‘one of degree’, Wittgenstein is able to anticipate and accommodate the objections of those who insist that our everyday concepts of punishment and reward are misplaced. Nevertheless, what Wittgenstein shows is that space exists for such concepts in a more nuanced, moderate understanding of responsibility.

This initial strategy demonstrates that we can do without unqualifiedly fatalistic or non-fatalistic images. For this reason, the image of the Law Court helps expose a false dichotomy in just the way that Wittgenstein intended, i.e. it is a suitably perspicuous representation of what it means to be more-or-less responsible. The image is therefore part of a more general strategy aimed at avoiding our thinking only in ‘black and white’ terms. This position is further supported by Wittgenstein’s insistence that we ought not to *start* with unqualified images, e.g. there is good reason not to explain the concept of the punishments of hell without *first* using the concept of punishment.

However, this proposal is not the only alternative to a ‘black and white’ dichotomy indicated by the LFW. A second, complementary proposal can be put forward on the strength of Wittgenstein’s analysis of another image, one that maintains the unqualifiedly fatalistic and non-fatalistic aspects of a broader framework of attitudes; specifically, St. Paul’s doctrine of election by grace.

Part Four: preserving a practical use for both unqualifiedly fatalistic and non-fatalistic images

As I shall now show, a second strategy can be put forward to complement the above strategy, but which takes an altogether different approach to the ethical tensions. That is, rather than seek to interpose a more moderate image in-between unqualifiedly fatalistic and unqualifiedly non-fatalistic images, we might consider a strategy that preserves a practical use for *both*. It is precisely in this connection, I want to suggest, that Wittgenstein begins to develop an account, both in the LFW and elsewhere, of the tensions as they are represented within a religious form of life, more specifically with reference to a certain picture offered by St. Paul.⁴²⁷ Wittgenstein epitomises the view, as it appears to be put forward by St. Paul (*Romans* 9, 21:23), as saying that ‘God has made you a vessel of wrath or a vessel of grace, and yet that you are responsible’.⁴²⁸ By preserving a practical use for this picture, not as a means of expressing the problem but as a potential response to it, Wittgenstein indicates a second potential strategy for taking up the tensions first-personally. To demonstrate this, I shall argue that the picture offered by St. Paul, like St. Paul himself, seeks to be ‘all things to all people’ so that via mutual correction of one’s attitude one can avoid thinking in terms of only one image.

What is promised by St. Paul connects with something Wittgenstein says is distinctive about a religious form of life, namely that it encompasses a sense in which human beings are, as described earlier, ‘*all* wicked and *all* innocent’. Elsewhere,

⁴²⁷ Wittgenstein refers to *Romans* 9 frequently. E.g. CV (1998), pp. 34, 37, 87-88; LFW, p. 437; see also, Bouwsma 1986, pp. 12, 15-16.

⁴²⁸ LFW, p. 437.

Wittgenstein incorporates this image of mankind, as ‘*all* wicked and *all* innocent’ into an account of the advantages of a religious attitude to life.

The whole planet can suffer no greater torment than a *single* soul. The Christian faith—as I see it—is a man’s refuge in this *ultimate* torment. Anyone in such torment who has the gift of opening his heart, rather than contracting it, accepts the means of salvation in his heart. Someone who in this way penitently opens his heart to God in confession lays it open for other men too. In doing this he loses the dignity that goes with his personal prestige and becomes like a child. ... A man can bare himself before others only out of a particular kind of love. A love which acknowledges, as it were, that we are all wicked children.⁴²⁹

The above is taken, by Wittgenstein, not as a fatalistic denial of responsibility, but as a way of responding to both an unqualifiedly fatalistic and unqualifiedly non-fatalistic understanding of human beings. In this respect, Wittgenstein’s words echo those of Father Zossima, who teaches not only that we can take responsibility for all and for everything, but that in doing so we must openly confess our sins to ourselves (or to God).⁴³⁰ For both Wittgenstein and Zossima, someone who opens his heart in confession to God does so, not in pride or in pity for oneself, but by holding oneself responsible.⁴³¹ Once again, this is not to say that the self-reactive attitudes take precedence over inter-personal attitudes since it is by opening one’s heart to oneself

⁴²⁹ CV, p. 46.

⁴³⁰ Monk 1991, p. 136. Ray Monk writes that in 1916 ‘Wittgenstein read [The Brothers Karamazov] so often he knew whole passages of it by heart, particularly the speeches of the elder Zossima, who represented for him a powerful Christian ideal, a holy man who could “see directly into the souls of other people”.

⁴³¹ Dostoevsky, F. *The Brothers Karamazov*, Book IV, Chapter I. Garnett, C. (trans).

or God that one opens it to others. For Wittgenstein, as for Father Zossima, this is the purpose of confessing our sins, i.e. to prevent us from ‘hardening our heart’ towards others and so isolating ourselves. This is why Wittgenstein continues the above series of remarks by adding that ‘hate between men comes from our cutting ourselves off from each other.’⁴³²

Whilst Wittgenstein is not himself a believer, the interest he shows in the struggle to ‘stay within the religious sphere’ is therefore intimately connected with, what Brenner calls, the practice of ‘sizing ourselves up morally’, i.e. distinguishing what we ‘freely caused to happen’ from what ‘just happens to us’. Brenner identifies further that Wittgenstein’s interest in a religious point of view derives, to no small degree, from his wish to understand just how this practice, and the ‘judgemental attitude naturally animating it’, comes to be altered by embracing ‘this and every form of common life and practice from a contemplative distance’. Brenner concludes that through this contemplation of different forms of life, the believers in question are granted ‘the grace to return to active participation in life with a less ruthless attitude towards themselves and others’.⁴³³ Brenner’s notion of ‘contemplative distance’ has a bearing on both parts of the strategic response in question, but with regards the first part, it shows how hatred can indeed turn to understanding by placing alongside the unqualifiedly non-fatalistic picture of people as wicked or sinful, the unqualifiedly fatalistic picture of human beings as children. The upshot is that we will thereby avoid subscribing to only one of these images, i.e. wickedness or innocence, and implement both in such a way as to counteract too strong feelings of hatred.

⁴³² CV, p. 46.

⁴³³ Brenner 2001a, pp. 62-3.

At least one way of implementing this strategy is relayed autobiographically by Wittgenstein himself. Writing of his experience in the trenches, where he experienced pronounced hostility from his fellow soldiers, Wittgenstein writes:

The people around me are not so much mean as *appallingly* limited. This makes it almost impossible to work with them, because they forever misunderstand one. These people are not stupid but limited. Within their circle they are smart enough. But they lack character, and thereby breadth.

‘A heart of true faith will understand all.’⁴³⁴

It is important to stress that the strategic advantage of fatalistic images is here granted *only* if they are applied to counteract the distressing aspects of ‘hardening one’s heart’. Wittgenstein does not think that understanding all *necessarily* leads to forgiveness. Certainly, he is not defending a claim, i.e. that we ought to understand rather than hate. In the LFW, Wittgenstein dispels the illusion brought about by thinking that, because understanding often counteracts hate, that ‘this is how it *must* be!’ He therefore opposes the fatalist’s dogmatic claim that ‘To understand all is to excuse all’ by asking, rhetorically yet significantly, ‘How do you know?’⁴³⁵ *Contra* the fatalist’s interpretation of the phrase, the true significance of the saying ‘a heart of true faith will understand all’ is more closely related to this strategic development, viz. through the broadening of one’s character. This, then, is the ethical bedrock of a fatalism that is used to dispel hatred.

⁴³⁴ MS 103, 8 May, 1916 as cited in Rhees, 1984, p. 198.

⁴³⁵ LFW, p. 436; Wittgenstein compares the statement with an advert claiming that “There are over 100 miles of kidney to clean”, the intention of the advert being to make it seem as though cleaning kidneys is particularly difficult when this needn’t be the case at all.

The way in which Wittgenstein applies fatalistic imagery in his own life—i.e. not as an out-and-out fatalist would do, but in order to quell the expression of only one unqualified attitude—relates back to his idea that ‘the rules of life are dressed up in pictures’ but not in such a way that they *justify* behaving a certain way. It is by seeking to understand what it is that limits others’ attitude(s) towards *him*, that Wittgenstein identifies the trait that he most wants to exemplify in his own attitude(s) towards *them*, viz. to understand rather than hate. By saying that his fellow soldiers’ misunderstood him, not out of stupidity, but out of a limitation of *character*, Wittgenstein once again reiterates that what is lacking here is a sufficiently broad response to the range of attitudes available.

The above clarifies further what I mean by saying that expressing both unqualified attitude(s) can serve a practical function, as mutually corrective of one another. When overtaken by a particular strong feeling one way, the tensions need no longer be seen as the cause of my anxiety. On the contrary, the tensions are what pull me back from attempting to justify my strength of feeling as though it were a claim, or from expressing only one unqualified attitude. Therefore, what prevents the above from being just another expression of fatalism is that it is made more, not less, meaningful by its serving as a counterpoint to the expression of an equally primitive, and perhaps unqualified, tendency to hate.

Nevertheless, in order for this to hold true, and in order for us to appreciate the full scope of the strategic response to the tensions a further manoeuvre must also be possible, i.e. the move to hate *rather than* understand. This, admittedly less natural tendency, is perhaps harder to make intelligible, although it must be possible at least to conceive of the above strategy being used ‘backwards’. During my analysis of the

LFW, the closest I have come to an example of this strategy being implemented, however, is when someone, who can understand all too well the action of another, says, “Yes, he is a rascal and so am I. I am to blame and so is he”.⁴³⁶ In such a case, the individual in question is beholden to the same picture as Wittgenstein—that we are all ‘wicked children’—and yet this level of understanding does not serve as an excuse. However, this says only that the images associated with fatalism can serve a non-fatalistic purpose; just as, *prima facie*, the command, ‘Judge not!’ is non-reactive and yet can only be made use of non-fatalistically (i.e. reactively).

A stronger case might be built around the penumbral areas spoken of by P. F. Strawson, i.e. cases where denying a person’s responsibility is implemented *in order that* that person should be reintegrated into reactive engagement with others. What I am suggesting is that, in similar cases, someone might make conscious use of the analogy—that we are all wicked children—to overcome a primitive desire to understand, rather than rebuke. For instance, a parent who sees their child misbehaving might instinctively think back to the exuberances of their own youth and say, “I was a child once too” and, in order to counteract this thought, make conscious use of another image, i.e. that they too were a rascal. As a result, the initial thought, i.e. to understand rather than rebuke, might be replaced by a desire to blame the child as they too should have been blamed; which is as if to say, “Yes, he is a rascal and so am I. I am to blame and so is he”. Again, however, this is limited to cases of *actual* children and can, at best, serve to explain the analogy we are looking to make conscious use of.

⁴³⁶ LFW, p. 437.

Nevertheless, this kind of case gives us some clue at least as to a potential answer to the question of when we might be inclined to hate *rather than* understand a person's actions. For instance, in taking the command, 'Judge not!' to heart, one might be inclined to rebuke one's *own* actions even as one commands oneself not to be resentful. In saying this, I am not insinuating that one's feelings of personal responsibility are the primary or only source of angst. Rather, it is to say that an individual can be critical of his own actions, to the point at which no fatalistic imagery will prevent that person from holding themselves accountable (even if they have an entirely fatalistic attitude with regards to others). As Wittgenstein attests above, acknowledging that we are all 'wicked children' is done through confession of one's own sins; or, as Father Zossima puts it, in recognition that 'I am lower than all men'.⁴³⁷

It is for similar reasons that Wittgenstein reflects in the LFW that 'when [St. Paul] says the words he does say he seems to take the responsibility on himself.'⁴³⁸ Although St. Paul is not thought by Wittgenstein to limit the non-fatalistic image to his own case; at least, Wittgenstein's paraphrase of St. Paul ends by saying 'that *you* are responsible'.⁴³⁹ In any case, when St. Paul invokes God's will he is doing so in neither of the ways described in the preceding chapter, i.e. in order to explain events or as the expression of a fatalistic attitude.⁴⁴⁰ That is not to say that St. Paul and the fatalist contradict each other—as Wittgenstein attests, the two might 'disagree greatly,

⁴³⁷ Dostoevsky, F. *The Brothers Karamazov*, Book IV, Chapter I. Garnett, C. (trans).

⁴³⁸ LFW, p. 439.

⁴³⁹ LFW, p. 437. Emphasis added.

⁴⁴⁰ See Chapter III, Part Four of this thesis.

little [sic.] or hardly at all. It depends.⁴⁴¹ What it depends on is the manner in which the words are said—it is by reading the manner of his words, and by not taking him to be advancing a theory, that Wittgenstein is able to connect St. Paul's words with a non-fatalistic attitude.

For this reason, the picture offered by St. Paul might be thought to provide, not just a perspicuous representation of the tensions, but also a potential way of taking responsibility despite or even because of an essential human weakness, i.e. that we are wicked despite, and *because*, we are like children.⁴⁴² That is, the picture presented by St. Paul can be connected with a strategic response to the tensions because it involves overcoming all opposition to taking responsibility for one's actions; i.e. one is asked (or commanded), on the strength of an image more commonly associated with pity, to take the uncommon step of holding oneself responsible. This might help to explain why Wittgenstein refers to both the religious and ethical demands of this picture as a 'struggle'.⁴⁴³

An initial obstacle to making use of this picture is therefore that we might be unequal to the task St. Paul is placing on us. It is worth considering that, only a few years prior to the LFW, Wittgenstein admits his difficulty applying the picture in his own life.

At my level the Pauline doctrine of predestination is ugly nonsense,
irreligiousness. Hence it is not suitable for me, since the only use I could

⁴⁴¹ LFW, p. 439. Cf. LFW, p. 441; 'propositions of which one is inclined to say that they express feeling are generally said with feeling.'

⁴⁴² My interpretation of Wittgenstein's words is similar to the interpretation put on Simone Weil's words by Diogenes Allen, i.e. that we experience the love of God, not just despite suffering, but *because* of it. This is offered 'not as a theory but as what actually happens.' E.g. Allen 1980 in Adams & Adams (eds.) 1990, p. 189-208.

⁴⁴³ CV, p. 86.

make of the picture I am offered would be a wrong one. If it is a good and godly picture, then it is for someone at a quite different level, who must use it in his life in a way completely different from anything that would be possible for me.⁴⁴⁴

What Wittgenstein finds repellent about the picture being offered by St. Paul is perhaps most understandable since the picture represents, in unqualified terms, the fatalistic idea, put forward in the LFW, that ‘He hasn’t given himself weakness and strength’ which, Wittgenstein goes on to say, is ‘generally, though not always, the beginning of a plea of not guilty.’⁴⁴⁵ The picture offered by St. Paul is introduced in the LFW, not as an intermediate case, but as an exception to this general use of an unqualifiedly fatalistic image. In saying this, however, Wittgenstein does not condemn the picture being presented by St. Paul any more than he condemns the picture of natural laws as laid down in a book.⁴⁴⁶ As potential theories, neither stands up to prolonged scrutiny and yet, *as images*, both have the potential to be made use of; even if both are thought, by Wittgenstein, to be ‘peculiar’ in some way.

Furthermore, Wittgenstein gives us several other reasons for thinking that he is, not so much critical of the picture offered by St. Paul, as he is cut off from it.⁴⁴⁷ To begin with, that Wittgenstein takes an interest in St. Paul’s doctrine is evidenced by his repeated references to it; it is not implausible to suggest that his interest derives from a wish to be able to apply the image ‘correctly’ in his own life, i.e. as St. Paul

⁴⁴⁴ CV, p. 32.

⁴⁴⁵ LFW, p. 437.

⁴⁴⁶ See fn. 336 of this thesis.

⁴⁴⁷ Bouwsma 1986, p. 16; Bouwsma records that, during their conversation in 1947, the question of God’s responsibility is also raised but that ‘[Wittgenstein] would not judge.’

intended. That is, the image is, to him, ‘ugly nonsense’ due his tendency to think fatalistically; e.g. to think about life in terms of ‘a path along a mountain ridge’. That is not to say that he advocates fatalism, merely that his resistance to the picture offered by St. Paul prevents him from making conscious use of the image as a means of holding others responsible. This is evidenced by the way in which Wittgenstein describes his difficulty concerning the picture offered by St. Paul, in the same terms as, for example, his ‘lack of faith’ (felt as an absence) in Christ as redeemer.⁴⁴⁸ It can therefore be suggested that the level at which Wittgenstein envisages applying the picture offered by St. Paul, is at the same level at which he envisages refuge being given to those in, what he calls, ‘*ultimate* torment’.⁴⁴⁹

As was mentioned previously, one way in which religion might be said to serve as a refuge, particularly in the case of feelings of hatred, is by offering, what Brenner calls, ‘contemplative distance’.⁴⁵⁰ That is, by embracing multiple different ways in which to live. As Soulez puts it, it is by ‘surmounting’ our resistance to seeing and making ‘new connections’ (comparisons, analogies, images, etc.) that we can gain a ‘pacified view of the whole’ of human nature.⁴⁵¹ Wittgenstein demonstrates in his own life too that it is not enough to recognise the ethical tensions that exist in our attitudes towards others, one must hold each in abeyance of the other. This, I

⁴⁴⁸ In *Culture and Value* Wittgenstein admits that he cannot ‘utter the word “Lord” with meaning’, since, in order to do so, he would have to live ‘completely differently’. Crucially, this does not prevent him from recognising the value of the image, e.g. of Christ as redeemer, as a way of regulating one’s life; merely he lacks the certitude, the faith, to regulate his life in the requisite manner. CV, p. 33.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid. As I mentioned in my discussion of fatalism in the preceding chapter, we might also consider Winch’s suggestion: that one’s fatalistic attitude might be subsumed within ‘an attitude of *gratitude* for life’; Winch, P. in Malcolm 2002, p. 113.

⁴⁵⁰ Brenner 2001a, pp. 62-3.

⁴⁵¹ Soulez 2000, pp. 136.

maintain, is what it means to live ‘completely differently’—i.e. not in accordance with one or another image but in accordance with all at once.

It might be objected that, if the picture offered by St. Paul is relevant only if you live ‘completely differently’, then this would appear to entail a complete loss of self. However, an inability to surmount one’s resistance to another picture is not, on Wittgenstein’s account, to be associated with an expression of self. Wittgenstein’s confessed difficulty in applying the picture correctly in his own life is intended to undermine whatever authority the pictures we *currently* live by might be thought to have. For this reason, the response is not restricted to a religious view of things, but rather to a view that is, in a sense unrestricted; or, as Wittgenstein puts it in continuation of the above cited passage, ‘if you no longer support yourself on this earth but suspend yourself from heaven’:

Then *everything* is different and it is ‘no wonder’ if you can then do what now you cannot do. (It is true that someone who is suspended looks like someone who is standing but the interplay of forces within him is nevertheless a quite different one & hence he is able to do quite different things than can one who stands.)⁴⁵²

What Wittgenstein knows he cannot do is attain a truly contemplative distance from the ethical tensions in his own life—far too strong is the tendency to say ‘How could a man help himself in such a situation!’⁴⁵³ For this reason, the above indicates, not only what Wittgenstein lacks, but also what it is he is looking for—hoping for, rather—vis-à-vis a potential response to the tensions. That is, despite his own difficulty in

⁴⁵² CV, p. 33.

⁴⁵³ CV, p. 63.

applying correctly the picture offered by St. Paul, Wittgenstein does not think that it is *impossible* to envisage making either move I have been considering. More importantly, both moves can be seen as part of a wider methodology; firstly, to dispel the illusion that freedom of the will *must* be this (or that) way; and secondly, to provide a way of taking up, first-personally, the tensions inhering within a broader framework of attitudes. This, then, is what a ‘heart of true faith’ understands, namely all the different ways in which it is possible *to* understand. More importantly, we can see how these strategic moves each involve the implementation of the strategy of making conscious use of different (and multiple) images. The thought expressed is one not so much one of self-effacement, but of self-understanding or self-control.

Our discussion of Wittgenstein’s interest in the picture offered by St. Paul therefore exemplifies one possible way in which his therapeutic strategy can be implemented, around ‘the axis of our real need’.⁴⁵⁴ That is to say, in the same way that St. Paul claimed to have ‘become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some’ (*Corinthians* 9:22), so too might we consider the picture he offers to be ‘all things to all people’, depending on their need. That is, we might employ the picture offered by St. Paul as a ‘one-size-fits-all’ solution to our distress. In this way, our attitudes can be mutually corrective to each other without compromising the unqualifiedly fatalistic or unqualifiedly non-fatalistic images associated with them. That is, when I am overtaken by a particular strong feeling one way, the tensions need no longer be seen as the cause of my anxiety. On the contrary,

⁴⁵⁴ ‘Our consideration must be rotated but around the axis of our real need.’ PI, §108. The phrasing of this remark was altered in the 1958 edition of *Philosophical Investigations*: ‘The axis of reference of our examination must be rotated, but about the fixed point of our real need.’

the tensions are what pull me back, say, from attempting to justify my strength of feeling.

Against the account I have offered here—of two different, yet complementary, strategies for implementing pictures of freedom and fatalism—it might be objected that a strategy which maintains a dichotomy between unqualifiedly fatalistic and unqualifiedly non-fatalistic images is inconsistent with a strategy seeking to expose that dichotomy as false. That is, one could not envisage taking up both strategies at once. The whole point of the image of the Law Court is to obviate the need for any talk of ‘heaven-and-hell responsibility’. In order to respond to this objection, and to illuminate the complementary elements of the two strategies, it is necessary to first understand the conditional aspects of the first strategy—that we ought not begin with, or limit ourselves to, unqualifiedly fatalistic or non-fatalistic images. Therefore, whilst we cannot take up both strategies at once, this does not mean that a strategy advocating the use of neither unqualified image is incompatible with the existence of a second strategy advocating the use of both images. A comparison might be drawn here with two incompatible, but equally effective, diets—the first consisting of no excess proteins or fats and a second comprising nothing but these food groups.

In addition, the two strategies complement each other in so far as anyone who is not helped by the one will likely find a ‘refuge’ in the other. For instance, the first strategy is of use to anyone who can find no practical use for either an unqualifiedly fatalistic or unqualifiedly non-fatalistic images. Wittgenstein arguably does not himself fall into this category since, unlike P. F. Strawson, he makes conscious use of unqualifiedly fatalistic images and, unlike Galen Strawson, he also makes conscious use of unqualifiedly non-fatalistic images. The second strategy is therefore of use to

anyone who, like Wittgenstein, takes up the tensions first-personally. Certainly, the image described in Section 2, of human beings as ‘*all* wicked and *all* innocent’, is not catered for by a ‘diet’ of purely fatalistic images. At the same time, fatalistic images are most nourishing when they are part of a more complete ‘diet’. For these reasons, there need be no inconsistency in my putting forward, on Wittgenstein’s behalf, two different, if complementary, strategies, because a practical use can be found for both.

That Wittgenstein himself is open to either strategy can be shown by attending to his comments in the revised edition of *Culture and Value* concerning the appearance, on the Pauline account, that ‘nothing—in human terms—is right.’⁴⁵⁵ In saying this, Wittgenstein acknowledges that images of heaven-and-hell responsibility conflict with everyday ideas of punishment and reward—the specific objection being that God punishes where punishment would not be allowed by human beings.⁴⁵⁶ This coincides with the objection I am now responding to, viz. that the ambivalence between a sense that human beings must have the ability to do what’s right and a sense that human beings radically lack this ability goes to the heart of St Paul’s perspective but is altogether lacking from the perspective of the Law Court, for instance. This is why Wittgenstein concedes that although, according to the picture offered by St. Paul, ‘nothing—in human terms—is right’ it can nonetheless be responded “But isn’t it right all the same?” In this way, Wittgenstein argues that, in a religious point of view, ‘the whole concept of ‘punishment’ changes’. For this reason, he accepts that ‘*some* will be far more confused than helped’ by the images (similes, metaphors, etc.) that are part of a religious form of life. Yet his response in these

⁴⁵⁵ CV (1998), p. 87. MS 137 130a: 22.12.1948.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid.

cases is to ‘apply [the image] differently or don’t bother with it!’⁴⁵⁷ That is, failing to be nourished by a particular diet of images need serve only to encourage one to look for alternatives images; perhaps even unqualified images that, whilst challenging, promise a deeper understanding of what it is one finds unsatisfying about the qualified images.

* * *

This thesis has shown that the question with which Wittgenstein begins the LFW—‘Could one say that the decision of a person was not free because it was determined by natural laws?’—ultimately ought not to be understood as posing a purely theoretical question; so that ‘Could one say that...’ is taken to mean merely ‘Is it conceivable that...’ Neither is it purely a practical question, i.e. of means; so that ‘Could one say that...’ comes to mean ‘Could one act according to the belief that...’ For Wittgenstein, not all the problems we face in relation to freedom and responsibility can be resolved by answering these kinds of questions. I hope to have made it clear that his express aim in the LFW—to impress on us that ‘it is one of the most important facts of human life’ that certain images force themselves on you⁴⁵⁸—and the closing words of the LFW—‘you can call it a different game or not call it a different game’⁴⁵⁹—reflect the fundamental aim to disclose the essential fragility of our freedom, both in light of scientific discoveries and in our ethical existence as human beings.

For Wittgenstein, then, the role philosophy plays in disputes concerning freedom of the will is, firstly, to dispel any illusion that, because an image is firmly

⁴⁵⁷ CV (1998), p. 87. MS 137 130a: 22.12.1948.

⁴⁵⁸ LFW, p. 435.

⁴⁵⁹ LFW, p. 444.

rooted in our ways of thinking, that we *must* think according to that image.⁴⁶⁰ I have shown that Wittgenstein's principal aim in the LFW is to make plain that, in any case, certain images *are* deeply rooted in our ways of thinking about freedom of the will. However, this only means that it is up to us to overcome our resistance to making conscious use of *other* images. For this reason, the second role of the philosopher is to disclose other ways of thinking/acting; not necessarily as a way out from a particular way of acting, e.g. holding or refusing to hold people responsible, but to prevent us from thinking that it is the *only* way of acting. In *Culture and Value*, this sentiment is conveyed by Wittgenstein as follows:

If it is asked: How *could* a man, the ethical in a man, be *coerced* by his environment?—the answer is that even though he may say “No human being has to give way to compulsion”, yet under such circumstances he *will* as a matter of fact act in such and such a way.

‘You don’t HAVE to, I can show you a (different) way out,—but you won’t take it.’⁴⁶¹

As we have also seen in this final chapter, Wittgenstein offers us an account of philosophy's therapeutic role, with respect to the mainstream debates about freedom of the will, as showing us a (different) way out—whether or not we choose to take it.

⁴⁶⁰ LFW, p. 435.

⁴⁶¹ CV, p. 84.

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⁴⁶² See Chapter I, Part One of this thesis, fn. 1.