

Wittgenstein on Solipsism

Selected by D .R. Khashaba

INTRODUCTORY NOTE:

Wittgenstein has not written a separate work or paper on the subject of solipsism, but in the *Tractatus* there are numerous relevant statements and remarks. Here I collect the most salient of these (in Ogden's translation) without comment. I give my comments both on Bradley's and on Wittgenstein's texts in Part III below, which constitutes my contribution to the present issue, divided into three sections: [A] a note on Bradley's text; [B] comments on Wittgenstein's text; [C] conclusion.

[Citations from *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, all in Ogden's translation]

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The limits of my language mean the limits of my world. (5.6)

Logic fills the world: the limits of the world are also its limits.

We cannot therefore say in logic: This and this there is in the world, that there is not.

For that would apparently presuppose that we exclude certain possibilities, and this cannot be the case since otherwise logic must get outside the limits of the world: that is, if it could consider these limits from the other side also.

This remark provides a key to the question, to what extent solipsism is a truth.

What we cannot think, that we cannot think: we cannot therefore say what we cannot think. (5.61)

In fact what solipsism means, is quite correct, only it cannot be said, but it shows itself.

That the world is my world, shows itself in the fact that the limits of the language (the language which I understand) mean the limits of my world. (5.62)

The world and life are one. (5.621)

I am my world. (The microcosm.) (5.63)

The thinking, presenting subject; there is no such thing. (5.631, abridged)

The subject does not belong to the world but it is a limit of the world. (5.632)

[Source: *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, side-by-side electronic edition, available at <http://people.umass.edu/klement/tlp/> All citations above are in Ogden's translation.]