KIERKEGAARD, WITTGENSTEIN, AND PHILOSOPHICAL DOUBT

By

Eric Froom

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Professor Michael Hodges

Professor William Franke

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Preface

I begin the essay by presenting Wittgenstein's criticism of philosophical doubt, a line of thinking that begins with his distinction between empirical and grammatical statements, continues through his remarks on the 'standard metre' and his criticism of G. E. Moore's attempt to defeat skepticism in his article "Proof of the External World," and culminates in his insight into the error that can lead to the confusion of philosophical doubt: the treatment of grammatical statements as if they were empirical, which in general amounts to the *error of overlooking the undoubted assumptions of philosophical doubt*.[1]

The second part of the essay consists of a presentation of Kierkegaard's criticism of philosophical doubt in his book *Johannes Climacus*, a criticism that functions similarly to Wittgenstein's criticism. Like Wittgenstein, Kierkegaard exposes the contradictions inherent in the skeptical procedure, contradictions that result from the skeptic's *error of overlooking the undoubted assumptions of philosophical doubt*, and like Wittgenstein, Kierkegaard achieves this through both a linguistic analysis and an analysis of the subject of language: the subject. Wittgenstein and Kierkegaard show that undoubted assumptions provide the context for philosophical doubt and that philosophical doubt betrays these assumptions.

In spite of the fact that the title character of Kierkegaard's narrative provides a sound criticism of philosophical doubt, he loses his self. Part II provides a bridge to the

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[1] At some points in this essay the reader might determine that this or that unmentioned Wittgenstein passage would be of benefit if it were included. The following might be the reason for the absence of some relevant Wittgenstein quotes: in this paper I attempt to balance a display of the development of Wittgenstein's line of thought while pushing forward and constructing the line of thought of this essay. I do not simply want to present his ideas; I want show how he moves from point to point. I want to display the traction of his movements.

second half of this essay, Parts III and IV, for not only is it my intent to develop a sound criticism of philosophical doubt and show how Wittgenstein and Kierkegaard compliment each other superbly to this end, I intend to develop an analysis of the subject of language, which is also the subject of philosophical doubt. To this end, I turn next to the last chapter of *Johannes Climacus*, in which Kierkegaard develops an analysis of *the consciousness for which doubt is a possibility*, a consciousness arises in the collision of language and reality.

In Part III, I present and develop Kierkegaard's description of *the consciousness for which doubt is a possibility*. Kierkegaard's analysis of this consciousness, a consciousness that is a contradiction, sheds light on the following: the individual of philosophical doubt, to whom I will refer as 'the agent of philosophical doubt'; the error-producing structure of philosophical doubt; the resistance of the agent of philosophical doubt to a disclosure of the presuppositions that make doubt possible; the difficulty in the task of proving to the agent of philosophical doubt that he is in error, and the significance of Wittgenstein's many attempts to *show* the reader the errors of philosophical doubt; the significance of Johannes Climacus' losing of his self.

In Part IV, I direct my expansion of Kierkegaard's analysis toward the *subjective* side of doubt to directly address the problem of communicating the contradiction of consciousness to the agent of philosophical doubt. In this section I continue exploring the significance of Wittgenstein's attempts to *show* the errors of philosophical doubt, for at times in his writing it appears that a direct disproving of philosophical doubt is nearly impossible. This issue directly pertains to the question of whether philosophical doubt is an essential part of philosophy, which I also address. In my effort to galvanize the

problem of communicating the contradiction of consciousness to the agent of philosophical doubt, I explore three types of relation that may exist between the individual and the contradiction of consciousness.

Part I

Wittgenstein: Grammatical investigations

In *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein often performs a grammatical investigation. One of the primary tools of this method of analysis is to ask whether the opposite of a particular statement would make sense in the same context. In Wittgenstein's taxonomy, empirical statements describe the world, and the opposite of an empirical statement shares the 'sense' of the original, i.e., the opposite functions under the same linguistic conditions as the original, and does not challenge these conditions. "That rod is four feet long" is a fine example of an empirical statement. It might be the case that the opposite of an empirical statement is false: a group of people could perform measurements that show that a particular rod is only three feet long. However, if the opposite of a statement operates under the same linguistic conditions under which the initial statement operated without challenging or altering these conditions, it is an empirical statement.[2]

On the other hand, grammatical statements usually concern how one thinks about the world, and they constitute (at least in part) the context in which empirical statements operate. Consider the following: "Every rod has a length." I can imagine a teacher saying this to a person who does not use the world "rod" correctly in a particular context. In this context of teaching, what would it mean to say "Every rod does not have a length" or "Not every rod has a length"? Though these statements might sound strange, I can

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[2] Wittgenstein's distinction between empirical and grammatical statements applies to sentences or parts of sentences *in context*. His emphasis on *use* is important in this context. In a particular *context*, a person might ask another the following: "Did you leave the cupboard open when you left the kitchen?" If the person is actually asking a 'normal' question about 'the cupboard' and 'the kitchen' (i.e., if he is <u>not</u> speaking poetically, fantastically, etc.), then this is an empirical question. At one level, the answers "yes, I left the cupboard open" and "no, I shut the cupboard" have the same *use* in this *context*. Though opposites, each answers the empirical question, and each is an empirical statement.

imagine abnormal uses of the word "rod." If one uttered the statement "Not every rod has a length" in a context in which "Every rod has a length" is a condition of the context (e.g., measuring length), however, it would amount to a challenge to this condition, a challenge to the practice and context of measuring length with a rod. If one assumes that "Every rod has a length" means among other things that "If a thing is a rod, it has length," one might begin to see how the negative statements derived from the initial statement fail to share the same sense.

Wittgenstein elaborates on the character of grammatical statements by providing the following example:

> There is *one* thing of which one can say neither that it is one metre long, nor that it is not one metre long, and that is the standard metre in Paris.—But this is, of course, not to ascribe any extraordinary property to it, but only to mark its peculiar role in the language-game of measuring with a metre-rule.[3]

The "peculiar role" that the standard meter plays in the language-game of measuring is one of definition. Though in some contexts it is appropriate to treat the standard meter as an object in the world like any other object, in most contexts the standard meter serves an additional function. In some contexts it would make sense to say the empirical statement "The standard meter is in that drawer." When I conceive of the opposite of this statement, I realize that the location of the standard meter is at issue – it could be in this box, in this drawer, etc. – and this is an example of an empirical statement. In most cases when one says "The standard meter is a meter long," however, one is dealing with a grammatical statement. On the surface, the statement appears to be a sensible and true statement about the meter as it is in the world, for one can measure the standard meter, an

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[3] Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, Ltd., 1998, p. 25 (#50).

act that takes place in time and space, and apparently check the validity of the claim. If this task were performed, one would measure the standard meter by comparing it to another meter stick. This other meter stick, however, acquires its significance as a measuring tool from the standard meter in Paris. Therefore, this task amounts to one 'measuring' the standard meter in Paris by itself.[4] In a sense, the odd activity of measuring the standard meter by itself takes place when one utters "The standard meter is a meter long" (in most contexts), for this statement includes the definition ("standard meter") and a reiteration of the definition ("is a meter long").[5] In most situations, the trap to avoid is the treatment of "The standard meter is a meter long" as if it were simply an empirical statement. Though I can imagine situations in which the claim would be appropriate (e.g., a person tries to teach another how to use the words correctly, how to play this particular language-game of measurement), in most cases, the statement could easily lead to confusion if one treats in as an empirical claim.[6]

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[4] It is possible for standards of measure to be changed and replaced. For example, there are now methods of measuring a meter that utilize standards other than the 'standard meter'. The point holds true, however, for in the context of 'measuring with the standard meter as the standard', one misunderstands the role that the standard meter plays in measuring if one both considers it to be *the standard* and measures the length of the standard meter with another meter stick because he doubts that the standard meter is actually a meter long. Over time grammatical statements can become empirical statements and vice versa in much the same way that standards of measure can be changed and replaced. In the analysis of these types of statements, attention to the *context* and *use* of statements is important.

[5] This is especially the case if the statement is treated as empirical. If the statement is understood in context (i.e., as a definition, if that is its use in the context), the peculiar character falls away.

[6] The mistake of treating a grammatical statement as if it were an empirical statement is similar to the following scenario: a drill sergeant teaches a private, one of her underlings and her future replacement, the correct way to accomplish some marching steps. To find out whether her pupil performs the steps correctly, the drill sergeant asks the private to judge her own marching technique. Upon hearing from the private that she executed the steps perfectly, the drill sergeant is relieved. (For a moment, the sergeant thought that her pupil did not know how to march well.) The drill sergeant's conclusion is mistaken, however, for all that is verified is that her subject marches in the way she thinks she has been taught, possibly in the way that she plans to teach others to march. The question of whether she marches in the way that her teacher tried to teach her is unanswered. Also, it is unclear whether she correctly understands her own movements as she teaches them to others. In this case, there is an ambiguous connection between the grammatical (the definition of how to march) with the empirical (empirical statements made in the encounter with objects in the world, all within the context of grammatical statements). The treatment of the statement "The standard meter is a meter long" in most contexts as if it were an empirical statement shares

By asking whether a particular statement can have a meaningful opposite, Wittgenstein helps eliminate some of the confusion that can arise from a philosophical consideration of a particular statement that overlooks the statement's context and use. This tool will prove indispensable in the investigation to follow, for the philosopher's failure to distinguish between these two types of statements invites much of the conceptual confusion that Wittgenstein attempts to expose.

In *On Certainty*, Wittgenstein addresses G. E. Moore's discussion of the statement "Here is one hand, and here is another," a statement that Moore claimed to know for sure in his article "Proof of the External World." This statement is similar to "I know I'm in pain," a statement that Wittgenstein address in *Philosophical Investigations*. First, I will consider the statement concerning pain. Found in the early sections of the private language argument in *Philosophical Investigations*, the following is a response to both the idea that only the person who is in pain can know that she is in pain, and the statement "I know I'm in pain":

> Other people cannot be said to learn of my sensations *only* from my behaviour,-for I cannot be said to learn of them. I *have* them.
> The truth is: it makes sense to say about other people that they doubt whether I am in pain; but not to say it about myself.[7]

Though the ideas expressed here concern sensation language, the role that certainty and doubt play in a discussion of sensation language and Wittgenstein's private language argument pertains to the question of skepticism. If one performs a grammatical investigation on the statement "I know I'm in pain" by analyzing its opposite in the initial

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the dynamic of this teaching scenario, and Wittgenstein's distinction between grammatical and empirical statements pertains to *learning, teaching*, and *knowledge acquisition* in general.
[7] Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, p. 89 (#246).

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context, one finds that it is similar to the statement "The standard meter is a meter long." In both cases, if one treats the statement as a description of the empirical status of the object (either the *standard meter* or *pain*) that could be false (opposite), confusion begins to take hold. In this context, one would be treating the object as if one has *empirical knowledge about it that could be incorrect*. Though pain is an empirical phenomenon, Wittgenstein stresses that one does not acquire knowledge of one's pains; a person *has* pain. It is a mistake to think that one can have pain and only later acquire knowledge of it. Though the statements "I know I'm in pain" and "The standard meter is a meter long" partially consist of 'empirical-type' language, the first is not an empirical claim about pain, and the second is not an empirical claim about the standard meter. In most contexts, the statement "I know I'm in pain" is a misleading distortion of the claim "I am in pain." When one treats the statement empirically, one incorrectly suggests that one could have pain and not know it. Likewise, if in most contexts of measuring one treats the statement "The standard meter is a meter long" as simply an empirical claim about the standard meter, which would amount to one treating it incorrectly, one conceals the important grammatical role that the standard meter plays in the contexts of measuring in which the standard meter plays a role.

The empirical-type language in these statements makes it easy for a person to slip into a mode in which he[8] treats them as empirical statements, but it is this misunderstanding that leaves in its wake the philosopher stuck in his metaphysical

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[8] I have chosen to use the male pronoun when referring to the agent of philosophical doubt. This is partly due to the fact that I cannot recall observing a person I knew to be a woman performing the activity of philosophical doubt. Though I have no reason to believe that women do not perform the activity of philosophical doubt, I think it would be unfair to use the female pronoun in light of my experience, however limited. (In turn, I do not wish to imply that philosophical doubt is an especially male proclivity.) As one hopefully expects, the term "agent" relates to the issues of this footnote, and the issues of this footnote relate to the subject of philosophical doubt.

dalliances. This confusion results from what Wittgenstein calls "a picture that holds us captive."[9] The problem arises when one fails to look past the deceptive form of a particular statement. Though these statements that I have discussed are composed of empirical-type language, they actually function more like definitions (in the contexts I am considering). This comes to light when one examines the contexts in which they are actually used. By concentrating on the form of empirical-type words found in many grammatical statements, an individual creates a 'picture' that inhibits him from realizing the meaning that sits below the (apparent) surface, and Wittgenstein often works to remove this picture. By examining the meaning of a statement (how a word is used), distinguishing between grammatical and empirical statements, and performing other tasks employed in a grammatical investigation, Wittgenstein tosses a handful of clarity into the cauldron of philosophical misconception. His insights directly pertain to the subject of philosophical doubt, for its manifestation is enabled by *a picture that holds us captive*: *the treatment of grammatical statements as if they were empirical*.[10]

Philosophical doubt can ensue when one fails to pay close attention to the grammar and use of grammatical statements. In the following statement from *On Certainty*, Wittgenstein comments on the propositions that "stand fast":

> I do not explicitly learn the propositions that stand fast for me. I can *discover* them subsequently like the axis around which a body rotates. This axis is not fixed in the sense that anything holds it fast, but the movement around it determines its immobility.[11]

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[9] Admittedly, some apply the significance of this expression to other concerns (e.g., Wittgenstein's criticism of the picture theory of language).

[10] It is important to point out that the terms 'grammatical' and 'empirical' pertain to the use of particular statements in particular contexts. The different terms are not ultimate determinations that apply to *any* use of a group of words arranged in a particular order.

[11] Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *On Certainty*. St. Louis: Harper and Row, Publishers, Inc., 1972, p.22 (#152).

Though empirical statements like "The tree is dying" are subject to practical doubt, it is grammatical statements – agreements, definitions, ways one sees the world – that provide a context in which one can talk about the world and doubt whether a tree recently lost one of its branches. Wittgenstein says that the axis, those propositions that stand fast, is not "fixed in the sense that anything holds it fast." The relationship between grammatical statements and empirical statements is similar to that of the axis and "the movement around it" that "determines its immobility."

The skeptic (it would seem) fails to realize that an empirical statement is tied together by agreements and definitions that cannot be tested in the same manner as the statement in question, whether it is empirical or grammatical. Wittgenstein says that unfounded beliefs,[12] "a nest of propositions,"[13] and certainty[14] all support the realm of empirical propositions in which practical doubt functions, as well as philosophical doubt. How could one doubt without being certain of something? How could one use language (i.e., think, speak, etc.) to question everything without adhering to agreements and ways of seeing the world that are the conditions for the ways one thinks and speaks? Wittgenstein provides the following insight:

> That is to say, the *questions* that we raise and our *doubts* depend on the fact that some propositions are exempt from doubt, are as it were like hinges on which those turn.[15]

Practical doubt functions in a context formed by propositions that are exempt from doubt. As a scientist tests a hypothesis, or as a person questions her friend's honesty, practical

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[12] Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, p. 33 (#253).
[13] Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, p. 30 (#225).
[14] Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, p. 18 (#115).
[15] Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, p. 44 (#341).

doubt functions amidst a slew of agreements and beliefs. These agreements, however, are overlooked by the exercise of philosophical doubt.

Moore tried to challenge skepticism in his attempt to show the certainty of the statement "I know there is a hand there." His effort suffers from some confusion, however, and fails to undermine the skeptical enterprise (in the way he intended). He attempted to protect empirical claims from practical doubt by appealing to his knowledge of the object of an empirical claim, which in turn was an attempt to give empirical claims a special non-empirical status – a status like that of grammatical statements – to shield the claims against practical doubt. His energies were misdirected, however, for practical doubt about empirical claims was not his foe. His true enemy was philosophical doubt. Whereas the treatment of grammatical statements as empirical statements can lead to confusion, Moore's treatment of empirical statements as if they were not empirical misses the mark, and likely adds to the confusion. By criticizing and working through Moore's attempt to protect "I know there is a hand there" against doubt, Wittgenstein illuminates its shortcomings and pushes closer to the correct target: philosophical doubt.

Throughout *On Certainty*, Wittgenstein illuminates ways in which Moore's treatment of the statement "I know there is a hand over there" is wrongheaded. In the following, Wittgenstein points out one of Moore's errors:

> "But can't I infer "It is so" from my own utterance "I know
> etc."? Yes; and also "there is a hand there" follows from
> the proposition "He knows that there's a hand there." But
> from his utterance "I know…" it does not follow that he
> does know it.[16]

In this stage of his criticism of Moore, Wittgenstein notes what one can infer from an "I know" statement. For example, one can infer "The phone is ringing" from "I know the

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[16] Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, pp. 4-5 (#13).

phone is ringing." It does not follow from "The phone is ringing," however, that it should not be doubted. Insofar as Moore tries to squeeze empirical substance out of "I know…" statements, he commits an error similar to some of the errors I address earlier in this paper. For example, the testing of the standard meter by empirical means does not show that the standard is a correct, ultimate standard outside the context in which the standard meter is used as the standard of measure.

In the following passage, Wittgenstein notes another error made by Moore:

> The wrong use made by Moore of the proposition "I know…" lies in his regarding it as an utterance as little subject to doubt as "I am in pain". And since from "I know it is so" there follows "It is so", then the latter can't be doubted either.[17]

Moore makes a mistake when he assumes that "I know…" and "I am in pain" are equal in their resistance to doubt. By equating the two statements, Moore attempts to give the statement "I know there is a chair over there" the same kind of certitude as "I am in pain," yet there is a fundamental difference between the two types of statements that he overlooks. Moore treats "I am in pain" as a statement of *knowledge* about an empirical phenomenon. As Wittgenstein points out, however, a person does not learn of his pains, he *has* his pains. I *learn* that there is a chair in the corner, whereas I *have* pain. With this incorrect move, Moore invites his detractors to thrust all the practical doubt surrounding "There is a hand there" onto "I know there is a hand there." This makes the job much easier for those who would challenge Moore's claim that he is certain that a statement is true. The doubt that functions in this realm of confusion is a philosophical doubt that thrives when one overlooks the grammar of the propositions in question, and Wittgenstein further defines this doubt as he analyzes Moore's failed criticism of it.

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[17] Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, p. 35 (#178).

Moore appears to invite the skeptic to adopt the following course of action: isolate the proposition that is considered certain, treat it as empirical (hence subject to doubt), and show how one fails to objectively prove the empirical proposition. Though in many situations it is entirely appropriate to doubt empirical propositions, problems arise when one treats grammatical propositions as if they were empirical propositions, and doubts them as if one were doubting empirical propositions. Due to the fact that agreements and definitions provide for the context in which empirical propositions function, grammatical propositions always form the backdrop of empirical propositions. The treatment of grammatical propositions as if they were empirical and the subsequent doubting of these propositions is a hallmark of philosophical doubt. In his attempt to combat skepticism, Moore commits the same error that is at the heart of philosophical doubt. In his attempt to defeat skepticism he *reflects* the error of the skeptical procedure by treating "I know…" statements as if they are simply empirical claims about objects.

Part II

Kierkegaard: Johannes Climacus

Johannes Climacus is a chronicle of Climacus' grappling with the issue of philosophical doubt. He labors to live the maxim *De omnibus dubitandum est* [everything must be doubted]. Much of this unfinished book concerns Climacus' working through of the following three theses in his effort to begin philosophy: "1) *philosophy begins with doubt*; 2) *in order to philosophize, one must have doubted*; 3) *modern philosophy begins with doubt*."[18] His mission is to become a philosopher and discover what it means to doubt everything.[19] As Climacus considers the three theses, he ascends the ladder of philosophical truth. Along the way, his criticism of the three theses, especially theses one and three, exposes their contradictory nature. Unfortunately for him, he forsakes the clarity and importance of his own critical insights and pushes on in his attempt to become a philosopher. It is the Johannes Climacus that he himself left behind – his footprints of hesitation on every rung of the ladder – that bears arms with Wittgenstein. In the next few paragraphs, I will try to trace these footprints.

In his consideration of the third thesis – *modern philosophy begins with doubt* – Climacus exposes some of the congenital contradictions of philosophical doubt. At first sight, the third thesis appears to be historical in nature ("modern philosophy begins"), whereas the first and second appear to be eternal (timeless) or philosophical. Upon further deliberation, however, Climacus finds that the third thesis (*modern philosophy*

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[18] Kierkegaard, Søren. *Philosophical Fragments and Johannes Climacus.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985, p. 132.
[19] He has been told that to become a philosopher one must doubt, though it is not clear that *one must know what it means to doubt everything* to be a philosopher. Thus, the following is a logical possibility in this framework: one could doubt everything, be a philosopher, and not know what it means to doubt everything. In turn, it is unclear whether there is a difference between 'one must doubt' and 'one must doubt everything'.

begins with doubt) must be eternal, interchangeable with the first thesis (*philosophy begins with doubt*). If one endorses the third thesis, one must understand it to be compatible with the first thesis, for if the third thesis were simply historical, one would admit to something preceding the historical beginning of modern philosophy, i.e., one would begin modern philosophy with something other than doubt. With this admission, how could one begin modern philosophy with doubt? Climacus then asks whether it was accidental that modern philosophy began with doubt. If it were the case that the beginning of modern philosophy (doubt) was accidental, this would contradict the first thesis (with which the third must align itself), for as Climacus says, "It would appear as if the essential happened by accident."[20] In other words, if the beginning of modern philosophy (doubt) were not essentially doubt, it would contradict the first thesis (unless the beginning of philosophy in time is a synthesis of the historical and the eternal). Climacus then asks whether modern philosophy is a necessity. If modern philosophy is a necessity, it is a consequence of that which preceded it, which is philosophy. The first thesis states that philosophy begins with doubt, and the third thesis states that modern philosophy begins with doubt. If I try to say something historical about the beginning of philosophy, I get into trouble, for if it is a historical necessity as is modern philosophy, it will also be a consequence of something else. This would require an undoubted precursor to philosophy, which would contradict the proposed starting point of doubt. This causes trouble for the first thesis, for which doubt is the beginning of philosophy. In an attempt to justify the third thesis, it appears that one must claim that the third thesis is a synthesis of the eternal and the historical, and that the first thesis must simply be eternal.

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[20] Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments and Johannes Climacus*, p. 136.

If modern philosophy is eternal and manifested in time, it is a synthesis of the historical and the eternal. Climacus notes that this very notion, however, is strikingly similar to the Christian notion of Christ, who in time is the eternal truth. It often goes without saying that philosophy has a problem with this conception, and it seems odd that it would understand itself to be the same as that which it criticizes, that philosophy would doubt this in another but not in itself. Regardless of this point, Climacus shares another insight that challenges this posture of modern philosophy: if modern philosophy holds that it began with doubt, and that it is a synthesis of the historical and eternal, it follows that something preceded modern philosophy and the doubt that gave it life. As far as I know, it is never assumed by Christianity that the world (i.e., the historical and empirical) failed to exist before Christ's birth. If one defends the third thesis by holding that it is a synthesis of the historical and the eternal, one must assume that something historical preceded modern philosophy's historical beginning.[21] Though this assumption is necessary for the justification of the third thesis, one cannot maintain it and also begin modern philosophy, something that begins with doubt. In attempting to rescue the third thesis from contradiction, it appears that one commits successive contradictions.

Climacus then considers the first thesis: *philosophy begins with doubt*. He surmises that either doubt is a part of philosophy, or doubt precedes philosophy. If doubt

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[21] The doubt-certainty dynamic that I outline is perfectly compatible with the theory of recollection, perfectly compatible with the seek knowledge / find knowledge dilemma, in response to which Socrates proposed the theory of recollection: do I have the truth or do I have the truth? I have it, but am I sure that I have what I think I have? There are two things that I have, which might be the same. How do I determine whether they are the same? I doubt. Descartes' clear and present ideas are the truth, and function in the same way as the assumption that there is truth and that each is of the truth (which is the same assumption), the assumption of the theory of recollection. In other words, this could be the formulation for both: I have the truth, therefore I doubt. What has happened? I, get in the way of the truth. If I were not, then the truth could be. I might be the truth, but I am not sure [though the truth is within me (premise)]. "I am the truth, therefore I doubt." The only thing that gets in the way of the truth and me is me. Therefore, doubt myself away: Johannes Climacus. Johannes Climacus is the embodied logical consequence of philosophical doubt. Yet one might see the flaw.

is a part of philosophy, every one is excluded from philosophy except the philosopher himself, as far as he is concerned.[22] Why is there only one, if that? To become a philosopher, one must trust the philosopher's remark that *philosophy begins with doubt*, but even if one does this, philosophy has not begun (as far as that individual is concerned). A trust in the thesis *philosophy begins with doubt* does not begin philosophy, for philosophy begins with doubt, yet if doubt is a part of philosophy and not the whole of philosophy, there is something within philosophy that is not doubted. This poses another problem. To push through these contradictions, it appears that one must believe to get doubt and philosophy going, but this is a further contradiction. Climacus remains confused, and the question of how to begin philosophy is still unanswered. The entry into philosophy eludes him.

After finding fault in the first and third theses, Climacus turns to the second: *in order to philosophize, one must have doubted*. Instead of criticizing this thesis as he criticized the others, Climacus rests with the realization that the maxim *De omnibus dubitandum est* is the required preparation for philosophy.[23] Though he has not learned how one could doubt everything, at this point in the narrative he decides to push ahead regardless. He says that he "cannot even know whether doubting is a preparation."[24] The thought of doubting everything defeated him, and he takes it up as his mission. "Come what may, whether it leads to everything or to nothing, makes me wise or mad, I shall stake everything but shall not let go of the thought."[25] The thought has grabbed him. In a

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[22] In accordance with the theses and the claim that philosophical doubt is a part of philosophy, all interactions between philosophers should consist of each person doubting whether the other person is a philosopher, along with whether he is a person, has brown hair, etc.

[23] It appears that philosophy has given him nothing and taken his self.

[24] Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments and Johannes Climacus*, p. 159.

[25] Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments and Johannes Climacus*, p. 159.

sense, he has become the philosopher, the philosophical doubter: through finding inadequacies and contradictions in each thesis, he even doubts that the maxim *De omnibus dubitandum est* is a preparation for philosophy.

From one perspective, *Johannes Climacus* is the story of an individual who tried to become a philosopher by following one of the three theses. In working through the three theses, however, he finds it difficult to begin philosophy from the standpoint of any of them. In his analysis of the three theses, he realizes that none of them can be the starting point for philosophy, for one must trust either the thesis or something else for philosophy to begin, which would be contradictory for a philosophy that begins with doubt. Though he noted the contractions of each thesis that prevent one from becoming a philosopher, he remained in awe of philosophy. To become a philosopher remained his goal. Though the theses seemed flawed, he grew to feel that it was an inadequacy on his part that prevented him from entering into philosophy. He often heard people proclaim one of the theses, or the maxim "everything must be doubted," and he assumed that if all these other people found no trouble in becoming philosophers, he was surely the problem. The elusive character of the theses enticed him, and he assumed that the importance of the theses required one to suffer through cumbersome training before their truth would be exhibited. After all, he felt that an easily acquired truth is a mediocre truth at best.

Wittgenstein and Climacus

Throughout his deliberations, Climacus remained in awe of philosophy, the idea that one could doubt everything, and the peculiar nature of philosophical propositions. In the *Investigations*, Wittgenstein makes some remarks concerning the ways in which the nature of philosophical propositions tantalizes the philosopher, producing in him or her a demeanor and cloudiness that stimulates philosophical doubt :

> One person might say "A propositions is the most ordinary thing in the world" and another: "A proposition—that's something very queer!"—and the latter is unable simply to look and see how propositions really work. The forms we use in expressing ourselves about propositions and thought stand in his way.[26]

Wittgenstein notes that whereas many people treat propositions as ordinary statements, some, like Climacus, understand them to be strange. Wittgenstein says that this results from the importance we give to propositions and a misunderstanding of how language functions. When talking about propositions incorrectly, these forms of expression bewitch us into thinking that the propositions are mysterious. Though Climacus challenges philosophical propositions and finds fault with them, he still maintains a degree of reverence for them. Like Wittgenstein, Climacus disassembles philosophical doubt. On a personal level, however, Climacus is swept up in philosophy's intrigue, and begins committing the contradictions on a personal level that he previously criticized and dismantled. Climacus is an example of a person who, in spite of all his diligence and mental agility, ends up treating propositions as queer and elusive. He becomes the anonymous philosopher in whom Wittgenstein sees a type of philosophical disease, one

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[26] Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, p. 43 (#93).

that begets itself as it prevents the person from using propositions correctly. This ill treatment of propositions breeds philosophical doubt.

Wittgenstein distinguishes between empirical and grammatical statements in his treatment of the disease that leads to philosophical doubt. Climacus performs a similar task in his analysis of the aforementioned three theses. After concluding in his analysis of the third thesis (*modern philosophy begins with doubt*) that a historical beginning for modern philosophy is problematic, Climacus decides to consult others about the status of the third thesis. He was disappointed, though, for it seems that others often used the terms "historical" and "eternal" interchangeably or imprecisely. Wittgenstein's use of "empirical" is strikingly similar to Climacus' use of "historical," and the same goes for the terms "grammatical" and "eternal." Something that exists in the world or has a beginning in time is "empirical" or "historical." Statements that are (or are similar to) beliefs, definitions, and mathematical rules are "grammatical" or "eternal." In multiple instances, Climacus shows the inherent contradictions in a given thesis by exposing its unacknowledged dependence on historical and/or eternal notions, whatever the case may be. Against the backdrop of Wittgenstein's empirical-grammatical distinction and Climacus' historical-eternal distinction, I will now contrast Climacus' consideration of the third thesis with Wittgenstein's analysis of doubt to highlight the similarities between the two writers' processes of inquiry.

Wittgenstein notes that the opposite of an empirical statement operates in accordance with the same rules as its positive counterpart, whereas the opposite of a grammatical statement would challenge and/or alter the rules in a given context. He often asks what the opposite of a particular statement could be. Though Climacus does

not ask this same question in his consideration of the third thesis (*modern philosophy begins with doubt*), his inquiry is similar and produces similar results. As Wittgenstein explores the empirical use of a statement like "The standard metre is a metre long," Climacus questions whether the third thesis, which includes a 'historical' term 'modern', is in fact a historical thesis. Climacus quickly reasons that the third thesis must be more than simply historical, for as an outsider he fails to see how one could believe the thesis and begin philosophy if one were to admit that something historically preceded modern philosophy. Climacus then reasons that the third thesis must have an eternal (timeless) import, for without it the thesis would succumb to the contradictions that arise when one considers it to be simply historical. Wittgenstein has a similar insight in his analysis of the proposition "He knows that there's a hand there."[27] Though the phrase "There is a hand there" follows from the phrase "I know that there is a hand there," it does not follow from "I know that there is a hand there" that I know that there is a hand there.[28] In carving up a grammatical statement, Wittgenstein shows that the attempt to derive empirical certainty from grammatical statements ends in failure, a failure that keeps the skeptical game going. Also, if one admitted that the elusive statement in question is grammatical, philosophical doubt could slip away. Climacus performs a similar move, for he shows that an outsider must resist beginning the doubt-project of modern philosophy if she realizes (and fails to forget) that the apparently historical thesis *modern philosophy begins with doubt* actually has eternal sense, for it would then contain an element of belief or truth. It is true that a person can hold that the thesis combines the historical and eternal, but this only leads to more problems. For example, if modern

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[27] Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, pp. 4-5 (#13).
[28] Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, pp. 4-5 (#13).

philosophy's inception (doubt) is historical-eternal, something historically prior is still implied, hence the contradiction. If one correctly admits to the grammatical character of a proposition that one mistakenly treats as empirical, the empirical doubt (practical doubt) that one thrusts into the grammatical arena of beliefs and definitions, hence the doubt that becomes philosophical doubt, can be avoided.

By exposing the contradictory elements in theses one and three, Climacus shows that belief must play a role in one's acceptance of the theses. This admission, however, presents a problem for the individual who would take them up. Individuals have endorsed these theses, though, and both Wittgenstein and Climacus attempt to communicate to the reader the beliefs and agreements that, if acknowledged, would undo the bind of philosophical doubt. Wittgenstein shows that the form of many grammatical statements traps people into thinking that they are empirical. For example, the statement "The standard metre in Paris is a metre long" is composed of words that appear empirical (e.g., "in," "metre," "long"). Wittgenstein points out that at times one must look past the mischievous nature of the form of words to understand how the statement is actually used. If this were done correctly, a person would have a harder time falling into philosophical doubt. Many fail to examine the use and context of statements, however, and this invites a mysterious veil of doubt to enshroud grammatical statements. Climacus shows that belief (in historical happenings or eternal truths/definitions) undergirds theses one and three, something that must be overlooked for the doubt-project to begin. In multiple ways, Wittgenstein shows the same thing concerning grammatical statements that are considered empirical, and he shows that some statements that many treat as empirical are actually grammatical. In light of the fact that empirical statements are

rightly subject to practical doubt, the attempt to ground grammatical statements in certainty by appealing to empirical statements held certain always fails.[29]   For Wittgenstein, if one realizes that the statements upon which philosophical doubt preys are grammatical, one might subdue philosophical doubt. For Climacus, if one realizes that the third thesis is eternal and not simply historical, one might gain the upper hand on philosophical doubt. Also, Wittgenstein and Climacus state what they consider to be an obvious truth: that one must believe in something if one is to doubt.[30] In his analysis of the first thesis, Climacus mentions that if doubt is only part of philosophy, certainty might be the other part. Both consider the relationship between certainty and doubt, and both show that when philosophical doubt functions in language – the only context in which it can function – agreements and beliefs precede the doubt-project. Though in the story Climacus eventually succumbs to philosophical doubt, Wittgenstein and Climacus show that if one acknowledges the agreements, beliefs, and certainty that provide for a practical type of doubt, one has the opportunity to prevent unruly philosophical doubt from taking hold.

As with many of the books that Kierkegaard wrote, in *Johannes Climacus* he places great emphasis on the significance of the individual, whether he is considering his own life, speculative thought, or something else. With this approach the reader is not given a grand speculative discharge of a particular way of thinking, though *Johannes*

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[29] One might claim that Johannes Climacus' critique is tautological because *he begins with something, an object*. Is this not the same as the doubt-philosophy – it begins with nothing? "Climacus duplicates his starting point, the doubter duplicates his…" That it *is* is the site of contestation. This is why parody is an appropriate tool. But what is different? Climacus interrogates the person and implores him to doubt, shows that the person is doubt, that in *beginning with nothing*, the person is beginning with nothing. The parodical narrative: Johannes begins, and Johannes loses himself. In the tautology of 'nothing-nothing', the self is overlooked. In *Johannes Climacus*, Johannes loses himself.

[30] For example, in *On Certainty* Wittgenstein writes the following: "If you tried to doubt everything you would not get as far as doubting anything. The game of doubting itself presupposes certainty." Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, p. 18 (#115).

Climacus is one of the few that comes close. What the reader is given, however, is the story of a person who grapples with the issue of philosophical doubt through an analysis of the three theses, and Climacus' struggle displayed on page after page. Though he challenges the theses and unravels their contradictions, in a way he succumbs to them, for in the end he replaces his challenging attitude with resignation. Though he conquered the theses, he ends up doubting everything. The narrative form of the book expresses this odd condition: that one can speculatively conquer doubt, and then fall prey to it in turn. Climacus shows how the doubt-project is endlessly flawed from the individual's perspective, and also that it is possible for one to win a speculative battle against philosophical doubt and then fall into its grasp. Though Wittgenstein and Climacus use slightly different language in their analyses of doubt, they both expose the contradictions of philosophical doubt and the ways in which one can become spellbound by its allure, an allure that stems from confusion.

Part III

The contradiction of consciousness in Johannes Climacus

I have shown that Kierkegaard and Wittgenstein maintain that doubt requires certainty. Wittgenstein shows that certainty grounds the common philosophical doubts that he analyzes, and he shows that these philosophical doubts are self-contradictory due to the fact that they simultaneously rely on and neglect assumptions held to be certain. Wittgenstein develops his critique by analyzing propositions in context, and Kierkegaard performs his similar critique of the discourse of philosophical doubt in another register, the bold pronouncements of doubt-philosophy: "Everything must be doubted." Like Wittgenstein, Kierkegaard shows that the starting point of philosophical doubt always simultaneously relies on and neglects assumptions held to be certain, and that a pure beginning of doubt is impossible.

How does one conquer the philosophical doubt? How does one show another person that the philosophical doubt is misguided? In *On Certainty*, Wittgenstein nips at the heels of philosophical doubt, over and over, by showing in different contexts how assumptions held to be certain are overlooked, yet the seasoned doubter, if agile, is always ready to point out the following: "Thank you for pointing out the fact that my previous doubt was indebted to a particular certainty. How do I know that this certainty is justified?"

In *On Certainty*, Wittgenstein writes that doubt functions in a system, yet the propositions that "stand fast" for him are not explicitly learned:

> I do not explicitly learn the propositions that stand fast for
> me. I can *discover* them subsequently like the axis around

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> which a body rotates. This axis is not fixed in the sense that anything holds it fast, but the movement around it determines its immobility.[31]

Part of Wittgenstein's strategy is to direct the reader toward the propositions that stand fast, propositions that are discovered, not learned. These are the propositions that make doubt possible. It appears, however, that if one can *discover* propositions that stand fast, one has the opportunity to doubt these propositions or one's discovery of them, regardless of whether this doubting is wrongheaded. If it is possible for me to doubt these previously undoubted propositions that structure the discourse in which I function, this new movement will determine the immobility of the propositions that stand fast. If doubt is a possibility, then the propositions that stand fast for me provide for the possibility of doubt.[32] Every doubt of the truth of previously undoubted propositions necessary for doubt requires propositions, yet there are always more propositions to doubt, always more propositions to provide for doubt. Wittgenstein exposes the internal consistencies of philosophical doubt and refutes many instances of it, but is a non-philosophical gesture the only means by which one can sidestep the philosophical doubt? Wittgenstein speaks to the difficulty of stopping with the propositions that one discovers and finding rest therein: "It is so difficult to find the *beginning*. Or, better: it is difficult to begin at the beginning. And not try to go further back."[33]

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[31] Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, p. 22, #152.

[32] One might claim that in two moments – a non-doubt moment and then a doubt moment – there are two different arrangements of propositions that determine the immobility of the propositions that stand fast. Even if this were the case, it appears that if there is something like 'a consistent self through time' or 'a person who maintains identity through time', then the propositions that stand fast in the first instance would provide for the possibility of doubt, which in this case would include the possibility that the propositions that stand fast can change. Even if this is not the case, however, it is the case that even in doubt there are propositions that provide for the possibility of doubt. In other words, doubt is tied to propositions that stand fast, propositions that provide for the possibility of doubt.

[33] Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, p. 24, #166.

The two questions at this point in this investigation are: 1) Why can Wittgenstein only attempt to <u>show</u> in different ways that philosophical doubt is misguided? Wittgenstein can *prove* that a particular instance of philosophical doubt is incorrect, but it appears that one cannot convince an agent of philosophical doubt (if he is to remain an agent) by logical argumentation alone that philosophical doubt *itself* is misguided, for among other things, the logical argumentation simply invites more doubt.[34] Or, is there something about philosophy such that philosophical doubt cannot be removed? Is it necessary to the structure that doubt persists, that certainty is impossible? 2) What is the nature of consciousness such that <u>showing</u> appears to be the only option (unless a person simply does it)? Or, why does Johannes Climacus lose himself in the wake of his valid critique of philosophical doubt? Kierkegaard's chapter "What is It To Doubt?" pushes toward the answers to these questions.

At this point of the paper it might be appropriate to give the reader advance notice of both Kierkegaard's method of analysis and the meaning of some of his terms. His method of analysis and the terms he uses are interconnected. This is partly due to his attempt to show the reader, over and over, what one can overlook as one thinks through the development of the concepts he considers. Also, this is partly due to his criticism of Hegel. In my opinion, he often retreads Hegel's development of concepts, attempting to show what Hegel overlooks or suppresses. The reader might find that consciousness has

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[34] Many would surely claim that I should maintain that Wittgenstein *does* prove that philosophical doubt itself is incorrect, yet if it is the case that philosophical doubt is an essential part of philosophy, it appears that philosophy, which takes itself to have the final say on matters of proof in this type of context, might not be equipped to determine whether either Kierkegaard or Wittgenstein proves that philosophical doubt is in error. This claim must remain outstanding for now, and hopefully the latter parts of this paper will shed light on the dilemma posed by my choice of phrasing in the sentence to which I am referring.

a propensity for overlooking or suppressing things in the same fashion. In light of what I take to be Kierkegaard's method of analysis, the traction of his development of concepts is important, along with the pace of his analysis. Also, it is my opinion that Kierkegaard's development of concepts compliments Wittgenstein's attempt to show the error of philosophical doubt. Some of Kierkegaard's key terms are the following: 1. 'Consciousness' arises in a collision between reality and ideality, and is both a relation – a third term – between reality and ideality, and a contradiction. 2. 'Consciousness' is a 'contradiction' because it is the relating – the attempted unification – of two qualitatively different components, reality and ideality. 3. 'Reflection' is a presumed relation between two (e.g., 'the thinker and his object', or 'thought about an object'). It also might be helpful to know that though at times it appears that Kierkegaard speaks from the perspective of one who is aware of the contradiction of consciousness, it also appears that at times he speaks from the perspective of one who is unaware of the contradiction of consciousness. Some of his comments on 'immediacy', 'reality in itself', and 'the possibility of consciousness' are likely examples of him speaking from this latter perspective. Among other things, this shift in perspective might highlight ways in which one attempts to overlook the contradiction of consciousness.

The section "What Is It to Doubt?" is the last in *Johannes Climacus*, and it is a kind of postlude to the narrative about Johannes Climacus. At the outset, the reader finds that Johannes began a deliberation on the following question: "What must the nature of existence be in order for doubt to be possible?"[35] Johannes turns his eye toward consciousness, in part because an answer from the *empirical* realm seems impossible,

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[35] Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments and Johannes Climacus*, p. 166.

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"for if someone were to discourse on doubt in order to arouse doubt in another, he could precisely thereby evoke faith, just as faith, conversely, could evoke doubt."[36] If a particular empirical phenomenon can inspire doubt in one person and faith in another, the possibility of doubt must lie in human consciousness, not in the object itself (assuming that there is a 'human consciousness').

Johannes then asks "what the nature of consciousness would be when it had doubt outside itself."[37] He proposes that this is the consciousness of a child, that the consciousness of a child is not qualified, and that it is immediate. "In immediacy there is no relation, for as soon as there is a relation, immediacy is canceled."[38] The thought is that if *for consciousness* there is no difference between consciousness and an object, then consciousness is "immediate." Johannes finds that 'true' and 'untrue' function for this unqualified consciousness in the following way: "*Immediately, therefore, everything is true*, but this truth is untruth the very next moment, *for in immediacy everything is untrue*."[39] At this point in his analysis, Kierkegaard is both leaving open the possibility of doubt not being an issue for a person by using the simple example of the child, and maneuvering in the language of 'immediacy and mediacy' and its traditional dilemmas. He continues: if this unqualified consciousness could persist, the question of truth would not arise. This thought, which reflects a dilemma that appears in the *Theatetus* and "everywhere else," as one with humor or a distilled spirit might say, addresses the idea

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[36] Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments and Johannes Climacus*, p. 166.
[37] Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments and Johannes Climacus*, p. 167.
[38] Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments and Johannes Climacus*, p. 167.
[39] Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments and Johannes Climacus*, p. 167.

that 'in the very next moment, insofar as the very next moment is a moment of mediacy, immediacy, which is no longer, is false'.[40]

"How does the question of truth arise?" and why does untruth arise with it, or in "the very next moment"?[41] The question of truth arises simultaneously with an appeal to something else, something other than both the object of thought and consciousness. If there is a relation, there is no immediacy. Once consciousness is in relation to something, there is mediacy, yet consciousness is the relation. Strictly speaking, in Kierkegaard's analysis, *consciousness is not in relation to something*. It is the relating, which is a contradiction.[42] How does consciousness arise? Consciousness, along with the question of truth and the possibility of doubt, arises in a collision.[43]

The perplexing questions "Which is first, immediacy or mediacy?"[44] and 'can consciousness remain in immediacy?' function in the same structure, a relation, a contradiction: insofar as there is consciousness, it is mediated consciousness. Johannes claims that mediacy cancels immediacy, and it does this by "*pre*-supposing it."[45] The essential thought is that the structure of mediation requires immediacy *to be*, yet this is not 'known' (i.e., 'certain', in the sense of 'once doubted, now certain'). Johannes finds this "*pre*-supposing" to be active in consciousness itself: insofar as mediacy *is* (insofar as consciousness is), immediacy is presupposed. Said another way, the presumption of immediacy is essential to the structure of consciousness. Here I can begin to put a twist

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[40] In mediacy, immediacy is false because it is no longer the case. In other words, immediacy is necessarily false due to the structure of mediacy. Hegel exploits this dynamic, that the structure of mediacy obscures immediacy, for he treats the immediate as both false and not known.

[41] Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments and Johannes Climacus*, p. 167.

[42] In mediacy, consciousness is not its object. The question of truth – whether I know the object, whether my claims are correct – takes place in mediacy, and doubt can continue in this consciousness due to the fact that attempts to eliminate doubt are always mediated (thought/language).

[43] Consciousness is the relation, and is not in a position to know what preceded it.

[44] Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments and Johannes Climacus*, p. 167.

[45] Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments and Johannes Climacus*, p. 167.

on Descartes: consciousness presupposes that it *is* even when it is not thinking; or said another way, not only does consciousness think that it is when it is thinking, but when it is thinking it thinks that it is even when it is not thinking.[46] Here one can see the impetus behind the transcendental I. This is not the end of the twist, however, for Kierkegaard drifts toward the thought that there is a structural disjunct between consciousness and the 'I'.

Johannes continues: immediacy is reality, mediacy is the word. "How does the one cancel the other? By giving expression to it, for that which is given expression is always *presupposed*."[47] In other words, when one relates to an object by means of thought, one simultaneously generates something other than the thing that is thought as one presupposes the object. Kierkegaard explains this in the following:

> Immediacy is reality; language is ideality; consciousness is contradiction [*Modsigelse*]. The moment I make a statement about reality, contradiction is present, for what I say is ideality.[48]

The thought is: when one thinks about an object, one is cut off from it due to the fact that one presupposes it and that consciousness is the relation between the two (thought and object). One important thing to mention at this juncture is that Kierkegaard is claiming that the word – language, thought – is constituted in part by a disconnect between the thinking consciousness and its object. Insofar as consciousness emerges – and if it is, it is mediacy – it is cut off from something. Its emergence cuts. A contradiction *is* whenever

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[46] And one can see the impetus behind the transcendental 'I'.

[47] Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments and Johannes Climacus*, p. 168.

[48] Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments and Johannes Climacus*, p. 168. The reader might enjoy knowing that the Danish word that Kierkegaard uses for 'contradiction,' 'Modsigelse,' literally means 'a saying against' (mod – against, sigelse – saying), which is essentially the case in English. Also, "mod" as a preposition means "against," and "mod" as a noun means "courage."

I express reality, for this attempt is made in a domain other than reality. *Consciousness is the relation, yet it is always at odds, trying to be something other than the relation.*

Johannes finds that the nature of consciousness is a contradiction "that is produced by a duplexity and that itself produces a duplexity."[49] The possibility of doubt lies in the contradiction of consciousness. The true and the untrue only emerge with consciousness, which is both a contradiction and a relation between ideality and reality. Doubt is neither a possibility in reality by itself, nor in ideality by itself. The possibility of doubt emerges as the relation between the two emerges. The idea that reality could be 'in itself' reflects the contradictory nature of consciousness – that one presupposes reality in talking about it and cuts oneself off from it.[50] In other words, it is essential to mediation (due to consciousness) that 'there is', but this is not necessarily known. Consciousness bears the mark of certainty, but it is pre-doubted certainty. If the relation between reality and ideality does not emerge, "consciousness exists only according to its possibility."[51] In reality itself everything is true, and in ideality itself everything is true.[52] In immediacy, everything is true and everything is actual.[53] Possibility only emerges in consciousness, the collision of reality and ideality, due to the fact that the possibility of reality being otherwise only emerges with the mediation of reality and ideality, which is

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[49] Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments and Johannes Climacus*, p. 168.

[50] This provides a bridge back to Wittgenstein, for Kierkegaard is claiming that presuppositions partially constitute one's thought about reality. In other words, whenever I think about reality, it is a presupposition of consciousness that reality exists (if doubt is a possibility for the individual). To express it on another dialectical level: I presuppose reality when I talk about it, and I also presuppose that doubt is not a possibility for it: I do not doubt that doubt is not a part of reality. There is an element in thought that is not doubted. Wittgenstein's grammatical investigations point this out as well.

[51] Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments and Johannes Climacus*, p. 168.

[52] As with some of Kierkegaard's claims about immediacy, this claim reflects both the presuppositions of consciousness and the perspective of consciousness for which the contradiction of consciousness is not apparent.

[53] Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments and Johannes Climacus*, p. 168.

also the emergence of consciousness. Johannes concludes these thoughts with the following:

> Reality is not consciousness, ideality no more so. Yet consciousness does not exist without both, and this contradiction is the coming into existence of consciousness and its nature.[54]

The possibility of doubt arises with consciousness, yet immediacy (on the 'level' of mediation) or reality and/or ideality (on the 'level' of consciousness) simultaneously arise as undoubted (presupposed in the sense of being essential to the structure). Here is the radical thought: consciousness, a contradiction, is caught between reality and ideality, and cut off from each.

In summary, Kierkegaard finds that mediacy cancels immediacy by presupposing it, and consciousness presupposes the structure of reflection, a relation between two. For consciousness, the relation between two is a possibility, and consciousness is this relation (and a contradiction). Consciousness, which is a contradiction and the relation between ideality and reality, presupposes immediacy and cuts itself from it, and presupposes the relation between two. Doubt would not be possible if consciousness, which is the third (the relation between the two), did not presuppose the two and place "the two in relation to each other."[55] In other words, 'that there can be two' emerges with consciousness, as well as the possibility of doubt.

Up to this point, Kierkegaard has identified two presuppositions that determine the structure of consciousness for which doubt is a possibility: *immediacy*, which is a presupposed oneness, and *reflection*, which is a presupposed relation between two (e.g., the thinker and his object), though the relating itself, which is the contradiction, is not

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[54] Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments and Johannes Climacus*, p. 168.
[55] Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments and Johannes Climacus*, p. 169.

apparent for this consciousness. Consciousness is the third. Johannes expresses this thought in another register, showing that if thinking is understood simply to be a relation between two (i.e., reflection), doubt is not possible: "We could not therefore say that reflection produces doubt, unless we would express ourselves in reverse; we must say that doubt *pre*-supposes reflection…"[56] Not only does Kierkegaard, like Wittgenstein, show that presuppositions are necessary for doubt to be; he shows that doubt cannot result from reflection. There must be a third, which is consciousness, that is the relation between two, yet most 'problems of doubt' concern the relation between two – the thinker and its object. Kierkegaard has shown that any act of doubt is based on the assumption of the two that are in doubt. In other words, any act of doubt presumes that the two are the case, and the questions of doubt and truth arise in whatever manifestation from something other than the two of reflection. For example, one assumes a) the thinker and its object and asks b) does the thinker know the object? The point is that the question is about the relation between the two, which is consciousness, yet consciousness, as the relation, is a contradiction that cuts itself from the two as it presupposes them. The following quote exhibits the logic of this dialectic of doubt: "Doubt arises by way of a relation between two, but for this to happen the two must be. Yet doubt, which is a higher expression, precedes and does not come afterward."[57] Doubt precedes? This means that consciousness – as the relation (the third) between two – is prior to reflection. Doubt as a possibility only emerges with consciousness. The two must *be* for doubt to *be* (the presumption), yet the attempt by consciousness to bring the two together – bring

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[56] Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments and Johannes Climacus*, pp. 169-170.
[57] Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments and Johannes Climacus*, p. 170.

reality into ideality, or bring ideality into reality – fails due to the nature of consciousness, which is the collision of the two.[58]

The skeptic, or the objective doubter

Reflection is handicapped from the outset. Consciousness is between – the relating of – thought and reality, and as such it is *interested*. It goes without saying, as it were, that for Kierkegaard "doubt is based on interest."[59] In *Johannes Climacus*, Kierkegaard contrasts two attempts to deal with doubt: the attempt to treat doubt objectively, and the attempt of the Greek skeptic. Kierkegaard claims that "it would be a misunderstanding for someone to think that doubt can be overcome by so-called objective thinking."[60][61] Kierkegaard finds that doubt can be neutralized in forms of disinterested thought. For example, in mathematics, one agrees to a set of propositions and then functions accordingly. If doubt is active in a domain of knowledge, consciousness is active and at issue. Any attempt to overcome doubt objectively would amount to an attempt to take leave of consciousness, and this very attempt would be structured by the presuppositions of consciousness. In other words, an objective avoidance of the subjective conditions of doubt fails to address the issue of doubt correctly. Consciousness prevents both a lack of interest and the lack of the possibility of doubt. Johannes found "the conduct of the Greek skeptics far more

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[58] Among other things, Kierkegaard is trying to prompt the reader to realize that reflection cannot cure doubt, for as long as it remains simply a relation between two, unaware that the relation itself is an active third, it remains unaware of consciousness, out of which the possibility of doubt is generated. Among other things, this realization could amount to a "discovery."

[59] Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments and Johannes Climacus*, p. 170.

[60] Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments and Johannes Climacus*, p. 170.

[61] The goal of seeking objective truth consists of a constant drive away from the subjective, in which Kierkegaard locates some of the essential components of doubt. It is "so-called" because Kierkegaard maintains that if doubt is at issue (i.e., if consciousness *is*), then objective truth, which neglects the subjective, is impossible.

consistent than the modern overcoming of doubt."[62]   Kierkegaard understands the skeptic's goal of apathy to be an attempt to neutralize interest, the *at odds* of consciousness, and it follows from this analysis of consciousness that the attempt to overcome and resolve doubt objectively maintains the 'problem' of consciousness, all the while attempting to overcome doubt in a direction away from consciousness toward disinterestedness.[63] *The attempt to overcome doubt objectively is an attempt to take leave of the contradiction of consciousness.*   This attempt must constantly avoid the contradiction of consciousness as it pursues a lack of interest and the overcoming doubt. One might see how the attempt to achieve a lack of interest would engender the 'problem' of consciousness over and over.

Consciousness as the problem

   The attempt to overcome doubt objectively is effectively the same activity as philosophical doubt. Consciousness must *be* in order for reflection to be. The act of reflection overlooks consciousness, that which prevents reflection from success, insofar as success is truth, and insofar as truth is harmony between thought and reality. Reflection is plagued by the conditions of consciousness, that the two of reflection (e.g., the thinker and his object) are presumed, yet there is the attempt to align them in truth. Kierkegaard says that thought and reality are aligned on the level of consciousness in that each is presumed to be the case, and that consciousness is cut off from them both, yet it is out of this very collision that the question of truth arises. At the level of reflection, insofar as truth is the ideal, consciousness is the problem.

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[62] Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments and Johannes Climacus*, p. 170.
[63] It appears that this is the 'death instinct' in Freud, the death instinct expressed on the level of the idea.

Essential to the structure of consciousness is the presupposition that the two of reflection *are*. If doubt hampers reflection, what is the problem? Consciousness. The two are presumed. If the two are presumed, why are they not aligned in truth? If the ideal of truth is that the two be known independent of the presuppositions that they *are*, the truth-endeavor will fail because of consciousness, for the presupposition that the two of reflection *are* is an essential component of consciousness. The enterprise of thought for which presuppositionless knowledge is the goal is effectively the same activity as philosophical doubt. In each case, the agent of philosophical doubt betrays the undoubted presuppositions that structure the discourse. Both activities require the avoidance of consciousness.

The drive toward presuppositionless knowledge and the phenomenon of philosophical doubt are mutually inclusive to the point of indistinguishability. One can observe this in the actions of others: in a given context, two people agree to a set of presuppositions, and determine the truth of their inquiry. But wait, were the presuppositions justified? Though the ideal of presuppositionless knowledge might not be explicit in the activity of philosophical doubt, it is effectively the case in the instances of philosophical doubt that I have considered. For example, someone says, "Wait, we have not doubted this. Are we certain of this?" And then there is a new set of presuppositions, familiar maneuvers are employed. "But wait, we have not doubted this." And so on. How does one stop?

If in the activity of thought for which presuppositionless truth is the goal, or in the activity of philosophical doubt, one demands that *begging the question* is a fallacy, the truth-endeavor will fail because the alignment of the two of reflection in truth will

generate the fallacy of *begging the question*: the alignment of the two of reflection in truth will be indistinguishable from the presupposition of the two in consciousness. In these types of thinking, error actually serves the purpose of truth. The search for truth (i.e., a presuppositionless starting point, etc.) would stop without error. These types of thinking demand a product different from the presuppositions that determine the structure of the discourse: error. For these types of thinking, error is conveniently produced by the suppression of the contradiction of consciousness.

Truth and *falsity* arise from a source other than the two of reflection in the following types of thinking: the thinking for which presuppositionless knowledge is the ideal, the thinking that demands that begging the question is a fallacy, and the activity of philosophical of doubt. The question of truth can only arise with the collision of ideality and reality that is consciousness, which is a contradiction. Doubt as a possibility of consciousness arises with this collision as well. It is essential to the structure of consciousness that ideality and reality *are*, yet how can doubt be resolved? Consciousness as contradiction prevents a harmonious relation between the domain of thought and the domain of reality precisely because it is the collision of the two. The two are fundamentally at odds with each other if consciousness *is*. In Kierkegaard's analysis of the consciousness for which doubt is a possibility, the act of philosophical doubt would include the imperative to resolve the disjunct between the domain of thought and the domain of reality – the imperative to unify qualitatively different components that are in relation to each other. Consciousness, insofar as it is, prevents this.

In the practice of thought for which presuppositionless knowledge is the goal, the presuppositions that structure the practice are the problem, more and more. The same is

the case in philosophical doubt, for there is always something more to doubt, more and more. The error of doubting that which is essential to doubting – the presuppositions – begets philosophical doubt. Concerning the existence of 'X', if it is the case that in reflection the two of reflection are presupposed, the alignment of the two in truth will reflect the presuppositions, which will be problematic if one maintains that begging the question is a fallacy. If this compounded reflection between the two presuppositions of reflection and the two determined in truth is the case, there must be something else, something other than the two. Consciousness is the third, and it is out of consciousness, not out of the two of reflection, that truth, falsity, and the possibility of doubt arise. It follows from my expansion of Kierkegaard's analysis that if doubt, plain and simple doubt or grand philosophical doubt, is part of a discourse – philosophy, for example – then a contradiction is an essential and foundational part of the structure of the discourse. The principle of non-contradiction functions in a space opened up by a contradiction. The a posteriori proof of this, as if this type of proof were allowed, approaches the height of the Comic: how often has it been said that 'that's the one thing you cannot doubt, *the principle of non-contradiction*'?[64]

Insofar as the principle of non-contradiction is operative in a discourse, the contradiction of consciousness must be avoided. The same goes for the type of thinking that has presuppositionless knowledge as its goal, for an encounter with the contradiction of consciousness could amount to a "discovery" that Wittgenstein talks about in *On*

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[64] In light of this claim, one might see how consciousness actually enables the act of philosophical doubt in multiple ways. For example, as I have tried to show here, and as Kierkegaard and Wittgenstein maintain, undoubted propositions would need to be in place for one to make the following claim: 'That's the one thing you cannot doubt, *the principle of non-contradiction*'. It covers over the contradiction of consciousness essential to the structure of the discourse, conceals the crack around which the discourse is structured, and results in a truth-foundation at home in the Comic: consciousness (contradiction) on the one hand, and the principle of non-contradiction on the other. Who says your left hand cannot give something to your right hand? (Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, #268.)

Certainty, a discovery of the propositions that "stand fast"[65] (though it appears that many agents of philosophical doubt are not phased by an encounter with the propositions that stand fast.) This is also the case with philosophical doubt, for the engagement with the presuppositions would either reveal the error of philosophical doubt, spur on the activity of philosophical doubt more and more, or both. This is also the case in the domain of thought for which begging the question is a fallacy, for one would engage the presuppositions of reflection.

The principle of non-contradiction and its support system helps secure both the pursuit of presuppositionless knowledge and the activity of philosophical doubt against the threat that consciousness poses. It is the blinders that keep the contradiction of consciousness from view, enabling the pursuit of presuppositionless knowledge and the activity of philosophical doubt to function regularly, as they were. The discourses of presuppositionless knowledge and philosophical doubt, along with doubt in the pursuit of truth, in general and in particular, arise out of the contradiction of consciousness, and the principle of non-contradiction plugs up the crack of the discourses, the crack that opens up into the contradiction of consciousness, the crack that is essential to the structure of these discourses. The integrity of these discourses relies on the generation of error and a concealing of the contradiction of consciousness.

The imperative of truth and the possibility of error arise out of consciousness. The previously mentioned discourses must avoid an encounter with contradiction of consciousness if they are to avoid the fallacy of *begging the question*, yet an encounter with the contradiction of consciousness in this context would amount to an 'error' defined from within the arbitrary limits of the discourse that neglect the contradiction of

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[65] Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, p. 22, #152.

consciousness, limits drawn inside the presuppositions of consciousness.   From within these arbitrary limits, begging the question and the breach of the principle of non-contradiction would ensue in an encounter with consciousness, with the presuppositions that provide for the possibility of doubt, truth, and falsity.   This betrayal of the presuppositions that determine the structure of the discourse is a further error, however. It is an error that stimulates the activity of philosophical doubt, the pursuit of presuppositionless knowledge, and the like, yet there is another type of error that can serve the interest of the agent of philosophical doubt, presuppositionless knowledge, and the like. It is _error_, here or there, everywhere or anywhere. In other words, the error of neglecting the contradiction of consciousness helps sustain the activity of philosophical doubt, and the judgment that an encounter with the presuppositions of consciousness is an 'error' helps to sustain the activity of philosophical doubt. If in the activity of philosophical doubt the agent did not encounter error, the practice would cease. If the agent is correct in truth, why continue? The activity of philosophical doubt produces error as it sustains itself. Philosophical doubt generates error, and I have shown why this is sufficient to sustain the agent and his activity. Insofar as this error allows the agent to avoid the contradiction of consciousness, the agent commits the error of neglecting consciousness, the presuppositions, etc. Wittgenstein screams this over and over: 'Look at what you are doing! You are contradicting your own presuppositions.' Can the agent of philosophical doubt understand the communication of this 'error'?

Why does it appear that Wittgenstein can only _show_ that philosophical doubt is self-contradictory? In other words, why does it appear that Wittgenstein cannot convince the agent of philosophical doubt by means of logical argumentation that philosophical

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doubt is necessarily self-contradictory? The structure of philosophical doubt is such that the disproving of it can actually stimulate it. I have shown different ways that this can unfold. For example, a person directs the agent of philosophical doubt to the presuppositions that he neglects, yet this provides the agent with more material to doubt. At a more complex level, the structure of consciousness is such that an engagement with the contradictory structure of consciousness can stimulate the error of philosophical doubt if the agent shelters himself from the contradictory structure. For example, the ideal of a presuppositionless starting point for knowledge demands that the agent pushes past the presuppositions provided for by the contradiction of consciousness, or the principle of non-contradiction necessarily renders the contradiction of consciousness as error, or the fallacy of begging the question demands error if the findings of the search for truth are identical to the presuppositions of consciousness. There are more examples.

Wittgenstein points out another hurdle for him who would direct the agent to his errors:

> But since a language-game is something that consists in the recurrent procedures of the game in time, it seems impossible to say in any *individual* case that such-and-such must be beyond doubt if there is to be a language-game—though it is right enough to say that *as a rule* some empirical judgment or other must be beyond doubt.[66]

Time is the doubter's mistress in waiting. There are many fruitful ways to approach Wittgenstein's quote. If it is the case that "a language-game is something that consists in the recurrent procedures of the game in time," and if it is the case that Wittgenstein's attempt to show that philosophical doubt is wrongheaded is part of the language-game in question, at least two moments will be in play. For simplicity I will call the instance of

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[66] Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, p. 68, #519.

the doubter's claim 'moment 1', and the instance of Wittgenstein's correction 'moment 2'. If the two moments are not part of the same language-game, it appears that Wittgenstein has no chance. If they are, the agent of philosophical doubt can contest Wittgenstein in multiple ways. The agent can doubt that there is a connection between moment 1 and moment 2 (i.e., he can doubt the consistency of the language-game), he can doubt moment 1 itself, he can doubt that he made the claim during moment 1, he can doubt the claim, etc. The list can go on and on, and the agent of philosophical doubt can exploit this as well, though I imagine that some of these agents have died before their time was up. Each doubt functions in time, and each doubt is something one can later doubt.

There is another line of defense for the agent of philosophical doubt, and it concerns the structure of consciousness for which doubt is a possibility. If Wittgenstein's criticism is part of the language-game in time, and if this consciousness continues as the language-game continues in time, the possibility of doubt remains for the individual, his line of resistance against Wittgenstein's criticism. This is one reason why it is impossible to know that "such-and-such must be beyond doubt" at any given time, for the knowing/doubting/discovering of presuppositions takes place in time as the possibility of doubt continues from moment to moment. The 'problem' that time poses for the communication of the contradiction of consciousness is a significant hurdle for him who would communicate the contradiction of consciousness to the agent of philosophical doubt, yet the problem that time poses does not appear to be an insurmountable hurdle for Kierkegaard in his critique of philosophical doubt. For Kierkegaard, the contradictory structure of consciousness remains, and the two of reflection simply transfer to the

categories of repetition and recollection, which Kierkegaard analyzes in *Repetition*, *Philosophical Fragments*, and other books. This compliments Wittgenstein's claim that "it is right enough to say that *as a rule* some empirical judgment or other must be beyond doubt," yet the task of convincing the agent of this appears to be impossible at times.

Reality is a presupposition of consciousness, yet it is not essential to the structure of consciousness that any object that one imagines necessarily exists.[67] One commits the error of philosophical doubt when one, in doubting the existence of a particular thing, effectively doubts the existence of the external world (reality). Logically speaking, insofar as consciousness *is*, doubting the existence of the 'external' world amounts to doubting the presuppositions essential to consciousness, that the 'external' world (reality) *is*. Wittgenstein screams this over and over in many contexts: "Look, you are doubting the presuppositions that allow you to doubt." One could attempt to show the agent of philosophical doubt that his doubt is effectively doubt of the external world, and one could prove this to the agent, over and over, with each successive doubt, until the agent is actually blue in the face, yet this 'blueness' and this 'face' would surely fall into the imaginary hands of the deft agent.

I do not claim that one cannot arrive at the truth. I have no problem with inquiries in which one agrees on presuppositions and keeps those presuppositions in mind. The problem begins when the ideal of truth shoots past the presuppositions, neglects them as it relies on them. It follows from what Kierkegaard and Wittgenstein state, which I take to be correct and which I am trying to explain and defend here, that the attempt to peek back behind the veil of the presuppositions depends on presuppositions, and when the

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[67] This sheds light on Wittgenstein's claim that "it seems impossible to say in an *individual* case that such-and-such must be beyond doubt if there is to be a language-game—though it is right enough to say that *as a rule* some empirical judgment or other must be beyond doubt."

agent of philosophical doubt does this <u>and</u> neglects the presuppositions, he is misguided. The question is: how to stop?

Wittgenstein is aware of this urge to 'peek back behind the veil': "It is difficult to find the beginning. Or better, it is difficult to begin at the beginning. And not try to go further back."[68] Philosophical doubt is a machine that pushers further back, more and more, and I have shown how a 'further back' is error. Wittgenstein investigates this tendency throughout *On Certainty*, along with the difficulty it poses for him in his attempt to show that philosophical doubt is wrongheaded. His mention of the idealist who claims that there is a "further doubt *behind*"[69] the practical doubt, along with "this transcendent certainty, which is connected to your concept of spirit,"[70] are prime examples of his sensitivity to the urge to continue, the urge to find something behind, more and more. Kierkegaard also puts this impulse in play in his analysis of consciousness as he navigates the dilemmas of immediacy and mediacy. Kierkegaard puts a stop to it, however: the presupposition of consciousness, a consciousness that is a contradiction that arises in a collision of thought and reality, and is cut off from them both.

One might now see how consciousness is the problem, why a 'pure language' (ideality) is often pursued in philosophy, and why consciousness cannot fit into any pure language, or any pure relation between language and reality. Consciousness hampers thought in reflection on "X." One might now see the impetus behind the transcendental I, which can cause many of the problems I have considered: consciousness does not appear in reality, and it does not appear in ideality, yet 'it must be, must be other than these,' as

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[68] Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, p. 62, #471.
[69] Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, p. 4, #19.
[70] Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, p. 8, #47.

the claim would go. There must be something more. If I *is*, and is not in reality or ideality, I must be. I=I.

Kierkegaard provides a critical perspective on Moore's attempt to prove the existence of the external world, a perspective that compliments Wittgenstein's criticism yet approaches it from another angle. The issue is not simply the thinker and the object and their harmonious relation in truth; the issue is the harmonious alignment of thought and reality. Kierkegaard develops this line of thinking further: not only is consciousness something other than thought, but the 'I' is something other than consciousness. Moore's "I know this" covers up the contradiction of consciousness and the discord between consciousness and the "I".

Regarding Johannes' loss: Insofar as Kierkegaard's claims pertaining to the structure of consciousness are correct, the following is the case: In this framework I locate two forms of profound doubt – *the philosophical doubt*, which labors over the certainty and doubt of reality and/or thought and all that the imagination might find fitting in these two realms; and *a doubt that tenses on oneself*, i.e., a subjective doubt that simultaneously engages the contradiction of consciousness and suffers in doubt. In other words, the first doubting concerns the object of consciousness from which one is cut off, and the second tenses on the I, the self, that I am, etc., however one would care to put it. Now does it not also follow from Kierkegaard's analysis of the *consciousness for which doubt is a possibility* that, insofar as consciousness *is* for an individual, the individual is cut off from his 'self' – the notion of 'subject', of 'self', of 'person', what have you? This is how Johannes could come to lose himself despite his sound criticism of philosophical doubt, which is doubt on the grand scale, presuppositionless doubt that

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almost demands, in a hushed cry, the transcendental I. This demand creates the goings

on, on and on, of philosophical doubt, of the error upon error. The poetic explanation of

Johannes' fall is that he doubted the doubters and became one of them, 'possibly' the

only one, or that he pushed the envelope so far that there was no one to receive it.

Another answer: he explained and exposed the thought-structure of philosophical doubt,

and was left with the contradiction, consciousness. He sinks. The form of this dynamic

appears in Kierkegaard's book *The Sickness unto Death* – that one cannot evade <u>not</u>

being a self.

Part IV

The problem of communicating the contradiction

Imagine a language-game "When I call you, come in through the door". In any ordinary case, a doubt whether there really is a door there will be impossible.
Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, p. 50, #341

I have distilled the problem of communicating the truth to the agent of philosophical doubt down to the problem of communicating the contradiction of consciousness to the agent of philosophical doubt. The word 'contradiction' makes perfect sense to the agent of philosophical doubt, however, if only because he endorses at his convenience the principle of non-contradiction and its complimentary principles. Telling the agent of philosophical doubt that consciousness is a contradiction will most likely fall on deaf ears, for as I have shown, the discourse of philosophical doubt is built to absorb the contradiction of consciousness into its error-producing structure. What must be communicated to and appropriated by the agent is a further expression of the contradiction, which is that consciousness is a contradiction that opens up the space for contradiction, which can also be expressed in the following formulation: *a contradiction opens up the space for the principle of non-contradiction*.

At times, Wittgenstein's method of *showing*, which he employs and develops in many of his writings, is strikingly similar to Kierkegaard's methods of indirect communication. In his attempts to *show* the error of philosophical doubt, Wittgenstein approaches the problem of philosophical doubt from many angles. He employs multiple strategies to expose the contradictions of philosophical doubt and he applies these

strategies in diverse contexts, yet it is often the case that he fails to attain the degree of clarity or the level of persuasive power for which he strives: "Here I am inclined to fight windmills, because I cannot yet say the thing I really want to say."[71] Kierkegaard's claim about the structure of consciousness – that consciousness is a contradiction, the relation of thought and reality – explains the difficulty that Wittgenstein encounters in his attempts to expose the error of philosophical doubt. Kierkegaard and Wittgenstein face this difficulty of communicating the contradiction, and in this final section I will direct Kierkegaard's description of the structure of consciousness toward the *subjective* to further define the errors of objective doubt and to further explain the problem of communicating the contradiction.

Most of the errors committed by the agent of philosophical doubt that I have discussed in this paper are structural problems inherent to the attempt to treat doubt objectively. In *Fear and Trembling*, Kierkegaard challenges the agents of philosophical doubt to doubt diligently. The agent of philosophical doubt who rattles his own cage in the objective maintains a false limit to the structure of doubt. He conveniently draws the limit inside the presuppositions that he contradicts. It is as if Kierkegaard says: 'Go right ahead. Doubt it all, truly doubt it all. And if you do, I do not expect to see you anytime soon.'[72] His point is that the person who truly doubts – the person who persistently engages the subjective corridors that make doubt possible – literally will not have time to fool around with abstract doubt.

Like Kierkegaard, Wittgenstein is sensitive to the objective/subjective distinction in his discussion of certainty and doubt:

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[71] Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, p. 51, #400.
[72] This is a paraphrase of the sentiment found in *Fear and Trembling*, pp. 107-111.
Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1983.

> With the word "certain" we express complete conviction, the total absence of doubt, and thereby we seek to convince other people. That is *subjective* certainty.
> But when is something objectively certain? When a mistake is not possible. But what kind of possibility is that? Mustn't mistake be logically excluded?[73]

This quote compliments Kierkegaard's criticism of objective doubt in *Johannes Climacus*. Kierkegaard writes that treating doubt objectively is a misguided venture, and he directs the reader toward the subjective side of doubt. Kierkegaard notes that the Greek skeptics were more in tune with the dynamic of doubt than the objective doubters: "They were well aware that doubt is based on interest, and therefore with perfect consistency they thought they could cancel doubt by transforming interest into apathy."[74] They attempted to neutralize the will, the subjective side in which Kierkegaard finds the condition for the possibility of doubt – consciousness. Wittgenstein's quote points out that if doubt is a possibility in philosophy and if mistakes are to be possible in philosophy, then objective certainty is not possible because this would require that one logically exclude the possibility of a mistake.[75] The agent of philosophical doubt puts in place a goal, at his convenience, that is unattainable. He manufactures error to enable philosophical doubt to continue, and he manufactures error both in particular episodes and structurally. The structure of philosophical doubt is such that objective certainty is impossible – that a mistake is logically possible – yet in the activity of philosophical doubt the agent treats objective 'certainty' as possible. The donkey produces its own carrot.

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[73] Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, p. 27, #194.

[74] Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments and Johannes Climacus*, p. 170.

[75] A weaker interpretation of the word 'logically' in Wittgenstein's quote might be justified, but the point remains the same: the claim of objective certainty in a particular instance is a claim that a mistake is not possible in that particular instance.

This takes me back to Part I of this paper, Wittgenstein's distinction between grammatical propositions and empirical propositions. The agent of philosophical doubt sustains the practice of philosophical doubt by treating 'doubt' and 'certainty' as opposites, as *empirical* propositions (i.e., either I have doubt about "X" or I am certain about "X"), yet the structure of philosophical doubt relies on them not being opposites (i.e., objective doubt is possible but objective certainty is not possible). If the agent were to treat certainty as a possibility, it would either be a fine time to stop doubting because one would be certain that certainty is possible, hence know that certainty is actual, or the agent would find himself in a nice little contradiction, and to continue the process of philosophical doubt he would then doubt whether certainty is possible in an effort to maintain the structure, and the error, of philosophical doubt. In the activity of philosophical doubt, doubt actually performs a grammatical function. In the activity of philosophical doubt, doubt is not the opposite of certainty, yet the agent of philosophical doubt treats doubt and certainty as equally attainable outcomes of the inquiry (e.g., either I have doubt about "X" or I am certain about "X"). This is another instance of *a picture that holds us captive*: by continually maintaining an ideal of 'certainty' that is the opposite of 'doubt', the agent of philosophical doubt mistakenly sustains the activity of philosophical doubt, an activity for which certainty is impossible.

How might an individual relate to the contradiction of consciousness? I suggest that there are at least three types of relation between the individual and the contradiction, which I will analyze in my effort to further explain the difficulty of communicating the contradiction: 1) the individual for whom doubt is a possibility who subjectively engages the contradiction, 2) the individual who engages the contradiction of consciousness who

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is subjectively certain of the contradiction of consciousness, and 3) the individual for whom doubt is a possibility who is an agent of philosophical doubt.

Consider *the individual for whom doubt is a possibility who subjectively engages the contradiction*. If doubt is a possibility for a person, how might he think about and/or express himself – 'that he is an I', 'that he is a subject'? In Kierkegaard's model of consciousness for which doubt is a possibility, consciousness is a contradiction, the relation between ideality (thought/language) and reality. Presuming that 'I am', whenever I think of my self I am cut off from my self due to consciousness.[76] Assuming that 'I am', if I consider my self to be a purely thinking being – that is, I am thought and thought alone – consciousness impedes this understanding of self, for consciousness is a relation between ideality and reality, and reality, which in consciousness is contradictorily related to ideality and which is an essential component of consciousness, hampers the pure apprehension of this proposed self that is pure thought. Assuming that 'I am', if I consider myself to be a purely material being, consciousness impedes this understanding of self, for ideality is an essential part of the structure of consciousness that determines the endeavor. If I consider my self to be something other than either thought or reality, the contradiction of consciousness prevents me from knowing this because it is the relation of ideality and reality. If I consider myself to be a combination of ideality and reality, I will need something other than ideality or reality – a bit of otherness – to determine the difference between the ideality and reality of consciousness, from which consciousness is cut off, and the ideality and reality of my 'self'. The same applies if I consider myself to be the relating of ideality and reality that is consciousness,

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[76] One might prefer the expression 'consciousness cuts me from my self in my thinking of my self', but the truth is that I do not know and cannot know which is the case, whether I *am cut* or I *do the cutting*. To rest in this and not go further – this is a cure.

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for it is not clear what 'I' is in this case. I would need an other, 'I' would need to be other. Therefore, insofar as the possibility of doubt is real for a person, the individual's attempt to understand himself as 'I' (self) is made problematic by the contradiction of consciousness. It appears that Johannes Climacus followed this path downward, and became engulfed in its subjective turmoil.

The person for whom doubt is a possibility is in a tough position if he has subjectively engaged the contradiction of consciousness and desires to communicate to another person the fractured 'I' apparently left in the wake of the contradiction of consciousness. If another person were to ask him to communicate this 'I', this 'fractured self', how might he respond? The imperative to speak might even stimulate the subjective turmoil that I explained in the preceding paragraph. Insofar as doubt is a possibility for this individual, the admixture of reality constitutive of the contradiction of consciousness will impede the communication of the 'I', fractured or otherwise, in the ideal realm of language. Regardless of whether this individual takes his self to be purely material (reality) or a combination of ideality and reality, communication of this self on the ideal level will fail. In an attempt to sustain an apparent harmony between his self and the word (the unit of meaning in ideality), this individual might take his self to be purely ideal, not in conflict with communication that is purely ideal. This attempt suits the idealist and the objective doubter perfectly, yet as it overlooks the contradiction of consciousness that is the relation of ideality and reality, it overlooks the material component of the contradiction and engenders the errors of philosophical doubt that I have discussed in this essay. If the word lacks a material component – i.e., if the word is ideal and a self-same identity – it will fail to serve the purpose of communicating the

subjective fracture.   How might the individual adequately *reflect* the fundamental

brokenness of the 'I' if this is the case?   For some people in some situations, the

communication of subjective brokenness generates a loss more profound than the sense

of loss or brokenness that precedes the failed attempt to unify the brokenness in language.

For some people in some situations, the communication of subjective brokenness is

undoubtedly unproblematic.

Consider *the individual who engages the contradiction of consciousness and is subjectively certain of the contradiction of consciousness*.   How might this individual

communicate the contradiction of consciousness to the agent of philosophical doubt, for

is it not the case that as the contradiction of consciousness problematizes the 'self-

understanding' of the individual for whom doubt is a possibility, the contradiction of

consciousness problematizes the communication of the contradiction of consciousness by

the person who is subjectively certain to the agent of philosophical doubt, as well as the

appropriation of the contradiction of consciousness by the agent of philosophical doubt?

The individual who is subjectively certain of the contradiction might be aware of the

following: a) that if doubt is a possibility for an individual, the imperative of unification

at work in language will impede the direct communication of the brokenness of the self;

b) that if doubt is a possibility for an individual, the imperative of unification at work in

language will impede the communication of the contradiction of consciousness to the

agent, for the contradiction of consciousness, which opens up the space for doubt,

includes an essential component (reality) that is both constitutive of the structure of the

communication of doubt and excluded by this communication if one maintains an ideal of

language that includes the imperative of self-same identity in meaning; c) that if doubt is

a possibility for an individual, the imperative of unification at work in language will suit the needs of the agent of philosophical doubt perfectly by glossing over the material component of the contradiction of consciousness. In light of these strictures, how might one communicate the contradiction of consciousness to the agent of philosophical doubt?

Consider *the individual for whom doubt is a possibility who is an agent of philosophical doubt*. The agent of philosophical doubt, for whom doubt is a possibility, demands a particular identity of anything he encounters, an identity that corresponds to contradiction as its opposite, yet the contradiction of consciousness, which opens up the space for the relation between contradiction and non-contradiction, is prior to the contradiction that corresponds to identity as its opposite. In its demand for the derivative identity, the agent of philosophical doubt renders the contradiction of consciousness, which opens up the space for the corresponding terms of 'identity' and 'contradiction', as a derivative contradiction. This derivation is ultimately a derivation from the error-producing structure of philosophical doubt that obscures the actual presuppositions of philosophical doubt. The split that is essential to the structure that makes philosophical doubt possible is fundamentally at odds with the identity that philosophical doubt demands. Whenever one tries to communicate the contradiction of consciousness to the agent of philosophical doubt, the agent prevents the schism essential to the structure of philosophical doubt from taking hold. The agent of philosophical doubt prevents the presuppositions of philosophical doubt from appearing, which amounts to the agent of philosophical doubt once again betraying the presuppositions of philosophical doubt.

In Wittgenstein's terms, the agent of philosophical doubt commits the mistake of treating *grammatical* propositions as *empirical* propositions. He treats the *contradiction*

of consciousness, which is a presupposition of philosophical doubt, as *empirical*, as a contradiction of the type that is opposite to a non-contradictory object, a self-same, identical object. He treats the contradiction of consciousness as a contradiction that could be otherwise (*empirical*), one that the agent can investigate to determine whether it is truly a contradiction. This prolongs the activity of philosophical doubt and sustains its error-producing structure. The contradiction of consciousness, on the other hand, is essential to the structure of philosophical doubt, a contradiction that forms the structure of the discourse in which contradiction and non-contradiction function.

The agent's use of the term 'certainty' can follow the same false pattern. He treats 'certainty' as the opposite of 'doubt', which at times is correct. Yet when exposed to the certainties that make doubt possible, certainties that Wittgenstein exposes in numerous contexts, the agent treats these certainties as derivative certainties derived from his understanding of 'doubt', whereas these certainties ground the practice of doubt and are prior to the derived understanding of 'certainty'. In truth, there are at least two types of 'certainty' at work in the phenomenon of philosophical doubt, and the agent, at his convenience, overlooks the type of certainty that makes doubt possible.

It might be helpful to consider *what happens outside the false limit of philosophical doubt from the perspective of the agent of philosophical doubt*, as if the agent could simultaneously sustain both perspectives. On the one hand, the contradiction of consciousness – in particular, the material real that consciousness contradictorily relates to the ideal – 'contaminates' the linguistic communication of the contradiction of consciousness. In other words, language is the medium through which one might attempt to communicate the contradiction, yet if doubt is a possibility for either person in the

chain of communication, the material component (reality) of the contradiction of consciousness obfuscates the seamless, one to one transmission of meaning, 'meaning' understood purely on the ideal level. From this perspective, when the contradiction of consciousness enters language by means of the individual, it disrupts the seamless linguistic chain of self-same units of meaning. The agent of philosophical doubt demands this ideal of meaning from him who would communicate the contradiction of consciousness. The objective doubter, and the idealist in general, demands a pure transmission of thought, which includes a demand for a self-same identity of the word, the phrase, the units of meaning, etc. With the ideal plane of language in sight, what should the agent of philosophical doubt do? He is aware that he himself is the problem, that if he enters the ideal plane he will contaminate it. Will he engage the subjective, or will he take leave of his self, his little problem, and merge with the ideal plane? If he chooses the latter, in one moment he overlooks the contradiction of consciousness, himself, and the presuppositions of philosophical doubt. It can be magical to observe this act, for he is able to make it appear that nothing happens. He remains standing, or sitting. Sometimes he does not even say a word.

The agent of philosophical doubt, if he sustains his identity, forecloses the appropriation of any transmission of his error, whether this transmission is through language that is purely ideal, through language that is a combination of ideality and reality, or through material disclosure, e.g., a rock falling on his head. He renders all objects, thought-objects or material objects, as self-same objects in line with the ideal of self-same identity in language that I have discussed, and this act forecloses the appropriation of the presuppositions that structure the practice of philosophical doubt. At

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the root of these presuppositions is the contradiction of consciousness. How does one communicate the truth to the agent? One of Wittgenstein's primary tactics is to direct the agent toward the presuppositions, over and over, presuppositions that constitute a particular language-game. Using other terminology, Kierkegaard employs this tactic as well. The agent's resistance to the truth of his error – his resistance to an encounter with the contradiction of consciousness – sustains the structure of philosophical doubt. Nowhere in this paper have I written that the truth of the error of philosophical doubt or the contradiction of consciousness cannot be communicated in language. I claim, however, that if doubt is a possibility for an individual – if the individual is not subjectively certain – the ideal of unification in language, which suits the resistance and error-producing activity of the agent of philosophical doubt, will gloss over the material component that is contradictorily related to ideality in consciousness, and it is this contradictory consciousness that makes doubt possible.[77]

I can tell the truth to the agent. He can understand it. Yet if he then relates to it as the agent, as an objective doubter, he distances himself from it. In his relation to it – by means of the contradiction of consciousness, though he is not aware of his means – he

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[77] It is true that this analysis – at least the analysis in the second half of this paper – relies on Kierkegaard's 'critical' exercise that focuses on the conditions of consciousness for which doubt is a possibility. The agent of philosophical doubt might mount a criticism based on this fact, and also point out that Kierkegaard used language to think and communicate this 'contradiction of consciousness'. If I were to respond by saying that Kierkegaard was subjectively certain of his critical determination of the conditions of consciousness for which doubt is a possibility, the agent might respond by saying that Kierkegaard's investigation was not philosophical. This might be the case, that it was not philosophical, yet I do not claim that Kierkegaard's investigation cannot or should not be doubted. Am I not saying that the agent distorts the truth? If the agent claims that Kierkegaard could not have been both subjectively certain of his conclusions and doing philosophy, then it appears that philosophical doubt is a necessary part of philosophy for this agent. Nevertheless, my task remains: how can one effectively communicate the truth to the agent of philosophical doubt? If I were to respond to this agent by attempting to show that subjective certainty is not necessarily non-philosophical, I would recommence the journey I took in this paper, in the same dialectical fashion and in the same spirit, though with some modifications here and there in content and approach.

treats it as a thought-object that is unified, not in discord.[78] By means of the contradiction of consciousness he renders the contradiction of consciousness as a derivative contradiction, which is unified.

The agent can appropriate the contradiction of consciousness. He can rest in it, or he can subjectively engage it with a furious passion. Yet he can also distance himself from it by relating to it objectively, and continue the activity of philosophical doubt.

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[78] The resistance to and avoidance of the contradiction of consciousness is also a matter for psychology. Interestingly and poetically, this might be the only thing with which the doubter would agree. I do not offer this up as an *ad hominem*, though many would likely take this essay to be a personal attack.

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