supposed or entertained (and so on), and sometimes to mean the linguistic expression of a proposition in that first sense. I use the word “sentence” to translate Wittgenstein’s “Satz” which has as its primary meaning in the Tractatus a combination of signs in use to mean that something is the case; this does not correspond exactly to either Russellian use of “proposition.” The use of two different terms creates some awkwardness; the alternative, which would be to use “proposition” for Wittgenstein’s “Satz” might create the false impression that the term meant the same for Wittgenstein as for Russell.

The works of Russell’s with which I shall be concerned are his essays “On Denoting” and “Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description,” the book Problems of Philosophy, and his manuscript on theory of knowledge. (It is not known how much of the manuscript Russell actually showed Wittgenstein; but we do know that Russell discussed his work on the book with Wittgenstein.) These writings come from 1905 to 1913; and a fundamental principle of Russell’s during that period was that all cognitive relations depend on acquaintance. Acquaintance is direct awareness, direct cognitive contact; and the objects of acquaintance, according to Russell, include not only sensations and other mental items, but also non-mental items, such as universals and abstract logical facts. Russell’s idea that all cognitive relations depend on acquaintance is tied closely to another fundamental principle of his, that every proposition which we can understand must be composed entirely of constituents with which we are acquainted (Problems of Philosophy, p.32; cf. “On Denoting,” p.56). During the period with which I am concerned those two principles help to shape Russell’s epistemology and metaphysics, via the theory of descriptions, used by Russell to explain how propositions about things with which we are not acquainted can have, as their constituents, only things with which we are acquainted.

Here are two important examples of how all this works. Consider first the metaphysical question whether our present experience is all-embracing, or whether instead something can lie outside it. Russell wants to reject the argument that, if something could lie outside our experience, we could not know that there is such a thing. He is perfectly happy to admit that one cannot now give an actual instance of a thing not now within one’s experience. One can, however, mention such a thing by using a descriptive phrase. Here is Russell’s argument.

An object may be described by means of terms which lie within our experience, and the proposition that there is an object answering to this description is then one composed wholly of experienced constituents. It is therefore possible to know the truth of this proposition without passing outside of experience. If it appears on examination that no experienced object answers to this description, the conclusion follows that there are objects not experienced. [Russell gives as an example that we may know Jones and know that there is the father of Jones, although the father of Jones is not within our experience.]

The second example concerns our knowledge of what other people are directly acquainted with, what is present in their experience. You and I might possibly experience the same object, but only you experience your experiencing of it: I
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cannot experience your experiencing of it. Or again, let us suppose that each of us is acquainted with his or her own self. Russell treats that as a serious possibility, during at least part of the period which I am discussing. Now consider a statement about Bismarck. Since we are supposing that Bismarck himself has direct acquaintance with himself, he will be able to use the name “Bismarck” (or “I”) so that it directly designates himself. If he makes the statement “Bismarck is an astute diplomatist,” or “I am an astute diplomatist,” he himself, an object with which he is acquainted, is a constituent of his judgment. But you or I or anyone else can think about Bismarck only via some description; we are not directly acquainted with the object which he denotes by “I.” If we say “Bismarck was an astute diplomatist,” an analysis of our proposition would show that we are not directly designating Bismarck. We designate him via some description. In the analyzed proposition, the name “Bismarck” is replaced by a description, and we can see from the analysis that Bismarck himself is not a constituent of the proposition. Because the object Bismarck is known to Bismarck by acquaintance, but known to us only by description, our judgment about Bismarck is not the same as Bismarck’s judgment about Bismarck. Bismarck has available to him a proposition which he can understand and which we cannot. We can, however, know by description the proposition which Bismarck understands.

It is important that, as Russell sees the situation, there is something which we should like to do but cannot do:

...when we say anything about Bismarck, we should like, if we could, to make the judgment which Bismarck alone can make, namely the judgment of which he himself is the constituent. In this we are necessarily defeated, since the actual Bismarck is unknown to us.

(“Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description,” p.218)

In that quotation, Russell uses a descriptive phrase to speak about a judgment which we cannot make or understand. We know that there is such a judgment, but there is a barrier cutting it off from us. There is an ideal position for thinking about Bismarck, a position which no one but Bismarck can be in.

(We can note that Russell’s argument applies to itself. Bismarck can say to himself: “When I say anything about Bismarck, I can make a judgment which Russell cannot make; and the judgment which I just made is an example, since I am a constituent of it. Because Russell does not know me, he is necessarily defeated in his attempt to make the judgment which I can make about his being necessarily defeated in his attempt to make judgments about me.” But Bismarck is himself necessarily defeated, on this view, in making about Russell the judgments he would like to make (including the judgment that Russell is necessarily defeated in attempting to make the judgment that he is necessarily defeated in attempting to make judgments about Bismarck himself), since no one unacquainted with Russell can make judgments of which Russell is a constituent. Only someone who was acquainted with both Russell and Bismarck could make the judgment which both of them would like to make about Russell’s necessary defeat in judgment-making about Bismarck; that judgment is one which both of them, and all of us, can speak about only via a description. And only someone acquainted with both Russell and Bismarck could make the judgment which my last statement was a necessarily defeated attempt to make, and only

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someone acquainted with both Russell and Bismarck could make the judgment which that statement was an attempt to make, and...)

Russell’s example concerns thought about Bismarck, about Bismarck’s self, but the point he is making is more general. Whatever elements there are in one person’s experience which another person can know only by description cannot genuinely be constituents of propositions understood by anyone else. The propositions which the person himself can make about that object and the propositions which other people can make about the same object will always have different constituents: the actual experienced object will be a constituent only of the propositions made by the possessor of the experience. Since we do not have acquaintance with any minds other than our own, all our knowledge of other minds is via description. We are cut off from the kind of knowledge of other people’s minds which we really want, just as we are cut off from knowing of Bismarck the propositions which Bismarck himself knows, which have as a constituent an object with which only he is acquainted. I want to emphasize that, although Russell’s example is the self, his discussion of it is meant to apply to everything with which other people are directly acquainted, and with which we ourselves cannot be acquainted. Russell himself certainly thought that, even if the self is not an object of acquaintance, there are objects of acquaintance to which his argument would apply: a person can make judgments about things with which he is acquainted, judgments which other people cannot make or understand. It is reasonable here to use the phrase “private object” in connection with Russell’s ideas about objects with which only a single person can be acquainted. (In writings a little later than those which I am using, Russell explicitly refers to toothaches as private sensations: he speaks of toothaches as essentially private. There is no reason to think that that talk of toothaches marks any significant change in his views about objects knowable only to one person. He speaks, in Problems of Philosophy (p.27), of “my desiring food” as an object with which I am acquainted. In Theory of Knowledge (pp.7–8) he says that we can denote objects with which we are acquainted by a proper name. In the case, then, of those objects with which only I can be acquainted, the proper names which I use for these objects are names which only I can understand. If I speak about these private objects to myself, using such names, I cannot be in error. In this essay I sometimes use the example of Bismarck’s toothache, instead of Bismarck’s self, as an example in discussing Russell’s views.)

Although my aim is to show how Wittgenstein responds to these ideas in the Tractatus, I want to note first how clearly it is these ideas which he also has in mind in Philosophical Investigations. When, in §243, he introduces the question whether there could be a private language, he explains it as a language in which the words “refer to what can only be known to the person speaking”; “another person cannot understand the language.” Again, in §289 of the Investigations, he takes the idea of a private language to include the idea that, in using it, one is directly aware of the justification for one’s use of the words of the language; and this connects directly to Russell’s description of the use of proper names for objects of acquaintance: one cannot be in error in one’s application of these names, because they name objects directly available for naming (Theory of Knowledge, p.7; cf. Problems of Philosophy, p.63).
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One further point should be mentioned concerning Russell’s views, and that is the seriousness of the threat of solipsism as he saw it. Russell takes himself to have good arguments against any form of idealism or solipsism. Indeed he writes “the chief importance of knowledge by description is that it enables us to pass beyond the limits of our private experience. In spite of the fact that we can only know truths which are wholly composed of terms which we have experienced in acquaintance, we can yet have knowledge by description of things which we have never experienced” (Problems of Philosophy, p.32; cf. Theory of Knowledge, p. 10, for the image of present experience as apparently a “prison” from which, however, knowledge by description can liberate us).

The theory of descriptions is important, then, within the theory of knowledge, in explaining how we can avoid solipsism. Russell’s idea that knowledge by description enables us to pass beyond the limits of our private experience could also be expressed this way: the limits of the world, about which I can have knowledge, and the objects in which I can denote (whether directly or in some cases only indirectly), lie outside the limits of the realm of my own experience. There are implicit in Russell’s statement about the significance of knowledge by description two limits which do not coincide. (Russell’s realism, we could say, is a two-limits realism.) When we read in the Tractatus that the world is my world, we should at least raise the question whether we are reading a criticism of Russell’s ideas about how knowledge by description enables one to pass beyond the limits of one’s own experience. I shall return to this question in section 10.

What lies outside the realm of things with which I am directly acquainted includes not only the experiences of others but also physical objects; and Russell’s view of physical objects was changing during the period with which I am concerned. He arrived at an account of physics involving the notion of “private worlds,” where a private world may be somebody’s but need not actually be anybody’s. I agree with Thomas Ricketts that Wittgenstein is, in the Tractatus, “as concerned to reject Russell’s view of sensibilia as he is to reject Russell’s view of Bismarck’s toothache,” but I shall not here trace how the concern with these two related topics works out. Much of what I describe as being the Tractatus view about Russell on private objects will, however, be applicable to Russell on our knowledge of the physical world.

3 Much of Wittgenstein’s philosophy, throughout his life, is constituted by responses to central elements of Russell’s approach. Before turning, in section 4, to the principles forming the basis for the Tractatus response to Russell, I shall here note two passages, one from the Investigations and one from around 1930, illustrating Wittgenstein’s interest in what we might call Russellian indirection.

Earlier I quoted Russell’s remark that whenever we say anything about Bismarck, we are, in a sense, necessarily defeated: we cannot make the judgment we should really like to make, the judgment Bismarck himself can make. We can ourselves, with our words, reach only indirectly, by description, what Bismarck can talk about directly. Section 426 of Philosophical Investigations applies to just this sort of view. Wittgenstein says there that we may think of an expression as having an ideal kind of use, which is unfortunately permanently unavailable to us. We cannot use the straight road, and have to use detours, side-roads. Wittgenstein’s metaphor applies to what
Russell says about Bismarck: Bismarck, using words that he alone can understand, can reach by the straight road of acquaintance what we can get to only by side-roads, by descriptions. The road that we can see to be available to Bismarck is permanently closed to us.20

There is an earlier, explicit, reference to Russellian indirectness in the *Philosophical Remarks*:

...Russell has really already shown by his theory of descriptions, that you can’t get a knowledge of things by sneaking up on them from behind and it can only look as if we knew more about things than they have shown us openly and honestly. But he has obscured everything again by using the phrase “indirect knowledge.”21

Wittgenstein implies there that Russellian indirection (as I have called it) goes against what Russell’s theory of descriptions had in fact accomplished, although Russell himself was not aware of its significance.

4 In order to see how the *Tractatus* responds to Russell, we should look at three things: the metaphor of logical space, Wittgenstein’s ideas about what is accomplished by logical analysis and his treatment of quantifiers.

Why are quantifiers important? Russell sees the theory of descriptions as explaining how we can, by using descriptions, reach indirectly the things with which Bismarck is directly acquainted; the theory supposedly explains how, by the use of quantification, we can indirectly speak about Bismarck’s private objects. So Russell’s idea of how we avoid solipsism, how we get to something outside our own experience, is based on what he thinks quantifiers enable us to encompass in our use of words.

Let me spell out further how the use of quantifiers will be important for my overall argument. The *Tractatus* shows, I shall hold, that no role in language is played by the things with which Bismarck is acquainted and which he can name in his language, but to which, according to Russell, we cannot refer by the proper names of our language. These things are not “denoted indirectly”; the supposition that we mean them is empty. In the *Investigations*, Wittgenstein uses the metaphor of the beetle in the box in criticizing the idea one may have of things in one’s own mind, things to which one can give proper names, and which no one else can know. If sensations are conceived in accordance with that model they would be, he argues, irrelevant to the language game: it would not make any difference to the language game if the box in which each of us kept our beetle were empty (§293). We are going to see him in the *Tractatus* provide an argument which in effect shows that any beetles in other people’s boxes drop out of the language game. This *Tractatus* approach may indeed leave us with our own beetles; the beetle population does not disappear until Wittgenstein develops powerful new coleoptericides in the 1930s. But other people’s beetles are getting attacked already in the *Tractatus*. The idea that we can reach indirectly, by our use of quantifiers, the beetles in Bismarck’s box, his private objects, depends on Russell’s conception of quantifiers, and that is why the difference between Wittgenstein and Russell about quantifiers will turn out to be important for us.
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Let us start here with the famous example Russell used in explaining the theory of descriptions.

"The present King of France is bald"
"(\exists x)((x \text{ is king of France})(y)(y \text{ is king of France} \supset y=x).(x \text{ is bald}))"

As Wittgenstein understands Russell's accomplishment, the analysis enables us to see the original sentence as a construction using quantifiers and sentential connectives. When we understand it as constructed in this way, we see how it represents a possible situation whether or not there is a king of France. And, at the same time, the Russelian rewriting of the sentence makes clearer how the inferential relations of the sentence depend on how it is constructed.

Wittgenstein thought that the process of logical analysis could continue, and the ultimate result would be that we should see all sentences as constructed logically from what he called elementary sentences. In the process of analysis we make clear both what possible situation is represented by any sentence, and what inferential relations the sentence has. The idea here is expressed in the metaphor of "logical space." Analysis makes it possible for us to see how each sentence represents a situation in a space of possible situations: this is "logical space." Just as a spatial description or a map, say a topographical map of Scotland, represents something in 3-dimensional space, each of our sentences, by its construction, represents a possible situation in logical space: it represents a reality as so; and the reality will actually be so, will be as represented, or not. The relation of logical consequence between sentences, as Wittgenstein understands it, is meant to be illuminated by the same metaphor. The space of possible situations is logically structured. If you take any sentence, it is so constructed that it represents a situation in logical space; at the same time, the sentence so constructed has fully determinate logical relations to all other sentences, all other constructions of signs used to represent situations in logical space. Although any sentence itself determines only a single place, a single possible situation, in logical space, "nevertheless the whole of logical space," Wittgenstein says, "must already be given by it" (Tractatus 3.42, my italics). He says that the sentence reaches right through logical space; this means that inferential relations between sentences are relations within this "space." The sentence's "reaching through" logical space, touching every location in it, is the determinacy of the logical relations between that sentence and every other. What the metaphor brings out is the tie between, on the one hand, two sentences each representing something as being so, and, on the other, their standing in logical relations to each other. (Compare two topographical maps of anywhere. By virtue of being topographical maps, they represent parts of the globe that do or do not overlap. In the latter case, they are logically compatible. If the two maps represent overlapping parts of the surface of the earth, they will either be compatible or not; they cannot represent how things stand topographically somewhere and not stand in determinate logical relations to each other.)

We can now move on to two profoundly connected things: how Wittgenstein's ideas involve a criticism of Russell's, and how he thinks quantifiers fit into the general picture. (The rest of this section is about the difference between Wittgenstein and Russell; the next section concerns the effect of that difference on Bismarck and his beetles.)
Wittgenstein’s metaphor of logical space is tied, I claimed, to his idea that in the construction of sentences you can see how they have their logical relations to other sentences: this comes out in the metaphor of logical space as not just a space of possible situations, but also a space within which sentences have their logical relations to other sentences, the space of inference. What then is the connection with Wittgenstein’s account of the quantifiers? The basic logical feature of quantifiers is the logical relation between sentences with quantifiers and singular sentences (or sentences with fewer quantifiers). Two of the most familiar such logical relations are the inferability of “Some x is f” from any such sentence as “fa” and the inferability of sentences like “fa” from “All x is f.” If these logical relations can be seen in the construction of our sentences, then we shall need to see the quantified sentences as themselves constructions out of singular sentences. I shall give a brief explanation of how this is supposed to work in the Tractatus, but what is important is not the details of how it works but the overall contrast between the Tractatus view and that of Russell; and what matters in Russell’s view is that the logical notions of all and some are, for him, primitive ideas. So sentences with quantifiers are not seen by Russell as they are by Wittgenstein, as constructions from sentences which do not contain quantifiers.

Here is the brief explanation of Wittgenstein’s view. To see how a quantified sentence is a construction from singular sentences, we need two things. We need rules which will generate, from a common feature of sentences, a set of sentences sharing that feature; for example, a rule that would generate, from the predicate “is red,” all allowable combinations of that predicate with the name of an object. Also, we need operations that work this way: given as bases any number of sentences (specified as the values of a sentence-variable), the operations will form a single new sentence out of them by making a truth-table using all of the input sentences, and systematically setting out all truth-value combinations for those sentences. (Any such operation is a general rule for sentence-construction from base sentences.) One such operation works by putting the truth-value T in the “result” column in all the rows of the truth-table, except the row in which all the input sentences are false. Here is that operation applied to three sentences.

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That construction shows you that the resulting sentence follows from p, follows from q and follows from r. Given that that is how the O operation works, let us now have this construction: the O operation applied to all the sentences which are values of the sentence-variable (Satzvariable) “fx,” i.e., all the sentences formed by replacing “x”
with an appropriate name: “O[f(a), f(b), f(c), f(d)...].” A sentence constructed in that way follows from each of the singular sentences “fa” etc. If we now treat “Some x is f” as a sentence constructed in that way, we can see how, by its construction, it follows from the singular sentences “fa” etc. The quantified sentence and each of the singular sentences from which it follows all lie in logical space; all reach to each other in that space.24

This is a big departure from Russell’s approach to the quantifiers. Russell gives somewhat different explanations of the quantifiers at different times, but they all fit into a basic picture different from Wittgenstein’s. His idea is that, since we understand logical words like “some” and “all,” we are acquainted with the logical objects “involved” in those logical notions. (See Theory of Knowledge, p.99; cf. also p.97.) And that idea—that the understanding of logical words goes via our acquaintance with logical objects—is exactly what Wittgenstein rejected in the Tractatus. He explicitly denies (twice) that there are “logical objects” (Tractatus 5.4, also 4.441); and he gives as his “fundamental idea” the idea that logical words do not work by standing for something (Tractatus 4.0312). There are no logical objects for which they stand, no logical objects with which we have to be acquainted in order to understand logical words or signs. (The fact that a logical word occurs in a sentence is not an indication of any element of meaning shared with other sentences containing the logical word. What it is for a logical word to be used consistently is for it to mark, in a consistent way, differences between sentences. Thus, for example, the occurrence of “not” in a sentence marks the difference in truth-conditions between that sentence and the sentence with “not” removed; and the word would work in exactly the same way if by “not-p” we meant what we mean by “p,” and vice versa.25 Hence the importance for Wittgenstein of the fact that a logical word like “not” can be cancelled out entirely by a second use of “not.” This possibility of cancellation shows that the occurrence of “not” indicates no common feature of the meaning of the sentences in which it occurs. The idea that logical words mark differences between sentences is connected with Wittgenstein’s fundamental conception of logic: logical relations are relations between ordinary sentences of our language.)

Getting back to Russell: what his view comes to, then, is that we can understand the words “some” and “all,” or the quantifier notation, if we have a general grasp of what it is for a property or relation to be instantiated in some or all cases. (And in Principia Mathematica, the explanation of the quantifiers goes via precisely those two primitive ideas, tied in with the Principia Mathematica account of prepositional functions.) In 1913, Russell’s view was that our understanding of a proposition like “For all x, x is red,” depends on our acquaintance with red together with our general logical grasp of the notion all (together with our acquaintance with a logical form). He does not see the sentence “For all x, x is red” as a construction from singular sentences, in the way Wittgenstein does. And similarly with “Something is red.” This too is not, on Russell’s view, a construction from sentences about named or nameable individuals. So here too there is a big difference from Wittgenstein’s idea that whenever sentences stand in logical relations to each other, those relations can be seen in the sentences themselves, in how they are constructed. Russell and Wittgenstein agree that There is some x such that fx follows from fa; for Wittgenstein but not for Russell, if you make clear what sort of construction the
quantified sentence is, you can see how its logical relations to sentences about individuals simply fall out of the construction.

(There is some discussion of the relation between Wittgenstein’s view and Russell’s in G.E.M. Anscombe, Introduction to Wittgenstein’s Tractatus,26 she quotes P.P. Ramsey’s discussion of the same subject. (Or, rather, of what she takes to be the same subject. What Ramsey discusses is the relation between Wittgenstein’s view and the “alternative” view. Presumably he does mean Russell, but he does not mention Russell or anyone else by name; and, taken as an account of Russell’s view, his discussion has some puzzling features.27) What Anscombe and Ramsey emphasize, as the crucial difference between Wittgenstein’s view and the alternative view of the quantifiers, is that Wittgenstein’s account does, and the alternative view does not, provide an “intelligible connection between a being red and red having application.” Their objection itself needs more elaboration before it can be judged how far it does apply to Russell or to Frege; it seems to me possible to argue instead that Russell and Frege do each provide a connection, but that the Tractatus rejects the sort of account they can provide.)

5 How then does the difference between Wittgenstein and Russell form the basis of a Tractatus attack on the Russellian view of Bismarck’s private language for his private objects?

The basic Russellian picture involves the relation between Bismarck’s judgment about his own private object and Russell’s judgment about that very same object:

![Diagram of the judgment relation between Bismarck and Russell.]

(The vertical line represents the limitation of judgments on either side. On the left, the constituents of judgment are items with which Bismarck is acquainted; on the right, the constituents of judgment are items with which Russell is acquainted.)

The Tractatus attacks this picture by attacking the conception of quantification on which it depends, as well as the underlying conception of logic. Russell’s account requires that there be a logical relation between the proposition on the left, which only Bismarck can understand (and which everyone other than Bismarck can speak about only by description), and the quantified proposition on the right, which Russell uses. The quantified proposition follows from Bismarck’s private proposition. And, on the Tractatus view, that is a crucial clue to the incoherence of the Russell conception. For Russell, there has to be that logical relation; but, on the Tractatus view, Russell has available no satisfactory account of what it is for there to be such a relation. The Tractatus view is that, if one sentence follows from another, then they are both within the space of constructive sentences of my language; they
are both in logical space. Any grasp which I have of their logical relations is inseparable from my grasp of the sentences themselves, of each as a sentence saying that such-and-such is the case. Russell has told us that there is a proposition which only Bismarck can affirm. Well, if there "were" a sentence which Bismarck could utter to himself with understanding, and which I could not understand, it could not be taken to stand in logical relations to any sentence which I can understand. If I can take a sentence to stand in logical relations to other sentences, then I can understand that sentence. Logic is precisely what joins together the sentences of the language which I do understand. This Tractatus conception of logic rules out the idea of quantifying over objects for which I cannot have names. Here is another way of getting at the same point: the Bismarckian private proposition has to stand in logical relation to the quantified proposition which I do understand: a quantified proposition has to stand in logical relation to propositions about the objects quantified over. But, although there has to be a logical relation between the two propositions, Russell’s views preclude my making an inference from one proposition to the other; I cannot grasp the two propositions “with” their supposed inferential relation. Wittgenstein’s conception of logic as joining together the sentences of the language which I do understand involves a denial that a sentence of my language can stand in logical relations to a sentence which cannot figure in any inference which I can make. A logical relation going outside the space of possible inference is an incoherent idea, and that is what is wrong with Russell’s account.

(Thomas Ricketts has argued that my references in this section and elsewhere to "understanding" are potentially misleading, since they suggest that the notion of understanding could be used to set out the issues, while a Russelian conception of understanding is itself at issue. I entirely agree with that. When I speak of logic as joining the sentences of "the language which I understand," I am picking up the use of "understand" from Tractatus 5.62, where indeed Russell’s ideas are at issue. Here, and elsewhere in the Tractatus, references to understanding can be explicated in terms of Wittgenstein’s account of the use of language. Thus, e.g., if we understand "not" (see Tractatus 5.451), this is not because we are acquainted with something, a logical object or anything else, but because a negation sign has been introduced via a rule covering its use in all prepositional combinations.)

At Tractatus 5.54, Wittgenstein says that in the general sentence-form, sentences occur in other sentences only as bases of "truth-operations." A full explanation of that remark would take us too far out of the way, but it does have an important consequence for the issue between Wittgenstein and Russell. Tractatus 5.54 does not rule out quantifying over sentences, or referring to them by descriptive phrases or abbreviations; what it does rule out is cases in which a sentence spoken about or quantified over is in a language which we cannot understand. Russell does, in stating his theory, explicitly use descriptive phrases in referring to sentences which we cannot understand; but what is important is that his position cannot be stated without such quantification. It is an essential part of his explanation of how we can understand propositions which indirectly denote Bismarck’s private objects. The logical structure by which our use of quantification enables us to denote Bismarck’s private objects requires there to be a prepositional function which has among its values propositions which we can denote only indirectly. My argument is that there is an inseparable connection between the Russelian view that we can quantify over
objects which we cannot name and his view that we can quantify over propositions which we cannot understand, and hence that Wittgenstein’s rejection of the latter constitutes part of the structure of argument against the former. The issue here is not separable from what I discussed in the last-but-one paragraph. Logical relations are relations between the sentences of the language which I understand; there is no coherent notion of a logical relation between a quantified sentence of my language and a sentence outside that language. If one claimed that there were such logical relations, one would have to gesture at the supposed incomprehensible sentence or sentences by a description or by quantification. And here one would be fooling oneself. What you can’t think you can’t think, and you can’t sneak up on it by quantifiers. That, at any rate, is the Tractatus view.

In the Tractatus, Wittgenstein is also rejecting the Russell picture of the mind’s relation to the objects which it thinks about: the idea that the mind directly connects up with some objects, and reaches others via descriptions. Some of those can be reached, supposedly, only by descriptions. On Wittgenstein’s view, what objects we are thinking about is something that is shown in the language we use. If, in logical analysis, we come to see the full structure of inferential relations within our language, then that is for it to be made clear what objects we are thinking about, what objects our quantified sentences quantify over.33

Let me summarize this: the disagreement between Russell and Wittgenstein over “some” and “all” underlies the disagreement about private objects in the minds of other people. The importance of the disagreement about quantification, which itself depends on the disagreement about how logical words function, is one reason why Wittgenstein says that it is his fundamental idea that logical words and signs do not have meaning by standing for something. They do not stand for or connect up with logical objects. Russell’s logical-object story about “some” and “all” provides essential support for his idea that there can be a logical relationship between Bismarck’s proposition, which we cannot understand or mean, and propositions of ours about there being such-and-such private objects. Russell’s basic picture allows for our quantified sentences to be true in virtue of the properties and relations of things to which we cannot refer directly; and that basic picture depends on the logical-object story about the notions of some and all.

The alternative Tractatus conception is that logical relations are relations between sentences in logical space, i.e., between sentences which we understand. This is tied to the “construction” story about the quantifiers, and also to a general “construction” story about all sentences, and, as I have suggested, also to what Wittgenstein regards as his fundamental insight in the Tractatus about how logical words contribute to the sentences in which they occur. There is here no appeal to an independent notion of understanding.

What I have done so far is present the two opposing views, and tried to show that a clear understanding of Wittgenstein’s view would enable us to see how it not only involves a general criticism of Russell on “some” and “all,” but also undercuts, quite specifically, Russell’s idea that quantified sentences enable us to talk about things which we cannot directly mean, including other people’s private objects. But showing that there is in the Tractatus an attack on Russell on private objects and private language does not itself show that the Tractatus argument actually resembles anything in the later discussion of private language. So that is the next question: in
what ways does the argument against Russell resemble the private-language argument in the *Investigations*?

6 A central insight in the *Investigations* is that, if we take our capacity to talk about and think about our own sensations as a matter of our having, each of us, a private object, then the object thus understood plays no role in our actual language games. Wittgenstein's conclusion is not that there are no sensations, but that our words for sensations do not have their meaning by connecting up with private objects. To think that they do is to have a confused picture of their grammar.

What now about the *Tractatus*, and Russell's idea that, when we speak of *other people's* mental life, we want to be able to refer to objects which are private to them, objects which only *they* can name and refer to *directly*? The issue here is, in two ways, importantly different from that in the *Investigations*. First, we are not concerned with my language for *my own* sensations, as in the *Investigations*, but only with my language for the sensations of *other people*, conceived as private objects which only *they* can mean directly. Further, in the *Tractatus*, there is no idea of things which have or lack a role "in the language game." What there is instead is the idea of what plays a role in the representational capacities and inferential relations running through language.

Keeping those two differences in view, we can see how Wittgenstein's conception of logic in the *Tractatus* underpins an argument with some close analogies to the later private language argument. A basic idea in the earlier private language argument is that a private object nameable only by Bismarck plays no role in my language or my thought. The idea that other people's private objects do have a role in our thought dissolves into incoherence. Since the ordinary language which I speak and understand has meaningful sentences about Bismarck's sensations, those sentences do not involve the indirect denoting of Bismarck's private objects. Objects known only to Bismarck play no role in the language which I use in everyday life in talking about Bismarck and things in his mental life. (An important premise in the *Tractatus* private language argument is that our ordinary everyday language is not in any way logically inadequate. Without that premise it might be thought that the absence of reference in our language to other people's private objects makes that language incapable of achieving its aims.) In terms of the *Investigations* image of the beetle in the box, what the *Tractatus* shows us is that any beetle which there might be in Bismarck's box drops out of consideration as irrelevant—irrelevant, that is, to all the logical relations reaching through language (including the representational relations). The fact that Russell is inclined to treat this private object of Bismarck's as the essential thing which we are trying to mean when we speak about Bismarck's mental life shows only how we can be misled in philosophy, misled by similarities between sentences which have different logical structure. There is then a real irony in the idea that Russell is being misled by such similarities, because Russell's theory of descriptions showed so clearly how such similarities can mislead. But what then happened was that Russell himself was taken in by superficial similarities: he knows that he speaks about but is not acquainted with either Bismarck's head or Bismarck's headache; and then he takes it that the headache, like the head, not being an object of acquaintance, must be an object known by description. And here one can see the *Tractatus* response as prefiguring