

Article

# Wittgenstein on the “Alien Will”: A Study of Compatibilism and Divine Influence

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**Abstract:** In this article, I delve into Wittgenstein’s early manuscripts to examine the idea of an “alien will”, which may have been inspired by Schopenhauer and Weininger. By contrast with other interpretations, I treat this notion not as a metaphor but as the fundamental idea that the world is independent of an individual’s will and appears instead to be influenced by a quasi-divine, alien will. This alien will, distinct from personal will, could either coincide or conflict with an individual subject’s will, affecting their happiness. I argue that this (dis)agreement involves the modal properties of objects rather than being a matter of factual consistency. Ultimately, I position Wittgenstein’s views as a form of pre-emptive compatibilism, according to which divine will shapes human conditions without compromising free will. This contributes a significant perspective to debates in the philosophy of religion.

**Keywords:** Wittgenstein; alien will; God; happiness; modality; pre-emptive compatibilism

## 1. Introduction

In this essay, I shall explore the concept of an “alien will” that is found in Wittgenstein’s wartime manuscripts. I argue that Wittgenstein’s framework includes an external or transcendent element, contrary to solipsistic interpretations of his *Tractatus*. Wittgenstein equated the alien will with the will of God, thereby placing it within the realm of philosophy of religion. I suggest that this will is alien because it differs from the personal will of the subject. This distinction between the two wills makes the possibility of agreement or disagreement between them intelligible. Wittgenstein’s concept of agreement then forms the basis for his explanation of happiness.

The peculiarity of this kind of agreement is that it does not pertain to actual facts but to simple objects and their modal properties. Modal properties are meant here in the sense of combinatorial properties, referring to *possible* combinations of simple objects into states-of-things (atomic facts, states of affairs).<sup>1</sup> This modal character of both the alien and personal will implies that will can affect and change the totality of all *possible* facts, but cannot change what facts actually obtain. In other words, will can change the limits of the world, but not the world itself.

The difference between the world and its limits leads us to a further distinction between different senses of “personal will”. The kind of personal will we have focused on so far can be called *will-in-the-ethical-sense*, which is able to change the limits of the world. Meanwhile, *will-in-the-psychological-sense* can change the world of actual facts.

This account of will has significant implications for the nature of divine influence in the world. It can be posited that God, through the exercise of his will, has the capacity to establish the limits of the world. The human subject, in turn, has the ability to align their own world with the limits set by God, thereby achieving a state of happiness. All alterations to the limits of the world are made without affecting the actual world. It is not possible for God’s will to override our personal will-in-the-psychological-sense.

The essay is structured as follows: The Section 2 examines the origins of Wittgenstein’s notion of will in the works of Schopenhauer and Weininger. The Section 3 discusses the



**Citation:** Mácha, Jakub. 2024. Wittgenstein on the “Alien Will”: A Study of Compatibilism and Divine Influence. *Religions* 15: 1567. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15121567>

Academic Editor: Kevin Schilbrack

Received: 26 October 2024

Revised: 16 December 2024

Accepted: 18 December 2024

Published: 23 December 2024



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various types of will identified by Wittgenstein. The Section 4 explores the notions of agreement and happiness. The Section 5 presents the core of my argument, focusing on the notion of the limits of the world. The Section 6 analyses the consequences for Wittgenstein's notion of will. The Section 7 situates Wittgenstein's account of God's will within the broader framework of pre-emptive compatibilism.

## 2. Alien Will in Schopenhauer and Weininger

Let us look at the roots of Wittgenstein's notion of an "alien will" in the writings of Schopenhauer and Weininger. Although these thinkers' influence on Wittgenstein is well established,<sup>2</sup> the origins of his concept of will in their thought have not received significant attention,<sup>3</sup> and the idea of the alien will has been largely ignored.

Arthur Schopenhauer is well known for his pessimistic philosophy, which articulates the view that all life is driven by a relentless, insatiable will to exist. A central place is occupied by the concept of "the Will": an irrational, impersonal, blind force that drives all living beings to survive and reproduce, often leading to suffering and dissatisfaction. Schopenhauer's "Will" is fundamentally different from what we might consider a conscious or intelligent "will". Schopenhauer's view derives from his understanding of Kant's transcendental philosophy. According to Kant, the "thing-in-itself" (*Ding an sich*), which Schopenhauer equates with the Will, is the underlying reality beyond the phenomenal world. The Will, in his view, is thus metaphysical, operating beneath conscious thought. Below, I shall look in a little more detail at two aspects of the Will: the way in which it operates beyond individual control, and its role as a source of suffering.

The Will, as Schopenhauer describes it, operates at a level beyond the conscious control of the individual. It is an omnipotent force that drives all actions and desires but is not subject to the personal, rational control humans typically associate with their actions. In this sense, the Will can feel "alien" since it confronts us with the realisation that the core driving force within us may be something that we cannot fully identify with or understand, and that acts independently of our rational intentions.

Often, the impulses and desires dictated by the Will do not align with an individual's rational goals or the pursuit of happiness but lead instead to suffering and strife. This misalignment is another factor that can make the Will seem alien, as it appears to work counter to personal well-being or societal norms, creating a sense of internal conflict in which a person's deepest impulses (the Will) are at odds with their conscious desires and ethical reflections. Schopenhauer remarks in section 66 of *The World and Will and Representation* that

The egoist feels he is surrounded by alien and hostile appearances [*fremde und feindliche Erscheinungen*], and all his hopes rest on his own well-being. The good person lives in a world of friendly appearances: the well-being of each of these appearances is his own well-being. (Schopenhauer 2010, pp. 400–1)

Schopenhauer speaks here of both alien and friendly appearances. However, appearances are expressions of the Will. That would entail that there are friendly and alien expressions of the Will. There is some room for an interplay between oneself and alien appearances, and thus between one's personal will and the alien expression of the Will (or: the alien will).

A good conscience comes from the fact that unselfish deeds, arising out of the immediate recognition of our own essence in other appearances, confirm the recognition that our true self does not exist only in the single appearance of our own person, but in every living thing. (Schopenhauer 2010, p. 400)

The self must be attuned enough to *recognise* its personal will in other forms and thus incorporate them as its own. These appearances do not originate in a subject's personal will, but there is room for agreement between one's personal will and the alien will behind the other appearances.<sup>4</sup>

Let us turn to our second source of inspiration for this idea of the alien will. Otto Weininger was a controversial and influential figure in early twentieth-century philosophy,

whose ideas on gender, ethics and personality have sparked considerable debate. His most notable works, *Sex and Character* (*Geschlecht und Charakter*) and *On Last Things* (*Über die letzten Dinge*), present complex views on the nature of the will, which are deeply interwoven with his theories on gender, ethics and intellectualism. I shall look in detail at two aspects of his account of the will that draw from the Schopenhauerian account: alienation through the idealisation of the will, and the dichotomy between the will and the phenomenal self.

Weininger elevates the will to a status that transcends common human experience and capabilities. He regards it as the marker of true individuality and the vehicle for achieving moral and intellectual perfection. This idealised state of the will can seem alien because it occupies a level of purity and power that the average person, according to Weininger, rarely if ever reaches.

Weininger posits a kind of dualism in which the will, as an ideal and pure force, is frequently at odds with the human condition, which he views as flawed and often driven by base desires or instincts. This creates a sense of alienation, as the will (which is supposed to guide a subject towards ethical and rational behaviour) is perceived as separate from one's everyday actions and desires, which are mired in ethical imperfection and irrationality.

One other aspect of Weininger's thinking must be highlighted, as it is crucial to Wittgenstein's account. The will, in its idealised state, relates to the entire world, and this whole possesses a divine nature. So, we read in *Sex and Character*: "A human being becomes a genius through a supreme *act of the will, by affirming the whole universe in himself*" (Weininger 2004, p. 159, italics original). The connection of the will to the entire world is linked to the concept of God. Weininger elaborates on this point in *On Last Things*: "The being of God and of nothingness, and dualism in the world, are most clearly expressed in the will. Thus the problem of the will is, and is identical with, the deepest problem of the world" (Weininger 2001, p. 90). Weininger also posits that the goal of the individual will is to reach the divine aspect of the idealised will: "God is the purpose of the human being, and religion is the will of man to be God" (Weininger 2001, p. 120). Hence, while striving to realise the ideal form of will, a person might feel fundamentally separate from the more attainable, everyday experiences of those around them, which feeds into the trope of the will as an alienating force. This is a key point where we can observe a complex relationship between the will, the world and God, which may have been an inspiration for Wittgenstein.

### 3. Will

#### 3.1. Will-in-the-Psychological-Sense

The concept of "will" in Wittgenstein's *Notebooks* and *Tractatus* is multifaceted. Initially, he discusses will as a psychological phenomenon (6.423;<sup>5</sup> Wittgenstein 1961, NB, p. 76) that, while somewhat limited, is not entirely powerless. For instance, this psychological will can initiate human motion (NB, p. 77), yet there is no guaranteed correlation between a person's intentions and the outcomes of their actions. This discrepancy arises because not all desires can be fulfilled, and even when intentions are realised the results often diverge from the original expectations. In this context, the ordinary conception of will ties into ethical deliberations, encompassed by the directive "thou shalt". However, Wittgenstein generally shows little interest in this conventional account of will, although it does find a place within his broader philosophical framework.

#### 3.2. Will-in-the-Ethical-Sense

Wittgenstein is mostly preoccupied with will-in-the-ethical-sense, which must be distinguished from will in the above described psychological sense. The distinction between will-in-the-psychological-sense and will-in-the-ethical-sense will be of crucial importance in my analysis. Will-in-the-ethical-sense is the bearer [*Träger*] of the ethical (6.432) and can be good or evil (NB, p. 73). It is always an inherently personal will; it is *my* will or the will of the willing subject.

However, the intriguing aspect is how this will relates to the world. In Wittgenstein's early philosophy, we encounter a paradox concerning the relationship between will and world. He presents three seemingly contradictory claims:

1. My will penetrates the world. (NB, p. 73)
2. The world is independent of my will. (6.373; NB, p. 73)
3. Will can change the limits of the world, but not any single fact expressible in language. (6.43)

These assertions, which are rooted in a Schopenhauerian framework, raise perplexing questions. How can my will simultaneously penetrate the world and remain independent of it? Furthermore, how can it alter the limits of the world without affecting any individual facts? This paradox deepens when we consider Wittgenstein's conception of the world as a totality of obtaining (positive) facts. It seems logically impossible for will to modify the limits of this totality without changing any of its constituent facts. To provide a satisfactory solution to this perplexing problem, we must consider another sense of will.

### 3.3. Alien Will

Before delving into these issues, I would like to bring up a third sense of "will": the "alien will", which is mentioned at several points in the *Notebooks*, though these remarks did not make it into the final version of the *Tractatus*.<sup>6</sup> They describe a sense in which the world pre-exists the subject; it is given to the willing subject as if it were created by an alien will, which is identified with the will of God (NB, pp. 74–75).

The world is *given* me, i.e., my will enters into the world completely from outside as into something that is already there. // (As for what my will is, I don't know yet.) // That is why we have the feeling of being dependent on an alien will. // *However this may be*, at any rate we *are* in a certain sense dependent, and what we are dependent on we can call God. (NB, p. 74)

The idea of an alien will goes against the solipsistic inclinations that are present to some extent in the *Tractatus*. Let us clarify what is meant by describing a will as "alien". I understand "alien" to mean originating outside oneself, possibly in another person. The personal alien will, which enters into someone's world from the outside, must be understood in the ethical sense rather than the psychological one. Just as *my* will can alter the limits of *my* world, the alien will, functioning at the same level, is capable of modifying the limits of *its* own world. However, it is important to note that this world is distinct from the one in which the subject operates, that is, it is distinct from *my* world. This world is under the dominion of the agent of the alien will, namely, God. Thus, it is the alien world, God's world.

## 4. Agreement and Happiness

This allows us to explain the notions of agreement/harmony and happiness:

In order to live happily I must be in agreement with the world. And that is what "being happy" *means*. // I am then, so to speak, in agreement with that alien will on which I appear dependent. That is to say: "I am doing the will of God". (NB, p. 75)

The alien will is independent of my will (in the ethical sense), and so is the world created by it. It does not make sense to say that I am in agreement with *my* world, because "I am *my* world" (5.62, my emphasis) and so to be in agreement with my world would be to be in agreement with myself. What does make sense, however, is speaking of an agreement between my will and the alien will. These two wills can be in agreement or disagreement, and the corresponding states are, respectively, called happiness and unhappiness. If will, whether my will or the alien will/God's will, can change the limits of the world, then these limits can be in agreement (or disagreement). The world of the happy is such that its limits match the limits of the world created by the alien will. By this account, the world of the unhappy is such that it diverges from the world created by God.

In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein brings together the elements of good and bad willing, changing the limits of the world and happiness in a single remark:

If good or bad willing changes the world, then it can only change the limits of the world, not the facts—not that which can be expressed by language.

In short, the world must thereby become an altogether different one. It must, so to speak, wax or wane as a whole.

The world of the happy is a different one from that of the unhappy. (6.43)

This remark echoes the passage from Schopenhauer quoted above. Before I explain what it means to change the limits of the world, let us look at the series of opposing pairs that Wittgenstein mentions: good and bad willing, the waxing and waning of the world, happiness and unhappiness. I assume that there is a certain congruence between the terms on each side of the duality. Good willing brings about the waxing<sup>7</sup> of the world, which leads to or is manifested in a subject's happiness. In light of the discussion above, this must be understood as bringing a person's world closer to God's world, that is, to the world created by the alien will. Again, perfect happiness consists in the identity, or perfect congruence, of one's world with God's world in terms of their limits. Unhappiness is a divergence between them.<sup>8</sup>

## 5. Limits of the World

In the remark quoted above, Wittgenstein is saying that the limits of the world are not facts that can be expressed in language. The concept of the limits of the world is central to Wittgenstein's argument in the *Tractatus*. I argue elsewhere (Mácha 2025) that the world is limited by the totality of objects together with their internal, i.e., combinatorial, properties. The limits of the world show themselves in the totality of names, together with their possibilities of occurrence in elementary propositions. In short, the limits of the world can be drawn in language by determining the actual set of names together with the ways in which they can be combined into elementary propositions.

In my view, Wittgenstein can be taken as advancing the following argument: the concept of "limits" or "boundaries" (both possible translations of the German *Grenze*) of the world is not spatial but rather logical and linguistic in nature. Wittgenstein asserts that the limits of my language are the limits of my world (5.6), and these limits are shown, not said, in language (Wittgenstein 2000, Ms 103, 11r–12r; 6.44). He further equates these limits with the limits of logic (5.61), suggesting that they are manifested in the logical form of reality as shown by propositions (4.121). Wittgenstein then emphasises that empirical reality is bounded by the totality of objects and elementary propositions (5.5561), with simple objects and their internal properties determining the possibilities of occurrence in atomic facts (2.0123). This complex argument links language, logic and the world, positioning the limits of the world as a matter of logical structure rather than physical or spatial boundaries.

The notion of an internal property of an object is crucial here. It lies at the heart of Wittgenstein's logical atomism. In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein only uses the term "internal properties", and not "combinatorial properties". However, this latter term does aptly capture the nature of objects' internal properties. Wittgenstein characterises those internal properties in the following three remarks:

2.0123 If I know an object, then I also know all the possibilities of its occurrence in states-of-things.

(Every such possibility must lie in the nature of the object.)

A new possibility cannot be found subsequently.

2.01231 To know an object, I do not need to know its external properties—but I must know all its internal properties.

2.0124 If all objects are given, then all *possible* states-of-things are thereby also given.

An internal property of an object is a relational property that determines the compatibility of the object with other objects. This idea goes back to Democritus's atomism, in which

atoms have physical hooks and barbs that determine whether two atoms can be combined into a complex thing. Wittgenstein's simple object, however, has no physical parts (and its physical properties, i.e., external properties, are not relevant here). Internal properties are distinct modal properties that determine the possible combinations of objects into states of affairs. An example may clarify this idea. Suppose we have a world with a total of three objects:  $\alpha$ ,  $\beta$ ,  $\chi$ . The internal properties of object  $\alpha$  determine that it can be combined with  $\beta$ , but not with  $\chi$ . The internal properties of object  $\beta$  determine that it must be combined with either  $\alpha$  or  $\chi$ . Finally,  $\chi$  cannot be combined with any other objects. These three objects, together with the internal properties listed above, form the boundaries of this world. The internal properties give us the following possible states (as expressed in 2.0124):

$\alpha$ ,  $\alpha\beta$ ,  $\alpha\beta\chi$ ,  $\beta\alpha$ ,  $\beta\chi$ ,  $\beta\alpha\chi$ ,  $\chi$

These are all possibilities within this world. Other states, such as  $\alpha\chi\beta$  or  $\chi\beta\alpha$ , are not; nothing new can emerge within this world, which is limited by the set of objects and their internal properties. I shall argue, however, that will can change this fixed totality of possibilities by changing the limits of the world.

Having explicated the notion of internal properties and the limits of the world, we can now consider how these points relate to *will*. Will, whether personal or alien, can change the limits of the world. This can be understood as meaning that will can change the totality of names along with their internal properties, or, alternatively, that it can change the totality of objects, again together with their internal, i.e., combinatorial, properties. Will can add or eliminate a name or an object or change the way they can be combined into atomic propositions or states of affairs. In the world described above, will can, for instance, add an object  $\delta$ , remove object  $\beta$  or change the internal properties of  $\chi$  so that it can now be combined with  $\alpha$ . By this account, we can explain how my will can penetrate the world and, at the same time, how the world can be independent of my will. Will can create or change every object the world is composed of. At the same time, will cannot turn any possible fact into an actual one—this can be achieved only by will-in-the-psychological-sense, but here we are dealing with will-in-the-ethical-sense. Will determines the totality of what is possible, not what facts actually obtain, i.e., what is the case.

Let us provide a more rigorous proof of my crucial statement that introducing or eliminating an object, or changing its combinatorial properties, does not change an obtaining fact into a non-obtaining one, or a non-obtaining fact into an obtaining one.<sup>9</sup> Let us take an obtaining fact,  $\alpha\beta\chi$ . Firstly, if will introduces a new object  $\delta$ , eliminates this object or changes its combinatorial properties, the fact  $\alpha\beta\chi$  is not affected by this change. Secondly, consider the situation in which will eliminates an object that is a constituent of  $\alpha\beta\chi$ . Suppose, for instance, that object  $\alpha$  is eliminated. In that case,  $\alpha\beta\chi$  is no longer a possible fact because object  $\alpha$  does not exist. And finally, let us consider a situation in which the combinatorial properties of object  $\alpha$  are altered. Object  $\alpha$  could previously be combined with  $\beta$ . If will eliminates this combinatorial possibility, then, again,  $\alpha\beta\chi$  is no longer a possible fact. These three options exhaust all the ways that will can change an object. In none of them does an obtaining fact become a non-obtaining one, though an obtaining or non-obtaining fact can become unreal. This concludes the proof that will (in the ethical sense) can change the limits of the world but cannot turn any actual fact into a merely possible non-actual fact.

One pressing issue remains to be solved: how can will change the limits of the world? Let us focus specifically on the question of how will can introduce a new object or a new name. When I refer to a name or an object, I remain neutral on which level is more fundamental—whether names determine objects or vice versa. The picture theory is supposed to ensure that both levels are isomorphic. Unfortunately, Wittgenstein's published and unpublished writings from his early period do not provide an answer to this question. The classical definition of the form *definiendum* = *definiens* is of no use in such a case. If the *definiens* were a simple name, the *definiendum* would be only its synonym. If the *definiens* were a complex, the *definiendum* would not be a simple name. Perhaps we could look to Wittgenstein's later writings, where the meaning of words is rooted in their use

within particular forms of life and activities. But this would surely be an overinterpretation. Wittgenstein can more plausibly be read as offering a transcendental argument that suggests that if there are names and objects, it must be possible to introduce or create them—by way of either the alien or personal will.

The world created by the alien will is made up of a set of objects and their possible combinations, which determine the total range of possibilities. In *Tractatus* 6.43, it is suggested that good willing brings about a waxing (that is, an expansion) of the world. Expanding the world can be taken to entail increasing the range of possibilities. It can be reasonably assumed that the world created by God's will has the highest amount of goodness. This suggests that the alien world has the widest range of good possibilities. At the same time, this does not mean that all combinations of objects are possible (by contrast with Russell's kind of logical atomism). If that were so, the notion of the internal property of an object would lose its significance, and objects would have no essence.

## 6. Implications

This philosophical framework has several implications for human subjects and their personal will. Will-in-the-psychological-sense is free because we cannot know our future actions, in the sense that there is no logical inference from the present state of the willing subject to what that subject will do in the future (5.1362). But we are concerned with will-in-the-ethical-sense. This will can change the limits of the subject's world. However, any change that increases the distance from the alien world will cause unhappiness in the subject. The subject's personal will, however, is free to bring about the subject's unhappiness. Wittgenstein says almost nothing about the freedom of God's will. We can reasonably assume that it is as free as the personal will.

Now we can evaluate whether God's will and human will are compatible. Neither God's will nor personal will-in-the-ethical-sense can have the effect of changing a non-actual fact into an actual one. This can only be achieved by will-in-the-psychological-sense. This kind of will cannot be influenced by God's will because they operate in different modal registers. The more pertinent question is whether God's will and personal will-in-the-ethical-sense are compatible. Both can change the limits of the world. However, they can change the limits of their respective worlds, which are independent of each other. Therefore, even in this case, no direct collision is possible. The human will is free in both senses.

God's influence on the world is indirect at best. God can change the limits of his world and thereby change the happiness of the subject. God's will can change the state of the subject at the limits of the (subject's) world. The subject is then encouraged, through their happiness, to adjust the limits of their own world to match the limits of God's world.

## 7. Pre-Emptive Compatibilism

Pre-emptive compatibilism is a nuanced variant of compatibilism that focuses on how God's will shapes the conditions and environment in which human decisions are made, without directly controlling or coercing those decisions. This position emphasises God's role in setting up circumstances that influence human actions, thereby aligning them with divine purposes while maintaining the voluntary nature of human choices. In the remainder of this essay, I shall argue that Wittgenstein's account of the alien will not only fits perfectly into this description of pre-emptive compatibilism but also articulates a distinctive *modal* kind of it.

From our discussion above, it is clear that in Wittgenstein's view, God exercises an indirect and strategic influence on human action, rather than a direct one through causation or determinism. We shall now turn to consider how exactly God's influence is exercised. Many ingenious accounts of God's indirect influence have been proposed. The most influential type of account draws on the concept of *providence* or providential agreement. In this version, advocated most notably by Aquinas, God pre-emptively arranges the external circumstances that influence human decisions. While humans maintain freedom of choice,

God's providence orchestrates events so that individuals are more likely to choose in a way that aligns with divine purposes.

Another account of God's strategic influence, advocated by Luis de Molina and Alvin Plantinga, rests on the notion of *middle knowledge* (*scientia media*). God knows not only what individuals will freely choose but also what they *would* choose in any possible set of circumstances. Through his middle knowledge, God places individuals in circumstances where they freely choose actions that fulfil God's will.

Augustine often wrote about divine providence and the mysterious workings of God's temporality. On his account, God exercises strategic influence through *temporal ordering*, meaning that God arranges the timing of events so that certain choices are made at crucial moments. While humans act freely, the timing of opportunities and obstacles plays a key role in shaping those actions.

Leibniz's notion of *pre-established harmony* is another example of such a view: God sets up the entire universe and its causal chains so that everything unfolds according to his plan without needing to directly intervene in individual human decisions. The world operates like a clockwork mechanism, but within this framework individuals act freely.

Pascal's reflections on faith and decision-making emphasise how psychological and emotional experiences such as a sense of conviction, peace or inner clarity can influence the decisions people make freely. In his famous *Pensées*, he reflects on how the heart (emotions and inner psychological states) can lead people to faith, which is in line with the idea of indirect divine influence on human decisions. Hence, God influences the *psychological state* of individuals, for instance by providing inner peace or conviction, in order to guide their free choices toward divine purposes.

Similarly, in Tolstoy's view, God is able to work through the psychological state of an individual—through moral conviction or spiritual realisation. Tolstoy focused heavily on the internal moral struggle and spiritual awakening of individuals, emphasising that humans are free but responsible for aligning their will with a higher moral order or divine law.

Wittgenstein's modal account of God's pre-emptive will does not fully correspond to any of these positions. He neither attributes a specific kind of temporality to God nor speculates about what God might know regarding future human decisions. Wittgenstein employs the notion of harmony. However, by contrast with Aquinas's providential account or Leibniz's notion of pre-established harmony, he believes harmony can be strived for and perhaps realised by human subjects, rather than being pre-established by God. Moreover, for Wittgenstein, this harmony does not concern actual facts but the whole range of all possible facts.

Wittgenstein's account is similar in some respects to Pascal's and Tolstoy's views on the nature of God's influence on human actions. The alien will, by changing its world, can indirectly influence the subject's happiness, that is, their psychological state. Here, we need to distinguish, as Wittgenstein did, between a psychological state in the factual sense—a phenomenon (6.423) that exists *within* the world—and a state of the metaphysical subject that lies at the limit of the world (5.641). God's will can only influence the state of the metaphysical subject, leaving the psychological self intact. This position reveals distinctive influences from Schopenhauer and Weininger, as discussed above.

Wittgenstein's approach to the problem of compatibilism is unique due to his modal account, which suggests that God's will can indirectly influence the *totality of all possible facts* through a person's happiness. His perspective allows for human freedom in several ways: individuals are not forced to be happy; they can choose not to pursue happiness; and their actions *in the world* remain independent of God's will.

**Funding:** This research received no external funding.

**Institutional Review Board Statement:** Not applicable.

**Informed Consent Statement:** Not applicable.



**Data Availability Statement:** No new data were created or analyzed in this study. Data sharing is not applicable to this article.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The author declares no conflicts of interest.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> All these terms are possible translations of the German “*Sachverhalt*”.
- <sup>2</sup> For an overview, see Janik (2011), Weiner (1989), Schroeder (2011), and Stern and Szabados (2004).
- <sup>3</sup> Sluga (1983) and Richter (2024) are notable exceptions here.
- <sup>4</sup> Schopenhauer also expresses the notion of agreement in his work *On the Basis of Morality*: “The good character, on the other hand, lives in an external world that is homogeneous with his own true being” (Schopenhauer 2019, p. 211). See also Richter’s discussion (Richter 2024, pp. 207–8) of these passages, though he emphasises different points.
- <sup>5</sup> References with decimal numbers in the format n.nnn are to Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus* (Wittgenstein 2023).
- <sup>6</sup> It could, therefore, be argued that we should not place much weight on the notion. In choosing to emphasise it, I follow Schönbaumsfeld (2013, pp. 66–67). Dissenting views are offered by Kuusela (2018, p. 46), who takes the “alien will” to be a mere metaphor, and Fairhurst (2022, p. 1761).
- <sup>7</sup> Stephen Mulhall (2007) connects this waning and waxing to the good and the bad, to the happy and the unhappy life. A happy life would involve acknowledging the nature of logic by reflecting on the limits of the world. Mulhall further suggests that a good or happy life is essentially a waning, a loss of meaning. My proposal is different: I think that the goal of the willing subject is to achieve harmony or agreement with the alien will, the will of God.
- <sup>8</sup> It is interesting to note that Wittgenstein closely echoes the opening line of Tolstoy’s *Anna Karenina*: “All happy families are alike; each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way” (Tolstoy 2004, p. 1). According to Tolstoy, happiness has universal elements, while unhappiness is diverse. He suggests that happiness shares common traits across all families, implying that there may be fundamental ingredients to happiness that create a similar state of contentment and harmony when they are present. Meanwhile, unhappiness is said to be unique to each family, meaning that there are numerous and varied ways in which people or families can be unhappy, each with its own set of circumstances and challenges.
- <sup>9</sup> Let me clarify the terminology in more detail. The world consists of the totality of all facts that are obtaining [bestehend], represented by true propositions (2.04). This totality also determines which facts are not obtaining (2.05). Wittgenstein calls the totality of both obtaining and non-obtaining facts reality [Wirklichkeit] (2.06). Obtaining and non-obtaining facts are also referred to as positive and negative facts (2.06). Both types of facts can be represented by pictures (2.11, 2.201) and propositions (4.01). Reality encompasses the totality of all possible facts. A non-obtaining fact is considered real because it belongs to reality. In my approach, will-in-the-psychological-sense can transform an obtaining (positive) fact into a non-obtaining fact, whereas will-in-the-ethical-sense can change a real fact into an unreal one or create a new real fact.

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