Picturing the World from Within

Wittgenstein’s Tractatus and the Limits of Sense

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Abstract

This thesis explores central themes in Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, and engages with exegetical discussions of Wittgenstein’s early philosophy. Metaphysical, therapeutic, and elucidatory interpretations are presented and discussed. The division between showing and saying, which is a key distinction in the *Tractatus*, is found to be more complicated than the exegetical discourse sometimes suggests. This is argued to count in favour of an elucidatory reading of the *Tractatus*’ seemingly paradoxical closing remarks. Moreover, Wittgenstein’s account of picturing is shown to have a fundamental role, around which the distinctions between showing and saying and internal and external relations revolve. Even the doctrine of simple objects and atomic facts is rooted in the pictorial view of language. The thesis furthermore defends a dynamic interpretation of internal relations, upon which internal relations are shown through the application of operations, a view that is linked to Wittgenstein’s philosophy of the subject. The result is a view on which, although the limits of language mean the limits of the world, the limits are not drawn once and for all.
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1 Introduction

The topic of this thesis is Wittgenstein’s early philosophy, in particular his major work of this period, the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1919/1922). The *Tractatus* is also the only philosophical book which Wittgenstein had published in his lifetime. Whenever possible, the discussion is focused on the published text itself, generally the Pears/McGuinness translation, but when necessary this is expanded to include notes Wittgenstein wrote in the period leading up to the publishing of the *Tractatus*. There are also, here and there, references to material he wrote later, but this is generally brought up to help illuminate the earlier work. The major focus of the thesis is on the interpretation of the *Tractatus*, as well as the discussion that has developed over the last few decades regarding how Wittgenstein intended his book to be understood.

That discussion revolves around the question of sense, and how, or whether, Wittgenstein intended to convey something that by his own lights transgresses the limits of what can be said. While it would be possible to attempt to rein in the discussion, staying within the confines of a narrow exegetical debate, it would be fruitless to attempt to sever it from a treatment of the *Tractatus* as a whole. The question is quite generally whether Wittgenstein’s views, as they appear to be expressed in the *Tractatus*, allow him to formulate those views. To even get anywhere in this debate, therefore, we have to be clear about what it is that Wittgenstein seems to express. For that reason, this thesis presents both the arguments of the *Tractatus* and the debate among philosophers as to how one should approach the work. The goal is to contribute to, and to some extent even move beyond, that debate, by viewing certain key themes of the *Tractatus* afresh.

That being said, the structure of the thesis is divided in two. The first three chapters, excluding this one, are concerned with the major strands in the reception of the *Tractatus*. It divides the exegetical debate into three main currents, each with different ways of understanding what Wittgenstein was doing and attempting to do. The first chapter presents the basic themes of the *Tractatus* and some of its claims in a loosely speaking metaphysical or traditional light. This approach serves as the introductory one since it represents a classic way of reading the *Tractatus*, and because it allows for a stark expression of its paradoxical conclusion. The second chapter outlines the therapeutic reading, which understands that conclusion in a resolute manner, leading to a more austere reading of the *Tractatus*. The third chapter presents the elucidatory reading, which agrees in some respects with the therapeutic reading, but disagrees
with it on the distinction between showing and saying. None of these chapters are attempts at exhaustive surveys of the interpretative strands in question; they focus on specific philosophers and debates in the hope of gaining a general overview of the exegetical terrain.

The other half of the thesis is a development of the themes of the *Tractatus* on their own terms, in a way which is inspired mostly by the elucidatory reading. These chapters emphasize certain aspects of the book which are often minimized. It is argued that the distinctions between showing and saying and internal and external relations are central to the work. In the fourth and fifth chapter, these distinctions are shown to derive from Wittgenstein’s view that language is pictorial, which is understood in a distinctively dynamic way. As is argued in the fifth and sixth chapter, the result is that the *Tractatus* constitutes an attempt to grapple with the relationship between the subject and the world in general, in addition to the relationship between thought and language in particular. In its concluding sections, the thesis reconstructs Wittgenstein’s rationale for saying that the point of the book is ethical, despite it not having anything substantial to say about ethics.
2 Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*

It is difficult to summarize the arguments of Wittgenstein’s early work, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, for multiple reasons. For one, the original text is largely aphoristic, and attempting to condense it further therefore easily leads to a loss in information. For another, because Wittgenstein expresses himself so concisely, it is not always obvious how he intends his views to be spelled out. As White (2006) writes, he often merely indicates towards philosophical arguments, leaving the details of those arguments implied. The third reason that giving a satisfactory summary of the *Tractatus* is difficult is that it covers several different topics, and Wittgenstein’s views on these topics rarely if ever stand on their own. Specific arguments and claims can easily be misconstrued when taken in isolation, functioning as explications of other ideas. Wittgenstein structured his work hierarchically, so that one set of statements are comments on another proposition, which again is part of a set of comments on another, and so on (*TLP* 1, footnote).1

The *Tractatus* has, accordingly, been read in several different ways. Certain readings limit themselves to more specific, technical topics, such as aspects of Wittgenstein’s apparent account of logic, causality or representation. Even if they emphasize different aspects of the text, these kinds of readings are often mutually compatible. More comprehensive accounts, however, are typically mutually incompatible. These include interpretations of the intended message of the book, and especially the remarks leading to its conclusion, where Wittgenstein seems to tell us how he is to be understood. Due to the structure of the work, disagreements over these concluding statements have wide ramifications. Beyond technical agreement there is, in other words, no generally agreed upon interpretation of the *Tractatus* as a whole (White, 2006, vii).

Despite these conflicts, there are some commonalities among the approaches of different interpreters. It is generally agreed that, around the middle and final portions of the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein begins to engage in self-criticism. What he had presented earlier as definitive

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1 References to Wittgenstein’s *Logisch-Philosophische Abhandlung* (1921), published in English as *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1922), are to the Pears and McGuinness translation, unless otherwise noted. Specific references and citations are written “*TLP*” followed by the number indicating the proposition quoted.
remarks and arguments comes to look, in some sense, suspect in light of his own account. Thus, for instance, Wittgenstein ends his work by saying that anyone who understands him recognizes his propositions as nonsensical (*TLP* 6.54). The precise interpretation of these reflexive comments is the subject of dispute, but the general consensus is that Wittgenstein formulates what at least appears to be a metaphysical system, before eventually going on to distance himself from his expression of such a system. This chapter sketches the metaphysical system Wittgenstein appears to express, along with its accompanying account of representation. Reference is also made to Zalabardo’s (2015b) reading and his interpretation of logical picturing.

Wittgenstein opens his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* with sentences that might most naturally be read, at least on one’s first encounter, as the foundations of an ontology. To begin with, these sentences appear to inform us of the nature of the world. We are told that the world is everything that is the case, the totality of facts. The constituents of the world are facts, as opposed to things (*TLP* 1.1). Wittgenstein then goes on to describe facts as combinations of atomic facts, which are completely particular states of affairs that either obtain or do not obtain. On the molecular level there are negative facts, consisting in the non-obtainment of atomic facts, as well as complex positive facts (*TLP* 2.06). Finally, Wittgenstein tells us how atomic facts are structured. In the atomic fact, objects “fit into one another like the links of a chain” (*TLP* 2.03).

There seems to be multiple doctrines flowing from this basic and apparently metaphysical idea. In addition to the theory of the structure of the world, there is the theory of internal and external properties and relations. Internal properties are combinatorial possibilities of atomic facts (*TLP* 4.122). That is, a fact with a given internal property consists of atomic facts in a specific structure. Internal relations are differences or commonalities in the respective structures of facts. Wittgenstein also adapts this vocabulary to objects, saying internal relations and properties hold of an object when it is unthinkable that it should not possess it, such as when one shade of blue is darker than another (*TLP* 4.123). In contrast, external properties and relations are not determined by logical possibilities. These are material properties and

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2 Although it only becomes clear later on in the text, Wittgenstein does not base his notion of internal relations and properties on self-evidence: “Self-evidence, which Russell talked about so much, can become dispensable in logic, only because language itself prevents every logical mistake.” (*TLP* 5.4731). At this point the discussion is restricted to a metaphysical reading of the ideas at hand.
relationships, holding in virtue of what is the case, such as a chair having a darker colour than a table.

As part of this apparent metaphysical doctrine there is also a theory of objects, understood as absolutely simple constituents of atomic facts (TLP 2.02). Wittgenstein here uses the word “object” to mean something distinct from ordinary objects like tables and houses, which he regards as contingently existing complexes (White, 2006, p. 44). For Wittgenstein, objects are little more than logical building blocks. They are said, however, to be differentiated in terms of form, corresponding to different possible facts, among which he lists as examples space, time, and colour (TLP 2.0251). We are told that with an object, we are also given the possibility of the atomic facts in which it might occur (TLP 2.0124). Objects are said to form the fixed and enduring substance of the world, since no matter whether any given atomic fact obtains, which is a contingent matter, the objects out of which it would be composed must exist in order for it to be a logical possibility. Objects make up the logical space in which everything is or is not the case.

Wittgenstein moreover appears to present a corresponding account of modelling and representation of facts. This theory revolves around what he calls “pictures”. Although he claims his understanding of pictures extends to ordinary uses of the word, his emphasis is on picturing as potentially accurate representation, and so he equates pictures with models (TLP 2.12). According to Wittgenstein, pictures are facts, rather than objects, that represent possible situations. He makes the following claim: “If a fact is to be a picture, it must have something in common with what it depicts. There must be something identical in a picture and what it depicts, to enable the one to be a picture of the other at all” (TLP 2.16–2.161). Building on this, he argues that the reason pictures can represent the world is that they are, as facts, isomorphic to whatever structure of atomic facts they represent. In other words, according to this theory, pictures stand in an internal relation to what they depict. The internal properties of a picture determine both that it is a picture, and that it represents whatever it does represent.

The structure that a picture and the fact it represents have in common, regardless of whether or not the situation exists, Wittgenstein calls the “form of representation” of the picture. ³ An example of a form of representation is the spatial form. The spatial form is involved, for

³ Wittgenstein uses a few different phrases with similar meanings, and the Ogden and Pears/McGuinness translations further extend the range of alternatives: “pictorial form”, “logico-pictorial form”, “method of signifying”, and “mode of signifying”, in addition to “form of representation”.

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instance, in the representation of relations among things in a landscape by means of spatial relations among elements of a map. The map is a picture of a possible landscape due to its spatial form. The metaphysical reading of Wittgenstein’s claim here is that the possibility of the picture depends only on the form of reality. That is, what makes a spatial structure a possible map of a landscape is just that it is spatial, which also is the case with any possible landscape. On the metaphysical interpretation, the relationship between a picture and a fact is a metaphysical correspondence.

With this, Wittgenstein positions himself to give an account of the relationship between world and thought. A thought, he says, is a logical picture of facts, which is a picture with a logical form of representation (TLP 3). The logical form of representation is what any picture must have in common with reality in order to represent it at all. The claim is that all pictures have an underlying logical form of representation, in addition to being e.g. spatial, chromatic or temporal. Unlike other kinds of picture, however, logical pictures represent possible situations in virtue only of logical form, and not in virtue of, for instance, spatial form. This is most obviously the case when the picture and what it represents are not both e.g. spatial. For instance, one might picture a terrain by organizing sound rather than spatially related elements as on a map. Wittgenstein’s claim is that propositions, which can be produced with linguistic signs, are logical pictures in just the same way. Although propositional signs, such as sentence tokens, consist of sounds or shapes, this medium is inessential to their representing possible atomic facts.

Wittgenstein does not by this make any definite claim as to the nature of thoughts, psychologically speaking. Like Frege, whose “great works” Wittgenstein credits as an influence in the introduction, his concern seems initially restricted to thoughts as what we would now call ‘propositions’. He says a thought is expressed through the senses by means of a proposition, and that we use the sensibly perceptible sign of a proposition as a projection of possible states of affairs (TLP 3.11). The distinction between the sensibly perceptible signs of a proposition, and the thought, should not necessarily be read as a distinction between the physically external and the psychologically internal.

Rather, Wittgenstein is here alluding to the difference between a particular fact, namely the propositional sign, and its internal properties. It is in virtue of the internal properties of the sign that it has a projective relation to the world, and not in virtue of outward features in the form of sounds or shapes. This being said, Wittgenstein introduces his treatment of pictures via a
seemingly anthropological remark: “We make to ourselves pictures of facts” (TLP 2.1). Also, he claims that to understand a proposition is to “know what is the case if it is true” (TLP 4.024). As these examples show, Wittgenstein’s comments do have consequences for the philosophy of psychology, but he doesn’t begin dealing with these directly until TLP 5.54.

The talk of isomorphism and the idea that thoughts are pictures might be taken to suggest that Wittgenstein advances a correspondence theory of truth. As White (2006, p. 24) points out, however, and even on a metaphysical interpretation, it is worth distinguishing between the Tractatus account of sense and any classical account of truth. While the correspondence theory of truth says that an accurate representation corresponds to an actual fact, Wittgenstein stresses that a picture itself is a fact that shares features with other possible facts. Pictures are built up in certain ways, and this structure determines what facts they represent due to the possibility of facts sharing the same structure.

Beyond the condition of a shared logical structure, Wittgenstein does not say that a truthful picture corresponds to a specific situation while a false picture does not. True or false, the picture corresponds to the possibility of a situation with a given structure. It seems, therefore, that Wittgenstein’s concern is in the first place with sense, and only secondarily with truth and falsity. Either way, given that there is a correspondence between the sense and a possible situation, Wittgenstein seems to be making the metaphysical claim that pictures have sense insofar as they match the form of possible reality, a form understood as prior to and independent of any pictorial practices.

So far, the notion of a logical form of representation has been characterized as what any picture of a situation must have in common, which is very vague. The question is how logical pictures are capable of representing reality, seeing as there is no identity of the form of objects and therefore no obvious method of correlation, unlike a map and a terrain. The short answer Wittgenstein’s framework seems to give us is that logical form is a mirror of the structure of the world (TLP 6.13). Propositions are composed out of atomic propositions, just as facts are composed of atomic facts. The sense of a given proposition, which is a combination of truth and falsity of elementary propositions, is isomorphic to a possible situation, in the same way that the spatial elements of a map are isomorphic to things in a possible landscape. The

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4 The Ogden translation is used here. In the original German §2.1 reads: “Wir machen uns Bilder der Tatsachen”, and the Pears/McGuinness translation is: “We picture facts to ourselves”. This rendering is simpler but lacks the creative associations of “machen”.

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difference is only in level of abstraction. In short, as Wittgenstein (TLP 6.124) says, logic represents “the scaffolding of the world”, so the logical form must be held in common between a picture and what it represents, insofar as it represents anything at all. According to the metaphysical interpretation under consideration, the form of the world thus imposes limits on representational language, delimiting what can be said from what is nonsensical.

This might pass as an explanation of molecular logical propositions, but leaves out atomic propositions. Hacker (1986) describes one way to understand what Wittgenstein says about the sense of atomic propositions. On Hacker’s view, atomic propositions are combinations of names that depict corresponding combinations of objects. The names are the indefinable signs in our language, the simplest possible constituents of propositions. Each name has logico-syntactic combinatorial possibilities that correspond to the metaphysical combinatorial possibilities of an object. Specific grammatical combinatorial possibilities of names correspond to specific ontological types of objects. So, atomic propositions result from licit combinations; “[i]t is of the essence of a colour that it can ‘concatenate’ with a spatio-temporal point, but not with a note. Parallel to this, it makes sense to characterize a point in the visual field as being scarlet, but not as being B-flat” (Hacker, 1986, p. 21). Combinations that transgress logical syntax result in nonsense.

Zalabardo (2015b) presents an abstractionist account of atomic logical picturing that can be compared with that interpretation. On Zalabardo’s view, for Wittgenstein, logical picturing necessarily involves treating relations and properties as objects of correlation. That is, in cases of picturing generally, we correlate elements of a picture with objects of representation. For instance, a simple model of a square next to a line can be taken to represent the relative positions of a book and a pencil, one being next to the other. But take, for instance, a case in which the square and line serve to picture a book being darker than a pencil. Zalabardo (2015b, p. 49) holds that not only do we in this case correlate the square with the book and the line with the pencil, we correlate the relation \( x \text{ is next to } y \) with the relation \( x \text{ is darker than } y \).

In this case, the square, line and their spatial relation (one next to the other) are combined with one another in the same way that the book, pencil, and their relation (one darker than the other) are combined. On Zalabardo’s rendering, logical form is a comparison of objects and relations with other objects and relations in terms of their combination, in contrast to spatial form, which compares objects in terms of position, or chromatic form, which compares objects in terms of colour. A logical picture represents a situation with a particular combination of items, such as
objects, properties and relations, because it itself consists of an identical combination of items. Zalabardo (2015b) presents this view as Wittgenstein’s solution to the mode-of-combination problem, which he traces to Russell (1913). With his Theory of Knowledge manuscript, Russell saw himself as beginning his collaboration with the young Wittgenstein, whom he had met not long earlier (Pears, 1989, p. 170). The topic that work is concerned with is the theory of judgment, and the problem that, on the one hand, a proposition is distinct from what is represented, but on the other, what is represented is somehow identical with the proposition. Reconciling these demands is the background of the mode-of-combination problem. The central challenge is accounting for the possibility of falsehood. A proposition seems to accord or fail to accord with reality, and in the latter case what is represented does not exist. On the view that a proposition consists of what it represents, there is a problem of how there could be false propositions. False propositions would fail to exist since what they represent does not exist.

For Russell (1913), this problem becomes specifically a problem of how the elements of a judgment are combined with one another. If one starts with the idea that the elements of a judgment and their relation are the things in the world that are judged, the possibility of falsehood is blocked. A degree of separation between judgement and reality is required, although the judgment nevertheless somehow represents a situation in the world. Russell’s answer to this was his multiple-relation theory of judgement, according to which a judgement is a relation between the mind of the judging individual and a plurality of objects in the world (Pears, 1989, p. 171).

However, this leads to the problem Zalabardo (2015b) highlights, that of accounting for how the judgment determines, not only which objects, but the combination of objects that would make the judgement true. In Theory of Knowledge (1913), Russell argues that Forms, in effect completely general propositions such as “something is somehow related to something”, yield the necessary mode of combination. Although he claims these general propositions could not be false, the mind is acquainted with the Forms and can therefore produce judgements of particular instances of them, which allows for falsehood. Zalabardo (2015b) argues that Wittgenstein’s account of picturing is to a large extent a critique of this solution of Russell’s.

For one, by the time Wittgenstein writes the Tractatus, he thinks the possibility of the truth of a proposition cannot depend on the truth of another, which would have to be the case on Russell’s view. For instance, the possibility of a proposition such as ‘Fa’ would entail the Form
‘∃x, φ(ϕx)’. As has been mentioned, Wittgenstein also thinks that to understand a proposition is to know what is the case if it is true. That being so, as Zalabardo (2015b) points out, even understanding ‘Fa’ would depend on the truth of another proposition with the same form as a precedent, e.g. ‘Gb’, in order to know that ∃x, φ(ϕx). But understanding ‘Gb’ would again have the same prerequisite, requiring the truth of an infinite series of propositions to understand the initial one. In sum, Wittgenstein comes to reject Forms as general and necessary truths, thus rejecting Russell’s theory of judgement.

Wittgenstein’s alternative involves a form of understanding that corresponds to his account of internal properties and relations. According to Zalabardo (2015b), representation amounts to the correlation of elements of a picture and reality, even construing relations and properties as elements of a picture. But what gives room for the possibility of falsehood, on Wittgenstein’s view, is that the picture is determined by its form of representation rather than by a situation in the world, a form which is shared with the possible situation independently of whether it is the case. As he says, “[t]he picture contains the possibility of the situation it represents” (TLP 2.202).

This logical possibility, the sense, is a possible combination of elements, or of constituent atomic propositions. In other words, it is the internal structure of the proposition. This structure cannot depend on the obtainment or non-obtainment of atomic facts, since it would be exhibited whether the proposition is true or false. Since understanding a proposition is to understand its sense, this understanding does not, then, require that anything else is true. In this way, the view of picturing Wittgenstein expounds in the Tractatus responds to and replaces Russell’s (1913) account. The details of this argument is worked out in chapter six.

Although Wittgenstein does not explain the distinction between showing and saying until 4.022 and beyond, his account of picturing depends on it from the start. On the one hand, a picture says that the situation it represents is the case, and on the other, it shows what would have to be the case for it to be true. This, Wittgenstein argues, is why we can understand a new proposition immediately, without being in a position to know whether or not it actually is true (TLP 4.024). We recognize internal properties and relations, which are not merely portrayed by the picture and therefore external to it, but which belong to the picture considered as a fact of its own. From the way in which the items belonging to the picture are combined, we are shown a possible combination of items. According to Zalabardo (2015b), we correlate pictorial items with objects
and relations in the world, their combination being identical in the two cases.

So, it seems that according to Wittgenstein, while a picture does not say the possibility it carves out in logical space, it is this possible situation we understand when grasping it. This is why we understand accurate pictures just as easily as inaccurate ones. Wittgenstein makes this distinction by saying the proposition shows the possibility that it depicts, while it says that the situation is depicts is the case. But this means there must be an alternative way of understanding a proposition which is distinct from knowing its truth or falsity. This form of understanding would have to be immediate because, unlike knowledge, it cannot depend on anything being the case, and it cannot amount to something being the case. Alternative ways to characterize this kind of understanding would be as a recognition of a combinatorial possibility or a logical form.

There are places in the Tractatus where Wittgenstein can be read as following in Russell’s footsteps on this issue, apparently understanding this form of understanding as a mode of perception akin to acquaintance. This form of perception would grant knowledge of different possible structures of facts. For instance, Wittgenstein says that “[t]o perceive a complex means to perceive that its constituents are related to another in such and such a way” (TLP 5.5423). Zalabardo’s (2015b) interpretation can be understood in light of such an interpretation, as a mode of combination is not an ulterior fact, but could perhaps be perceived. As is argued in later chapters, identifying what is shown with something that is perceived coheres with a broadly metaphysical reading of the Tractatus, being compatible with both realist and idealist interpretations. While Wittgenstein undeniably draws links between the concept of showing and certain modes of perception, it is contentious whether the concept is fundamentally one of perception. Such an interpretation ignores Wittgenstein’s own explanation of internal relations in terms of operations (TLP 5.21-5.32).

Either way, Wittgenstein underscores the difference between saying and showing: “What can be shown, cannot be said” (TLP 4.1212). The form of representation of a picture cannot be put

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5 This remark can be compared to Wittgenstein’s famous “duck-rabbit” example in the Philosophical Investigations (1958, Part II, §xi). TLP §5.5423 is accompanied by a model of a cube which can be seen in two different ways, just as the duck-rabbit can be seen as either a duck or a rabbit. Wittgenstein might be taken to explain these phenomena in terms of perception, in terms of seeing “two different facts” (TLP 5.5423), and to ground the understanding of pictures on perception. An alternative reading of what Wittgenstein is saying, however, is just that in cases of multiple possible structures of fact we can picture these different structural possibilities. In other words, one can think of Wittgenstein as explaining the phenomenon of seeing aspects in terms of his elaboration of picturing, rather than the other way around.
into words, but can at best be shown by a use of words. Furthermore, Wittgenstein’s analysis of pictures has the consequence that tautology and contradiction lack sense. On this conception, after all, an atomic proposition is true provided a state of affairs obtains, and the sense of a molecular proposition depends on the structure of atomic propositions that make it true. In the case of tautologies, there is no unique structure of atomic propositions that determines its sense, since it is true no matter which of them are true. In the case of contradiction, no combination of truth and falsity renders the proposition true, so, similarly, no unique possibility is represented. Despite this, Wittgenstein says, tautology and contradiction are both part of the language, since they serve as limiting cases of symbolism (*TLP* 4.466). They carve out all or none of the room, respectively, in logical space. Tautology and contradiction are called “senseless”, since, while they are not complete nonsense, they do not say anything.

The question, then, becomes what to make of the sentences of the *Tractatus* itself. Wittgenstein appears to have painted himself into a corner. On the one hand, there is language with sense, the function of which is to picture facts. This language represents things that may only contingently be true, by showing its internal structure and saying that isomorphic states of affairs exist. On the other hand, there are tautologies and contradictions. These lack sense, rather than representing necessary truths and falsehoods. Their representational conditions cancel each other out, in the former case by including all possibilities, and in the latter case by excluding all possibilities. There is no notion of *a priori* truth that survives Wittgenstein’s account. It is simply the existence of a state of affairs that makes an atomic proposition true, which cannot be determined by logic. But the question then is what to make of Wittgenstein’s own remarks. If the *Tractatus* is read as a metaphysical theory along the preceding lines, then its accompanying account of sense leaves it a mystery how these sentences convey anything at all.

Clearly aware of the issue, Wittgenstein ends his work by concluding that the reader who understands him will realize that his propositions are nonsensical. By calling them “nonsensical” rather than “senseless”, he seems to be making the strong claim that his sentences are not even merely tautological, but are completely devoid of a place in meaningful language. The paradox is how Wittgenstein could maintain this, despite also believing he had formulated a comprehensible philosophical account of thought and the world. After all, to add another layer to the difficulty, it seems to be this very account that leads Wittgenstein to the idea that the language used to formulate it is nonsensical. This seems to presuppose the coherence of the account in question, requiring that the language expressing it has at least *some* kind of meaning.
The question of how to resolve these conflicting interpretative demands divides the different interpretations of the *Tractatus*. 
3 The therapeutic reading

The views attributed to the author of the Tractatus so far constitute, in rough outline, what is sometimes called a “metaphysical reading”. On this interpretation, the remarks of the book stand in a radical internal tension with each other. There are metaphysical commitments pertaining to the structure of reality, on the one hand, and claims pertaining to language, logic, and philosophy itself, on the other. The source of the tension is that the logical and meta-philosophical consequences are meant to show that the metaphysical claims are nonsensical. Thus, Wittgenstein (TLP, 6.54) concludes, “anyone who understands me eventually recognizes [my propositions] as nonsensical”. But this seems to be a self-defeating conclusion. The question is why the reader would be led to regard the propositions as nonsensical, since the reasoning that apparently reaches that result itself transgresses the limits of sense.

Metaphysical readings take the early Wittgenstein to attempt to express philosophical theses pertaining to reality, facts, objects, thoughts, logic, language, and/or the mind. However, these theses, if correct, could by their own lights not actually be propositions with sense. The reason is that one of their apparent consequences is that of setting limits to the expression of thought, one demarcating sense from nonsense, and Wittgenstein’s formulations would themselves fall outside these limits, in most cases falling into the category of nonsense. This is so even when it comes to remarks that are not obviously metaphysical, including most of his claims pertaining to the philosophy of language, logic and mind. For instance, White (2006, p. 116) points out that Wittgenstein transgresses his own prohibition against using expressions such as “… is an object” as if on par with genuine predicate expressions. But this generates the puzzle of to how to read these sentences. Their expressing true propositions would require them to have sense, and yet, in virtue of what they say, that would rule out that they do have sense.

This does not mean Wittgenstein himself rejects his work as mere nonsense, which would seem at least to require further explanation. Rather, on the metaphysical interpretation, Wittgenstein’s sentences are meant to show ineffable features of language and reality. This is what Wittgenstein means when he follows up his conclusion by saying that the reader must “so to speak, throw away the ladder after he has climbed up it. He must transcend these propositions, and then he will see the world aright” (TLP 6.54). Roughly speaking, Wittgenstein accepts what his sentences express, including apparently metaphysical theses, but not his manner of expressing them. He sees it as being up to the reader to acknowledge the ineffable truth of what
is expressed, while simultaneously therefore rejecting the manner of expression as nonsensical. Wittgenstein’s remarks thereby function like the steps of a ladder that must be thrown away after use, leading the reader to discard them after the inexpressible thoughts have been grasped.

One famous response to this interpretation comes from F. P. Ramsey: “[W]hat we can’t say, we can’t say, and we can’t whistle it either” (Hacker, 2000, p. 356). If something is beyond the bounds of expression, it is also, according to the Tractatus, outside the bounds of expressible thought. Wittgenstein does not prevaricate on this matter. One of the fundamental ideas of the Tractatus is that a thought is a proposition with sense (TLP 4). If what the Tractatus attempts to express can’t be put into words, it cannot even be thought, and so it is only misleading to speak of the reader understanding it at all. But this leaves the Tractatus embroiled in contradiction.

As Hacker (2000) argues, this adds up to a reductio ad absurdum of Wittgenstein’s reasoning entailing that his own sentences are nonsense. After all, it leaves nonsensical, and so unthinkable, any reason to take them to be nonsensical in the first place. This could be taken to imply Wittgenstein was radically unclear about his own argument, had it not been the case that he was obviously aware of the tension and seemingly convinced there was a way out. The difficulty is to see why, for instance, he remained convinced of “the truth of the thoughts that are here communicated”, as he states in the Preface, when also declaring his own propositions “nonsensical” and steps on a ladder to be “thrown away” (TLP 6.54).

Out of this quandary emerges the therapeutic reading. The therapeutic reading attempts to take seriously the final remarks of the Tractatus, in particular TLP 6.54 and the claim that Wittgenstein’s propositions are nonsensical and must be thrown away. The purpose or aim of

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6 However, it is worth questioning whether this objection conflates thinking with the expression of thoughts. Wittgenstein himself draws this distinction in the Preface to the Tractatus: “[T]he aim of the book is to draw a limit to thought, or rather—not to thought, but to the expression of thoughts: for in order to be able to draw a limit to thought, we should have to find both sides of the limit thinkable (i.e. we should have to be able to think what cannot be thought).” The point is not that there is necessarily more to thinking than expressing thoughts. The distinction Wittgenstein alludes to can be unpacked as follows: There are failures in attempts at expressing thoughts, resulting in language expressing no thoughts. It is possible to distinguish between successful and unsuccessful attempts at expressing thoughts. But failing to think results in nothing, it is no more than an omission of thought. Since an omission of thought is not itself a kind of thought, we cannot draw a limit to thinking in terms of expressible and inexpressible thoughts. Instead, any limit to thinking must be put in terms of a limit to the expression of thought.

Wherever one stands on the matter, it should be noted that Wittgenstein here neither identifies thinking with the expression of thoughts, nor asserts or denies the possibility of thought that cannot be expressed. He does not, in other words, say whether the limit to the expression of thought coincides with possible thought, since this would require identifying a limit to thought. All he does is deny the possibility of demarcating effable from ineffable thoughts, directing attention to the demarcation of sense from nonsense in language.
the *Tractatus* is on this view purely therapeutic. That is, the aim is for the reader to realize that what has been presented as theses on the nature of language, logic, the world, the self, and so on, are in fact nothing but sentences empty of meaning. The motivation for expressing those apparent theses is shown to depend on mistaken demands placed on language. What Wittgenstein means by speaking of “his elucidations”, in e.g. *TLP* 6.54, is sentences functioning as *only apparent* rungs on a ladder which eventually reveals itself to be illusory. That is, these remarks have no other purpose but to reveal themselves to be nonsense. This process of luring the reader in with apparently metaphysical theses and theories, only to get them to see their self-defeating nature, is according to this reading intended to convince that metaphysics results in literally meaningless sentences, mere nonsense.

There are certain challenges naturally facing anyone wishing to defend the view that Wittgenstein saw the bulk of the *Tractatus* as mere nonsense already by the time of writing it. For one, there is the question of whether this view is consistent with Wittgenstein’s stated goals and intentions, as well as descriptions and reports of his activity, which come out from the notes and correspondences that have survived from the time leading up to and after the publication of the *Tractatus*. Moreover, if one thinks Wittgenstein communicates a distinction between remarks with sense and remarks that do not make sense within the *Tractatus* itself, one is faced with identifying the demarcation, and having to show that the motivation for it does not rest on material rejected as mere nonsense.\(^7\)

Some therapeutic interpreters, notably Diamond in her “*Ethics, Imagination and the Method of Wittgenstein’s Tractatus*” in Crary & Read (2000), understand the *Tractatus* as divided into two layers, a dramaturgic device allowing the author to distance himself from the bulk of his own text. One layer is categorized as “the frame”, the other as “the body”, and the latter contains the merely apparent content. Although the nature and validity of this distinction is a matter of contention in the therapeutic tradition, Diamond identifies the frame of the *Tractatus* with “its Preface and its closing sentences” (Crary & Read (2000), p. 149). It is somewhat unclear what determines which remarks are to count as framing remarks, but the point is in any case that Wittgenstein is here taken to speak in a different voice than in the body. The frame is Wittgenstein speaking *in propria persona*. This is where he speaks candidly about his project.

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\(^7\) This latter condition applies if one wants to defend the consistency of Wittgenstein’s approach, which the therapeutic readers are generally inclined to do. To be clear, the consistency at issue is that between Wittgenstein’s intentions and the *Tractatus* as a work of philosophy, not consistency among the propositions within the text.
leading the reader to regard the rest of the book as being mere nonsense.

Diamond’s (2000, p. 150) justification for drawing such a distinction comes out of a reading of the penultimate remark. As she highlights, at *TLP* 6.54, Wittgenstein tells us that the reader who understands *him* will realize that his propositions are nonsensical. This, Diamond takes as a sign that Wittgenstein rejects any sense in which the reader can still understand the propositions contained in the body of the work. The reader has to understand Wittgenstein the person, rather than the apparent propositions of the *Tractatus*. Since there is no understanding to be gained from the apparent propositions contained in the body, taken by themselves they also cannot show that they themselves are nonsensical. There is thus need for another layer, and a sharp division between the sentences that make sense and others that do not. In the sentences with sense, Wittgenstein tells the reader how to approach those that do not have sense, namely as nonsense intended to counter the kind of nonsense he felt was characteristic of philosophy (Diamond, 2000, p. 151). These framing sentences are, as Diamond says, instructions for the reader.

Leaving aside the biographical challenges, there are interpretive issues with such a distinction between the frame and the body. One question is how the frame and body are supposed to relate to each other. The frame is intended seriously, and is meant to convince the reader that the body of the book consists in nonsense. However, the body seems to either logically follow from or lead to the framing remarks, such as the closing sentences, which would apparently be impossible if the body was a collection of literal nonsense. Moreover, if we exclude the body from serious consideration, we thereby exclude the remarks that seem to motivate and elaborate the framing remarks. The problem is that the remarks belonging to the frame and the body cannot be as sharply distinguished as the two-layer view presented so far suggests.

Read (2006) defends a strongly therapeutic reading of the *Tractatus*. He explains the form of therapy his reading appeals to by emphasizing that the *Tractatus* does not contain a theory that refutes itself. Rather, on Read’s view, the contents in the body of the book being nonsensical means that they “are suspended between different meanings that one would like to give them” (2006, p. 77). The therapy consists in using these apparent contents as mere “props”. According to Read (2006, p. 78), “you don’t strictly need the ‘frame’ at all! When one reads the Tractatus with understanding of its point […] the body already succeeds in making the frame unnecessary.” Reading the text with understanding means working on one’s own demands on language, a process that shows that the text actually contains, or says, nothing. Read goes on to
point out that, on the therapeutic reading, the paradoxical end of the Tractatus is in no way a conclusion of its preceding parts. Indeed, on that view the end could not stand in any logical relation whatsoever to the body, since the body is simply nonsense. The ending remarks describe what the reader should have understood by working through the preceding apparent content.

However, precisely this is an issue with the strongly therapeutic interpretation. Read’s comments suggest that the frame is just as logically inert as the body. The frame is meant to guide the reader to grasp the incoherence of the body, but it does so by appeal to what the reader thereby is meant to realize are mere “props”. The frame, too, is effectively suspended between different meanings. Read elsewhere acknowledges this and formulates it in active terms, because “whether something is being temporarily, transitonally held onto as a frame (or not) depends upon one’s progress through the text” (Read & Deans, 2011, p. 153). As a form of therapy, reading the Tractatus is meant to be a process in which some remarks are treated merely transitonally as if they have sense. Read and Deans in this way distinguish themselves from milder therapeutic interpreters, who assert a static distinction between frame and body.

However, this notion of a transitional distinction invites a reframing, as it were, of the objection. The question is whether anything is to be achieved by treating one remark as a “prop”, seemingly with sense, to motivate rejecting another as mere nonsense. The next step will presumably be to reject that “prop” as nonsensical in turn, which fosters doubts about the entire enterprise. The principle behind this process is that, once correctly understood, the frame, like the body, says nothing, and so cannot be taken to lead the reader to understand that the propositions of the Tractatus are nonsensical. In any case, the therapeutic reading in question makes a mystery of how this would be possible. If the remarks could really have this effect, then their view attributes sense to them.

Ironically, it seems that one cannot be persuaded that the remarks in the body of the Tractatus are nonsense. Rather, this is something that would have to simply “show itself”. For any distinction between layers to remain, one would have to be able to differentiate between nonsense that is seriously intended and merely unintelligible nonsense, which, as the therapeutic readers themselves point out, is a psychological rather than logical distinction. What the strongly therapeutic reading is left with is the text inexplicably revealing itself to be nonsense, as if pulling itself up and throwing itself away by its own bootstraps.
As mentioned, there is contention even among therapeutic readers as to whether there is a sharply distinguishable frame and body of the book. There are, however, several reasons to think such a distinction is impracticable. The Preface and the closing sentences of the *Tractatus* both involve notions that are developed elsewhere. In the Preface, for instance, Wittgenstein speaks of the aim of the book, that of setting a limit to the expression of thought, but he doesn’t begin to develop anything resembling such a limit until *TLP* 3.02 and 3.03, after he has introduced the idea that a thought is a logical picture of facts. Here, he rejects the appeal to limits of thought on the grounds that one cannot think illogically: “Thought can never be of anything illogical, since, if it were, we should have to think illogically” (*TLP* 3.02). This presupposes an account of logic and thinking according to which the activity of thinking is internally related to logic, developed earlier, most notably in *TLP* 2.1 and 2.11-2.19. And far from the Preface denouncing the contents of the book as something the understanding reader sees as mere nonsense, Wittgenstein here assures us that he is convinced of the truth of what follows (*TLP*, Preface).

As for what is meant by “closing sentences”, Diamond (2000) refers to *TLP* 6.54, and Read and Conant & Dain (2011) also focus on this remark. But the attempt to understand this penultimate remark as part of a distinct frame faces similar issues. In the hierarchy of propositions, *TLP* 6.54 is simply an elaboration on 6.5, which says that if a question can be expressed, its answer can also be expressed. The first comment on that proposition, 6.51, says that skepticism results in nonsense when it tries to raise doubts “where no questions can be asked”. The next, 6.52, says there would remain no questions after all possible scientific questions had been answered, although the “problems of life” would still be unanswered. Such problems, it is implied, cannot be expressed in the form of questions. So, in the 6.5s, Wittgenstein develops the idea, introduced earlier, that philosophical questions are pseudo-questions. It is clear from this that *TLP* 6.54 merely continues and applies this theme to the work at hand. Moreover, the expression “closing sentences” is misleading, considering it is arguably only the penultimate proposition that might be taken to motivate the claim which drives the therapeutic interpretation, namely that the *Tractatus* is nonsense.

Only two remarks earlier, at *TLP* 6.522, Wittgenstein says that there are things that cannot be put into words, things making themselves manifest. There is thus no indication that

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8 By this, Wittgenstein means that all questions that make sense have possible answers that make sense. Not, that is, that human beings necessarily can answer all questions.
Wittgenstein is steadily approaching the stance that saying what is contained within it is nonsense precludes anything from being shown by it. But there are no signs of a sudden change in intent or tone progressing from \textit{TLP} 6.522 to 6.54, either. Instead, there seems to be a buildup and a climax in these final remarks, as they lend weight and support to each other, concluding with the notorious remark that “[w]hat we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence” (\textit{TLP} 7). On the face of it even this remark is in tension with the therapeutic reading. The question one has to ask is why Wittgenstein ends by implying there is anything to pass over in silence. It seems that on this issue, the therapeutic reading is at odds with Wittgenstein, but in agreement with Neurath, who responded that “one should indeed be silent, but not about anything” (Hacker, 2000, p. 356).

One could add another consideration weighing against taking certain sections as key to the interpretation of the rest of the work: If anything is to count as part of such a frame, it probably has to be the remark at \textit{TLP} 6.54. However, the very notion of “nonsense” that Wittgenstein returns to here is arguably inexplicable in isolation from the rest of the work. There is no apparent reason to think he uses this word in a new and unexplained way in \textit{TLP} 6.54, in contrast to how he explains and uses it in, for example, \textit{TLP} 4.4611, 5.5303 or 5.5422, where the notion of “nonsense” is connected to sense, senselessness and logic. These notions, in turn, branch out to every part of the \textit{Tractatus}. But this means one cannot salvage \textit{TLP} 6.54 while declaring the apparent theses of the work to be rejected as mere nonsense.

One possible response would be to separate out Wittgenstein’s views on logic, claiming that even though the rest of the body of the \textit{Tractatus} cannot be taken literally, the views on logic and language can. However, this runs into the problem that there is no sharp distinction between remarks on logic and other remarks, and that, as will be argued in later chapters, sections on logic typically either elaborate or are elaborated by remarks on, for instance, causation, the philosophical subject, and language. This problem generalizes to any interpretation which presupposes a clean subdivision of the contents of the \textit{Tractatus}, considering its structure.

In addition to these issues, the therapeutic reading seems to be in tension with external evidence of Wittgenstein’s intentions when writing the \textit{Tractatus}, including the evolution of his ideas evident from his notebooks and work leading up to its publication, as well as his subsequent mixture of criticism and defense of its arguments. In short, the biographical evidence suggests that Wittgenstein did not have a purely or even fundamentally therapeutic attitude towards his early work, that his idea of clarification and logic was not purely meant to free the reader from
the urge to engage with philosophical questions. As his notebooks show, Wittgenstein was constantly grappling with questions pertaining to the nature of logic, language, mathematics, the self, and causality, among others, seeking novel ways of solving or dissolving them. Whatever therapeutic value he hoped his remarks may have had, it was of a secondary concern to the effective solution or dissolution of these problems.

As White (2006) also argues, there is a large amount of evidence to this effect. To pick one such example, we might consider Wittgenstein’s response to Russell’s objection that “[i]t is necessary also to be given the proposition that all elementary propositions are given”, by denying it and saying there is no such proposition. He repeats a point he makes in the book, which is that every atomic proposition is given is something that is shown by there being none with a sense that is not given (White, 2006, p. 127). One should also keep in mind “Some Remarks on Logical Form”, written by Wittgenstein after the publication of the Tractatus, where he wrestles with his own earlier views in light of criticisms made, in particular, by Ramsey. It would be difficult either to justify the claim that Wittgenstein forgot the intent behind the Tractatus immediately after its formulation, or otherwise to find another reason why he would be so keen to defend, modify and criticize its technical claims if he initially published it with a purely therapeutic aim.

This is not to suggest there is knock-down biographical evidence counting against therapeutic interpretations. It does, however, call for the need for any interpretation to accommodate the great value Wittgenstein evidently saw in working out the technical questions he was grappling with. Wittgenstein was clearly concerned with formulating coherent and plausible views of a philosophical nature, whether or not he felt an ambient effect of this exercise was therapeutic. The overall point of drawing attention to this issue with interpretation is that, instead of meta-exegetical approaches serving to emphasize some aspect of Wittgenstein’s work from the outset, such as the notion of ineffability or nonsensicality, it would be fruitful to discard preconceived narratives and turn to closer, more informed readings of the source material. For instance, rather than emphasizing TLP 6.54 as the key to a general interpretation of the Tractatus, ignoring or downplaying evidence that is in tension with this, we should start by trying to understand what leads Wittgenstein to this and his various other claims.

The Tractatus does not have to be read from beginning to end, its aphoristic style and system

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9 For biographical substantiation of this claim, see, for instance, Monk (1990).
of numbering allowing, even encouraging, backtracking and comparisons of different remarks. However, as with most readings, one has to incorporate the different themes and consider them as part of an argument in order to see clearly how any one of them should be understood. This includes working out in detail what Wittgenstein says about sense, senselessness, and nonsense, as well as showing and saying. In order to understand them one has to see how these notions fit into the overall project of the *Tractatus*, as parts of a coherent whole. Only then might it be possible to ascertain what *TLP* 6.54, among other sections, is supposed to mean.

Denying from the outset that the *Tractatus* contains claims to be evaluated as philosophical arguments, even if this ends up being one’s position in regards to certain sections of the book, gets things the wrong way around. One problem, as has been shown, is that this leaves Wittgenstein’s comments on the status of his own remarks equally impotent. Starting with this preconception, then, by virtue of denying the content standards of justification and reasoning, one cannot consistently defend oneself. On this view there can simply be no reason to think portions of the *Tractatus* that apparently draw a limit to sense, considered without relation to anything else it contains, are themselves mere nonsense. One is left with only the preconceived narrative, with nothing counting in its favor.

In particular, overemphasizing *TLP* 6.54 to such an extent that the rest of the book becomes merely “provisional”, conceiving the reader as someone going through an act of entertaining philosophical theories inevitably meant to be thrown away, not only seems to distort what this comment says about the rest of the work, that it should not be considered in theoretical terms at all, but makes it hard to see why *TLP* 6.54 should be approached in this way. To be clear, even if the therapeutic interpretation is partially correct in the assessment of the reflexive ramifications of the *Tractatus*, that all its theoretical claim are to be thrown away as mere nonsense, that cannot be all there is to say about the matter. The interesting question is why they have to be thrown away.

One-sided readings of the concept “nonsense”, as distinct from “senselessness” and “meaning”, can be found in writings of metaphysical and therapeutic interpreters alike. 10 “Showing” and

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10 A case in point: Read (2006, p. 73) conflates nonsense with meaninglessness in his criticism of Hutto’s interpretation of the *Tractatus*, claiming Hutto prevanciates over whether what Wittgenstein says has meaning. The problem is that the word “meaning” itself has several different meanings: personal significance, communicative meaning, point, purpose, function, reference, moral or political significance, and linguistic meaning, to name a few. “Meaninglessness” has, of course, a similar number of different meanings. Furthermore, Wittgenstein didn’t say his remarks were meaningless, but nonsensical. And the word “nonsense” should here, as elsewhere, be understood according to how Wittgenstein in fact explains the notion. Confusion is
“what shows itself” are likewise notions, along with ineffability and nonsensicality, that often fall victim to overly general and partisan textual debates. The extent to which a reading allows for objects or features of language or reality to “show themselves” has typically been taken as an indicator of its position along an ineffable/therapeutic scale. Floyd (2007, p. 182) helps us see the need to let go of such meta-exegetical debates, instead letting Wittgenstein tell us what he means by his own words, by demonstrating the wide range of uses of the term “show”:

“In the Tractatus [...] we have remarks about a proposition showing its sense, showing how things stand if it is true (4.022), we have an analysis of statements of propositional attitudes that shows that there is no soul or subject (5.5421), we have a sign for an elementary proposition showing that in its sense an object appears (4.1211), the remark that a proposition shows a logical form of reality (4.121), a remark that the falling under a formal concept by an object shows itself in the symbol for the object itself, so that the name shows that it signifies an object, the numerical sign that it signifies a number, and so on (4.126), the remark that generality is shown through the fact that one can infer by universal instantiation (5.1311), the idea that Frege’s and Russell’s employment of the logically meaningless assertion sign shows only that what they mark in this way they take to be true (4.442), the remark that tautologies show the formal—logical—properties of language, of the world (6.12), the famous selfreflexive, at first blush destabilizing “what can be shown cannot be said” (4.1212) [...] a remark in which operations are said to “show themselves” (5.24), another in which tautologies themselves “show” that they are tautologies (6.126, 6.127) and, last but not least, Wittgenstein’s remarks about the inexpressible, which is said to “show itself” in connection with the solution to the riddle of the meaning of life (6.522)”

This is not to imply that there are no general ways of understanding Wittgenstein’s uses of “show”, “shows itself”, a proposition “showing its sense”, and so on, helping us tie together some of these sentences. However, the problem is neglecting any attempt at reaching such an understanding in favor of taking up a position “above and beyond” actual interpretation, and so failing to accommodate these different uses. One such tendency among proponents of the therapeutic interpretation is insisting that “the concept of showing” is something that must be thrown away. The issue is that Wittgenstein spoke of showing, displaying, and demonstrating in various ways throughout the Tractatus and continued this in his later work. Moreover, as

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11 There are, for instance, 149 occurrences of the morpheme “show” in the Philosophical Remarks (1930/1975). Most of these are similar, or fruitfully compared, to patterns of use in the Tractatus. One example: “What kind of proposition is ‘There is a prime number between 5 and 8‘? I would say ‘That shows itself‘. And that’s correct, but can’t you draw attention to this internal state of affairs?” (p. 134). In the Philosophical Investigations (1953/1958) there are 116 occurrences of “shew”. Here’s a paradigmatic example, from §325: “Is our confidence justified?—What people accept as a justification— is shewn by how they think and live.” This is not to mention
I’ve argued, at least one form of therapeutic interpretation would actually require that the sentences of the *Tractatus* simply show themselves to be nonsense.

Another overly general tendency, one that to some degree could be attributed to exponents of metaphysical interpretations of the work, is to emphasize that Wittgenstein claims metaphysical features of reality “show themselves”. This view takes the moral of the reflexive concluding comments to be that, although the *Tractatus* excludes its own remarks from the realm of sense, it nevertheless still attempts to show the reader various ineffable truths. Again, Wittgenstein uses the term “show” in importantly different ways, but most of these are not even apparently metaphysical. Rather than leaving it an inexplicable indicator of the inexpressible, Wittgenstein explains what he means by “showing”, at least in its most central uses. An example is *TLP* 6.12-6.1271, where showing is related to logical method. In the chapter to follow, we turn to a reading that attempts to remedy these aforementioned shortcomings, taking greater heed of the distinction between showing and saying.

“clarify” and “elucidate”, which also occur all throughout Wittgenstein’s works, and which seem to be interchangeable with some uses of “show”.

24
4 The elucidatory reading

Two philosophers who have sought to move beyond the traditions of metaphysical and therapeutic readings alike are Hutto and McGinn. They do this by emphasizing somewhat different aspects of the work than either of the aforementioned traditions. Although they agree with the therapeutic interpretation in not ascribing to Wittgenstein positive theories about any traditionally philosophical subject matter, they agree with the metaphysical interpretation that he was nevertheless involved in a project of clarification (McGinn, 1999, p. 497). Like the therapeutic readers, McGinn looks to TLP 6.54 as a guide to interpretation, but, unlike them, she gives priority to the claim that the remarks serve as elucidations. Like Hutto, she emphasizes what is perhaps the most conspicuously methodological remark of the entire Tractatus, TLP 4.112:

"Philosophy aims at the logical clarification of thoughts. Philosophy is not a body of doctrine but an activity. A philosophical work consists essentially of elucidations. Philosophy does not result in ‘philosophical propositions’, but rather in the clarification of propositions. Without philosophy thoughts are, as it were, cloudy and indistinct: its task is to make them clear and to give them sharp boundaries."12

The notion of elucidation mentioned here is also invoked in TLP 6.54:

"My propositions serve as elucidations in the following way: anyone who understands me eventually recognizes them as nonsensical, when he has used them—as steps—to climb up beyond them. (He must, so to speak, throw away the ladder after he has climbed up it.) He must transcend these propositions, and then he will see the world aright."

Taken together, this at the very least leaves open the possibility of a positive contribution by philosophy, or by philosophers, namely the logical clarification of thoughts. Furthermore, it seems to imply that Wittgenstein as self-conscious philosopher should be understood as someone essentially engaged in an activity, rather than as someone who has formulated a doctrine of his own. In this way, although Wittgenstein calls propositions of philosophy nonsensical, and not merely senseless, philosophy is closely connected with logic. Philosophy, on this view, is a matter of what can be done with logic, which is at least potentially an activity

12 One can add that Wittgenstein’s comment on this remark, 4.1121, is relevant to the therapeutic interpretation: “Psychology is no more closely related to philosophy than any other natural science. Theory of knowledge is the philosophy of psychology. Does not my study of sign-language correspond to the study of thought-processes, which philosophers used to consider so essential to the philosophy of logic? Only in most cases they got entangled in unessential psychological investigations, and with my method too there is an analogous risk.”
of clarification.\textsuperscript{13}

When it comes to understanding Wittgenstein’s views on the role of philosophy, the difference between McGinn and Hutto and the therapeutic interpretation is mostly a matter of emphasis, rather than substantial disagreement on a given issue. Roughly speaking, the elucidatory reading takes Wittgenstein to hold that philosophy can clarify the language and conditions involved in asking philosophical questions, while the therapeutic reading takes him to say philosophy can at best help the person inclined to pose such questions realize that they fail to give meaning to certain signs they employ. Since clarification can also include the latter, the therapeutic interpreters are technically more restrictive on this issue. There is, on the other hand, a substantial difference between McGinn and Hutto and the metaphysical interpretation over the prospects of philosophy. Whereas the latter holds Wittgenstein to have thought elucidations can reveal truths of an ineffable nature, this is denied by McGinn and Hutto alike.

Hutto (2006a, p. 101) argues that Wittgenstein in the \textit{Tractatus} makes an attempt at elucidation, and not at theory, but ultimately fails in this attempt. The cause of this failure, Hutto argues, is the early Wittgenstein’s impoverished conception of language, which identifies any use of indicative language with empirical fact-stating assertion, relegating sentences about propositions, the demands of logical symbolism, etc. to the realm of nonsense. Even so, Hutto argues, Wittgenstein is not in the business of formulating theory. Rather, Wittgenstein sees himself as providing elucidations, though their form in the \textit{Tractatus} is “strictly incorrect”. What remains to him are elucidatory tautologies and logical devices like truth-tables, on the one hand, and ordinary or scientific propositions on the other. Wittgenstein regards the subject matter with which he deals as belonging to the former category, but nevertheless has to employ what for him appears to be nonsensical pseudo-propositions as elucidations. Nonetheless, we can see what Wittgenstein means by his elucidations, precisely because his strict division of intelligible indicative language into senseless sentences and empirical propositions is impoverished, as he addresses in later work.

Hutchinson and Read (2006) criticize the interpretations offered by Hutto (2006a) and McGinn\textsuperscript{13} Floyd (2007) makes the point that, like “know that”/“know how”, one can draw a distinction between “show that” and “show how”. When using the term “show”, Wittgenstein should often be taken to intend the latter. “In this sort of case, “show” would not, perhaps, best be understood as “proves that,” or “gives us reason to believe”—each of these are part of the idea of showing that something is the case—but, rather, as showing us how to do something, perhaps by example, in virtue of what the author’s words do” (Floyd, 2007, p. 186). However, metaphysical and therapeutic interpreters alike have focused mostly on “showing that”, with the result being a notion of showing that they relate closely to the expression of metaphysical (pseudo-)propositions.

\textsuperscript{13}Floyd (2007) makes the point that, like “know that”/“know how”, one can draw a distinction between “show that” and “show how”. When using the term “show”, Wittgenstein should often be taken to intend the latter. “In this sort of case, “show” would not, perhaps, best be understood as “proves that,” or “gives us reason to believe”—each of these are part of the idea of showing that something is the case—but, rather, as showing us how to do something, perhaps by example, in virtue of what the author’s words do” (Floyd, 2007, p. 186). However, metaphysical and therapeutic interpreters alike have focused mostly on “showing that”, with the result being a notion of showing that they relate closely to the expression of metaphysical (pseudo-)propositions.
(1999). Common to Hutto’s and McGinn’s approaches is an emphasis on the notion of clarification and elucidation, and that both attempts to overcome the dichotomy of metaphysical and therapeutic readings (McGinn 1999, p. 491). Hutchinson and Read’s own sympathies are with the therapeutic interpretation, defending what Hutto (2009, p. 631) calls an “extreme therapeutic reading”. They critique McGinn and Hutto for ultimately sharing with the metaphysical reading a commitment to ineffable truths, or, at least, attributing that commitment to Wittgenstein. Furthermore, the elucidatory reading is particularly insidious, on their view, precisely because it is nuanced, sophisticated and avowedly anti-theoretical. Despite this sophistication, Hutchinson and Read say, McGinn and Hutto’s respective readings perpetuate the notion that it is possible “simply to say and understand philosophical truths about how language works” (Hutchinson & Read, 2006, p. 3). This, they argue, involves an implicit commitment to ineffable truth.

In arguing this, Hutchinson and Read point out that the distinction between what can be shown and what can be said is developed in the body of the Tractatus, and so if one thinks, as they do, that TLP 6.54 instructs the reader to denounce what has come before it, this distinction is also meant to be rejected (Hutchinson & Read, 2006, p. 4). Furthermore, they point out what indeed seems to be one of the main points of the Tractatus: That nonsensical language does not express truths of any kind. They also claim that the “fantasy that one can have any cognitive or linguistic access to ‘things’ that lie beyond the reach of language is one of which Wittgenstein is explicitly critical in the Preface to the Tractatus” (Hutchinson & Read, 2006, p. 4). To make their case they quote the final paragraph of the preface, which should be quoted more fully:

“The book deals with the problems of philosophy, and shows, I believe, that the reason why these problems are posed is that the logic of our language is misunderstood. The whole sense of the book might be summed up in the following words: what can be said at all can be said clearly, and what we cannot talk about we must pass over in silence. Thus the aim of the book is to draw a limit to thought, or rather—not to thought, but to the expression of thoughts: for in order to be able to draw a limit to thought, we should have to find both sides of the limit thinkable (i.e. we should have to be able to think what cannot be thought). It will therefore only be in language that the limit can be drawn, and what lies on the other side of the limit will simply be nonsense.”

Now, whether one can have linguistic “access” to anything “beyond the reach of language” seems to be a non-question, especially if Hutchinson and Read mean being able to assert something that cannot be asserted. Or, that is, if “having access” means being able to assert, and “being beyond the reach of language” is something that cannot be asserted. Presumably,
though, language gives multiple forms of “access” and allows us to do things beyond that of asserting propositions, which is Wittgenstein’s view when it comes to, for instance, the language of logic.\footnote{It is also his view when it comes to the application of propositional operations in general, as will be argued.}

Moreover, if we drop the quotation marks around “things” and speak literally, every object accessed by language lies beyond the reach of assertion. After all, common nouns are used to talk about things, though there is no asserting a noun. This is not to suggest that there is something we cannot do, or that we therefore lack access to objects, but that this focus on what language “accesses” and what is within “the reach of language”, as if language was a net thrown over phenomena to be captured, is misplaced. Furthermore, contrary to what Hutchinson and Read suggests, it is precisely this point that can be taken from the recognition that nonsensical language does not express truths of any kind.

It is arguable whether, in the Preface, Wittgenstein expresses the critique that Hutchinson and Read attribute to him. They claim he criticizes the idea of cognitive or linguistic access to anything beyond the reach of language. However, there are three notions at work in the quoted passage, explicitly differentiated by Wittgenstein: thought, thinking, and the expression of thought. Even ignoring the fact that these are all notions explored and developed later in the body of the work, this suggests that one should be careful about how one interprets the conclusion that “the limit” can only be drawn in language and that what lies on the other side will be “simply nonsense”. After all, Wittgenstein rejects the notion of a limit to thinking, in favor of a limit to the expression of thought. Though he also rejects the notion of an unthinkable thought, he doesn’t say that expressing thoughts is all there is to language, nor necessarily that thinking is limited to expressing thoughts, although he elsewhere identifies a thought with a proposition with sense.

The limit to the expression of thought can only be drawn in language, and what lies on the other side will be simply nonsense, but it does not follow that this limit is a global division carving up “the entirety of language”. Unless language consists merely in the expression of thoughts, which is a strong assumption on any view, and arguably not one to which the Tractatus is committed, Wittgenstein cannot be taken to say that all language either has sense or else is simply nonsense.\footnote{This is something Wittgenstein expressly denies when he distinguishes “unsinnig” from “sinnlos” language, as will be shown.} The limit he talks about in the Preface, dividing sense from nonsense,
applies in the context of apparently thought-expressing language specifically. This is obscured when Hutchinson and Read quote only the conclusion, claiming that “the limit to what can be thought can ‘only be drawn in language and what lies on the other side will be simply nonsense’” (Hutchinson & Read, 2006, p. 5). Here they are framing the matter as if Wittgenstein concludes that the division between sense and nonsense limits thinking and use of language quite generally, with attempts to transgress this limit resulting in nonsense. But this framing is precisely what Wittgenstein rejects by saying it would require finding both sides of the limit thinkable. There is no thinking nonsense, only failing to express a thought.

One could, therefore, argue that Hutchinson and Read operate with the debatable assumption that Wittgenstein identifies language with the expression of thoughts, and that at least one motivation for their strong therapeutic reading rests on this assumption. It would follow that there is no more to consider about language than its capacity to express information by asserting propositions. Precisely this assumption is rejected on McGinn’s interpretation (1999, p. 512):

>In opening up a space between metaphysical speculation and gibberish, in which the activity of elucidation takes place, the interpretation makes room for the possibility that Wittgenstein’s remarks can bring about a change completely distinct from the acquisition of new information. It is a conception of philosophy which fits not only Wittgenstein’s remarks at TLP 4.112, but also the later idea that philosophy is a form of grammatical enquiry, that is, ‘an investigation [which] sheds light on our problem by clearing misunderstandings away’ (PI §90).

She goes on to position her interpretation relative to ineffable, or metaphysical, and therapeutic readings (McGinn, 1999, p. 513):

>“Nothing I have said warrants the ascription to Wittgenstein of the doctrine that there are ineffable truths. It is an essential part of the pattern he discerns that what is essential to language is disconnected from the concepts of truth or falsity and agreement or disagreement with reality. However, it remains true that Wittgenstein does not conceive of the investigation of the logic of our language as the investigation of ‘mere language’. This would require a gap between logic and its application. At this level the idea of language on the one hand and the world on the other disappears.”

Hutchinson and Read (2006, p. 7) argue that McGinn’s concern with demystifying the nature of whatever is behind Wittgenstein’s remarks, claiming that it need not commit him to any metaphysical doctrines, ignores the issue with claiming there is “something” that is ineffable in the first place. No matter the supposed nature of this “something”, a dilemma arises over what it is that is elucidated. If this question can be answered, what is elucidated is not ineffable. But
if it cannot, it is entirely unclear what there is for Wittgenstein’s remarks to elucidate.

Hutchinson and Read seem, in other words, keen to reject as incoherent a model of elucidation according to which whatever is elucidated has the form of a proposition that, had it not been nonsensical, would have been true. As the above quote shows, McGinn claims her own position avoids such a commitment. Hutchinson and Read (2006, p. 7) insist to the contrary that her position depends on calling “ineffable” a particular kind of “something”, implying this is a kind of pseudo-proposition. Reasonably, they consider such an idea a confusion. To make their case, they quote McGinn (1999, p. 496-7):

“[What is needed is an interpretation] which avoids the suggestion that there are ineffable truths about reality, but which allows that there is something behind Wittgenstein’s remarks; which permits these remarks to fall away completely, but which allows that the remarks accomplish something important; which avoids committing Wittgenstein to any metaphysical doctrines, but which does not fall into the paradox of self destruction.”

In light of what McGinn says about her own position, Hutchinson and Read seem to be begging the question. By categorizing McGinn’s interpretation as an ineffable reading, they assume that whatever is “behind” Wittgenstein’s nonsensical remarks must be peculiar kinds of propositions. They unjustifiably rule out the possibility that by allowing there to be something “behind Wittgenstein’s remarks”, McGinn has in mind, for instance, an intent, effect, purpose, or linguistic function, rather than a kind of (non-)sense. Indeed, something like this seems an obvious and charitable alternative, given that she goes on to rephrase her point by talking of the remarks “accomplish[ing] something important”.

In other words, McGinn should be taken to hold there is something “behind” Wittgenstein’s remarks in the same sense in which there is something “behind” one’s remarks simply in virtue of aiming at “the logical clarification of thoughts” (TLP 4.112). This is an aim and effort to challenge and rectify the linguistic inclinations of the reader by means of elucidations, remarks that are nonsensical because they are neither substantially true nor false, and not theories that are expressed in illegitimate ways. If they were to be taken as theses, albeit illegitimately formed, Hutchinson and Read would be right to align McGinn’s position with the metaphysical interpretation.

Wittgenstein discussed the English translation of the Tractatus with its original translator, C. K. Ogden. Hutchinson and Read (2006, p. 15) go on to discuss Wittgenstein comments on the translation of 6.54, from Letters to Ogden:
“I didn’t mean to use ‘elucidate’ intransitively: what I meant to say was: My propositions elucidate – whatever they do elucidate – in this way: [he who understands me recognizes them as nonsensical …] // Similarly I might have said ‘My propositions clarify in this way …’ meaning ‘My propositions clarify whatever they do clarify – say, the propositions of natural science – in this way: …’. Here clarify is not used intransitively."

Hutchinson and Read (2006, p. 15) say of this note:

“Wittgenstein is here keen to point out that ‘elucidation’ and ‘clarify’ are used, in 6.54, transitively: that is, something has been elucidated, something has been clarified. So the propositions themselves are not elucidations per se. The propositions are only elucidatory in so far as we come to recognize them as nonsense. They convey nothing; rather they serve to elucidate through their ultimate inability to convey anything. Something is elucidated – but something ordinary.”

Although there is a question of what “ordinary” is supposed to mean here, and if Hutchinson & Read haven’t given that word a technical meaning that is external to the Tractatus itself, they are right to point out that Wittgenstein held his work to elucidate a subject matter. However, this still leaves work to be done through the remarks, in virtue of which they serve to clarify anything, even if this anything is “something ordinary”. And the issue is that, for one thing, it seems difficult to maintain that ordinary propositions, among which the abstract formulations of physics would not normally be counted, can be clarified simply through recognizing Wittgenstein’s remarks as nonsense. This would involve no appeal to any considerations or anything being done in light of which the reader recognizes an external connection. After all, nothing is clarified solely in virtue of realizing that one is dealing with a piece of plain nonsense, except that one was mistaken to take it seriously to begin with.

This is so, at least, provided one assumes that, besides the technical treatment in the Tractatus, there is a single, sharp meaning of “nonsense”, namely plain gibberish. This, however, is a questionable assumption, especially given that “nonsense” in ordinary language seems to have multiple functionally different uses. After all, one might reject a statement such as “there are dogs living on the Moon” as nonsense simply in virtue of being ridiculous. Similarly, one might consider nonsense an unacceptable answer to a question or request, one might point out that something is not a sign in a language, and one might point out that something is not a clear or

16 And, as has been argued, there are no motivations or considerations for this that are not themselves to be considered parts of the content of the book, rather than merely parts of a distinct frame.

17 And it is clearly not this realization Wittgenstein has in mind when talking of elucidations. As he says, “elucidation” is intended transitively, meaning that something exterior to the nonsensicality of the sentences in question is elucidated.
understandable sentence in a language, all by using the word “nonsense” in different ways. This is not exclusively a matter of sentences failing to express propositions; one can, for instance, fail to properly express a rule, imperative or question in a way in which the listener understands how to take it.

All of these examples involve what is often called “nonsense”, but not mere gibberish. The point is that anyone reading the Tractatus has to treat “nonsense” either as an ordinary term, which behaves as a family-resemblance concept, or else as a technical term. However, the therapeutic interpreters are not in a position to treat it seriously as a technical term, given that it is developed along with, and even logically woven together with, material that they seek to discard because it is outside the bounds of sense. Thus, they are left with “nonsense” as a family-resemblance concept. But this is in tension with their own strict interpretation.

Now, McGinn’s position can deal with Wittgenstein’s statement concerning what he intended by “elucidations”. Her claim, after all, is that Wittgenstein’s remarks serve as elucidations insofar as they produce an effect and make the reader realize a connection to an area of language that is clarified, in which case the sentences “accomplish something important”. On the elucidatory view, Wittgenstein’s elucidations are considerations in light of which the reader recognizes, for instance, that a specific philosophical issue turns on a certain figure of speech or form of expression, or, more in general, how some form of language operates. To this end, Wittgenstein’s sentences serve as elucidations. However, this does not require taking any of his sentences to be elucidations per se, as if it was in virtue of having an “elucidating sense” that they could accomplish this, which Hutchinson & Read (2006) rightfully reject.

In fact, the argument could be turned back around. It is difficult to see what kind of clarification can be achieved that pertains to “the ordinary” on Hutchinson and Read’s view. If what is elucidated are ordinary propositions, but the achievement of the remarks of the Tractatus is merely that they show themselves to be nonsensical, how is the elucidation supposed to be accomplished in the first place? There is a gap that remains to be closed. If Hutchinson and Read were right, one would expect Wittgenstein to have said that his propositions clarify themselves, or the reader’s belief in them as metaphysical theories, and to reject precisely the idea that his remarks clarify anything external. Rather than supporting their interpretation, Wittgenstein’s note on “elucidate” seems to count against it. It suggests that his remarks are meant to show the workings of fact-stating language and thereby show that they themselves are excluded from that language.
Lugg (2003) argues that one reason for the bifurcation of the literature over the interpretation of Wittgenstein’s intentions as to the correct reading of the *Tractatus* is an apparent contradiction within the book. As pointed out earlier, Wittgenstein talks of his “thoughts” in the Preface, while later arguing philosophy is no more than criticism of language (*TLP*, 4.0031) and an activity (*TLP*, 4.112), and finally urging the reader to throw away his propositions as nonsense (*TLP*, 6.54). If one interprets “nonsense” as explained in the book, there can be no nonsensical thoughts. So, the end appears to contradict the beginning. This apparent contradiction has been met by rejecting, implicitly or explicitly, either of its theses. Either, by emphasizing that Wittgenstein took his work seriously, and so could not have regarded his remarks as simply nonsensical and empty of thought, or else emphasizing that his view of philosophy was radical, and therefore ignoring or rejecting as bombastic Wittgenstein’s calling his thoughts unassailable (Lugg, 2003, p. 332). These reactions can roughly speaking be attributed to the metaphysical and therapeutic readings, respectively.

Against this, Lugg (2003) points out that Wittgenstein’s comments in the Preface, where he calls his own thoughts “unassailable and definitive”, exclude them from being thoughts in the sense in which something counts as a “thought” according to the account developed in the *Tractatus*. After all, Wittgenstein informs us that thoughts are propositions with sense (*TLP* 4), meaning they are pictures that are true or false, and cannot be true *a priori* (*TLP* 2.225). Similarly, Lugg (2003, p. 335) points out, the relevant closing remark, *TLP* 6.54, speaks of Wittgenstein’s *propositions* as “nonsensical”, yet this is ruled out by the account of sense developed in the book, according to which a proposition having a particular sense is internal to it, without which it wouldn’t be a proposition. Strictly speaking, then, “on the view of thoughts and propositions adumbrated in the *Tractatus*, ‘unassailably and definitively true thought’ and ‘nonsensical proposition’ are solecistic” (Lugg, 2003, p. 335).

This arguably means one really could speak of a “frame” of the *Tractatus*, though for a different reason than the therapeutic readers tend to suggest. This frame would be one where Wittgenstein uses terms in a way he rejects within the body of the work. Lugg (2003) brings this up to make the claim that Wittgenstein operates with a notion of “tautology” in a wide, pre-*Tractatus* sense. This notion is one accommodating truisms like “every part is part of something”, sentences true in virtue of logical connectives like “if $p$ then $p$”, propositions of mathematics, and those concerning internal relationships among colours (Lugg, 2003, p. 336). Although these express thoughts in some sense, Lugg claims, they are mere truisms. This could
be taken to square with what Wittgenstein says in the Preface, being unassailably true. However, the question is how Lugg’s view, which takes Wittgenstein to have grouped his own remarks together with “sinnlos”/“senseless”, as opposed to “unsinnig”/“nonsensical” language, squares with TLP 6.54. Here, after all, Wittgenstein calls his propositions “nonsensical”, not “senseless”.

The distinction between senseless and nonsensical language is drawn in TLP 4.461-4.4611. Senseless language is a category that includes tautologies and contradictions (TLP 4.461); laws of inference (TLP 5.132); the propositions ‘a = a’ and ‘p ⊃ p’ (TLP 5.5351); and sentences such as “A knows that p is the case”, provided p is a tautology (TLP 5.1362). Senseless language has no truth-conditions: it is either unconditionally true or unconditionally false. Unlike nonsensical language, however, senseless expressions “are a part of the symbolism” (TLP 4.4611). To this list, one would on Lugg’s account add the remarks of the Tractatus itself. However, the question remains why Wittgenstein called his propositions “nonsensical”. Lugg’s (2003, p. 344-5) answer is the following:

“A thought that elucidates our means of representation is unassailably and definitively true (or unassailably and definitely false), and it is nonsensical to assert it. What goes by the board when we have climbed the ladder is not Wittgenstein’s elucidations, only the illusion that they describe the logic of language (and provide information about the nature of representation). The remarks of the book are nonsensical only when taken as (assertable) propositions; regarded as elucidations, they are ‘senseless’, and Wittgenstein was not being careless when he let C.K. Ogden’s translation of ‘unsinnig’ as ‘senseless’ pass without comment.”

So, according to Lugg (2003), Wittgenstein’s remarks are nonsensical insofar as the reader regards them as assertable propositions. However, insofar as they are instead read as

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18 From TLP, 4.461: “A tautology has no truth-conditions, since it is unconditionally true: and a contradiction is true on no condition. Tautologies and contradictions lack sense.” (In the original German: “Tautologie und Kontradiktion sind sinnlos.”) From TLP, 4.4611: “Tautologies and contradictions are not, however, nonsensical. They are part of the symbolism, much as ‘0’ is part of the symbolism of arithmetic.” (In the original German: “Tautologie und Kontradiktion sind aber nicht unsinnig; sie gehören zum Symbolismus [...]”). This suggests nonsensical language is a subcategory of senseless language. Nonsensical language not only has no truth-conditions, but moreover is not part of the symbolism.

19 Of course, ‘p ⊃ p’ is already covered, being a tautology, but for simplicity’s sake every example Wittgenstein explicitly gives of senseless language is included. There are several other implied examples as well, such as TLP 5.515, where Wittgenstein writes: “It is nonsense to place the hypothesis ‘p ⊃ p’ in front of a proposition, in order to ensure that its arguments shall have the right form, if only because with a non-proposition as argument the hypothesis becomes not false but nonsensical, and because arguments of the wrong kind make the proposition itself nonsensical, so that it preserves itself from wrong arguments just as well, or as badly, as the hypothesis without sense that was appended for that purpose.” The expression “without sense” in the final clause is a translation of “sinnlos”. So, Wittgenstein here says ‘p ⊃ p’ is senseless. Earlier in the same remark he indicates that ‘a = a’ should be treated the same way, though identity in the Tractatus is a topic of its own.
elucidations, they are senseless. This might explain why Wittgenstein let Ogden translate “unsinnig” as “senseless” rather than “nonsensical” in this case. It is nonsensical to assert a senseless thought, but doing so can nevertheless elucidate through communicating something unassailable and definitively true. These “thoughts”, on this conception, are not strictly speaking informative, in the same way in which truisms are uninformative. They are not substantive claims about the world, but are instead about the framework within which substantive claims can intelligibly be stated (Lugg, 2003, p. 346).

Lugg’s exegetical proposal coheres with the defense of McGinn’s notion of Wittgensteinian elucidation “accomplishing something important”. That is, one need not take the elucidation to obtain only as a consequence of the (non-)sense of the sentences involved, in which case the sentences would elucidate “intransitively”. Rather, the elucidation could be an effect of the use to which the sentences are put, through comparisons made with other areas of language. To offer an example, the expression “ξ is green” can help show that colour description in general requires use of predicates rather than nouns. This, in turn, might help clear up someone’s philosophical confusion about the kinds of things, if any, to which colour words refer. It might, for instance, dissuade someone from believing that colours are entities. In this way, elucidations can demystify the sense of sentences in language, despite themselves not having sense. This suggestion removes the paradoxical idea of elucidations conveying a (non-)sense, taking them instead to guide and demand work on the part of the audience.

However, to accommodate Wittgenstein’s statement about his thoughts being “unassailably true”, Lugg (2003) goes further, introducing the idea of thoughts that elucidate our means of representation. The operative word here is “elucidate”, which must be taken in contrast to “describe” or “picture”. In the body of the Tractatus, Wittgenstein ties thoughts to the function of saying, that is, to the concept of a logical picture. As has been shown, though, “elucidation” should be understood transitively, implying a use to which a remark is put. This, as mentioned, seems inevitably to involve work on the part of the reader, more so than would be the case when merely perceiving a logical picture and its direct, internal relation to what it depicts.

Wittgenstein’s choice of words in the Preface can in any case only partially be understood in the same way as in the text itself, since, while it serves as a precursor or abstract of the ideas to

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20 This is changed to “nonsensical” in the Pears/McGuinness translation, which is in line with the convention that “unsinnig” be translated “nonsense”. Whatever one’s thoughts on the matter, it is noteworthy, as Lugg (2003) points out, that Ogden’s idiosyncratic translation of TLP 6.54 was let through.
follow, the strict and elaborate terminology has yet to be introduced. Despite clearly being carefully chosen, the wording is looser, and the word “thought” in particular has to be taken in a wide enough way to potentially include any kind of purposeful mental or linguistic activity, such as the expression of a comparison or tautology. It thus seems natural for Wittgenstein to here call his remarks “thoughts”, given that they are meant to serve as elucidations. Moreover, the kind of thoughts alluded to, namely comparisons and reminders of the workings of language, would be uniquely “unassailable and definitive” if true.21

Having reconciled many of the apparently contradictory things Wittgenstein says about his own work, the question becomes what he actually sets out to achieve within it, and the extent to which he is successful. To answer this, we first have to gain a greater understanding of how, according to the Tractatus, senseless language can be used to accomplish anything. The question is how, despite having no truth-conditions, language without sense can serve to elucidate anything at all. This, after all, is the crux of the therapeutic argument against McGinn and Hutto’s elucidatory interpretations. The clue is the reflexive idea that Wittgenstein’s remarks are intended to “display” the structure or framework within which substantive claims can be stated, but that this is an effect that is ultimately dependent on work done by the reader. Either way, the nature of this effect, and more generally the question of what language can show, is the topic to follow.

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21 They would certainly be “unassailable” in the sense of not being answerable to any facts, on Wittgenstein’s conception. This point counts in favour of the interpretation under consideration; only loosening the notion of “thought” taken to be at play would allow for there to be unassailable thoughts.
5 Saying and showing

Wittgenstein uses the term “showing” in connection with, and in contrast to, the notion of “saying”. TLP 4.022 relates the two as follows:

“A proposition shows its sense. A proposition shows how things stand if it is true. And it says that they do so stand.”

An explicit application of a similar distinction appears in TLP 4.126, where formal concepts are introduced. Formal concepts differ from genuine concepts in that they serve a logical role, their function being to specify a domain of quantification (White, 2006, p. 78). An example in Wittgenstein’s account is the word “object”. While the sentence “there is a book on the table” would in classical first-order notation be rendered ‘∃x(Tx ∧ Bx)’, the sentence “there is an object on the table” is simply rendered ‘∃x(Tx)’. The latter is true if there is anything whatsoever on the table, which is to say that it is true if the table is not empty. Objects do not “fall under” the formal concept signified by “object”, unlike the genuine concepts signified by “cup”, “table”, etc.

The Fregean functional treatment of concepts captures the workings of genuine concepts, but it is, on this view, inadequate for representing formal concepts. Wittgenstein takes this, not as a shortcoming of that notation per se, but as an instance of a more general point about the non-representational function of formal concepts. In his view, the idea that “a is an object” says something, on the model of propositions such as “a is a book”, is a confusion. TLP 4.126 outlines the discrepancy:

“When something falls under a formal concept as one of its objects, this cannot be expressed by means of a proposition. Instead it is shown in the very sign for this object. (A name shows that it signifies an object, a sign for a number that it signifies a number, etc.)”

As is often the case, the term “showing” is here used in contrast to something else, namely what can be expressed by means of a proposition. It might be tempting to take it to mean what can be expressed means other than propositions. However, that reading relies on the assumption that Wittgenstein simply distinguishes two forms of expression, one by means of proposition and one by other means. Instead, he separates showing from expressing, simpliciter. As in the

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22 Although it is skipped past at this point, an earlier explicit use of “showing” occurs at TLP 3.262: “What signs fail to express, their application shows. What signs slur over, their application says clearly.” This remark is explicated below.
case of showing and saying, Wittgenstein uses “show”/”showing” negatively, as what can occur or be done as an alternative to expressing something. He is referring to different basic activities or actions, and not different species of expression.

Before attempting to give a more explicit interpretation of the concept of “showing”, it is worth exploring the contrasting notions further, in particular “saying” and “expressing”. Going more in depth into the comparisons and contrasts Wittgenstein makes will contextualize showing and give us insight into the work that notion is meant to do in the *Tractatus*. It will show the role left for showing to play in Wittgenstein’s overall treatise, leaving that notion to be treated clearly. So, although the present chapter is not an attempt at explaining showing as such, it will attempt to explain the reason for its introduction. It will trace Wittgenstein’s arguments for there being something besides what is said with propositions, something that is not to be counted among the describable facts.

As mentioned, the clearest and most apparent contrast to showing is saying. A proposition *shows* the situation that would make it true, its sense, and it *says* that it is true. The vehicle of showing in this sense is the proposition, but what is shown is distinguished from what the proposition says. Still, one might think that showing must involve conveying “representational content”. That is, what is shown might be taken to be, firstly, representational content that can be said, or secondly, representational content that cannot (physically, logically, or metaphysically) be said.23

However, as was highlighted in earlier chapters, there is a common problem with both of these suggestions. The issue stems from a focus on “what” is conveyed through showing, as if the proposition shows a possible situation beyond that which would make it true. Granted, one could argue that “content” in the first sense can be shown in the case of metaphor or non-literal language generally. A clearly metaphorical statement, such as “humans are children of Earth”, could be taken to show something beyond its literal sense. For instance, it could be taken to show that the relation between humans and the Earth is similar, in some respect, to that between children and their parents. This representational content would come in addition to what the sentence literally says.

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23 “Representational content” is left deliberately vague in order to cast a net wide enough to catch the variations of a single possible misinterpretation of Wittgenstein on this issue, namely confusing what a proposition shows with a representation, thought, or proposition in its own right.
This, though, is not the kind of thing that Wittgenstein has in mind by showing as opposed to saying as he distinguishes them in *TLP* 4.022, which states that “[a] proposition *shows* how things stand *if* it is true*. Non-literal language expresses a secondary sense which itself could be said, insofar as it could be made clear what it expresses at all. On the same figurative model, it would be false, for instance, to say that humans are children of Mars. This form of expression is therefore not strictly distinct from saying, but constitutes a supplementary form of assertion. This is not to suggest that analogy or metaphor work in the same way as saying, in Wittgenstein’s sense, but that metaphorically conveyed *content* is not relevantly distinct from something that is said.24

A proposition showing content in the second sense outlined above reduces to incoherence. If inexpressible content could be conveyed by a proposition, this would be part of what the proposition said, not merely what it showed. What a proposition says is that what it shows is true, that it is how things stand (*TLP* 4.022). So, in order to pose as an alternative to what is said, the surplus content that is supposed to be shown could not possibly accord with how things stood. Otherwise, this content would just be part of what the proposition says. If something is shown that couldn’t possibly accord with how things stand, there is nothing that this *says* is the case. It therefore wouldn’t be propositional content.

To be clear, this latter point is merely a simplified form of one of the therapeutic arguments against the metaphysical or ineffabilist readings of the *Tractatus*. In conclusion, both the former and latter interpretations, identifying what propositions show with a kind of content, involve misunderstandings. They confuse what is shown with something that is said. Again, Wittgenstein gives an explicit account of the relationship between what a proposition shows and what it says in *TLP* 4.022: “A proposition *shows* its sense. A proposition *shows* how things stand *if* it is true. And it *says* that they do so stand.”

Hutto (2006, p. 61) argues that Wittgenstein effectively distinguishes between depiction and representation. A painted image of a hand would be an example of a depiction. Though the painting might portray a hand naturalistically, it does not, as an image by itself, determine a situation that is represented. It is not until the image is considered within the context of a space of logical possibilities that it serves as a representational picture. As Hutto says, “[a] mere

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24 To be more specific, figurative language arguably does have another function that involves showing. Figurative language shows, not in contrast to saying, but in contrast to *expressing* constituents of propositions. This suggestion is taken up in the section on showing as opposed to expressing, below.
depiction is, strictly speaking, senseless until it is given a location in logical space. It becomes a representation proper only when we use it to say that things stand this way or that: when we use it to assert $p$ or not $p$.”

Wittgenstein’s formulation of this point is that a picture only represents through a form of representation (TLP 2.22), which is the possibility that things are arranged in the same way as the depiction (TLP 2.51). This possibility is aspectual, at least in the case of complex imagery (TLP 5.5423). For instance, depending on the form of representation, the image of a painted hand may represent that a given hand has five fingers, or that it has a given shape. Or, it may represent the negation of either of these propositions, in which case it represents through the logical form of representation. 25 Only used in such ways is the depiction a full-fledged picture:

2.1513 “According to this view the representing relation which makes it a picture, also belongs to the picture.”

2.17 “What the picture must have in common with reality in order to be able to represent it after its manner—rightly or falsely—is its form of representation.”

Insofar as the depiction is used to say something, which invokes a form of representation, it serves as a picture. The same holds, analogously, for propositions. It is only through the logical form, which is the form of representation of a proposition, that it serves as a thought. Wittgenstein (TLP 3.5) characterizes this in active terms: “A propositional sign, applied and thought out, is a thought.” Independently of this, the depiction is an idle arrangement of elements. He further argues that a picture cannot represent its own form of representation. Rather, it “show it forth” (TLP 2.172). That also applies to propositions:

4.12 “Propositions can represent the whole of reality, but they cannot represent what they must have in common with reality in order to be able to represent it—logical form. In order to be able to represent logical form, we should have to be able to station ourselves with

25 A form of representation can be thought of as a rule for producing a situation out of the elements of the depiction. TLP 2.151: “The form of representation is the possibility that the things are combined with one another as are the elements of the picture.” In order for such a combination to be practically possible, even ideally, the elements must be of the same form as those involved in the situation that is represented. In this case there is an agreement between the form of the picture and the form of the situation it depicts, whether it be auditory, spatial, etc. However, if producing the situation represented out of the elements of the depiction is not practically possible, but merely combinatorially or structurally possible, the form of representation is the logical form of the picture: the picture is a logical picture (TLP 2.181).

All pictures, of whatever form, also represent through the logical form of representation. That is to say, any rule for producing a situation out of the elements of a depiction must also be combinatorial or structural. The elements of a picture, beyond having a location in chromatic space (i.e. relative colour), or geometric space (relative shape), or ..., etc., all have a location in logical space (TLP 2.013). This ‘location’ is the element’s contribution to the structure of a logical picture.
This argument is perhaps counter-intuitive. We seem to be able to represent logical form when we say, for instance, that “the apple is red” has the form ‘Fa’. However, if we follow Wittgenstein’s reasoning, we recall that the form of representation of a picture is the possibility of its structure. By this, Wittgenstein cannot mean logical form in the sense exemplified by ‘Fa’. After all, “the pear is green” has the same structure as “the apple is red” in this sense. Rather, pictorial and logical form alike must for Wittgenstein be more fine-grained than anything formulated by the apparatus of classical logic. After all, his claim is that the representing relation is internal to the picture (TLP 2.1513). The possible situation it depicts must be apparent just from perceiving it.26

Wittgenstein (TLP 4.04) talks of a “logical (mathematical) multiplicity” that must be common to a picture and what it represents, in the sense that it must have as many distinguishable parts as the situation represented. This logical multiplicity must be so fine-grained that it completely determines which states of affairs must obtain, or which must not obtain, in order for us to perceive what is represented. The example used above shows that in terms of logical multiplicity, “the apple”, “the pear”, “is red”, and “is green” must all be differentiated. They must be recoverable as distinct elements of the analyzed propositions if Wittgenstein’s view that the form determines what is represented is to get off the ground. The logical form must be as complex, as potentially informative, as the situation that is represented.

Wittgenstein’s (TLP 2.172) statement that the picture cannot represent its own form of representation can be unpacked with these considerations in mind. For one thing, there is the question of why he denies the possibility of a picture representing its own form of representation, ignoring the possibility of one picture representing the form of another. In order to reconstruct this argument, let’s suppose that a proposition ‘p’ represented the logical form of another proposition, ‘q’. In that case, the logical form of ‘p’ would include the complexity of ‘q’, which is what it is supposed to represent. This means that either ‘p’ has the same logical multiplicity as ‘q’, or it exceeds it. In the former case, from what was said above, ‘p’ and ‘q’ are the same propositions. If so, ‘p’ represents whatever ‘q’ represents, so it does not represent

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26 Or, to make a subtle but important distinction, it must be apparent without having to know whether another proposition is true. Although what a picture represents does not rest on some other picture accurately depicting anything, it does not follow that what it represents must be immediately obvious. This is analogous to the recognition of tautology. A formula may be tautologous, which does not rest on any other proposition being true, but depending on its complexity this might not be readily apparent. It is worth pointing this out to counter the idea that showing is necessarily a perceptual phenomenon.
the logical form of ‘q’ after all. The second possibility is that ‘p’ exceeds ‘q’ in terms of logical multiplicity. In this case, ‘p’ represents something more complex than what ‘q’ represents. But the logical form of ‘q’ is just as complex as what it represents, so ‘p’ does not represent the logical form of ‘q’ after all.

The remaining possibility is that of a picture depicting its own form of representation. However, for the reasons just outlined, the very suggestion depends on a misunderstanding. The logical multiplicity of a proposition, or the pictorial form of a picture, must be inherent to it. After all, it is just in virtue of this form that it is the proposition or picture that it is. Wittgenstein states the point more generally early on in the *Tractatus*, extending it to the case of propositions later on. The representing relation that determines a picture cannot itself be represented by it, and it follows from Wittgenstein’s view of propositions according to which the representing relation is gathered from the logical form that this form cannot be what is thereby represented.

It could be objected that Wittgenstein is wrong to conflate propositions with pictures in this way. For instance, it could be argued, propositions can represent the non-obtainment of a state of affairs, while pictures simply represent whatever they resemble. It is worth recognizing that this argument rejects Wittgenstein’s view of propositions because it departs from his view of pictures. If Wittgenstein is right, pictures do not represent in virtue of a correlation with real situations, but in virtue of internal properties. The internal properties of a picture is the configuration of elements within a logical space of possibility, such as chromatic space. That a picture has a given set of internal properties is what gives it its internal relations, the relations the picture has to the possible situation it represents. External correlation never enters into it; this is why these are called “internal relations”.

The objection is correct, however, to the extent it shows there are differences between pictorial form in general and logical form. It might be argued that if Wittgenstein is right, the forms of representation of ‘p’ and ‘~p’ are identical, and, in that case, these propositions are true if and only if the same structure of states of affairs obtains. This brings into relevance the role of operations in the *Tractatus*, which has not yet been explicated. At this point it can be replied that a form of representation is only the possibility of the structure of a picture, and that the possibility of ‘p’ being true is the same as the possibility of ‘p’ being false. But, as the objection suggests, this possibility cannot determine what either ‘p’ or ‘~p’ say, it cannot determine their truth-conditions.
This is determined by *sense*, which is distinct from form of representation. What sense adds to a picture is hinted at in the notebooks: “Can one negate a picture? No. And in this lies the difference between picture and proposition. The picture can serve as a proposition. But in that case something gets added to it which brings it about that now it *says* something. In short: I can only deny that the picture is right, but the *picture* I cannot deny” (Wittgenstein, 1916/1961). While picture and proposition both represent *through* their form, *what* a proposition represents is its sense. But the sense is nevertheless contained in a proposition only to the extent that it is determined by its logical form:

> 3.13 “A proposition includes all that the projection includes, but not what is projected. Therefore, though what is projected is not itself included, its possibility is. A proposition, therefore, does not actually contain its sense, but does contain the possibility of expressing it. (‘The content of a proposition’ means the content of a proposition that has sense.) A proposition contains the form, but not the content, of its sense.”

To unpack these somewhat cryptic comments: A picture does not contain the situation to which it is supposed to correspond if it is true. If it did, it would contain its own truth. And, if so, it wouldn’t represent its subject from the outside; it wouldn’t be a picture (*TLP* 2.173). Transferring this over to propositions, what a proposition *says* is not actually contained in it. That is to say, since the sense is how things stand provided the proposition is true (*TLP* 4.022), the *content* of the sense is not contained in the proposition. As has been shown, one consequence of this distinction between the content and form of the sense is a rejection of the early Russellian theory of judgment, according to which the constituents of a proposition are things in the world, related in a particular way to the mind judging it so (Zalabardo, 2015a, p. 2). However, whether there is a wide gap between form and content on Wittgenstein’s view, which is implied by Zalabardo’s reading, is discussed in chapter six.

Even though the content of the sense is not contained in the proposition, the proposition’s sense is perfectly determined, and not incompletely determined. So, Wittgenstein argues, a proposition contains “the form, but not the content, of its sense”. It draws the logical outline of a situation without colouring it in with obtaining or non-obtaining states of affairs that would

27 In his treatise, Wittgenstein accounts for sense after turning from pictures to propositions. The latter are among the class of pictures that represent through the logical form of representation. Though little turns on it, this is here taken to indicate that he reserves the notion of sense to logical pictures. Support for this interpretation comes from the idea that the sense of molecular propositions, including e.g. ‘~p’, are results of logical operations with the atomic propositions as bases (*TLP* 5.234, 5.2341). However, it could also be argued that all representational models, as opposed to mere depictions in Hutto’s sense, *ipso facto* have sense. In this case it is just the determination of sense that differs from models to logical pictures.
make it true or false. In order to do this, the proposition must have the same number of
distinguishable parts as the situation (TLP 4.04). So, the form of the sense is what the
proposition contains in virtue of its signs, that is to say, what it shows. The content of the sense
is not contained by the proposition, but said by it.

If Wittgenstein is right in this, the fact that a proposition is articulated in a certain way is enough
to determine its sense. It is unnecessary to add that it is articulated in the same way as the
situation it represents, because what is represented is what the articulation in question
determines. Again, it is not a matter of there being a pre-propositional formal identity between
“thought” and “reality”, which the proposition in turn more or less reflects. Rather, “[i]n a
proposition a situation is, as it were, constructed by way of experiment. Instead of, ‘This
proposition has such and such a sense’, we can simply say, ‘This proposition represents such
and such a situation’” (TLP 4.031). This is why Wittgenstein later goes on to declare that the
limits of language mean the limits of the world (TLP 5.6). This follows already from the idea
that language is not subject to limits beyond itself.

Sense is not contained in the proposition, while the form of representation is internal to the
picture, but this apparent difference does not serve to distinguish two contrasting notions.
Rather, it marks a similarity, since the form of representation is displayed rather than
represented, and the proposition contains the form but not the content of the sense. In both cases,
the representation is proclaimed to be inadequate for representing what is required in the act of
representation. Restricting our attention to this, the unsayable presuppositions for what is said,
the proposition’s sense is simply a special case of the picture’s form of representation. As also
mentioned, however, there is one way in which propositions obviously diverge from pictures,
which is in terms of complexity. A negated proposition is not obviously well understood as a
picture, let alone a sentence such as “few people love no one” (White, 2006, p. 72). In
accounting for the sense of molecular propositions, Wittgenstein therefore turns to the notion
of propositional operations, particularly truth-operations.

Even if we accept Wittgenstein’s reasoning so far, that something cannot be said does not entail
that it can be shown. Nor, for that matter, does it explain what showing in this sense means. At
this point it is worth summarizing that Wittgenstein says a picture “displays” its form of
representation (TLP 2.172); that the form of representation is what the picture must have in
common with reality in order to represent it, truly or falsely (TLP 2.17); and that the form of
representation is the possibility that things are combined with one another as are the elements
of a picture (TLP 2.151). Combining these remarks with the idea that the articulation of a proposition determines what it represents, allows for a the expression positive account of what Wittgenstein means by “showing” in relation to sense and form of representation alike.

For now, we should also consider a more complicated use of “showing”, which is drawn out by a comparison to “expressing” or “ausdrücken”. Wittgenstein seems to give this notion a wider meaning than “saying”, though the two are occasionally used interchangeably. In particular, “express” is used differently when it occurs in discussions of the expression of simple signs and propositional signs. TLP 3.1, for example, says that “[i]n a proposition a thought finds an expression that can be perceived through the senses.” The reference to a proposition being an expression is potentially deceptive.

In general, it should be remembered that Wittgenstein uses the term “Sätz” for what is translated as “proposition”. Although distinguished from propositional signs, Sätz should not be considered a distinct type of entity, whether psychological phenomena or denizens of a Fregean Third Realm. Just as we can use the word “sentence” to refer either to a token or a type of sentence, restricting our attention to tokens when talking of “perceiving a sentence”, Wittgenstein means the sign when talking of what can be expressed and perceived of a proposition. Indeed, this is how Wittgenstein (TLP 3.12) introduces propositional signs:

“I call the sign with which we express a thought a propositional sign.—And a proposition is a propositional sign in its projective relation to the world.”

A propositional sign is introduced as a means of expressing a thought. A proposition in turn is no more than the propositional sign, but understood or used as a projection of how things are. Wittgenstein (TLP 3.14) gives some clues as to how this distinction is meant to be understood: “What constitutes a propositional sign is that in it its elements (the words) stand in a determinate relation to one another. A propositional sign is a fact.” And, elaborating on that: “A proposition is not a blend of words.—(Just as a theme in music is not a blend of notes.) A proposition is articulate” (TLP 3.141).

At first, these might seem like unclear and disjointed sections. After all, Wittgenstein first talks of the propositional sign, emphasizing that it is a fact, and then goes on to talk of the proposition being like a musical theme. However, there is a point made by this juxtaposition, which is that the proposition is no more than the propositional sign considered as a fact with articulate features. That the elements of the propositional sign stand in determinate relation to one another
is what makes it a propositional sign, and not, as it were, an inarticulate fact. Analogously, the notes of a musical theme are related to one another in time, and there is no theme independently of this relation.

What this shows is that the distinction between proposition and propositional sign, rather than separating different kinds of things, or separating type and token, actually distinguishes between two ways of considering the same fact. Moreover, a propositional sign cannot be understood as such without understanding the proposition, and vice versa. Understanding a proposition requires that one understands its constituents, the signs used in given ways to make up the propositional sign (TLP 4.024). In the same way, a temporal arrangement of notes cannot be learned without learning a musical theme, and vice versa. 28

The passage drawing the most explicit distinction between showing and expressing is TLP 3.262, which says “[w]hat signs fail to express, their application shows. What signs slur over, their application says clearly.” This is one case where the Pears/McGuinness translation is potentially misleading. Adding to Wittgenstein’s own questionable wording, the second sentence is a translation of the German sentence “[w]as die Zeichen verschlucken, das spricht ihre Anwendung aus.” It does not contain the German word Wittgenstein uses for “say”, namely “sagt”, so the Ogden translation is arguably more accurate: “What the signs conceal, their application declares.” This is no more than a reiteration of the division between what signs express and what their use shows.

The point of this passage is that a sign does not express a meaning on its own, as it were, but that its use shows its meaning by opening for comparison with the use of other signs. This allows us to understand the mode of signification of the sign, in virtue of which it is a symbol (TLP 3.322). That the application of signs shows what they fail to express is a comment on TLP 3.26, “[t]he name cannot be analysed further by any definition. It is a primitive sign.” Indeed, if all the signs of a language could be analyzed in terms of other signs, analysis would be a cyclical process. The differences in the meaning of symbols has ultimately to be apparent from

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28 Perhaps one can learn arrangements of notes without necessarily learning a musical theme. The same cannot be said of propositional signs and propositions, however, since each sign symbolizes only insofar as it contributes to the sense of the proposition. This comes out of Wittgenstein’s discussion of expressions (for instance TLP 3.314) and Occam’s Maxim (TLP 5.47321).
differences in the application of signs. Thus, TLP 3.326: “In order to recognize a symbol by its sign we must observe how it is used with a sense.” And TLP 3.327: “A sign does not determine a logical form unless it is taken together with its logico-syntactical employment.”

The meaning of primitive signs, which are any that cannot be defined in terms of other signs, is something that is shown in practice. In this context, Wittgenstein (TLP 3.263) introduces what he calls “elucidations”:

“The meanings of primitive signs can be explained by elucidations. Elucidations are propositions which contain the primitive signs. They can, therefore, only be understood when the meanings of these signs are already known.”

Elucidations are not special kinds of propositions, in the sense that they have a subject matter of their own. Nor do they all have a structure in common. The only distinguishing mark of an elucidation is that it elucidates something via a sign or expression that it contains. Being a proposition, its constituents exhibit logico-syntactical features from which one can gather its logical form. This presupposes that one is already in a position to understand the proposition, that its logico-syntactical features are readily recognized as such. So, while an elucidation can explain the meaning of a sign, it cannot teach it to someone who is unfamiliar with it.

Wittgenstein outlines a general approach to showing that applies to constituents of propositions. As Anscombe (1971, p. 93) argues, this approach accompanies one of the main points of his views on meaning, an extension of Frege’s context principle: The relevant remarks are TLP

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29 Wittgenstein writes: TLP 3.32 “A sign is what can be perceived of a symbol.” TLP 3.321 “So one and the same sign (written or spoken, etc.) can be common to two different symbols—in which case they will signify in different ways.” It follows from a sign belonging to two different symbols that it signifies in two different ways. He goes on to give examples: TLP 3.323 “In everyday language it very frequently happens that the same word has different modes of signification—and so belongs to different symbols—or that two words that have different modes of signification are employed in propositions in what is superficially the same way. Thus the word ‘is’ figures as the copula, as a sign for identity, and as an expression for existence; ‘exist’ figures as an intransitive verb like ‘go’, and ‘identical’ as an adjective; we speak of something, but also of something’s happening. (In the proposition, ‘Green is green’—where the first word is the proper name of a person and the last an adjective—these words do not merely have different meanings: they are different symbols.)”

30 In the *Foundations of Arithmetic*, Frege lists this as the second principle guiding his investigations: “There must be a sharp separation of the psychological from the logical, the subjective from the objective; The meaning of a word must be asked for in the context of a proposition, not in isolation; The distinction between concept and object must be kept in mind” (Frege, 1884/1997, p. 90).

It could even be argued that, rather than accompanying a particular view of the context dependence of expressions, Wittgenstein (TLP 3.311-3.314) outlines what he means by “expression” and how an expression in this sense is to be understood. Both are arguably the case.
"An expression presupposes the forms of all the propositions in which it can occur. It is the common characteristic mark of a class of propositions. It is therefore presented by means of the general form of the propositions that it characterizes. In fact, in this form the expression will be constant and everything else variable. Thus an expression is presented by means of a variable whose values are the propositions that contain the expression. (In the limiting case the variable becomes a constant, the expression becomes a proposition.) I call such a variable a 'propositional variable'. An expression has meaning only in a proposition. All variables can be construed as propositional variables. (Even variable names.)"

As these remarks suggest, an expression can be presented by means of a propositional variable. A propositional variable isolates an expression as an invariant of a range of propositions, effectively showing its contribution to the sense of the propositions that are its values (White, 2006, p. 90). It is worth noting that a propositional variable, as Anscombe (1971, p. 95) points out, takes any expression as substitutable for the variable name, irrespective of logico-syntactic function. For instance, ‘ξ loves Socrates’ has as values such propositions as “Plato loves Socrates”, “someone loves Socrates” and “Nobody loves Socrates”. The only condition is that the range of values all make sense.

Anscombe (1971, p. 96) argues that in order to present the “common characteristic mark” of the class of propositions that are values of ‘ξ loves Socrates’, the allowable substitutions for ‘ξ’ must be restricted to names. Sentences with variable or pro-form expressions, such as “someone loves Socrates”, are misleading in terms of logical form. Moreover, she takes this to indicate that propositional variables cannot, pace Wittgenstein, “give us the general form of the whole class of propositions”. The general form in question can be shown only by a sub-class of the values of the propositional variable.

Wittgenstein’s way out of this quandary, Anscombe (1971, p. 97) adds, is the idea that all propositions are truth-functions of atomic propositions. However, we can go further and note that what he says about expressions here depends on a point made elsewhere, namely that “all the propositions of our everyday language, just as they stand, are in perfect logical order” (TLP 5.5563). Although ‘ξ loves Socrates’ does not display the logical distinction between “someone loves Socrates” and “Plato loves Socrates”, it reveals a common use of the pronoun and proper name that is part of everyday English, which itself for him is logically significant. In effect, “someone” yields a value of the propositional variable under consideration, no different from a proper name.
As was argued in regards to elucidations, earlier, and as Anscombe’s point corroborates, propositional variables present the meanings of expressions on an apparently superficial level, presupposing knowledge of their use. However, it should be recalled that Wittgenstein distinguishes sign from symbol, and claims that we identify the symbol in the sign from its use. His claim therefore seems to be that we can only recover the symbol from a given range of admitted uses of the sign, that is, from a given propositional variable. If so, we would be mistaken to think ‘ξ loves Plato’ admits “everyone” in the same way as it admits “Socrates”. That is not to say that “loves Plato” is two different symbols depending on what argument the propositional variable takes, but that it hides two differentiable propositional variables. The signs conceal a difference in the symbolism, calling for a distinction between the variable ‘ξ person loves Plato’, where arguments include “every”, “some”, and “no”, and e.g. ‘ξ is someone who loves Plato’, which takes names as its arguments.

Still, in general, expressions like “someone”, “everything”, “no one”, “one object”, etc., yield values when substituted for ‘ξ’ in ‘F(ξ)’, where F is a property or relation. In this is shown the fact that these expressions are easily mistaken for names. Since we can also form propositions about whether or not specific things exist, the temptation is to extend this to sentences about whether there are any things that exist, whether nothing exists, and so on. However, Wittgenstein thinks that such sentences, which do not describe particular objects and their configuration in any way, are really pseudo-propositions.

Rather than standing in for things, which is what names do, logical constants are signs of operations. They inform us of how a proposition is built up, in what way atomic propositions have to be combined in terms of truth and falsity for it to be true. In the example of “someone loves Plato”, the meaning of “someone” is shown by the propositional variable ‘ξ is someone who loves Plato’, where all the values are names. In particular, “someone loves Plato” is true if one of the values of that propositional variable is true. Thus, if we want to display the meaning of logical constants, we must presuppose a familiarity with formal concepts. This, however, means no more than understanding what to do with the propositional variable that signifies it (TLP 4.126). Wittgenstein lists as examples of formal concepts object, complex, fact, function, and number (TLP 4.1272).

Wittgenstein distinguishes the signs of logical constants from other expressions in that they can only be clarified in terms of what all instances of formal concepts have in common, having no independent meaning on their own. Logical constants are no more than signs for operations that
we perform on propositions (TLP 5.4611). They are clarified without remainder through propositional variables that make this manifest, showcasing our ability to produce certain propositions out of others. Variables in which only logical constants are invariant coincide with purely schematic formulas, such as ‘∃x(ϕ ∨ ψ)’. This, Wittgenstein argues, shows that signs for logical constants do not make any independent contribution to the sense of propositions. In effect, there really are no logical constants (TLP 5.47). This aspect of the argument is explored further in the next chapter.

As mentioned earlier, figurative language can also be taken to involve showing as opposed to expressing. It is likewise an area of language to which propositional variables seem highly applicable. The only explicit reference in the Tractatus suggests that Wittgenstein connects the possibility of figurative language with the pictorial nature of representational language: “The possibility of all imagery, of all our pictorial modes of expression, is contained in the logic of depiction” (TLP 4.015). The original German has “Gleichnisse” for “imagery”, which Ogden translates to “similes”. The comment follows TLP 4.014, which emphasises that there is something in common between distinct phenomena that, in the broadest sense, portray, picture or model the same thing:

“The gramophone record, the musical thought, the score, the waves of sound, all stand to one another in that pictorial internal relation, which holds between language and the world. To all of them the logical structure is common. (Like the two youths, their two horses and their lilies in the story. They are all in a certain sense one.)”

Indeed, the account of propositions and propositional variables in the Tractatus can itself be compared with metaphor. To return to an earlier example, the constituents of a metaphorical sentence like “humans are children of Earth” are comparable to those of other sentences, a comparison which suggests itself due to the linguistic form. The fact that the sentence is taken figuratively, rather than literally, seems to require that the relation of being the child of another is understood in a different way than what is customary. The figure of speech can be illuminated through the application of propositional variables. If we isolate certain expressions which signify objects of comparison we can display the range of propositions that make sense in which these both occur. From the expressions “children”, “parents”, “humans” and “Earth” we get ‘children ξ parents’ and ‘humans ξ Earth’ and can therewith compare truth-value.  

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It is beyond the scope of this thesis, as it isn’t recoverable from the Tractatus, to give an account of what counts in various different cases as ‘enough’ or ‘relevant’ here, or how metaphor in general is interpreted. There seems to be at least two different approaches, as argued in Carston (2010). All we have to go on is Wittgenstein
instance, given the argument “originate from”, these are both true. So, here is one sense in which the metaphor is true.

In this way, a metaphor can be elaborated by a propositional variable that shows internal relations. This is not to make any claim to the effect that in order to understand a metaphor, analogy, or simile one must explicitly use or think in terms of propositional variables. However, propositional variables are nevertheless one method of showing the workings of such uses of language, since they can display similarities in propositional structure. Indeterminacies left by the propositional variable, depending on overt limitations on its range and whether any given weight should be laid on its various values, can be taken to reflect the interpretative sensitivity of metaphor. The two are, in any case, related in the *Tractatus*; Wittgenstein frequently employs metaphor to highlight internal relations, which is also what propositional variables display.\(^{32}\)

To take stock, we’ve encountered a few different ways in which Wittgenstein argues there is something that can only be shown. For one, there is the form of representation of a picture. In order to form a representational picture, it must be positioned within a space of logical possibility. This means that we relate elements to one another in a determinate way, which represents that objects are related to one another in the same way (*TLP* 2.15). In the case of the simplest pictures, this is a matter of combining elements that stand for objects directly. In the case of complex pictures, we combine several pictures which together represent a structure of states of affairs.

Now, in order for us to be able to gather what a picture represents, Wittgenstein says there has to be something identical between the picture and what it represents, independently of whether it represents truly or falsely. This is the possibility of having the structure of the picture, that objects are combined just like elements in the picture(s). However, no picture can represent such a possibility. When we form the picture it must already be understood that its elements are to reflect the combinatorial possibilities of certain objects, and the picture displays this. In order to understand this apparent limitation on what can be said, we have to delve further into the themes with which Wittgenstein opens the *Tractatus*, in particular what he says about simple

\(^{32}\) On internal relations see *TLP* 4.122. As for metaphorical language, *TLP* 4.014 compares the “pictorial internal relation” between language and world with a plethora of analogies: the gramophone record/the musical thought/the score/the waves of sound, and the two youths/their horses/their lilies. *TLP* 3.141 again compares propositions to themes in music. *TLP* 4.1221 identifies the internal properties of a fact with features of a fact, comparing these to facial features. There are numerous other less obvious cases.
objects and states of affairs. Having done so, it will be apparent what it is that a picture shows.

As we’ve seen, there is one other main rationale for there being something that can only be shown. It relates to the structure of sense, limitations upon which are shown by logical tautologies and contradictions. Structural relations constitute internal relations, and molecular propositions stand in internal relations to structures of states of affairs. Internal properties and relations are not potential subjects of representation. Like forms of representation, they are presupposed and exhibited by the proposition. And, as above, what can only be shown extends from language to the world. Similarities, differences, and patterns among facts are not ulterior facts, to be represented in addition to the individual facts themselves. Nevertheless, Wittgenstein seems to have held that we can give prominence to them by means other than representation. In particular, he says that operations bring out internal relations (TLP 5.21). These are the themes explored in the next chapter.
6 Sense and time

The overall aim of this chapter is to explain more positively what Wittgenstein should be taken to mean by something being shown. Working from background knowledge of his rationale for introducing this concept, in its two main variations, this chapter attempts to give a positive account of what can be shown, as well as how showing is actually achieved. To this end, the connection between Wittgenstein’s remarks on internal relations, time, and prediction is explored, as well as his concept of logical operations. The chapter ends by considering the role of the subject and freedom of the will, which are shown to figure in the *Tractatus* in a way that is directly tied to the foregoing discussion.

One rationale for saying there is something that can only be shown is that there are some things that cannot be said. As noted in the previous chapter, it is worth drawing a distinction between this and the kinds of things Wittgenstein claims cannot be expressed. What cannot be expressed is a more general category, since expressing is more elementary than saying. It concerns our operating with signs in general, rather than our expressing propositions in particular. White (2006, p. 133) outlines a candidate for something that, at least, cannot be said: “What seems attractive to say is that we are shown not an additional fact, but a pattern within the facts, but the difficulty is thinking through what is meant by talking of such a pattern without making it an additional fact.” As a paradigmatic example of patterns in this sense he quotes Wittgenstein:

4.1221 “An internal property of a fact we can also call a feature of this fact (in the sense in which we speak of facial features).”

On the *Tractatus* account, internal relations cannot be represented by propositions. Rather,

4.125 “The existence of an internal relation between possible situations expresses itself in language by means of an internal relation between the propositions representing them.”

Although Wittgenstein never talks directly of patterns in this way, White’s (2006) suggestion is reasonable. Luntley (2002) similarly associates what is shown with patterns. The notion alluded to is, to a first approximation, that of structure, understood as the combination of atomic facts that make a possible fact obtain. Wittgenstein already extends this to pseudo-relations between facts, internal relations, which are determinate similarities or differences between their respective structures (*TLP* 4.122). Patterns can be understood as a further generalization of this, that is, as combinations of structural features possibly shared between any number of facts.
The difficulty White (2006) mentions is that, given that facts are structures of atomic facts, and patterns are structural features of possible facts, there seems to be nothing that distinguishes a pattern from a fact. They are both structures of atomic facts, although patterns are sections across several structures. This problem does not arise on the level of internal properties or internal relations. Unlike patterns, neither internal properties nor relations group together sets of atomic facts that are independent from the structure of any given molecular facts. This does not mean internal properties and relations are well understood, but it is at least clear that when a fact obtains with a given internal property, that’s not a fact about that fact. In contrast, it is not clear why the instantiation of a pattern within facts would not constitute the obtainment of an independent fact.

Wittgenstein warned about confusing the external and the internal, and it would perhaps help to draw a distinction between external and internal patterns. An external pattern is a pattern of external properties or relations. External properties and relations are not structures of atomic facts, but ways in which the objects hang together in the atomic facts. External patterns, therefore, are instantiated whenever a given set of atomic facts all obtain. Aside from that, external patterns are logically arbitrary. That is, the way such patterns are individuated is in principle a matter of choice. They are brought to reality and compared with it, rather than inherent in its structure or physiognomy.

Internal patterns depend, in contrast, on form. In the case of physical uniformity, such as leaves of grass on a lawn, there is a structural similarity exhibited by the common spatial relation each leaf has to the soil. This is therefore an internal pattern, as well as a potential external pattern. Indeed, one may talk of a degree of the externality of a pattern, where the purely external pattern is arbitrarily formed, while the purely internal pattern determines only the kinds of fact to be

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33 Or, perhaps less misleading: External properties and relations are given by states of affairs. “States of affairs” is the common translation of “Sachverhalten”, whereas the term “atomic facts” has consistently been used here. The disadvantage of the term “state of affairs” is the suggestion that molecular facts are combinations of pseudo-objects. Thus, in the Pears/McGuinness translation: “What is the case—a fact—is the existence of states of affairs” (TLP 2). This suggests that facts are complexes. Instead of existing or not existing, states of affairs should be taken to obtain or not obtain, just like facts; the original German expression is “das Bestehen von Sachverhalten”. However, the advantage “state of affairs” has over “atomic fact” is that it marks a distinction in structure from regular facts. Atomic facts are states of affairs, or states of things, while what I call “molecular facts” are combinations of the obtaining and not-obtaining of atomic facts. This topic is explored further in the next chapter.

34 The term “physiognomy” is apt given Wittgenstein’s allusion to facial features. It is a term that would resurface in his later philosophy, where he declares that “[m]eaning is a physiognomy” (PI, §568). Wack (2014) emphasizes this, seeing in the Investigations a practical turn in the tradition of critical physiognomy tracing back to Kant and Lessing. The Tractatus may constitute an earlier, logical turn.
included, independently of their obtainment. This is comparable to what Wittgenstein (*TLP* 6.341) says about different systems for describing the world, since patterns are like nets into which facts fit or do not fit.\(^{35}\) An external pattern cannot be distinguished from facts, other than by convention. It is instantiated whenever a set of facts obtain. An internal pattern, however, cannot be substantially instantiated, because it reflects structure irrespective of whether the atomic facts making up the structure obtain or do not obtain. Leaves of grass on a lawn co-relate; there’s a formal likeness among facts constituting an internal pattern. However, the same physiognomy could be present elsewhere, as well. An internal pattern can be shown by a range of facts, but cannot be instantiated. It makes no demands on the world whatsoever, cohering with McGinn’s remark that “[Wittgenstein’s early work] makes clear that logic does not belong to the level of facts, that the logic of our language does not represent and is not answerable to anything outside language” (2009, p. 499). Like logic, internal patterns leave the facts open, but the question is how they can be shown by them.

That facts can form non-factual internal patterns helps to explain what’s at stake in Wittgenstein’s claim that there are things that can be shown but cannot be put into words. This is not to make concessions to a metaphysical interpretation. What’s being pointed out is not what McGinn attacks by saying that, in the metaphysical interpretation upon which sense consists in a shared logical form between proposition and reality, “the notion of ‘answerability’

\(^{35}\) To extend Wittgenstein’s metaphor (*TLP* 6.341), patterns are like geometric meshes, but they cover only a limited area of the canvas. External patterns are filled meshes that cover the area in coloured shapes, and it is an empirical question whether they match the canvas underneath. Internal patterns are nets of infinitely fine lines making specific shapes, dividing the canvas in specific ways independently of colour. As expected, both analogues differ from Wittgenstein’s analogue for laws of mechanics, nets of which are described as general and indiscriminate, differing only in the shape of mesh so that they organize the underlying canvas into distinct shapes. In that, laws are like internal patterns; they differ in being general.

The radical point of the analogy is that the applicability of natural laws in general has no bearing on experience. Scientific method involves, not discovering which laws regulate experience, but discovering the simplest laws that can be reconciled with experience (White, 2006, p.112). This can be compared to Einstein (1933): “[T]he supreme goal of all theory is to make the irreducible basic elements as simple and as few as possible without having to surrender the adequate representation of a single datum of experience.” Wittgenstein would say that the laws governing the formulation of representations weigh power against simplicity, since representations are necessarily as complex as what they represent.

The net metaphor is not meant to be read in an epistemic way, as if only to say that facts are categorized in different ways. Rather, the point is that “Newtonian mechanics, for example, imposes a unified description of the world.” Systems of description are ways things can be described, not categorizations of what is the case. Wittgenstein adds that the difference in usefulness, coherence and comprehensiveness of various systems of description nevertheless tells us something about the world (*TLP* 6.342). This pragmatic difference is not a difference in the veracity of descriptions, but in the relative use of the range of propositions that can be constructed within the system. Similarly, internal patterns apply to regions of experience independently of anything’s being the case.
is being employed in a context in which the idea of a method of comparison makes no sense” (2009, p. 505). Internal relations are reducible to internal properties, which is why Wittgenstein does not see them as genuine relations. Likewise, internal patterns do not consist in contingent relations between facts. The idea of finding such patterns through a process of comparing facts therefore makes no sense.

Still, the idea of facts that formally correlate, independently of their obtainment, survives. The question becomes how we could possibly become aware of these correlations. The obscurity only multiplies if we go from simple patterns to sequences of patterns. As should be even clearer than with simple patterns, repeating or non-repeating sequential patterns of facts playing out over time could not be represented by propositions, since each proposition at best says that one of these facts obtain. It can’t be a “meta-fact” that something becomes the case, or not the case, because then this would itself become the case, and so on, leading to an endless regress depending on the obtainment of a final fact.

Even given such sequences, the patterns themselves would be atemporal, just as they are independent of spatial position. For instance, a pattern may contain the possibility that Socrates had a beard, alongside the possibility that Mars is the closest planet to Earth. On Wittgenstein’s view, whether facts are temporal depends on the form of the objects. Nevertheless, the facts can change, or, as Wittgenstein says, “[e]verything we describe at all could also be otherwise” (TLP 5.634). This supports the idea of sequential patterns of facts evolving over time. Still, sequences in this sense have to be distinguished from other types of change. After all, they are not patterns in how things change, simple patterns of temporal facts, but patterns in how facts themselves go from obtaining to not-obtaining.

Despite possible sequences of facts not being represented by propositions, their pattern can be shown by representing the facts in succession, whether this succession is in time or some other dimension. For instance, the simplest possible sequential pattern has the form ‘{p, ~p}’, and it is instantiated whenever p goes from obtaining to not obtaining. This pattern may be a succession in time, but it is shown in text from left to right. Independently of the form of the pattern, p may or may not be time-bound. For the case of non-temporal form, let p be the possible fact that Mars is the closest planet to Earth. In this case, the pattern {p, ~p} is

36 This example, {p, ~p}, is an external sequential pattern. Its non-sequential counterpart is just [p], which is instantiated whenever p itself obtains; for instance, by (p & q), but not (~p & q). It is distinct from the internal properties of p, which might be shown (but not instantiated) by p just as well as ~p.
instantiated whenever Venus gets closer to Earth than Mars. Still, such a pattern does not constitute a fact, ulterior to either $p$ or $\neg p$.

For the case of sequential patterns of time-bound possibilities, let, for instance, $p$ be the fact that Thor Heyerdahl sailed on a raft across the Pacific Ocean. Taken as an empirical process that happened to unfold at a given time, it instantiated the external sequential pattern. Taken as a historical achievement, the case is more difficult from Wittgenstein’s perspective. If $p$ really is a fact, it appears to remain the case out of historical necessity, in which case it cannot instantiate this pattern. When ‘$p$’ is paraphrased as “Thor Heyerdahl sails across the Pacific Ocean”, it instantiates the external pattern ‘{$p$, $\neg p$}’. When paraphrased as “Thor Heyerdahl once sailed on a raft across the Pacific Ocean”, it does not. It merely exhibits an internal pattern.

It seems that Wittgenstein cannot accept that the truth-value of ‘$p$’ is constant due to modelling a situation that is necessarily fixed in time, because he repudiates the idea of representing necessary truths. On the *Tractatus* view, the apparently fixed nature of the situation must be due to the proposition, or the manner of representation, itself. In the example given, that could only be because it conveys an internal relation between event and person. But this means that, despite really being a historical event, $p$ is not a mere fact. If so, it does not instantiate the reverse external pattern, {$\neg p$, $p$}, either. And it seems this must generalize, *mutatis mutandis*, to historical events generally, in virtue of constituting timeless connections. If this is right, an interpretation of the *Tractatus*’ view of sense has to account for this.\(^{37}\)

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\(^{37}\) It could be objected that internal properties are irrelevant to the point at hand. The point, the objection goes, is that no time-bound possibility could ever instantiate a sequential pattern of possibilities like {$p$, $\neg p$}. Take the possible fact that it rained in Paris on June 3rd 1975, for example. It is either the case or not the case, and this is forever fixed as a matter of physical or metaphysical necessity.

However, on Wittgenstein’s (*TLP* 6.3611) account there is no process corresponding to the “passage of time”, which implies that there are no independent objects of time, as opposed to objects with the form of time. The statement “it rained in Paris on June 3rd 1975” expresses a possibly true proposition, not because ‘Paris on June 3rd 1975’ refers to an object of time, but because we read ‘June 3rd 1975’ as a possible temporal property. The date does not contribute to the meaning of the proposition, but to its sense, the possibility of it raining in Paris while it has the external property of time as specified.

This being so, the possible fact that it rained in Paris on June 3rd 1975 is analogous to the possibility that it rains in Paris while, say, it snows in Beijing. They both have the form ‘$p \rightarrow q$’, and the simplest sequential pattern in which they are embedded is {$p \rightarrow q$, $\neg (p \rightarrow q)$}. Here, $q$ is that it is raining in Paris. This means that what happened at some given time is independent of what happens later, only because it is represented as the consequent of a conditional with a temporal property as its antecedent. Whether it rained in Paris on that date cannot change later, simply by dint of logic.

What distinguishes such a case from the ones attributed to internal properties is that it makes mention of a time, and the appearance of necessity is due to this time-specification. The fixed nature of historical events, like Thor Heyerdahl having sailed across the Pacific Ocean or Tolkien being the author of *The Lord of the Rings*, is of another kind. The sentences make no mention of a date, and they are, as it were, timelessly true. Hence, on the *Tractatus* account, they exhibit internal relations.
It might correctly be pointed out that this is a so-far unjustified application of the doctrine of internal relations. It is partially substantiated in the remaining portions of this chapter. The more general point being made at this point is that, since internal relations can be understood to give rise to patterns within facts, in the way White (2006) suggests, they also limit the possible patterns of facts that change over time, and so the possible patterns of change over time. This being so, the category of what can only be shown, as opposed to said, is a lot broader than what a reader of the *Tractatus* might first think. The category originates with the unsayability of sense, expressing internal relations between possible facts, but it extends to include any dynamics of facts.

In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein focuses more explicitly on the limits of knowledge of the future than on historical events. In particular, he draws out the implications of his pictorial account of representation for the theory of probability and prediction. At, *TLP* 5.1361, Wittgenstein says that “[w]e cannot infer the events of the future from those of the present. Belief in the causal nexus is superstition.” It should be kept in mind that, given temporal pictures, representations can cover situations spanning time. Moreover, though Wittgenstein denies causality in terms of logical entailment, that is, as grounds for *a priori* knowledge of future eventualities, he does not deny the possibility of empirical knowledge that is pertinent to the future. We may gain information about the probability of future events from knowing which propositions are true. Probability is a measure on the level of logical possibility, necessity, and impossibility: If a ‘q’ follows from ‘p’, then ‘p’ gives the probability 1 to ‘q’. If they are atomic propositions, or otherwise have no truth-arguments in common, they give one another the probability .5. If ‘~q’ follows from ‘p’, then ‘p’ gives the probability 0 to ‘q’.

One might respond that if, from a given situation, there is only one possible future event, everything else being impossible, then this event is knowable *a priori*. Wittgenstein’s argument is that if a proposition is shown to be necessary or impossible, it is already true or false, and so not a question of probability (*TLP* 5.152). If ‘q’ follows from ‘p’, and ‘p’ is known, then ‘q’ is known to be true, not probable. The reason is that if ‘ q’ follows from ‘p’, then ‘p’ contains the form of ‘q’. The two propositions do not represent independent situations; ‘p’ represents what

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38 Patterns delimit the possibility of change because internal relations are reducible to internal properties, and internal properties are the logically “distinguishable parts” of facts, i.e. aspects amenable to change.

39 The truth-arguments of a proposition ‘p’ are the atomic propositions depending on the truth-possibilities of which ‘p’ is true or false. Truth-grounds are the combinations of truth-possibilities upon which it is true. To fill out the picture: If more than 50% of the truth-grounds for ‘p’ are truth-grounds for ‘q’, then ‘p’ gives a probability >.5 to ‘q’, and so on (*TLP* 5.101).
‘\( q \)' represents and more. If, instead, ‘\(~q\)' follows, then ‘\( q \)' is known to be false, not improbable. This being so, probability cannot inform us of unknown events, but it weighs up what we already know.\(^{40}\)

From these considerations, Wittgenstein draws out an argument against causal necessity. This argument progresses from his understanding of propositions, through entailment as involving only internal or truth-functional relationships, to a conclusion about the natural laws. In particular, as Sandis & Tejedor (2016) explain, Wittgenstein denies a purported form of entailment that is supposed to legislate inferences from past events to future events, in virtue of mirroring causal relations. This view treats natural laws as propositions describing mechanisms of causal necessity, allowing inferences from known premises to unknown conclusions. But, as Wittgenstein’s philosophy of logic has it, inferences express internal, not external, relations among propositions. Whether some proposition follows from another cannot depend on anything else, not even natural laws.

Still, Wittgenstein seems to extend this argument too far when he says, for instance, that “[t]he freedom of the will consists in the impossibility of knowing actions that still lie in the future. We could know them only if causality were an inner necessity like that of logical inference” (TLP 5.1362). Recalling that time is included among the forms of objects, which implies that there can also be temporal facts, Wittgenstein appears to contradict himself. He now seems to exclude cross-temporal knowledge, slipping into a Humean view according to which a fact is an instantaneous state of things, and pictures, even thoughts, are snapshots of independent states. On that view, we can have free will only in the sense of the future being as of yet unknowable.

This is at odds with several of his own earlier comments. Just a few remarks earlier, Wittgenstein says: “There is no possible way of making an inference from the existence of one situation to the existence of another, entirely different situation” (TLP 5.135). He has to add the proviso that the two situations be entirely different because, if they were represented by internally related propositions, one could make such inferences. But Wittgenstein provides no
argument to the effect that future actions must be without internal relations to the present. This might be taken to suggest that, at the time of discussing action and causality, he overlooked both the possibility of animated facts and of patterns of fact that play out in time.

Considering the context of these remarks (*TLP* 5.13-5.14), which is a repudiation of the possibility of *a priori* propositional knowledge, an alternative interpretation seems more plausible. On this reading, Wittgenstein merely denies a particular view of prediction and the will as based on knowledge of contingent future events. If this is right, Wittgenstein’s argument loses some of the air of radical empiricism. The point is that when we make informed predictions, and when we know what we will do, we have insight into internal relations between situations. It is only to the extent that there are no such internal relations that all alternatives are equiprobable and hence unknowable. This interpretation matches Wittgenstein’s enduring view that the will or intention is not an independent fact contingently preceding the action, but is to be identified with the action itself.41

It is possible, as was noted, to read these remarks in the reverse way. One might think Wittgenstein is separating the will from the action, rather than identifying the two. Taken this way, *TLP* 5.1362 is naturally construed as an argument that the will is epistemic. The phenomenon of hoping for something is independent of whether or not it will actually come to pass, as Wittgenstein writes in his notebooks. Wishing, as he there calls it, is merely contingently associated with any future event. On this reading, freedom of the will is a lack of knowledge of future events. This, in turn, is a consequence of the argument against the possibility of inference between logically independent propositions.

To what extent this makes for a coherent picture of free will is debatable. At the very least, it comes with a specific understanding of the condition of having free will, amounting to the absence of knowledge that what one wishes for will come to pass. Though any critique of this

41 *Notebooks* 1914-1916 (p. 88): “The fact that I will an action consists in my performing the action, not in my doing something else which causes the action.” This view is expounded at length in the notebooks, among material that would eventually become the remarks of the *Tractatus* under discussion. The way that *TLP* 5.1362 should be read is as in line with that thought: “The freedom of the will consists in the impossibility of knowing actions *that still lie in the future*” (emphasis mine). The remark continues: “We could know them only if causality were an *inner* necessity like that of logical inference.” This suggests that the causal consequences of current events cannot be known beforehand, which in turn implies the point of the first sentence is that we cannot know which actions we will perform in the future, since it depends on external relations. Our actions are independent of what is yet to happen; the will relates, not to possible futures, but to differentiations of the present (compare *TLP* 5.241). The same view is arguably invoked in *TLP* 6.422, which is not just an argument against consequentialism. *TLP* 6.422 does not only reject the view that value is merely correlated with action, but that ethically, actions are independent events at all.
position itself would be besides the point, it should be noted that it downplays the connection between anticipation, intention, and free will. Planning can give effective insight into possibilities, but for that reason planned action would exemplify free will to a lesser degree than completely capricious action. The positive role left for the will to play is as a purely psychological phenomenon, as a wish for an unknowable future event. Whether or not it matches what goes on to unfold is a matter of luck.

Stokhof (2002) interprets what Wittgenstein says on free will along these lines. He acknowledges that the early Wittgenstein elsewhere identifies willing with the action itself, but understands this to mean that the will cannot temporally precede the exercise of the action. To make sense of *TLP* 5.1362, Stokhof (2002, p. 207) therefore takes Wittgenstein to change his terminology and talk about willing as if it were merely wishing: “It is in this independence that Wittgenstein locates the freedom of the will: since the wish and the act are separated in space and time, they are linked only by causal relationships, which from a logical point of view are contingent” (Stokhof, 2002, p. 208).

But, by Wittgenstein’s lights, this does not follow. A wish does not have to be separated from the act in time and space. Wittgenstein says that “[e]ven if all that we wish for were to happen, still this would only be a favour granted by fate, so to speak: for there is no logical connexion between the will and the world, which would guarantee it, and the supposed physical connexion itself is surely not something that we could will” (*TLP* 6.374). The point he makes here is that a wish is logically independent of the action, while the will is not. That is why the will cannot guarantee that any wished for event will come to pass. Wittgenstein does not derive this from the supposed fact that a wish must precede the action in time; someone may presumably act while wishing or not wishing to do so.

This is not to suggest that *TLP* 5.1362 should only be read in the reverse way, as saying that freedom of the will consists in internal relations among alternatives. Rather, it should be understood in both ways. On the one hand, one can intend only what is internally related to

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42 In fact, it is the prevailing reading. I highlight Stokhof (2002) because he gives due consideration to the will and action in the *Tractatus*. Wittgenstein declared the point of the book was ethical, as Monk (1991) records, and the way the passage under consideration is read has wide ramifications. Stokhof’s (2002) interpretation aligns the ethics of the *Tractatus* with Buddhism: The ethical life requires giving up not only the wishing for specific consequences of action, but, since the two are conflated, preferential willing entirely; one must harmonize one’s will with whatever happens. In the contrasting view argued here, Wittgenstein keeps the distinction between wishing and willing in *TLP* 5.1362. Actions can be ethical because they are not merely events in the world (*TLP* 6.422); they manifest internal relations. This accommodates the idea that good and bad action can change the limits of the world, as stated in *TLP* 6.43.
one’s present, and the will consists in these internal relations. On the other, possible facts that are not related in this way are independent of the subject’s wishes and can, at best, be granted by fate. Delimiting freedom in both the positive and the negative direction, TLP 5.1362 reasserts the distinction between what is internally willed and for what one may only externally wish. One can act freely only insofar as there is room for preservation of internal structure, and everything else is a matter of fortune or misfortune.

How, then, do these comments pertaining to probability and action relate to showing? The argument just discussed is not an idle metaphysical reflection on the nature of prediction and the will. Read in that way, these remarks (TLP 5.135-5.1362, 5.621-5.634, 6.373-6.375) fit awkwardly within the sequence of themes in the Tractatus, placed amid remarks on logical method, contradiction, tautology, and possibility. Instead, they should be read as an application of the general methods of showing, through truth-tables, the $ab$-notation, and operations, to the individual case. Through these remarks on action and probability, Wittgenstein himself attacks the question of how internal relations are shown to the individual. Internal relations are shown to us, as agents, not as knowledge of facts, but in our ability to act in the world, conceive of possibilities, and make inferences.

Like probabilities, sentences about internal relations do not assert facts. It is only insofar as we can act and transform propositions that we have access to internal relations, and only this that allows us to conceive what a proposition shows but does not say. It is through the application of an operation on a propositional sign that we gather the potential internal relation between it and the world (Sundholm, 1992, p. 60). This is why Wittgenstein is in a position to declare, as an upshot, that there is no such thing as the merely thinking, representing subject of the kind postulated by Cartesian dualistic philosophy (TLP 5.631). This would be a subject that represented the world externally.

Whereas Wittgenstein elsewhere talks of operations as methods or recipes of acting, as general ways in which a proposition is produced out of another, his remarks about the willing subject all concern the subject that applies operations, performing particular deeds. Wittgenstein claims that the subject is a limit of the world, and that “the limits of my language mean the limits of

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43 So, there is no independent process or event of “willing an action”. The will is timelessly related to the action, and when we talk about alternative actions, we talk about alternative exercises of the will.

44 Sundholm’s (1992) explication of operations includes a negative assessment of Wittgenstein’s notational innovations, which should be contrasted with the developments in Rogers & Wehmeier (2012).
my world” (*TLP* 5.6). Rather than a separate theme, this continues from the above, and should be read as an extension of that argument. The limits in question are the internal relations that constitute sense, and they are for that reason also limits of the world of facts. This is the background of the following remark:

5.631 “There is no such thing as the subject that thinks or entertains ideas. If I wrote a book called The World as I found it, I should have to include a report on my body, and should have to say which parts were subordinate to my will, and which were not, etc., this being a method of isolating the subject, or rather of showing that in an important sense there is no subject; for it alone could not be mentioned in that book.”

For interpretative purposes, highlighting this metaphor can both be helpful and misleading. It is helpful to the extent it explains the relation between logical operations and Wittgenstein’s rejection of *a priori* pictures. It bolsters his analysis of what he calls “psychological propositions”, sentences containing indirect speech, such as “A says that *p*”, “A has the thought *p*”, etc. Eager to dispell the notion that these forms of speech are equivalent to ‘A(*p*)’ or ‘B(A, Fa)’, which treats propositions as objects, Wittgenstein paraphrases them into “‘*p*’ says that *p*” (*TLP* 5.542). Even if Wittgenstein leaves little in the way of detail here, the main point is that the relation between subjects and their thoughts is internal, not external.

The suggestion is less of an analysis than it is a call for clarity in the method of projection. It presupposes that the subject, A, is inherent in the propositional sign, ‘*p*’. While this propositional sign must be a fact that is internally related to *p*, it must also somehow relate A to ‘*p*’. This rules out three potential candidates. Firstly, the sign cannot simply be the product of writing, speaking, etc., insofar as this fails to identify the subject. Secondly, ‘*p*’ cannot be a sign in an individuating idiolect, insofar as this idiolect would be private. Although it would identify A, ‘*p*’ has to be translated into a publicly intelligible proposition, which wouldn’t be possible if it were private. Thirdly, ‘*p*’ must include the type of speech-act or mode of representation attributed, e.g. saying, yelling, or believing, as in “A says ‘*p*’”, “A yells ‘*p*’”, or “A believes ‘*p*’”, respectively.

What remains as a possibility is the event of saying. If this is correct, ‘*p*’ is the fact of A’s writing, speaking, thinking, or even gesturing that *p*. This expressive deed places A in an internal relation to *p*, so it is itself a kind of picture of *p*. Diamond (2000) and Zalabardo (2015a) read Wittgenstein’s take on indirect speech as part of a repudiation of the very idea of nonsensical thoughts, formed as a response to Russell theory of judgment. While that is an
important motivation behind Wittgenstein’s views on the matter, the consequences are far-reaching. The proposed paraphrase of “A says that \( p \)” as “‘\( p \)’ says \( p \)” amounts to A sharing internal properties with \( p \), which is something that can only be shown by operations. The upshot is that understanding what a subject says or thinks coincides with understanding their actions, since it involves co-operation.

A potential objection to this would have to show how the propositional sign ‘\( p \)’ could otherwise say that \( p \) obtains, as well as identify the subject and a mode of representation. Anscombe takes Wittgenstein to disregard the latter two requirements and offer only a partial analysis: “[W]hat [Wittgenstein] should have said was that the business part of ‘A judges that \( p \)’, the part that relates to something’s having as its content a potential representation of the fact that \( p \), was of the form “‘\( p \)’ says that \( p \)”’ (1971, p. 88). But Wittgenstein does not limit his proposal to covering only a sign’s potential for representation, which would have nothing specifically to do with psychological propositions. He says that “A says that \( p \)” and the like have, quite generally, the form “‘\( p \)’ says \( p \)”.

Anscombe’s reasoning for preferring the selective rendering is that she takes the alternative to construe the mind as a composite, the possibility of which she thinks Wittgenstein denies (TLP 5.5421). But, firstly, on Anscombe’s view it is unclear why Wittgenstein takes the analysis to concern the mind at all. Secondly, the present reading gives a better understanding of TLP 5.5421, since it follows from it that statements about peoples’ thoughts do not make for a descriptive science, i.e. a “superficial psychology”. In a report like “A says that \( p \)”, the subject is shown as composer of a picture, as author of a proposition. The thought is not described, as if its constituents were psychologically related contents of A’s mind. Rather, what A says is explained by co-ordinating the elements of A’s picturing with the objects pictured, in effect reproducing the picture from A’s picturing.  

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45 This reading is also supported by Wittgenstein’s notes (1916/1961, p. 118), near the origin of TLP 5.542, where Wittgenstein writes that “it is just as impossible that \( I \) should be a simple as that ‘\( p \)’ should be”. So, as Diamond (2012) and Hacker (1986) also note, Wittgenstein’s was precisely not trying to defend a notion of the soul or mind as simple. Even if the detail of the view presented here is wrong, the subject and the mode of representation are not trifling details of “A says \( p \)”. It is unlikely that these were not meant to be communicated.

46 This is not a disconnected view introduced by Wittgenstein at this point. Forming a picture requires an act of articulation with logical complexity corresponding to what it articulates and what is articulated. Wittgenstein (TLP 5.542) claims “A says \( p \)” does not involve a correlation of fact (\( p \)) with object (A), but a correlation of facts (‘\( p \)’ and \( p \)) through a coordination of their objects. On the present reading the complex articulation of a picture, on the part of A, itself is coordinated with the objects pictured.

Diamond (2012, p. 177) writes that, “if we grasp from being told what someone said was so what the person’s utterance-fact was, we grasp what the utterance-fact was from our grasp of an internal projective
The *TLP* 5.631 metaphor of the world-book is, however, also potentially misleading. Wittgenstein could be taken to indicate support for a form of solipsism or idealism. The metaphor would then be construed as a phenomenological exercise, which, taken together with other suggestive remarks, imply that the subject imposes transcendental limits on any possible experience through a private language. Only the subject itself escapes the descriptive endeavor, existing outside the bounds of language. This is too hasty, however, ignoring the detail of what Wittgenstein writes. The point he makes is that reporting all one’s experiences, including which parts of the body obey one’s will, makes no reference to a subject.

This method thereby removes the temptation to think of the subject as something found in experience. Still, its target is precisely what might be taken to be the alternative conception, that of an ethereal thinking, representing subject, which does not itself partake in experience but which represents and organizes experience. This being the announced target, it is initially perplexing that Wittgenstein adds that “there really is a sense in which philosophy can talk about the self in a nonpsychological way” (*TLP* 5.641), and that “what the solipsist means is quite correct; only it cannot be said, but makes itself manifest” (*TLP* 5.62). The question is what his method is meant to leave us with.

Wittgenstein’s elusive answer is that it leaves us with the subject as a limit of the world (*TLP* 5.632). However, this limit cannot itself be part of the world, nor can it lie outside the limits of the world. Wittgenstein locates the subject, as a limit, in the parts of the body that are subordinate to the will. As has already been argued, the will itself amounts to an internal relation between the current and possible alternative situations. A straightforward application of this is that the allusion to the will in *TLP* 5.631 refers to the body, not in terms of its external properties or relations, but in terms of its internal properties. These properties yield internal relations to alternative situations. In short, they determine how the subject could possibly interact with the

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47 By philosophy talking about “the self in nonpsychological way”, Wittgenstein is alluding to a way of talking of the subject that does not address psychological, biological, anthropological, or other empirical questions. On this, see Schulte (1992).
world, at one and the same time constituting the limits of the subject, its world, and its language. These limits are set and manifested by action in general, and the application of logical operations in particular. Logical operations give prominence to internal relations because they express a relation between the structure of the base proposition and the structure of the result proposition. But operations are not themselves facts, and they are not recoverable from either the base or the result taken individually. In this, Wittgenstein is careful to distinguish logical operations from propositional variables (Hylton, 2005). Analogously, the will does not contribute independently of the body, which is to say that, “in a certain sense, there is no subject” (TLP 5.631). Given that the will consists in internal relations between situations, “[t]he world is independent of my will” (TLP 6.373).

Although a propositional operation is testament to an internal relation, Wittgenstein does not talk as if the internal relation is presupposed and independent of the operation (Sundholm, 1992, p. 62). He describes the operation and internal relation as equivalent (TLP 5.232). The application of an operation on a given proposition yields a result that, *eo ipso*, stands in an internal relation to the base. However, the internal relation is not preconceived. It originates with the transformation allowed by the internal properties of the base proposition, which is a technical condition. A propositional operation is not an inference from the existence of one proposition to that of another.

Logical constants indicate how propositions are procured; they are instructive rather than descriptive. As such, they can cancel each other out. Negation, for example, inverts the sense of the base, so the base equals the result of the second iterated application. Senseless propositions say nothing, despite being combinations of atomic propositions, because the operations out of which they are produced fail to leave truth-grounds as a proper subset of the truth-possibilities. For instance, negation swaps the truth-grounds of the base proposition with its remaining truth-possibilities, and conjunction restricts truth-grounds to the commonality between the bases, meaning that ‘(*p ∧ ~p*)’ has no truth-grounds whatsoever. Likewise, ‘(*p ∨ ~p*)’ says nothing, because disjunction combines the truth-grounds of both bases, so all its truth-possibilities are truth-grounds.

48 Given what Wittgenstein says about the will, the relationship between a particular action (in general) and the application of an operation (in particular) is analogous to the relationship between a situation and a proposition. An action transforms one situation into another, internally related situation. The application of an operation transforms a base proposition into a result proposition, which are also internally related.
The truth-operations conspicuously alter the combinations of atomic propositions, so that the truth of the result is dependent on that of the base(s) in a way that constitutes a rule. Truth-operations have atomic propositions as bases, adding layers of inversion, restriction, and inclusion, at each step complicating the structure of atomic propositions in a determinate way. Wittgenstein’s major claim in this context is that all propositions are merely results of truth-operations on atomic propositions \((TLP \, 5.3)\). In consequence, logical relations among propositions are not a result of their structure, but rather their structure is given by their logical relations. These, in turn, are given by the operations.

This claim has ramifications both for the understanding of molecular propositions and for atomic propositions. Zalabardo (2009, p. 430) outlines the first point: “What makes it logically impossible for a proposition to have a truth value that is at odds with what \(f\) dictates is that a proposition with such a truth value wouldn’t be the same proposition.” Here, \(f\) is a function that returns a value of true or false depending on the truth or falsity of the truth-arguments. The identity of the proposition, as Zalabardo (2009) says, is what makes it logically impossible for it to have a value conflicting with the value of \(f\). Wittgenstein fleshes out the identity of a proposition purely in terms of combinations of truth-arguments, giving it an intrinsic link to its truth-grounds.

The second point to make is more tendentious. There is no enduring range of atomic propositions out of which molecular propositions are composed. Given that the operation and internal relation are equivalent, and that the internal relation is a correlation in formal structure, the structure of a molecular proposition coincides with the bases of the operations out of which it is produced. That is, the atomic propositions that constitute its structure are given with the application of operations, and not independently of this. Sullivan (2004) makes a relevant point: The variable for all atomic propositions, \(p\), in the general form of proposition, \([p, \xi, N(\xi)]\), is given no object-language application. Atomic propositions are logically independent, and they can be determined only one by one.\(^49\) Wittgenstein himself points out this dependence of atomic

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\(^49\) Sullivan (2004) maintains that Wittgenstein nevertheless did seek to defend the unity of language. According to the view argued here, what Wittgenstein is up to in introducing the general form of proposition is supposed to be clear from the very fact that there is no way to determine the values of the variable. Wittgenstein elsewhere says: “[t]he range that the totality of atomic propositions leaves open for [the general construction of the world] is exactly the same as that which is delimited by entirely general propositions” \((TLP \, 5.5262)\). Put another way, no atomic proposition can be produced that conflicts with an entirely general proposition \((e.g. \, ‘\exists x, \varphi(\varphi(x))’\)) and vice versa. Logical space is the space open to propositional construction, and propositions are immediately interconnected in this space, but the space may nevertheless vary. Indeed, it is altered whenever an “atomic” proposition becomes true or false.
propositions on operations:

5.557 "The application of logic decides what atomic propositions there are. What belongs to its application, logic cannot anticipate. It is clear that logic must not clash with its application. But logic has to be in contact with its application. Therefore logic and its application must not overlap."

As previously mentioned, propositions are, as it were, experimental constructions of situations (TLP 4.031). The above connects to this remark. There is no range of intelligible propositions that can be determined a priori, which would constitute a fixed sphere of sense. Rather, the subject is shown the limits of sense in practice. The limits are at once constructed and made manifest by performing logical operations. As Wittgenstein (TLP 5.556) says, "[w]e can foresee only what we ourselves construct." We determine the limits, both in the sense of finding and in the sense of setting them. But, if that is right, the limits of sense are not independent of human action, and Wittgenstein’s overall early account of representation is not a fundamentally static one.

The idea that the limits of sense are not set independently and prior to our representational practice, that the limits of the world depends on language, runs counter to how many read the Tractatus. It also gives a different reading of the distinction between showing and saying. We are shown applicable possibilities of representation and interaction. This is supported by Wittgenstein’s recommended analysis of indirect speech, which translates a personal propositional sign into an impersonal proposition. There is no method of translation written down in stone, or into the metaphysical fabric of reality; we recognize the proposition in the propositional sign due to having the ability to re-construct it ourselves. We understand one another due to our shared abilities.

One objection to this view is that, if limits of sense are mutable in the way suggested, Wittgenstein’s critique of metaphysics fails to have any traction. There is no sense in which anything can lie outside the limits of sense, since any novel use of language would simply move these limits. 50 There are two replies to make to this. Firstly, it does not follow from the mutability of the limits of sense that utterances necessarily move these limits. The distinction between an operation and its application still remains. Secondly, the distinction between

50 The therapeutic interpretation holds that nothing is outside the limits of sense, because uttering nonsense is just to say nothing. On the objection under consideration, the present reading precludes the very possibility of 'saying nothing', because the limits of sense move with any act of sense-making.
pictorial propositions, senseless sentences, and nonsensical language still holds water. The fact that there is no fixed, primordial domain of atomic propositions granting our molecular propositions sense does not mean that anything goes.

More fundamentally, it might also be objected that this reading of dynamic limits conflicts with the view of simple objects and atomic facts in the *Tractatus*. These, after all, are supposed to be metaphysically foundational ontological structures, unalterable and prior to experience. Simple objects exist independently of anything being the case, and atomic facts are the sempiternal combinatorial possibilities of objects. If these are given once and for all, the same must be true of the limits of sense. This objection is the topic of the next chapter, where this supposedly metaphysical foundation is explored in more detail.
7 Objects and facts

As was discussed in the first chapter, Wittgenstein could be charged with generating the impression that his account of objects and facts constitute a metaphysical doctrine. Objects, and the forms of facts that they produce, could be read as necessary features of reality, features that remain constant across any possible change in the merely accidental facts. And several commentators take this view. Hacker (2015), for instance, finds in the *Tractatus* an account of metaphysical truth, albeit one that precludes its own expression. There are metaphysical truths, but they are beyond the limits of language, so expressing them results in nonsense. It is this tendency to read the *Tractatus* as a transcendental metaphysical project, combined with a paradoxical reversal in the closing remarks, that is susceptible to a wholesale critique in the form of the therapeutic interpretation.

Fundamental to the metaphysical reading is a specific understanding of how objects are supposed to delimit the range of possible facts. A clear expression of the view in question is given by Malcolm: “According to the *Tractatus*, if a name is assigned to an object, the use of that name in sentences must duplicate the form of that object. The possibilities of combination of that name with other names, in sentences that have sense, are determined by and exactly match the possibilities of combination of that object with other objects in states of affairs. What makes sense in language and thought is dependent on and derived from the nature of the objects” (1986, p. 14).

Additionally, since there is in principle a gap between the range of possible facts and the available combinations of names, nonsense results from illicit combinations. That is, nonsense results from attempting to combine names in ways in which objects cannot, as a matter of metaphysical fact, combine. The combinatorial possibilities of objects are “prior to the existence of human beings, of experience, of thought, of language” (Malcolm, 1986, p. 14). Thus, the limits of sense are given independently of language. These limits could potentially be represented, but we cannot do so using language, the sense of which presupposes the limits in question. The limits show themselves in the logical form of the world, through our nominal combinations mirroring objective combinatorial possibilities.

There are several remarks that might be taken to support this reading of objects: “Objects make up the substance of the world. That is why they cannot be composite” (*TLP* 2.021). “The
substance is what subsists independently of what is the case” (*TLP* 2.024) “Objects are what is unalterable and subsistent; their configuration is what is changing and unstable” (*TLP* 2.0271). In Hacker’s reading of the *Tractatus* and what he takes to be its conception of metaphysical truth, these comments are expanded: “Simple objects are the substance of the world – that which persists through all change. Change consists in the combination and separation of objects. Destruction consists in decomposition of complexes.” He adds this to a quote of the opening lines of the *Tractatus*: “The world consists of facts, not of things. It is everything that is the case, i.e. the totality of facts” (Hacker, 2015, p. 5).

There is considerable tension between the two sets of claims that Hacker makes here. This tension is a product of Hacker’s own addition, namely the idea that change consists in the combination and separation of objects, which is nowhere stated in the *Tractatus* itself. On the contrary, Wittgenstein makes a point by saying the world consists of facts, not things (*TLP* 1.1), but if change is identified with the recombination of objects, this recombination is apparently an empirical process. If so, facts are made up of empirical objects, in which case facts are empirical constellations of objects. The distinction between facts and things is thereby weakened to a distinction between complexes and objects. Since complexes themselves consist of objects, this would mean that the world were made up of things, not facts, despite Wittgenstein emphasizing the opposite.

As this shows, something is awry with this take on how objects are supposed to combine to form facts. The point is subtle, since Wittgenstein does say that atomic facts are combinations of objects (*TLP* 2.01). Perhaps he has some of the blame for confusion and disagreement among readers on this issue. The terminology in the first set of remarks of the *Tractatus* does not make it clear how objects are related to the subject of the later remarks, namely pictures. That is, the positioning makes it difficult to understand the remarks that objects “form the substance of the world” (2.021) and that this substance “is both form and content” (*TLP* 2.025). Even the apparently simple idea that objects are simple lends itself to varying interpretations.

The comments on objects fall under at least three different themes that are worth differentiating. Firstly, objects are simple, non-composite, and statements about complexes can be resolved into propositions about simples (*TLP* 2.02, 2.0201, 2.021). Secondly, objects have forms, including space, time and colour, which are possibilities of their occurring in states of affairs (*TLP* 2.0141, 2.0251), and which is independent of the possession of any particular material
properties (TLP 2.0231, 2.0232). Thirdly, objects in atomic facts “hang one in another, like links in a chain”, and the way in which they combine is the structure of the fact (TLP 2.03, 2.031, 2.032); objects are “both form and content” (TLP 2.025). This last comment is grouped under the third theme, since objects give form to the structure and content to the substance of the fact; in a similar way, links in a chain constitute the structure of the chain as well as its extension.

The idea the metaphysical interpretations seize upon is that objects are fixed, unchanging building blocks of facts. When Wittgenstein says this, however, it is as a consequence of the second theme just outlined. The objects have forms independently of their possessing any given material properties. For instance, an object will have the form of colour whether it is red or blue. It is with respect to possibility alone that objects are unalterable, which is because knowing an object means to know a range of possibilities (TLP 2.01231). Wittgenstein does not say objects are inherently the most basic parts of any physical structure. Whether or not a thing is part of another is a contingent matter, and whether it has any mereological relations at all presumably depends on whether it has a meronomical form. What is inherent to objects is that they together make up the structure of atomic facts, which is why statements about complexes can be resolved into propositions about objects. But this structure is not mereological. In contrast to Russell, Wittgenstein never thought of facts as complexes made up of parts (Palmer, 1996, p. 166).

It might be objected that it must be part of the early Wittgenstein’s doctrine that facts, and propositions among them, are complexes. After all, he says that the fact is composed of objects, just as the proposition is composed of signs that refer to these objects. The two share a structure. This, the objection goes, could only be so if the fact and proposition alike were both complexes. As Palmer (1996, p. 170) puts it, however, facts and propositions are for Wittgenstein complex, but not complexes. Wittgenstein explicitly makes the distinction: “Instead of, ‘The complex sign “aRb” says that a stands to b in the relation R’, we ought to put, ‘That “a” stands to “b” in

51 This is why Wittgenstein (TLP 2.0232) adds that “[i]n a manner of speaking, objects are colourless,” even though he had just declared that colour is among the forms of objects. The identity of an object is independent of material properties, but not which material properties it can have.
52 Wittgenstein would later give a chain as an example of complex. It consists of links, and not of links as well as their spatial relations (1931/1975, p. 302). It is a fact that the links have certain spatial relations, but this fact itself consists of nothing. He gives several other examples in an anti-Platonic vein: A red circle is not a complex composed of circularity and redness, nor is the fact that the circle is red composed of a circle and redness. Such anti-essentialist ideas are a recurring theme in Wittgenstein’s philosophy, and are incorporated in the Tractatus account of sense, as is argued by Palmer (1996).
a certain relation says that $aRb$” (TLP 3.1432). And the following remarks distinguish situations and facts from objects: “Situations can be described but not given names” (TLP 3.144). “Objects can only be named. Signs are their representatives. I can only speak about them: I cannot put them into words. Propositions can only say how things are, not what they are” (TLP 3.221).

This is one point at which Zalabardo’s (2015b) account of logical pictures, introduced in the first chapter, runs into issues. On Zalabardo’s conception, atomic propositions consist of names, properties, and relations, which are all treated as constituents of the proposition according to a certain mode of combination. The proposition is isomorphic to a situation, understood to contain the identical combination of correlated objects, properties, and relations. Although this account does bear a resemblance to Wittgenstein’s, for instance when he states that the proposition must share a “logical multiplicity” with what it represents, it seems to diverge from Wittgenstein’s view. One reason is that in order to achieve logical picturing, on Zalabardo’s account, the proposition and situation alike must be treated as complexes. This is required in order to treat the signs, properties, and relations as combinatorial components of the proposition. But this is precisely to ignore Wittgenstein’s insistence that it is only as a fact that the proposition has sense.

There is another related aspect of Zalabardo’s interpretation that’s equally questionable, regarding how parts of the proposition receive their meaning. On Zalabardo’s (2012) account, this is a matter of arbitrary stipulation. Logical picturing is understood as a two-step procedure, where the first is a determination of logical form, that is, the identification of a mode of combination of signs, their properties, and their interrelations. The second step is the assignment, through what Zalabardo (2012, p. 121) calls “proxy mapping”, of meanings to the signs. The names in the proposition are taken as arbitrary representatives of specific objects in the given combination. Logic has no bearing on this second stage of representation. But, as Kang (2016) argues, this division into stages seems to conflict with what Wittgenstein says of propositions and names, given that the sense of a proposition is meant to be entirely determined by the logical form it shares with the fact it represents.53

53 Bronzo (2016) argues Zalabardo commits the error Anscombe (1971, p. 25) warns against, namely to think of the Tractatus as the merely external conjunction of a pictorial theory of atomic propositions and a truth-functional theory of molecular propositions. This error is arguably reflected in Zalabardo’s understanding of names and objects. Given the idea that names are stipulated to stand for certain objects ad hoc, the relation between the molecular proposition and the fact it represents becomes non-pictorial.
White (2008) presents an account of simple objects that contrasts with those of Hacker and Malcolm.\textsuperscript{54} It is informed by Wittgenstein’s development of his views in his notebooks, and does not stand in tension with other parts of the \textit{Tractatus}. On the contrary, White (2008) argues that the necessity for simples is based on Wittgenstein’s conception of pictures. In particular, it is based on the view that pictures contain their representational relation to reality (\textit{TLP} 2.1513) and that it is an intrinsic property of a picture both that it is a picture and that it pictures whatever it does picture (White, 2008, p. 43). This logical dependence is implied by \textit{TLP} 2.0212, which states that if whether a proposition had sense depended on whether another was true, then “we could not sketch any picture of the world”. This, in White’s (2008) view, is the denied consequent of a \textit{modus tollens}.

White uses the example of a picture of Napoleon leading his army to Moscow, but the same point can be made with a statement such as “in 1812, Napoleon led his army to Moscow” (2008, p. 43). It must be possible to understand it, as a representation of a possible fact, independently of knowing whether the representation is accurate. Further, given that on Wittgenstein’s view a picture is meant to contain its representational relation to reality, and what it pictures is intrinsic to it, then what it represents cannot depend on any extrinsic facts. Plainly, whether Napoleon actually existed is an extrinsic fact. So, the picture must represent the same possibility independently of whether Napoleon existed.

This, White (2008) argues, is why Wittgenstein thinks the ability to picture Napoleon, and complexes in general, must be independent of their existence. To account for this, he takes pictures of complexes to be analysable into pictures of their constituents. This analysis takes off from a definition of the sign for the complex, which divides the internal representational relation of the picture into more basic relations, because “[e]very defined sign signifies \textit{via} those signs by which it is defined” (\textit{TLP} 3.261).\textsuperscript{55} By the same token, this analytic step also breaks what is represented, the complex, down into its constituents. There may be indefinitely many such steps, until we come to those elements breaking up which would cancel the representational relation entirely. Those are the simple signs.

If this is right, we can look to the \textit{Tractatus’} account of representational possibilities to inform

\textsuperscript{54} See also Ludwig (1975), who argues Wittgenstein positing objects is the expression of a metaphysical prejudice, dividing reality into an immovable foundation of unchanging objects underneath the contingent flux of facts. Ludwig traces this prejudice among philosophers back to Plato’s \textit{Theaetetus}.

\textsuperscript{55} So the analysandum stands in internal relations to the analysans: “A proposition about a complex stands in an internal relation to a proposition about a constituent of the complex” (\textit{TLP} 3.24).
its account of objects. As Ishiguro (1969, p. 41) argues, if we take propositions to be pictorial, signs for properties and relations are logically unnecessary. They can be expressed by features of the arrangement in which the names for the objects occur. For instance, instead of ‘Fa’, the sign ‘a’ can be written upside down. Instead of ‘ϕ(x, y)’, the ‘x’ and ‘y’ can be written one atop the other. Through these operations, the resulting propositional signs exhibit the same degree of articulation as what they replace, the former operation giving the sign ‘a’ a specific property, the latter relating the signs ‘x’ and ‘y’. Ishiguro understands this as part of the motivation for Wittgenstein’s treating names as fundamental elements of pictures: “[T]n any subject-predicate proposition which we can write as function of subject names it is essential to have constituents which stand for the subjects but it is not necessary to have a function sign” (Ishiguro, 1969, p. 41).

According to Ishiguro, however, names are not ultimately necessary ingredients in our representations, either. She argues that the simple signs constituting atomic propositions must, in effect, be dummy names. They are names introduced via definite descriptions, as in the geometric example “let a be the center of the circle C”. Once a dummy name has been introduced, there is no sense in supposing the object fails to have the property by reference to which it was introduced, though the name might fail to refer. Just as a is both a geometric argument and the stipulated center point of a circle, objects contribute not just form, but also content (TLP 2.025). It follows, if Ishiguro is right, that for every name, ‘x’, there is an atomic proposition of the form ‘ϕx’ that is true, e.g. ‘a is the center of the circle C’. And, therefore, "conditions for the use of the name ‘a’ is nothing more than the conditions which enable us to say ‘∃x(ϕx)’” (Ishiguro 1969, p. 46). This matches Wittgenstein’s statement of his view on names, which is not that they must exist, but only that they must be possible (TLP 5.526).

Ishiguro argues that the atomic proposition correlated with a name amounts to the proposition that a certain irreducible property is instantiated (1969, p. 49). The use of a name identifies an instantiation of such a property, and the same instantiation is identified with every use. Aligning with White’s account of simple objects as intrinsic to pictures, she concludes that names identify properties that hold of elements of representations. These properties are depicted independently of whether they exist; “to say that there are objects is nothing more than to say

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56 Wittgenstein (TLP 5.526) writes: “We can describe the world completely by means of fully generalized propositions, i.e. without first correlating any name with a particular object. Then, in order to arrive at the customary mode of expression, we simply need to add, after an expression like, ‘There is one and only one x such that . . . ’, the words, ‘and that x is a’.”
that there is something described, or presented by a diagram, picture, etc.” (Ishiguro, 1969, p. 49). In her view, the role of objects in the Tractatus does not, therefore, distance Wittgenstein from his later view that the meaning of a word can be explained as its use in language.\textsuperscript{57} Rather, it is right in line with it.

An illustration could help bring out the idea of objects as properties of elements of pictures. Suppose that there are cave paintings, two-dimensional spatial pictures, painted with marks of pigment. In this case, marks of pigment combine into spatial pictures. These marks are like names, and anything coordinated with a mark is a spatial object. However, this coordination is essentially dependent on the manner of combination. The way in which marks are combined in the painting determines the meanings of each of them. For instance, if marks of pigment are combined spatially like the body of a deer, a given mark may stand for its antlers. If marks combine to form the profile of a lynx, a given mark stands for one of its paws. This is so even if there is no differentiation of individual marks, in which case any given region of pigment names some region of the animal.\textsuperscript{58}

In the case of logical pictures, objects are not given independently and prior to names. They are given with, and by, the use of the names in the propositions. It follows that the arbitrary conventions, to which Wittgenstein appeals when talking of the coordination of names with objects, are not of the kind that Zalabardo (2012) describes. Zalabardo’s interpretation aligns Wittgenstein’s names, as simple signs, with mere external labels. That is, he takes signs to be combined in some way in the proposition, and then externally related to referents through proxy mapping. For Wittgenstein, reference is arbitrary and conventional, but it is not based on external stipulation. Reference is achieved as a result of the structure of the picture being so fine-grained, the relation among elements so specific, that the picture as a whole portrays something to which each element contributes.

Even though assigning meaning to the names is not a matter of arbitrary stipulation, everything hypothetical about picturing is a matter of logically arbitrary convention. In the above example this includes the idea that we make pictures with marks of pigment of certain shapes, painting

\textsuperscript{57} “For a large class of cases—though not for all—in which we employ the word "meaning" it can be defined thus: the meaning of a word is its use in the language” (Wittgenstein, 1953/1958, §43).

\textsuperscript{58} “Even if [...] every fact consists of infinitely many states of affairs and every state of affairs is composed of infinitely many objects, there would still have to be objects and states of affairs” (TLP 4.2211).
certain things and not others. In fact, for Wittgenstein, conventions play a deeper role than merely being norms for arbitrary referential relations. Conventions delimit which internal relations that are to constitute, independently of any stipulation, possibilities of representation. In the example given, marks of certain relative sizes and positions stand for parts with certain relative sizes and positions. In effect, conventions of picturing determine which objects there are to be represented at all, rather than merely choosing which signs are to be representatives of which objects.

The distinction between pictures, in general, and atomic propositions in particular, is a distinction between elements and names. In paintings, if elements are distinguishable at all, they are distinguished only as parts of the painting in question. There is no sense in which two paintings have the same elements, except that they may be visually similar. In contrast, the essential features of propositions are those that any proposition expressing the same sense have in common (TLP 3.341). Propositions consist essentially of parts that have a role towards determining the sense of the proposition, and these parts are identified with their way of determining the sense of propositions in general. As Ishiguro says, names identify a given property with every use.

To expound this idea, Wittgenstein uses terminology inspired by geometry. Logical space is the space in which everything is the case or not the case; possible facts are placed in logical space, just as possible points are placed in geometric space (TLP 3.411). Moreover, just as a place in geometric space can be determined by Cartesian coordinates, a place in logical space is determined by names. For instance, if ‘a’ and ‘b’ are names, ‘ab’ coordinates a logical place, designating a logical possibility. Now, unlike elements of a painting, names do not have to be combined in some specific way to designate a logical possibility. They just have to be combined: “One name stands for one thing, another for another thing, and they are combined

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59 So there are conventions for the forms of representation employed in spatial picturing, but conventions are a lot more intricate in the case of logical picturing: “Everyday language is a part of the human organism and is no less complicated than it. It is not humanly possible to gather immediately from it what the logic of language is. [...] The tacit conventions on which the understanding of everyday language depends are enormously complicated” (TLP 4.002)

60 From Wittgenstein notes: “The internal relation between the proposition and [the possible situation it represents], the method of symbolizing—is the system of co-ordinates which projects the situation into the proposition. The proposition corresponds to the fundamental co-ordinates. We might conceive two co-ordinates ap and bp as a proposition stating that the material point P is to be found in the place (ab). For this statement to be possible the co-ordinates a and b must really determine a place. For a statement to be possible the logical co-ordinates must really determine a logical place!” (1916/1961, 29.10.14).
with one another. In this way the whole group—like a tableau vivant—presents a state of affairs” (TLP 4.0311).

Determining the meaning of ‘a’ and ‘b’ does not amount to the specification of objects to which the names refer independently of any proposition. Rather, it amounts to finding the logical possibility that ‘ab’ designates, the place in logical space along the axis of ‘a’, and the axis of ‘b’, that the proposition pictures. For this to be so, the objects must come with their possibilities of combination. That is, when the contribution of the name to the logical picture is determined, the proposition is compared with others that contain everything else besides that name. For instance, the object a mentioned in ‘ab’ is given, not by what ‘a’ contributes to propositions in general, but specifically what it contributes to any proposition ‘ax’, where ‘x’ is substituted for other names. The object a is just what is invariant across those atomic facts.

On the most elementary level, assigning meaning to the parts and determining the sense of the whole amounts to one and the same task.

Wittgenstein states that all pictures are logical pictures, but only propositions have a logical pictorial form. This distinction is due to the distinction between names and objects. Spatial pictures, for instance, are arrangements of objects in space. That means that spatial pictures can be represented by propositions consisting of names that give coordinates in that space. Unlike other pictorial forms, the elements of the logical method of projection have a meaning that transcends a single picture. A name is a feature common to distinct propositions; this is the sense in which an object contains the possibility of a range of atomic facts. The arbitrary range of distinct propositions in which a name is employed determines all the forms of the object. If, for instance, we took ourselves to ascribe sound to a geometric point, we would be talking of another object that had this form.

Wittgenstein identifies the notion of mathematical multiplicity with that of a definite number of dimensions (TLP 5.475). Logical multiplicity adds to this distinguishable values along the dimensions (TLP 4.04). So, there are two roles he attributes to names that are essential to the method of projection of a proposition: (1) designating a form, the name’s dimension, (2) designating a content, the value along the dimension. Dimensions derive from the combination. The dimension of ‘a’ in ‘ab’ differs from the same name’s dimension in ‘ac’, but its value is the same. Conversely, the dimension of ‘a’ and ‘b’ are the same in ‘ac’ and ‘bc’, but their values along that dimension differ. Wittgenstein’s proposal of analysis, which reduces propositions to atomic propositions consisting of names expressing both form and content in this way, perfectly encapsulates the idea that a proposition shares logical multiplicity with a situation.

This exegetical claim is also argued, for instance, by Bronzo (2011).

“The name means the object. The object is its meaning. (“A” is the same sign as “A”.)” (TLP 3.203). The claim that objects contain the possibility of atomic facts is criticized in Malcolm (1986), but it is at worst a misleading expression of the idea that a name is common to a range of logical pictures.
The interpretation here agrees with Diamond (1991) in rejecting what she identifies as a realism about possibility in the reading of Hacker. There is no sense in supposing that an object has, “internal to it and independently of language, fixed possibilities of occurrence in kinds of fact” (Diamond, 1991, p. 194). This is nonsensical, in Wittgenstein’s view, and not just senseless, because it attempts to sever the internal connection between names and objects, failing to say anything about objects. The suggestion that language derives its representational capacity from pre-existing combinatorial possibilities of objects confuses the internal relations among pictures with external, albeit supposedly metaphysical, relations among objects. That misconstrual flows from the idea that names receive meanings independently of coordination in logical space.64

Wittgenstein writes that: “A proposition can determine only one place in logical space: nevertheless the whole of logical space must already be given by it. (Otherwise negation, logical sum, logical product, etc., would introduce more and more new elements—in co-ordination.)” (TLP 3.42). He also states that atomic propositions are truth-functions of themselves, and that they already contain all logical operations (TLP 5.47). Another way of putting this is that the atomic facts are all arranged in logical space by logical scaffolding. For instance, ‘Fa’ might describe an atomic fact located at the place designated by ‘abc’. This being so, the molecular proposition ‘¬Fa’ designates a different place, due to ‘a’ not being given the property F. The fact that names admit of composition allows for function and argument, which opens up for negation and other logical operations (TLP 5.47). This is what allows for the ordering of logical space, as the sign ‘¬abc’ would be equivalent to ‘xyz’, which is nowhere in logical space at all.

This might be taken to suggest that a proposition comes with the directly relevant logical

64 In a comparison of Wittgenstein and Heidegger, Braver (2014) writes that “one of the guiding ideas of the Tractarian system is that ‘the form of a word is the possibility of its occurrence in a proposition. Every such possibility must already be contained in the word. If all words are given to us, then all possible statements are given too.’ It is this verbal predestination that allows Wittgenstein to draw the limits of language once and for all by preventing anything genuinely new from occurring somewhere down the line” (Braver, 2014, p. 76). But when Wittgenstein talks about words here, he means words as they contribute to the sense of propositions. That is, he is thinking about how we determine what a proposition says, which depends on words already having meaning in the language.

Braver goes on to conflate propositions proper with logical propositions, taking Wittgenstein’s comment that there can never be surprises in logic because the process and result of deduction are equivalent to mean that the limits of language are drawn once and for all. For Wittgenstein, substantial change is possible, but it cannot be given by logic. Moreover, since the limits of language cannot be depicted, they are precisely not restricted within, or relative to, time or place. No matter how language or the world changes, whenever something is said, language delimits the world from within: “The force of a proposition reaches through the whole of logical space” (TLP 3.42). The fact that this is how his comments on limits of sense are to be understood shows that the label “logical atomism” sometimes given to the Tractatus is at least as misconceived as “logical holism”. The holism in question concerns only the logically foreseeable world, that which at any point is already constructable.
scaffolding, but the idea that the entire logical space is given with it is yet to be explained. As mentioned, for Wittgenstein, the atomic proposition is a function of names; ‘Fa’ is a function of ‘abc’, for example. From the above it is clear that, even though ‘Fa’ may have the same meaning as ‘Gb’ and ‘Hc’, provided they are functions of the same names, their senses differ. It is only when understood as truth-functions that atomic propositions resemble arrows; ‘Fa’, ‘Gb’, and ‘Hc’ are arrows from the same point, pointing in different directions. Though the positive possible facts that correspond to their truth are located in the same place, the negative facts corresponding to their negation are not.

A truth-operation divides logical space in two, one side being in the direction of the arrow, the other the opposite direction. That is, one side contains everything consistent with the result, the other everything inconsistent with it (TLP 4.463). This applies to atomic propositions as well, since ‘p’ says the same as ‘~p’. As a truth-function, the coordinates of p are not simply the names ‘abc’, but rather (p) (TF), where T is the condition of its truth and F is the condition of its falsity, as represented in a truth-table. The negation of ‘p’ is expressed by (p) (FT), the conjunction of ‘p’ and ‘q’ corresponds to (pq) (TFFF), the conditional from ‘p’ to ‘q’ corresponds to (pq) (TFTT), and so on. Truth conditions of molecular propositions bottom out in the fundamental coordinates, the combinations of names, but truth-operations organize the entire logical space around those coordinates.

A proposition ‘p’ intersects with any other; if it is true, it is true while the other is true, or true while the other is false, and ‘p’ has the same meaning in conjunction, disjunction, etc., as it does independently. So, the space presupposed by a proposition overlaps with the space presupposed by its consistent combinations. But this means that the place of other propositions must already be given with ‘p’. In fact, the entire space designated by propositions with which it can be combined in truth-operations is presupposed. This holds in general, so a proposition stakes out a place in logical space only relatively to all others. Consequently, names are logical coordinates in more than just a local sense, relating any given proposition to any other through operations. An atomic proposition gives half of logical space, divided at a

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65 Notably, therefore, all atomic facts are in a sense interdependent; see TLP 2.0122. It is important not to confuse the portion of logical space “given” or presupposed by ‘p’ with what it says. What is given by ‘p’ can be thought of as what is required of the symbolism for ‘p’ to have the sense it does.

66 Anscombe (1971, p. 75) has a good illustration of this: Imagine a globe upon which you fill in an area. By doing so, you eo ipso define the opposite, negative area. That doesn’t mean you say what is in the contrasting area. We can go further and add that the globe itself is only given when an area upon it is filled in, as any act of doing so (saying) presupposes the whole sphere of places which are not filled in.
particular point, its negation giving the other half.

The dimension associated with a name does not derive from its particular position in a propositional sign. There are good reasons to think Wittgenstein rejects the idea of logical places as given by specific arrangements of names. For one, that would apparently render propositions into complexes supplied with parts. For another, Wittgenstein says that atomic propositions are functions of names, not names and their arrangement. But this means that, for instance, ‘a’ in ‘ab’ is essentially distinguished from other possibilities for ‘b’, and ‘b’ is essentially distinguished from other possibilities for ‘a’. Still, the object for which a name is representative depends on the other names in the combination. This is reflected in Wittgenstein claim that the proposition ‘aRb’ should be thought of as the fact that ‘a’ stands in a certain relation to ‘b’. The fact that the signs are combined in a certain way is constitutive of the meaning of the names, the ordiates, themselves.

It could be argued that this fails to account for the pictorial nature of propositions. A spatial picture represents a possible situation in virtue of constituting a given arrangement of elements, which is taken to be shared with the situation. But atomic propositions are now said to be based on names without any arrangement. However, as Wittgenstein reflects in his notebooks, a difference between pictures and propositions is to be expected, given the fact that a picture cannot be negated: “And in this lies the difference between picture and proposition. The picture can serve as a proposition. But in that case something gets added to it which brings it about that now it says something. In short: I can only deny that the picture is right, but the picture I cannot deny” (1916/1961, 26.11.14).

What distinguishes pictures from propositions is that, although pictures can be placed in logical space, they do not place themselves. A particular place is designated only insofar as something is done to place it there. Wittgenstein’s argument is that a proposition automatically has the

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67 From Wittgenstein’s Notes on Logic: “Frege said ‘propositions are names’; Russell said ‘propositions correspond to complexes’. Both are false; and especially false is the statement ‘propositions are names of complexes’” (1916/1961, p. 93). Arrangements, such as x-to-the-left-of-y, are complexes.
68 TLP 4.24: “Names are the simple symbols: I indicate them by single letters (‘x’, ‘y’, ‘z’). I write elementary propositions as functions of names, so that they have the form ‘fx’, ‘φ(x, y)’, etc.”
69 See TLP 3.1432. The example is elaborated in the notes, where the relational sign is defined in terms of names: “A proposition must be understood when all its indefinables are understood. The indefinables in “aRb” are introduced as follows: (1) “a” is indefinable, (2) “b” is indefinable, (3) whatever “x” and “y” may mean, “xRy” says something indefinable about their meaning” (1916/1961, p. 98). So, ‘aRb’ is understood to calibrate names standing for objects a and b such that the object a has the relation R to b.
specificity required in order to “restrict reality to two alternatives: yes or no” (TLP 4.023), because it portrays through an immediate combination of names. Given the propositional sign ‘aRb’, both the relation R and the spatial relations between ‘a’, ‘R’, and ‘b’ are external. But there are any number of external relations among these signs, so the correlation would be just as indeterminate as in the case of a spatial picture. Rather, by externally relating ‘a’ and ‘b’, names are made to stand for objects with that relation. The question of whether objects are configured in that way is just the question of whether ‘aRb’ is true. A possible situation is depicted through its internal properties.

That certain names are connected signifies objects having a certain configuration. The atomic proposition presents a situation just like a picture, each name standing for objects differing in form and content, that is, in terms of position, colour, shape, sound, and so on. These are internal properties of the proposition because they are given by the names, rather than being differences in external properties independent of the proposition. But since the connection of names is immediate, it can be directly mirrored by objects in certain configurations, and vice versa. When objects stand in a given configuration, they identify a specific combination of names. 70 Recalling that the meaning of a proposition is the situation corresponding to it, regardless of it being true or false, the meaning of an atomic proposition is the obtainment or non-obtainment of an atomic fact.

The relation between a, b, and c presented by ‘abc’ is internal, not external. The coordinates show a place in logical space, saying nothing. In contrast, the atomic proposition ‘aRb’ shows the same place in logical space, but it also says something. The fact that the sign ‘a’ is to the left of ‘R’ and ‘b’ says that a has the relation R to b. The reason is that the names in the propositional sign are not combined as coordinates, but instead ‘a’ is externally related to ‘b’. So, a actually having that relation to b is not guaranteed by the propositional sign. When forming propositions of facts at ‘abc’, such as ‘Fa’ or ‘aRb’, the names are embedded in a pictorial fact with its own place in logical space. With ‘Fa’, ‘a’ is placed in logical space by giving it the property F, and with ‘aRb’, ‘a’ and ‘b’ are placed in logical space by giving one the relation R to the other.71

70 Again, this is a feature of names within a system of symbolism, not an independent power of objects.
71 The resulting pictures are the propositions. The propositional signs ‘Fa’ and ‘aRb’ have places in logical space that are distinct from that of the situations they depict, but propositions “reach right out” to what they depict (TLP 2.1511).
The manipulation of names delimits the form of the objects for which they stand. Given ‘a’ and ‘b’ as mere signs, relating them in a specific way assigns a form to their objects. For instance, giving ‘a’ the relation R to ‘b’ connects both ‘a’ and ‘b’ to ‘c’. However, this only delimits the form associated with ‘a’ and ‘b’, not the value. The content of ‘a’ and ‘b’ is not shown by ‘aRb’ itself, but is given as a consequence of these names standing in for specific objects. Since it is an arbitrary matter which of these names is exchanged for a technique of representation, what ‘a’ and ‘b’ means is identified with the features for which they are otherwise substituted. The result places a fact at ‘abc’. This explains what Wittgenstein really means by saying that names “stand in” for features of the pictured situation. Without anything standing in for objects, the would-be picture produces the full fact itself, without any differentiation that allows it to picture anything external to itself.72

So, ‘Fa’ and ‘aRb’ both picture the logical place designated by ‘abc’, but do this in distinct ways. The proposition ‘Fa’ projects a possible fact at ‘abc’ by the fact that ‘a’ is given the property F. The proposition ‘aRb’ projects a possible fact at ‘abc’ by the fact that ‘a’ is given the relation R to ‘b’. The two different propositional signs are superimposed on the same place, but they depict different facts. The two pictures differ in terms of their movable, non-constitutive elements, and for this reason what they say, as opposed to what they show, differs. They share meaning, but not sense.

If, instead of forming a proposition, ‘abc’ is presented as such, everything presented is constitutive. The names merely coordinate the logical place, involving no question of a match or mismatch. This shows two things. Firstly, the account of sense in the Tractatus is not aptly described as a correspondence theory. The propositional sign itself projects the possible situation that means it is true or false, with different methods of projection delimiting the situation in different ways. Secondly, the distinction between the internal and the external is derived from the distinction between showing and saying. For Wittgenstein, these distinctions do not presuppose a metaphysical division; rather, showing and saying are fundamentally different aspects of the practice of representation.

With this idea of logical space combined with nominal coordinates, Wittgenstein’s comments

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72 This is for instance also why Wittgenstein (TLP 4.243) stresses that, “[i]f I know the meaning of an English and a synonymous German word, it is impossible for me not to know that they are synonymous, it is impossible for me not to be able to translate them into one another.” The simple signs, at least, do not refer to something independent with which both would have to be correlated to establish synonymy.
on molecular propositions and complexes become clearer. A proposition about a complex is internally related to the atomic propositions about its constituents, so the atomic propositions are truth-functionally combined in order to give a picture of the complex. This means that the area in logical space making up the complex, which itself is made up of atomic facts, is pictured by the molecular proposition. Complexes are not represented by pictures one by one, or by any external relation, but they are pictured by truth-functions of atomic propositions. The upshot of this is that the Tractatus does not contain two independent theories, one about pictures and the other about truth-functions. Their internal connection is Wittgenstein’s theory of objects.

This reflects back on the interpretation of showing in the Tractatus. Showing cannot be a matter of expressing something that could be denied. What can be denied can be said, and therefore cannot be shown. Tautologies cannot be denied at the cost of saying nothing. Still, tautologies show limiting cases of combinations of signs through the process of coordination. For instance, ‘(Fa ∨ ~Fa)’ shows, firstly, a single place in logical space, that of Fa. Secondly, through the failure of the attempt at coordinating the disjunction, it is shown that ‘Fa’ and ‘~Fa’ are mutually inconsistent, which might otherwise not be apparent. One is presented with the workings of symbolism and the relevant representational techniques, which counteract each other. But tautology and the “zero-method” (TLP 6.121) are simply the clearest examples of a family of phenomena. Any operation expresses internal relations, and asserting propositions in general elucidates the objects or complexes which are their subject-matter (TLP 3.263).

Moreover, since names are coordinates for facts, logical space constitutes a mirror image of the world. This mirror image shows any possible fact that can be expressed linguistically. It presents the world sub specie aeternitatis and as a limited whole (TLP 6.45). Viewing the world in that way is to think of it as captured by any truth-function of atomic propositions. In other words, it is not a perspective from outside the world. Rather, it sees the world as limited from within. The limits of the world are shown, not through the apperception of a domain of possibilia external to the world, but through the application of truth-operations on the atomic propositions. Since facts are seen as truth-functionally interrelated, positive facts are seen to

73 And just as molecular propositions can be generated from atomic propositions, molecular propositions can be unravelled by counteracting the operations. The end result of such a procedure is always just a neutral collection of logical places, and not a conjunction or disjunction. The result shows places in logical space, but it does not say anything. The truth or falsity of the decomposed atomic propositions together determines whether a molecular fact is the case, but this can only be expressed by reapplying the truth-operations, that is, by asserting a molecular proposition. So, just as molecular propositions are results of applications of truth-operations on atomic propositions, atomic propositions can be thought of as null-points of truth-operations on molecular propositions.
comprise their own limit, the negative facts. For Wittgenstein, what is imaginable is rooted in our world.

Viewing the world as a limited whole is ultimately to integrate every picture into a single picture. As parts of a limited whole, all logical possibilities are internally related. Given that action is the expression of internal properties inherent in a given situation, viewing the world as a limited whole means to view the will as an expression of the world itself, and vice versa. From this point of view, as Wittgenstein writes, “I am my world” (TLP 5.63). However, the identity of life and world is not an identity between an inner and outer world, which would constitute solipsism, but precisely the rejection of the sense of this metaphysical distinction. All propositions are merely the results of iterated application of the N-operation to atomic propositions, and for Wittgenstein this shows that the subject extends through, and between, any logically foreseeable situation. So, insofar as the will is ethically good or bad, it moves beyond this stasis. Ethically speaking, action alters the limits of the world, not merely what is the case (TLP 6.43).

Sullivan writes that the method of analyzing propositions as combinations of names leads us to “recast objects, from the presumed role of things we have to make sense of, to [...] elements in the sense we make” (2011, p. 173). For Wittgenstein, in contrast to Kant, objects are not ineffable noumena. The indefinable signs in our propositional signs, the names, function as representatives of objects, allowing the translation of configurations of objects back into propositions. By bringing logical order into the world, we bring the world into logical space. This is why there is no representation of logical form. For, in order to picture logical form, “we should have to be able to station ourselves with propositions somewhere outside logic, that is to say outside the world” (TLP 4.12).

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74 This would picture negative molecular facts alongside positive ones, and as a proposition it would be a contradiction. That would be so if its senselessness could be decided, which it couldn’t, as it is meant to capture the entire logical space without remainder: “The sense of the world must lie outside the world. In the world everything is as it is and happens as it does happen. In it there is no value—and if there were, it would be of no value” (TLP 6.41). Viewing the world as a limited whole means the universal application of logical operations, treating facts as internal properties and changes as internal relations. Even a change from an atomic fact to its negation’s being the case then constitutes a fundamental change from one world to another. The opposite of this perspective decomposes molecular facts into independent atomic facts.

75 If action alters the world ethically, its significance resides in the internal relation between the world, as a limited whole, and the altogether different one to which the action leads (TLP 6.43). The world that is already given as a limited whole is the solipsistic world of pure realism, a world coextensive with oneself as a willing subject. Within this world, there is no value. Consequently, value does not arise from self-effacing solipsism, but from transcending solipsism. A related reading is developed by Kremer (2004).
As has been explicated in previous chapters, molecular propositions are merely the result of applications of truth-operations on atomic propositions. Atomic and molecular facts are, as it were, on the same level. But, since atomic propositions are simply manipulations of names and coordinates, objects and facts are also on the same level. For Wittgenstein, the world does not consist of objects, parts of a pre-empirical and metaphysical realm, combining into contingent facts. Rather, our propositions are contingent because there are alternatives; they designate a place in a space of possibilities, each other possibility likewise being designated by a proposition. When we form what appears to be an *a priori* truth or falsehood, the sentence gives us no coordinates, offering no waymarks; it contains no path to a possibility in logical space. In this case, no situation is depicted.

This carries implications for the interpretation of the final remarks of the *Tractatus.* Metaphysics is an attempt at saying something that cannot be denied. That is, the theorist attempts to produce a proposition for which there is no question of negation. If successful, this would mean that the composition of names was not finalized, in which case the utterance remains inert. How it is supposed to relate to logical space as a whole is unclear. However, this in itself does not constitute a problem. The issue can only be the demands made on the would-be picture or pseudo-proposition in question. The issue is with taking such a sentence to have a place in logical space, to say something, when it does not. So, whether Wittgenstein’s own remarks have this status depends on how they are treated.

One alternative takes them to say something, attempting to apply a method of projection. Given this treatment, the *Tractatus* by its own lights constitutes a series of sentences in which little sense could be found, excluding some of the remarks on language. The other alternative does what Wittgenstein recommends, throwing away the ladder after it has been ascended (*TLP* 6.54). This attitude grasps the elucidations, letting go of Wittgenstein’s would-be propositions as a result. But it is only the appearance of sense that is thrown away. The remarks themselves remain as measures devised to show the logic of our language. From there, it is up to the reader to continue to the second part of the *Tractatus.* That part is the one which Wittgenstein, upon explaining his project, says he had left conspicuously unwritten: “And precisely this second part is the important one. My book draws limits to the sphere of the ethical from the inside, as it were, and I am convinced that this is the *only* rigorous way of drawing those limits.”

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76 From Wittgenstein’s 1919 letter to Ludwig von Ficker, editor of *Der Brenner.*
8 Conclusion

There are multiple trains of thought distinguishing this interpretation from most others. One is the understanding of the atomic proposition, which is intimately bound up with the notion of logical space. The atomic proposition consists of names, which function as coordinates in logical space. It is this basic insight that led Wittgenstein to deduce further views on the nature of objects, including the idea that objects link together directly to form facts. The nature of the simples of the Tractatus is a disputed issue, and if the preceding interpretation is right, a deflationary reading is advised. That is, the existence of objects is, for Wittgenstein, equivalent to language having pictorial capacity. The fact that we use a certain name gives us a certain object, because the name is constitutive of the object as a possible feature of atomic facts. In Wittgenstein’s terminology, it would be as nonsensical to talk of objects in the absence of a system of symbolism as it would be to talk of a symbolism in the absence of objects.

Both the form and the content of facts is designated by the names in the atomic proposition. The holding of an external relation between ‘a’, ‘R’ and ‘b’ in the sign ‘aRb’ expresses, not that ‘R’ stands for a correlated relation in an atomic fact, but that certain internally related objects are combined. The internal relations among objects are just internal relations among propositions in which their names occur.\(^77\) The atomic proposition asserted by combining those names expresses, as a consequence, that a specific external relation holds between objects. So, form is not fundamentally separable from content. There are, for instance, exactly three

\(^77\) The propositions ‘aRb’ and ‘cRd’ stand in the internal relation shown by the propositional variable ‘xRy’. For instance, with ‘R’ meaning “is taller than”, it is an external relation that this table is taller than this chair, but the height of the table being greater than the height of the chair is an internal relation. This is reflected in how the analysis of “this table is taller than this chair” is meant to proceed. The statement is factorized into propositions involving a specific unit of length. These propositions are conjoined, and the exponent of this operation is the given value of height of the respective complexes (see TLP 6.02). What is contingent is the height of the respective complexes, not whether one height is greater than the other.

After discussions with Ramsey, Wittgenstein realizes his account of atomic propositions runs into trouble. One sort of problem concerns contrasts. The propositions “this patch is red” and “this patch is blue” can’t be analyzed as logically independent pictures, because logical operations fail to mirror their mutual exclusivity. A related problem has to do with measuring standards or units, as in the case of height mentioned above. Measuring is understood on the model of counting; in a proposition ‘∃xyz(Fx ∧ Fy ∧ Fz)’, three distinct objects are mentioned. But, while this proposition could say there are three apples in a bowl, it could not describe three units of height. This would require that these units weren’t identical. Nor can an equality of length be expressed as a relation among the objects themselves, as this would lead to an infinite regress. Wittgenstein (1929) acknowledges that atomic propositions can exclude one another, but it isn’t until later that he rejects logically independent propositions altogether, coming to see pictures as parts of grammatical systems that involve common standards.
propositions resulting from binary combinations of ‘a’, ‘b’, and ‘c’, such as ‘aRb’, ‘aLc’ and ‘bMc’. That both logical form and content is inherent in atomic propositions, means propositions show what they say even when we don’t know if they are true.

In general, the early Wittgenstein views language as a set of conventions for calibrating names in propositions, and by so doing coordinating facts in logical space. Logic allows the transition from one proposition to another, leaving the names unchanged. So, logic is not a descriptive endeavour, but allows the combination of propositions by means of truth-operations. Truth-operations have propositions as bases and as results, the truth or falsity of the latter depending on the truth or falsity of the former. Inference sheds layers of truth-operations, simplifying propositions. In other words, logic increases or decreases the level of sophistication of the process of coordinating atomic facts. More importantly, however, logic forms internal relations between atomic propositions. For instance, the simple truth-operation of negation separates one set of coordinates out from others. Without this logical scaffolding, we would have no system of coordination whatsoever.

Consequently, Wittgenstein sees logic not just as a means of forming complex propositions, but as a means of relating facts to each other in the world. The endpoint of this is that logic enables us to view the world, not as a series of atomic facts, nor even as a collection of complexes, but as pictured by the general form of proposition. The general form of proposition is common to any proposition that has been constructed out of another, which Wittgenstein expresses uniformly by the N-operation. Again, therefore, logic is not viewed as the base or result of a process of thinking, but the process itself. Viewing the world as a limited whole is to be able to go anywhere with one’s thinking, that is, to form any kind of picture by using the names at one’s disposal.

With this reading in mind, certain remarks should be read in a new light. One example is the set of remarks TLP 2.022-2.0231: “It is obvious that an imagined world, however different it may be from the real one, must have something—a form—in common with it. Objects are just what constitute this unalterable form. The substance of the world can only determine a form, and not any material properties. For it is only by means of propositions that material properties are represented—only by the configuration of objects that they are produced.” Any imagined world is still a world that is constructed out of representational materials available within our world. We literally cannot foresee, or construct logically, any world with objects differing from our own, because our names and our objects are mutually constitutive. This means only that we
could not imagine the result of fundamental changes to the world beforehand, not that it could not occur.

The problem with nonsense is not that there are some combinations of names to which no possible configuration of objects corresponds, nor more generally that there are some combinations of names that are illicit. Rather, there are uses of language that fail to coordinate facts, failing to specify any combination of names. A clear example of this is a sign for an internal relation, such ‘\(xRy\)’. While this sign shows what is common to ‘\(aRb\)’, ‘\(cRd\)’, and so on, there is nothing to which it corresponds, and so it is nonsensical. More deeply, the fact that ‘\(xRy\)’ is nonsensical is essential to it, as a sign showcasing an internal rather than external relation, to the extent that it fails to have this function if it is taken to say anything. This settles the issue of interpreting TLP 6.54 squarely in the favor of an elucidatory reading along the lines of McGinn (2006). As Wittgenstein says, the reader is meant to “transcend these propositions, and then he will see the world aright” (TLP 6.54).

If the preceding reading is along the right lines, Wittgenstein does not, as is sometimes argued, identify ethics with any form of self-effacing solipsism. There is nothing theoretically true or false about solipsism. The subject posited by solipsism is a point without extension, an origin around which the world is coordinated in logical space. When Wittgenstein says that there is something correct about what the solipsist means, the point is not that it is true in and of itself, but that the application of the N-operation shows that solipsism and pure realism converge. Consistent application of logical operations brings out logical space as a limited whole, but the one who applies the operations is nowhere to be found within this space. This argument culminates in the recognition that world and life are one. It is important to note that Wittgenstein explicitly says “life”, here, not “mind” (TLP 5.621). Logical space is delimited by the life and language of the acting subject.

However, this combination of world and life itself empties the world of value. Logical operations apply independently of anything being the case or not being the case, and so independently of either situation being valuable. Actions patently lack ethical value insofar as they are understood as expressions of a presupposed base and a logically derived result. That is to say, logic cannot tell us whether anything is or is not valuable. Like much that Wittgenstein writes, this argument has both an explicit, negative side, and an implicit, positive one. He adds that ethical and aesthetical value are one and the same, both being transcendental. Implicitly,
ethics must consist in non-logical internal relations between events, and aesthetics in non-logical internal properties of facts.\textsuperscript{78}

The logical view of the world, treating it as a limited whole, renders it fundamentally changeable, rather than changeable in detail. Whereas what is the case is irrelevant to the application of truth-operations, changes to the world \textit{sub specie aeternitatis} express internal relations between two entirely distinct worlds. From this point of view, action gains inherent value only insofar as it expresses a difference between worlds. The good or bad exercise of the will makes the world “wax and wave as a whole” (\textit{TLP 6.43}). When Wittgenstein says this, he is not describing a psychological accompaniment of action, but alluding to the actual result of ethical change. The important point here is that Wittgenstein’s philosophy of logic and his fragmented comments on ethics form parts of the same doctrine, according to which the limits of the world are timeless, but not static.

Changes in the world express ethical reward or punishment, a change in the direction of happiness or unhappiness, insofar as they alter the structure of the world. That is, because they alter the limits of the world, such changes also alter the subject, in Wittgenstein’s philosophical sense of that term. However, it is precisely such changes that cannot be logically foreseen, nor even described after the fact. The value of a given action, object, or event is, for Wittgenstein, not something that could be determined by theory. So, what is the fate of philosophy?

Wittgenstein (\textit{TLP 4.113-4.115}) offers some suggestions:

\begin{quote}
“\textit{Philosophy sets limits to the much disputed sphere of natural science. It must set limits to what can be thought; and, in doing so, to what cannot be thought. It must set limits to what cannot be thought by working outwards through what can be thought. It will signify what cannot be said, by presenting clearly what can be said.}”
\end{quote}

Although Wittgenstein assigns a distinct role to philosophy, distinguished from that of scientific representation, the method he recommends is not strictly speaking divorced from science. Rather, philosophy is supposed to work through the possibilities of scientific representation, outwards, to the limits of sense. By doing so, and by making it clear when these limits are

\textsuperscript{78} Logic, ethics, and aesthetics are all transcendental(\textit{TLP 6.13} and \textit{TLP 6.421}). It is, strictly speaking, incoherent to speak of “non-logical internal relations/properties”, since such features could only be shown, case-by-case, but that’s the point. Wittgenstein delimits ethics and aesthetics by contrast with logic. There is no reason to suspect that Wittgenstein thinks that value, in the ethical or aesthetical sense, is unreal. Besides the apparent textual and biographical evidence that count against an attribution of this view to Wittgenstein, this would be akin to saying that, since “Fa” and “Gb” are not logically related, being functions of distinct names, there is no difference between them. That does not follow, even if we cannot say what their relation is.
reached, philosophy should present the limits of science. Philosophy can not only show where nonsense takes over for sense, but, perhaps more positively, counteract the “superstitious” belief in the causal nexus (TLP 5.1361).

Even if certain aspects of the reading presented in this thesis were mistaken, many of the connections that have been highlighted would be worth exploring further. For instance, the connection between internal relations and the will led Wittgenstein to his comments on the philosophical subject and the relationship between the self and the world. The distinction between the picture, as an inert point in logical space, and the proposition with sense, led him to think of metaphysics as a confusion of showing and saying. Exploring these connections could help elucidate the early Wittgenstein’s views on indirect speech, his concept of elucidation, operations, the “New Logic” which makes do without a sign for identity, and, ultimately, the entire idea of language being pictorial.

The relationship between Wittgenstein’s early and later work is another issue that is potentially illuminated by these connections. Although Wittgenstein retains the concept of internal relations, he comes to reject the idea of language having a substratum. He exchanges logically vertical analysis for grammatically horizontal investigations. That being said, the rejection of atomic propositions is restricted to their status as logically independent. This change involves a relatively disconnected part of the structure of the Tractatus. Rather than a wholesale repudiation, Wittgenstein’s later emphasis on grammar is a further development of other views found already in his early work. He expands the range of internal relations between pictures to include a wide range of grammatical and anthropological relations. In short, from identifying the scope of language with the limits of our lives as individuals, Wittgenstein comes to construe language in terms of entire forms of life. A change in how the former is understood accordingly changes how the latter should be understood, the elaboration of which is a task left for the future.
Literature


