INFORMED BY SILENCE

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by

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Abstract

Wittgenstein in his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* seeks to demonstrate the activity of purging from philosophical and scientific discourse all expressions of thought that are not stated clearly in a way that allows their veracity to be determined through truth-functional analysis; however, he concedes the language in which he expresses this project falls short of his standard for acceptable discourse and therefore cannot define his project didactically. This apparent contradiction has fostered both criticisms and reinterpretations of the *Tractatus*. The critic Gellner on this ground dismisses the text as meaningless while Feibleman faults Wittgenstein for denying rather than embracing the metalanguage the *Tractatus* employs along with its metaphysical implications. Those reinterpreting Wittgenstein's project read into the *Tractatus* elements he expressly rejects: Kantians such as Pears, the synthetic *a priori* and a transcendental standpoint; phenomenologists such as Black, reflexivity; and semiotical analysts such as Brown, a triadic rather than gapless dyadic relation of world, language and meaning. Nieli's and Edwards' presentations expose Wittgenstein's predilection for the ineffable truths of religion, ethics and esthetics for which the *Tractatus* clears a space in limiting sensible discourse to propositions of natural science. In this light, one must take seriously Wittgenstein's rejection of the metaphysical discourse the *Tractatus* employs, thereby allowing what Wittgenstein leaves to silence to inform debates regarding criticisms and reinterpretations based on what are clearly false readings of the *Tractatus* as a

metaphysical treatise: in other words, letting the message of what he does *not* say show what is *not* meant by what he *does* say. As Marion demonstrates, Wittgenstein's idea – that one can never say what philosophy is but can only do it – is expressed and evolves during Wittgenstein's lifetime in his treatment of mathematics as anti-Platonist constructivism employing operations without classes. Following through on the radical implications of this approach, Wittgenstein abandons his *Tractarian* belief in a solitary pure transformational language of scientific discourse in favour of multitudinous ordinary language games. Wittgenstein's final anti-standpoint leaves him vulnerable to charges his approach is nonrational and mystical.

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For any errors, misinterpretations and misrepresentations this document may contain, I bear sole responsibility.

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Chapter I - Introduction

The *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, on Wittgenstein's account in the book's Preface, functions to "draw a limit... to the expression of thoughts"[1] in order to deem nonsensical and purge from philosophical discourse all expressions of thought that are not stated clearly. The *Tractatus* itself is, of course, an expression of thoughts – thoughts Wittgenstein holds to have "*truth*"[2] but whose expression in this book, he concedes, has "fallen far short of the possible"[3]. By implication, Wittgenstein is warning readers at the outset that the book he has crafted for the express purpose of delimiting the expressibility of thoughts may have itself transgressed that limit by failing to state the thoughts behind it with sufficient clarity and sensibility and thereby fallen into nonsensical discourse. This potential failing of the book would be a fatal one for the *Tractatus* on its own terms for the reason of logical necessity were it not for the fact that Wittgenstein evidently leaves open the possibility that thought can transcend clear expressions of thought. The book, he says, functions to draw a limit "not to thinking, but to the expression of thoughts; for, in order to draw a limit to thinking we should have to be able to think both

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[1] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. C.K. Ogden (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 27.

[2] *Tractatus*, p. 29. [emphasis Wittgenstein's]

[3] *Tractatus*, p. 29.

sides of this limit (we should therefore have to be able to think what cannot be thought)"[4]: that is to say, while one cannot think beyond the limit of thought, one can indeed think beyond the limit of the clear expression of thoughts as one must do in order to determine where that limit of expressibility should be drawn. Moreover, he states that the *Tractatus* "will perhaps only be understood by those who have themselves already thought the thoughts which are expressed in it"[5]. Clearly, then, he believes that while any articulation that transgresses the limit of the expressibility of thought is "nonsense"[6], thought can nonetheless clearly think that which has not been clearly articulated. In other words, that a statement is nonsensical is not sufficient reason to judge the thoughts it purports to represent to be meaningless. So, while Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* may well fail to express with clarity some or all of the thoughts it purports to represent and therefore fall into nonsense to the extent that it fails in this regard, yet the thoughts it purports to represent may be no less true, on Wittgenstein's view, than if they had been expressed with clarity. Though he challenges others to "come and do it better"[7] by expressing with greater clarity the thoughts behind it, Wittgenstein seems content for the time being that his *Tractatus* should serve to point out that there is a limit to the expressibility of thought, even if it fails to define that limit adequately.

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[4] *Tractatus*, p. 27. [parentheses Wittgenstein's]

[5] *Tractatus*, p. 27.

[6] *Tractatus*, p. 27.

[7] *Tractatus*, p. 29.

Chapter II - Transcending Articulability:

What What Wittgenstein Doesn't Say Says

Wittgenstein intends, in his *Tractatus*, to lay the groundwork for a new pure language of inquiry that reflects the primacy of the propositional function. On his analysis, everything in the world is divided into two aspects: the objective and the logical. The objective aspect involves simple objects, which are real — but these objective simples are not the basic elements of experience. Experience encounters these simples already combined, as complexes that he calls facts.[8] All facts are finite combinations of objective simples. The world is nothing more than the totality of facts. The other aspect, the logical, is also composed of simples, which he calls names — but these names are not the basic elements of logical experience. Experience encounters these simples already combined, as complexes he calls propositions.[9] The general form of a proposition is: Such and such is the case.[10] Elementary propositions – the simplest propositions – are truth-functions of themselves, and the act of verifying the proposition consists of determining whether the "such and such is the case" that the proposition asserts is true or

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[8] *Tractatus*, section 1.1 and following.

[9] *Tractatus*, section 3.1 and following.

[10] *Tractatus*, section 4.5.

One who seeks to critique Wittgenstein's project on its own terms, then, is charged with the rather difficult task of rescuing thoughts Wittgenstein takes to be true from language expressing those thoughts that Wittgenstein calls inadequate. How does one analyze thoughts the author purports to be true when the expression of those thoughts that becomes the focus of such a critique is, by the author's own admission, to some extent nonsensical under the very notion of 'nonsense' that the work defines? If language is not a vehicle adequate to the task of articulating the position, then with what other vehicle can the position be presented for analysis? Moreover, can a position that transcends expressibility become the proper subject of rational philosophical discourse at all, or is it, rather, a religious doctrine that can be accepted only on the basis of faith or a mystical epiphany of some sort? It is with questions such as these in mind that some analysts have rejected the *Tractatus* as internally incoherent. Others, to save the work, have read into certain propositions of the *Tractatus* general conclusions about the author's intent that seem to contradict other propositions in the text, especially those warning against the embrace of metaphysical discourse. Conclusions based on generally indefensible readings of the *Tractatus*, it will be argued, are false.

The present thesis is that it is possible to salvage Wittgenstein's project as defined in the Preface to the *Tractatus* – that is, to successfully show a truth without articulating it – by allowing that which Wittgenstein relegates to silence to inform contradictory and therefore indefensible readings of his text. Put another way, the thesis is that what what

Wittgenstein doesn't say says shows what what Wittgenstein says doesn't say and thereby demonstrates the efficacy of demonstration for the conveyance of truth. To accomplish the task, it will be useful to present fair analyses of, first, the place of silence in the *Tractatus*; second, the place of nonsense in the *Tractatus*; third, certain critical reinterpretations of the *Tractatus*; and, fourth, the place of mathematics in the *Tractatus*. On its way to proving the thesis, this project will show:

I. that Wittgenstein's project in the *Tractatus* is vulnerable to the charge that it is grounded in unarticulated, ineffable epiphany;

II. that the project not only contains fundamental contradictions that leave it unclear and therefore, in Wittgenstein's terms, nonsensical but, moreover, that these 'nonsensical' assertions are so integral to the project that its prospects survive or fall on theirs;

III. that the project does not survive if reinterpreted as a 'critique' in the Kantian sense, a 'phenomenology' in the Husserlian sense, or a work of semiotics; and

IV. that Wittgenstein, to rescue the intent of his project, must undertake a shift in approach – a shift that is epitomized by his shift in approach regarding mathematics.

false. General propositions, in turn, are truth-functions of elementary propositions.[11] There is a perfect correspondence between true propositions and facts, and that correspondence is a pictorial correspondence such that true propositions depict facts.[12] Nothing can be said of any meaning or truth about the world that is not a true proposition about a fact. One cannot encounter the world meaningfully in the absence of this correspondence: true propositions and facts are the indivisible aspects of every experience. Experience is in this way apprehended at all times pictorially.

While on Wittgenstein's analysis the world has this duality of aspects, he does not maintain that there is a real duality of realms. The factual and propositional aspects of reality are not themselves facts. The factual and propositional aspects of reality are indivisible features of a world we apprehend as a unified totality. There is no sense in which we can have one without the other. This presents a special challenge for Wittgenstein as he writes the *Tractatus*, for he is attempting to present in propositional discourse, not a fact of reality, but an explanation of what propositional discourse has in common with the factual reality is depicts. Since the objects of philosophical discourse are encountered as facts nowhere in the world, therefore philosophical discourse fails to

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[11] *Tractatus*, section 5 and following.

[12] *Tractatus*, section 2.1 and following.

meet the test of that which can be stated sensibly and clearly.[13] Wittgenstein makes clear the logical relation binding propositionally-articulated pictures of facts to the facts they depict cannot itself be articulated in clear, truth-functional propositional discourse.[14]

So, while Wittgenstein, in making this point, calls into question the validity of much if not all of the great corpus of philosophical discourse preceding his work, he also cannot avoid calling into question the *Tractatus* itself. Indeed, he evidently concedes this very point when he writes, in the penultimate section of this work:

> My propositions are elucidatory in this way: he who understands me finally recognizes them as senseless, when he has climbed out through them, on them, over them. (He must so to speak throw away the ladder, after he has climbed up on it.)
>
> He must surmount these propositions; then he sees the world rightly.[15]

The function of philosophy, then, is neither to produce a corpus of true propositions about the world (for this is the activity of natural science[16]) nor to produce in propositional language an explanation of how true propositions present a picture of the world (for this

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[13] *Tractatus*, section 4.003.

[14] *Tractatus*, section 4.12 and following.

[15] *Tractatus*, section 6.54. [parentheses Wittgenstein's]

[16] *Tractatus*, section 4.11.

cannot be stated[17]); rather, philosophy is the activity of making propositions clear.[18] On his view, philosophy exposes the logical form of reality – that is, how propositions picture the world – in an indirect way by making propositions clear and sensible.[19] Propositions that purport to state what philosophy does are not truth-functional, depict nothing in the world and, therefore, have no sense.

Donald Peterson analyzes the way in which Wittgenstein divides possible discourse into three categories: representational language, which is comprehended by truth-propositional discourse and covers the breadth of natural science; non-representational language, which has proper syntactical form but whose propositions have no 'sense' (evidently meaning in this case they have no 'reference'); and nonsensical language, which comprises the pseudo-representational statements of ethics, esthetics, religion[20] and, arguably, metaphysics. In order for this division of discourse to be valid, it must be inarticulable, for the only kind of discourse that can purport to describe this division is the pseudo-representational, whose statements are nonsensical.

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[17] *Tractatus*, section 4.12.

[18] *Tractatus*, section 4.112.

[19] *Tractatus*, section 4.121.

[20] Donald Peterson, *Wittgenstein's Early Philosophy: Three Sides of the Mirror* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), pp. 166-167.

Wittgenstein's harsh judgment on the veracity of traditional (though not his own) philosophical discourse was bought freely by adherents of the movement, situated largely in Vienna, that came to be known as logical positivism. The Vienna Circle of logical positivists included Rudolf Carnap who, in 1932, published in the Circle's journal, *Erkenntnis*, the definitive and influential article of the movement entitled "Die Überwindung der Metaphysik durch logische Analyse der Sprache" (which is, in translation, "The Overcoming of Metaphysics through the Logical Analysis of Language") in which he argued that

> [t]hrough the development of modern logic it has become possible to give a new and sharper answer to the question of the validity and justification of metaphysics.... In the realm of metaphysics (including all value-theory and norm-science) logical analysis leads to the negative conclusion that *the alleged statements in this area are totally meaningless*. Thus is achieved a radical victory over metaphysics, which, from the earlier anti-metaphysical standpoints, was not possible.[21]

By "meaningless", Carnap means "pseudo-statement" (*Scheinsatz*), where a pseudo-statement contains either meaningless words or meaningful words strung together in defiance of the rules of proper syntax, in either case rendering the statement incapable of being judged according to truth-functional logic. "The meaning of a statement lies in the method of its verification"[22], where verification is grounded in empirical observation and

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[21] Rudolf Carnap, "Die Überwindung der Metaphysik durch logische Analyse der Sprache", *Erkenntnis*, Band 2, Heft 4, p. 220, trans. Arthur Pap. In Nieli, p. 7. [emphasis and parentheses in the document quoted; brackets mine]

[22] Carnap, *Erkenntnis*, p. 236. In Nieli, p. 8.

the logical derivation of statements on the basis of defined 'protocol statements'. Carnap in this way dismisses as meaningless such concepts as metaphysics, God, the thing-in-itself, and a host of other such terms of speculative metaphysics.

Russell Nieli[23] has noted that Carnap's polemic against metaphysics is here far stronger than the conciliatory approach to metaphysics laid out in his book *Der logische Aufbau der Welt* published four years earlier. Carnap – in the Foreword of the second edition of the *Aufbau* and elsewhere – credits Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* for his adoption of the more polarized view that comes to characterize logical positivism. Yet, Carnap later comes to recognize that he and Wittgenstein do not see eye-to-eye on the purpose of the *Tractatus*. Carnap indicates in his "Intellectual Autobiography" that something about Wittgenstein's approach bothered him. In Carnap's view, Wittgenstein not only had the "attitude" and "point of view" of "a creative artist... a religious prophet or a seer", but also defended both religion itself and the metaphysical statements of a speculative philosopher against attacks by a member of the Vienna Circle.[24] Carnap indicates he had a suspicion upon first meeting Wittgenstein that the author who so greatly influenced him

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[23] Russell Nieli, *Wittgenstein: From Mysticism to Ordinary Language: A Study of Viennese Positivism and the Thought of Ludwig Wittgenstein* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1987).

[24] Rudolf Carnap, "Intellectual Autobiography", *The Philosophy of Rudolf Carnap*, Paul Arthur Schlipp (ed.) (LaSalle, Illinois: Open Court Publishing Co., 1963), pp. 25-27. In Nieli, pp. 64-65.

regarded science and mathematics, not in the manner of the members of the Vienna Circle, but in contrast with "an attitude of indifference and sometimes even with contempt"[25]. Carnap stated:

> [e]arlier, when we were reading Wittgenstein's book in the Circle, I had erroneously believed that his attitude toward metaphysics was similar to ours. I had not paid sufficient attention to the statements in his book about the mystical because his feelings and thoughts in this area were too divergent from mine. Only personal contact with him helped me to see more clearly his attitude at this point.[26]

W.D. Hudson also paraphrases Engelmann's description of the divergence, saying "whereas the logical positivists thought that what we can speak about is all that matters in life, Wittgenstein believed all that really matters to be precisely what we must be silent about".[27]

This divergence of views distinguishing Wittgenstein from Carnap and other logical positivists is critical. Historically, the positivist movement is mortally wounded by the criticism that its very existence rests on the use of language that fails to meet the rigid tests laid out in positivist documents for determining whether propositions make

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[25] Carnap, "Intellectual Autobiography", p. 28. In Nieli, p. 66.

[26] Carnap, "Intellectual Autobiography", p. 27. In Nieli, p. 68. [brackets mine]

[27] W.D. Hudson, "The Light Wittgenstein Sheds on Religion", *Aesthetics, Ethics and Religion*, Volume 14 of *The Philosophy of Wittgenstein*, John V. Canfield (ed.) (New York: Garland, 1986), p. 342.

sense. Unlike Wittgenstein, positivists cannot fall back on the argument that the statements grounding their approach are imperfect representations of a truthful but ineffable conception of the world. For positivists, statements that make no sense – including those defining their movement – have no purchase whatsoever, nor is there, for them, any sense in that which cannot be stated clearly. The positivists are left with no way to ground, as meaningful, the activity that defines them.

On Nieli's view, Wittgenstein project is grounded on the assumption that some subjects of thought and discourse whose sentences do not meet the test of what can be clearly and sensibly expressed in truth-propositional language are not to be eliminated from thought and discourse but rather to be distinguished and protected from the constraints of truth-propositional discourse. It is particularly the language of religion, ethics and esthetics that Wittgenstein intends to rescue, Nieli says. Nieli illustrates Wittgenstein's appreciation for mystical writings by citing the author's manifest high regard for the works of St. Augustine, Søren Kierkegaard, Fyodor Dostoevski, William James, and George Fox (the founder of the Quaker movement).[28] Furthermore, Nieli points to a passage referring to one of the lectures Wittgenstein gave soon after returning to philosophy in 1929 in which he describes the foundation of ethics.

> He describes this experience of being "absolutely safe"; it is a "state of mind in which one is inclined to say 'I am safe, nothing can injure me

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[28] Nieli, p. xiii.

> whatever happens'." This experience is offered by Wittgenstein as one of three types which constitute for him personally the terminus of ethical inquiry.... Ethical inquiry for Wittgenstein is a truth-seeking inquiry... which delves into "what is really important", "into the meaning of life", "into what makes life worth living". Further on in the Lecture, Wittgenstein links the absolute safety experience in religious literature, equating it with the experience of being "safe in the hands of God".[29]

Nieli also points to a passage in a memoir of Wittgenstein's sister Hermine in suggesting that, prior to his transfer from engineering to philosophy during or soon after 1910, Wittgenstein may have had a mystical experience – an experience so profound that it led him to pursue philosophy in an attempt to ground or to recapture it. This is, of course, speculative on Nieli's part, but to support his assertion he points to the language of the memoir. While studying engineering, Hermine indicates,

> he was suddenly seized (*ergriff*) so strongly and so completely against his will by philosophy, i.e. by reflections about philosophical problems, that he suffered severely under his double and conflicting calling, and felt inwardly divided. One of several transformations which he was to undergo in his life had come over him and shaken his whole being.[30]

This, says Nieli, suggests Wittgenstein's switch to philosophy and, by implication, the particular philosophical path he chose may have been grounded in a mystical experience. If he initially pursues philosophy to reinforce an ineffable mystical experience, as these

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[29] Nieli, p. 91, referencing "Wittgenstein's Lectures on Ethics", *Philosophical Review, 74*, 1965.

[30]Bernhard Leitner, *The Architecture of Ludwig Wittgenstein* (New York: New York University Press, 1976), p. 18. In Nieli, p. 96*n*. [parentheses Nieli's]

passages suggest, then it follows that the philosophy he produces will reserve a privileged place for the ineffable.

This conclusion is shared by Ignace D'hert who, in *Wittgenstein's Relevance for Theology*[31], argues that Wittgenstein sees the system of truth-propositional discourse he creates in the *Tractatus* as being merely "a necessary transitional stage on the way to a right view of the world"[32]. In D'hert's view, Wittgenstein deliberately omits from the world-view of the *Tractatus* those things that belong to a realm of the world that cannot be put into propositions: namely, the mystical realm. D'hert says the *Tractatus* is a rigid language-game whose rigidity nevertheless elicits in the person using it the question, unanswerable within the system, of why there is a world at all. The discourse, in saying so much about the world, concomitantly reveals its impotence to say anything to account for its own activity. By continually focusing on the ordinary world through the grid of truth-propositional discourse, D'hert says, one is more and more exposed to the "character of mystery"[33] implicit in the effort. "[I]t is essential for the business of philosophy (and consequently for his own work) that it should not forget that it is

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[31] Ignace D'hert, *Wittgenstein's Relevance for Theology* (Berne: Peter Lang Ltd., 1978).

[32] D'hert, p. 33.

[33] D'hert, p. 140.

something provisional, that it is not itself the ultimate goal."[34] By leaving questions of the meaning of life outside the realm accessible to rational discourse, says D'hert, Wittgenstein joins Kierkegaard and Schopenhauer in paying allegiance to a realm that it beyond what reason can comprehend.

Peterson says Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus* gives no original thoughts about the mystical or ineffable realm and, moreover, that it is his refusal to do so that imbues the *Tractatus* with its strength on this point. Unlike other presentations of the philosophy of language which ignore or reject the mystical, Wittgenstein clears a space where the mystical realm, recognized from ancient times to convey meaning through silence, can inhere and work in silence.[35] Peterson notes that William James, whose work Wittgenstein admired, identified in religious experience four factors – namely, ineffability, noetic quality, transiency and passivity – that can be found prominently at work in such religions as Japanese Zen Buddhism and its progenitor, Chinese Ch'an Buddhism.[36] Peterson sees the same factors at play in artistic activities, such as painting and music, and other disciplines whose art or technique is taught or learned more *despite* than *through* the medium of language. Peterson contends the *Tractatus* is intended to

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[34] D'hert, p. 33. [brackets mine]

[35] Peterson, p. 158.

[36] Peterson, p. 154.

function in the same way.

The common theme in all literature of mysticism, on Nieli's view, is what Rudolf Otto references with the term '*ganz andere*'- which, loosely translated, means 'wholly other'.[37] A similar term, used by Pseudo-Dionysius, is '*ἔκστασις*' - 'ek-stasis' or 'standing outside'.[38] In Nieli's words:

> [t]he absorption of consciousness away from its former dwelling, its flash-entrance into a non-multiplicitous, transcendent realm, is so spectacular and emotion-laden, that a declaration of the ontological distance from the events and things of the everyday world, i.e., a declaration of being *ganz andere*, is very often seen as the only adequate way of expressing the experience. Such a method of theological symbolization was known in Latin Christendom as the *via negativa* or "negative way" (negative theology). By [enumerating] all the categories and concepts of earthly things, and the nature of God in relation to them as *ganz andere*, the *via negativa* stood, first of all, as the most appropriate manner of expressing the pureness of the divine nature; and second, as a meditative aid whereby all the realms of being less than God might be contemplated and transcended in an effort to reach (and renew) the peak of the mystic flight.[39]

Mysticism, then, treats the ordinary world and the transcendent realm as wholly other than one another such that the language of the former is inadequate to define the latter, except perhaps by enumerating the ordinary world in an attempt to create a space where

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[37] Nieli, p. 71*n*.

[38] Nieli, pp. 74-75 and 75*n*.

[39] Nieli, p. 73. [parentheses Nieli's; brackets mine]

the transcendent is free to appear.

Peterson is not convinced the demarcation is as severe as he believes Wittgenstein suggests. He points out that the religious and esthetic realms are commonly taken to be accessible to some extent through the language of poetry and metaphor, for example, and that the lack of literalness of metaphors, which are ubiquitous in language, is a matter of degree. "Ordinary discourse contains a multitude of half-dead metaphors, and these words owe some of their semantic resonance to their original non-metaphorical meanings, as is brought out if there is 'mixing'."[40] Yet, he concedes Wittgenstein is focusing on something that is generally outside factual discourse: "something behind, rather than inside, the great mirror"[41]. Peterson disagrees, though, that one can then conclude that, to the extent that the boundary comprehending factual discourse can be determined through the delineation and expression of factual propositions, the realm of the mystical is also defined since the factual and the mystical share and are mutually determined by a common perimeter. For one thing, the factual is bounded by not only the mystical but also the syntactical; and, secondly, one can never be sure that a proposition purporting and appearing to be factual is fact-stating since Wittgenstein provides no method of

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[40] Peterson, p. 159.

[41] Peterson, p. 159.

analysis to test the individual case.[42] Wholly determining the boundary setting off the mystical, then, is on Peterson's view not a task one can hope to accomplish; yet, despite the imprecision of the demarcation and the consequent amorphousness of the mystical realm, there is this space whose contents stand outside the realm of factual discourse but are not merely reference-less syntactic propositions.

In the *Tractatus* itself, despite its intransigence on matters of metaphysics, one can find explicit justification for the thesis that Wittgenstein is attempting to protect rather than merely to dismiss the disciplines of ethics, esthetics and religion from the rigours of truth-functional discourse. Nieli says he began to recognize Wittgenstein's intent in this regard when he reflected "on the meaning of the term 'world', and of the mystical or higher reality (*das Mystische, Hoeheres*) which lay outside and beyond the world"[43].

> Everything in the *Tractatus*, I came to realize, - the musical cadence, its logical system of "the world", the say/show itself distinction, the remarks on timelessness, the mystical, silence, etc. - begins to fall into its proper place once the world is seen in its function as a ladder in the mystical ascent along the *via negativa*.[44]

"World" is a term Wittgenstein defines early in the *Tractatus* (in proposition 1 and following) as the totality of facts such that no facts lie outside the world and nothing of

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[42] Peterson, pp. 160-161.

[43] Nieli, p. xi. [parentheses Nieli's]

[44] Nieli, p. xii.

the world transcends the facts. Later in the *Tractatus* (in proposition 6 and following), he adds that the meaning and value of the world must lie outside the world since meaning and value are not what they are unless we take them to be non-accidental. In proposition 6.432, he goes even further by indicating God does not reveal himself in the world. Meaning, value and God - if they are taken to matter - must be viewed as nonfactual, non-accidental and beyond the world. Wittgenstein evidently believes the logical positivists are wrong to conclude nothing beyond the world matters. In Nieli's words:

> ...the "world" Wittgenstein was delineating in the *Tractatus* was just the world one stands outside of (*ek-stasis*) in the mystic flight, the logical system of the *Tractatus* being a precise delineation of the profane world which is left behind in the transcendental encounter with the Sacred. One might call proposition 6.432 - "God does not reveal himself *in* the world" - the *Tractatus* in miniature.[45]

Put another way: "[t]he sacrality of God is thus established symbolically by a de-sanctification of all that is less than God."[46] D'hert says this activity of de-sanctification of the ordinary reveals that "any language which wants to talk about what is beyond the realm of natural science cannot and should not use the truth-functional model of language"[47] but requires a kind of discourse appropriate to its extra-rational nature.

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[45] Nieli, p. 98. [parentheses Nieli's]

[46] Nieli, p. 107.

[47] D'hert, p. 35.

One can see, then, how logical positivists and mystics, while sharing a common opposition to attempts to express in the language of philosophy - i.e., as speculative metaphysics - the nature of mystical experience, nevertheless find themselves opposed to such a project for entirely different reasons: the logical positivists because such statements transgress the limits of what can be stated sensibly, and the mystics because such statements profane and subordinate to the constraints of truth-propositional discourse that which cannot be stated as such. Nieli contends Wittgenstein's apparent agreement with the logical positivists on this point belies a radical disagreement on the fundamentals which is grounded in Wittgenstein's embrace of the mystical realm that logical positivists deny. Wittgenstein forbids the philosopher from articulating in the language of philosophy the mystical experiences of religion, not because they are meaningless, but because the validity and nature of such experiences can be only demonstrated, not stated.[48] Both the logical positivist and the mystic advise silence with respect to the mystical. In Nieli's words:

> [s]ilence may thus be held as the only manner of symbolization which does not profane, either by suggesting that the experience is an act of human will, or that the Reality revealed through it is like an everyday "thing" in the mundane world.[49]

Nieli quotes Pseudo-Dionysius in the *Theologia Mystica* (chapter III) saying "when

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[48] Nieli, p. 83.

[49] Nieli, p. 89. [brackets mine]

plunging into the Darkness which is above the intellect, we pass not merely into brevity of speech, but even into absolute silence, of thoughts as well as of words".[50]

That silence on matters other than natural science, such as religion, is chosen by Wittgenstein is clear in the final proposition of the *Tractatus* where he writes: "What one cannot speak about, one must pass over in silence."[51] It is also made clear in his Preface where he writes: "One could sum up the whole import of the book in the following words: what can be said at all can be said clearly; and what one cannot talk about one must pass over in silence."[52] Silence, says D'hert, has the peculiar feature of needing language to form the boundary of the space in which it obtains. "Silence cannot be 'expressed' in language. And yet, if it is to exist at all, it can only be through the means of language. It is only by means of words that silence can be created."[53] Words lead, not to knowledge, but to a place (or a state of mind or a condition of being) in which a naïve, unfiltered view of the world is possible. "They draw attention in a negative way to what is not yet present but is to come."[54] D.Z. Phillips describes the transition from articulation to silence as a "stopping" and says there is a natural resistance to this

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[50] Nieli, p. 89.

[51] *Tractatus*, section 7.

[52] *Tractatus*, p. 27.

[53] D'hert, p. 140.

[54] D'hert, p. 141. [emphasis D'hert's]

arresting of articulation, as if one has stated only in a preliminary way something that needs further explanation. Quoting Wittgenstein, he points out that what we often take to be preliminary is actually the final solution and efforts to articulate further "explanations, justifications and foundations" of this solution only serve to distort.[55] Silence and acquiescence, says Phillips, are what we ordinarily choose when we put an end to inquiry and initiate an activity on the presumption that the subject of the inquiry has been adequately, though only approximately, justified.[56] Though we ordinarily end inquiry in particular instances – for example, when we stop asking whether this thing before us is a person and proceed to behave as if that is the case – Wittgenstein is concerned with ending inquiry and adopting silence regarding an entire component of existence: '*das Mystische*' or the mystical. In Wittgenstein's 'pictorial' theory of language in which true propositions 'picture' true facts, the truth-propositional discourse itself – as a singular corpus – serves as a 'picture' in that it silently 'shows' something about the way things are; or, rather, the way things are silently 'shows' itself through the activity of the discourse. As Wittgenstein puts it in the *Tractatus*, "There is of course the unspeakable [*Unaussprechliches*: inexpressible, ineffable]. It *shows* itself [*sich zeigen*: manifests itself]; it is the Mystical."[57]

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[55] D.Z. Phillips, "Wittgenstein's Full Stop", *Perspectives on the Philosophy of Wittgenstein*, Irving Block (ed.) (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981), p. 179.

[56] Phillips, p. 356.

[57] *Tractatus*, section 6.522. [emphasis Wittgenstein's; brackets mine]

Behind the silence that both unites and divides Wittgenstein and the logical positivists is, therefore, a difference that fundamentally disconnects the former from the latter. Wittgenstein is silent because he is waiting to see what cannot be spoken while the logical positivists are silent because there is nothing 'unspeakable' to be seen. The silence that is to Wittgenstein pregnant is to the logical positivists vacant. Logical positivists believe that through truth-functional propositional discourse one can say all that can be said, while Wittgenstein believes defining truth-functional propositional discourse accomplishes little despite solving so much.[58] Therefore, the logical positivist will fill the silence with discourse while Wittgenstein will as much as possible push the discourse aside the let what is hidden in the silence peer through. That the distinction is critical to Wittgenstein is evident in a letter from Wittgenstein to Bertrand Russell critiquing Russell's comments on the unpublished *Tractatus*, where Wittgenstein states:

> [n]ow I'm afraid you haven't really got hold of my main contention, to which the whole business of logical propositions is only a corollary. The main point is the theory of what can be expressed (*gesagt*) by propositions - i.e. by language (and, what comes to the same, what can be *thought*) and what cannot be expressed by propositions, but only shown (*gezeigt*); which, I believe, is the cardinal problem of philosophy.[59]

Nieli says the relevance of this distinction between what can be expressed

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[58] *Tractatus*, p. 29.

[59] G.E.M. Anscombe, *An Introduction to Wittgenstein's Tractatus* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971), p. 161. In Nieli, p. 113. [parentheses in the work quoted; brackets mine]

(*gesagt*) and what can only be shown (*gezeigt*) is revealed in Wittgenstein's treatment of what a picture of reality has in common with the reality it claims to represent. That this relation cannot be stated is made clear by Wittgenstein in subsections of proposition 4 of the *Tractatus*, where he indicates "[t]he proposition *shows* the logical form of reality"[60] and "[t]he proposition can represent (depict) the whole of reality but it cannot represent what it must have in common with reality in order to be able to represent it - i.e., logical form..."[61]. If the picture of reality, which propositions are, is taken to be a road map, one cannot discuss the relation of the map with the actual road network unless one can step outside the world of facts and language, which is not possible. The proposition can show what reality is like, but the relation between the two cannot be stated, Nieli says.[62] Language is part of reality and cannot step outside its own limitations. Nieli puts it like this:

> What language shares with the reality it depicts that shows or manifests itself but cannot be said, is just its *in*-the-world structure. This structure cannot be described by language because it is a property possessed only by virtue of, and in contrast to, the *out*-of-the-world mystic flight - the flight (i.e., consciousness disattention, intensification, and absorption) into a sacred realm. It *is* this contrast.[63]

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[60] *Tractatus*, section 4.121. [emphasis Wittgenstein's; brackets mine]

[61] *Tractatus*, section 4.12. [parentheses Wittgenstein's; brackets mine]

[62] Nieli, pp. 114-115.

[63] Nieli, p. 115. [emphasis and parentheses Nieli's]

Furthermore, "[i]n this flight, logic represents the '/' in the in/out travelogue".[64] Nieli says there are two kinds of showing going on here concomitantly: there is the showing of what lies beyond the world, and there is also the showing of the mutual relation of language and the world it depicts, taken together, to what lies beyond the world, that relation being the logical form. Meaning is outside the realm of fact but involves the world of facts; and this meaning is shown to be a transcendence that anchors the veracity of the world of facts by allowing the world to be meaningful to the individual. One might say the search for meaning is proof of the veracity of meaning.

The role of the say/show distinction in grounding Wittgenstein's ethics is James Edwards' concern in *Ethics Without Philosophy*, in which he says "showing is an escape hatch from the realm of nonsense"[65] not just for logic, which Wittgenstein seeks to rescue whole from the theory of types Russell proffers to counter a troublesome paradox regarding class membership, but also for ethics. Ethics, concerned with what a human being should do – or, more fundamentally, with the meaning and purpose of life – is grounded in the broader question of what it is to be a human being, which Edwards says has been bound up in Western philosophy since Socrates with the capacity to think: to represent *sub specie aeternitatis*, which means, inevitably, to represent *the ideal human*,

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[64] Nieli, p. 116. [brackets Nieli's]

[65] James C. Edwards, *Ethics Without Philosophy: Wittgenstein and the Moral Life* (Tampa: University Presses of Florida, 1982), p. 15.

sub specie aeternitatis.[66] Ethics, unlike matters of contingent fact, must involve matters of necessity, for otherwise there is no way notions of good and evil can be either determinative or prescriptive, Edwards seems to say.[67] Necessity, Wittgenstein contends, is found in the conditions of representation, not in what is represented. The conditions of representation are such that any picture, to be a picture that can show something, must, first, be structurally complex such that there are elements that stand discretely apart from one another or form boundaries against one another; and, second, comprehend relationships among elements that can be measured and compared against the relationships obtaining in that which is to be 'pictured' or represented; and, together, these aspects constitute the logical form of the picture, which Wittgenstein takes to correspond to the logical form of that which is being pictured.[68] It is by standing back from this rigid structure of the world, allowing its necessary structure to reveal itself as such, and feeling oneself to be outside the structure as the limit of the structure possessing an attitude towards the structure that one can encounter the meaning of life; so in this way philosophy – the process of coming to terms with the structure – is an activity of ethics: an encounter with the meaning of life.[69] Meaning is shown when the structure of things with the self at their limit is shown.

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[66] Edwards, p. 22.

[67] Edwards, p. 27.

[68] Edwards, pp. 13-14.

[69] Edwards, pp. 32-48.

How showing occurs is grounded in the difference between science, concerned with contingent facts, and ethics, concerned with necessities. Hudson draws Wittgenstein's distinction in this way: "'The mystical'... has to do with the questions: What is the meaning of *all* there is? and What has *absolute* value? He [Wittgenstein] thinks it logically impossible for the answer to either question to be something that merely 'happens and is the case.' How can the sense of all things be just one more thing? How can absolute value be something that just happens?"[70] Edwards says "if thought can reach no further than representation of contingent reality, then ethics, which has to do with discovering the noncontingent *meaning* of those contingencies, has nothing to do with thought."[71] Edwards contends that the will, not thought, is what grounds noncontingency. Wittgenstein's will, despite being connected with the self that sees and limits the world and despite being named for a faculty that is traditionally taken to be essentially active, is neither representational nor active. The will does not change the world but rather adopts an affective attitude towards the world it encounters – an attitude it can change. Edwards says the reading of a poem or an encounter with a religious text can profoundly affect how one sees the world: whether one is happy or unhappy with it. The world has not been changed, but how one sees it has.[72]

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[70] Hudson, p. 341. [emphasis Hudson's; brackets and omission mine]

[71] Edwards, p. 50. [emphasis Edwards']

[72] Edwards, pp. 51-52.

> What is said can be the vehicle for *showing* something that is unsayable. What is shown in ethics is *das Mystische*, and it is this which makes possible the good will that solves the problems of life. *In ethics the doctrine of showing is fundamentally Wittgenstein's attempt to connect the will to thought*; it is his attempt to make explicable the way in which what can be said (thought, known, represented) can illuminate what cannot.[73]

In other words, through the operation of showing, we can attend to and be changed by that which cannot be captured in representational propositions. Richard Brockhaus makes a point, similar to Edwards', that showing involves an alteration at the level of one's receptivity to the world rather than a manipulation of its elements. He notes that Wittgenstein nearly always uses "showing" in the *Tractatus* in the passive sense while using "saying" in the active sense.[74]

On Edwards' view, showing functions to ground for us several truths: that logic mirrors the formal properties of language and the world; that logical tautologies are tautologous; that mathematical processes are reliably useful; and that one has the power to will the world to be a happy one.[75] What is shown that cannot be stated is how these features of our encounter with the world can be necessarily true. Brockhaus, too,

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[73] Edwards, p. 52. [emphasis and parentheses Edwards']

[74] Richard R. Brockhaus, *Pulling Up the Ladder: The Metaphysical Roots of Wittgenstein's "Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus"* (La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1991), p. 184.

[75] Edwards, pp. 54-58.

identifies at the centre of Wittgenstein's work the question of how value is possible in a world of pure contingency[76]; or, to put the matter in another way, Wittgenstein is searching for the ground of freedom and therefore the possibility of morality in a contingent world. Wittgenstein achieves his aim by revealing how the world's contingency is framed by a rigid structure grounded in necessity. It turns out, as Edwards notes, that the necessary truths structuring reality are, in each case, a truth that is of practical use. Edwards says showing takes precedence over saying, not only because it is the only link available to Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus* between rational thought and the mystical will,[77] but moreover because the ethical – which is about what is *done*, practically, rather than what is *said*, representationally – takes precedence over the rational.[78]

With a view to the centrality of the say/show distinction to Wittgenstein's project and the priority of showing over saying, Nieli interprets the final propositions of the *Tractatus*, which read:

> 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.)

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[76] Brockhaus, p. 13.

[77] Edwards, pp. 58-59.

[78] Edwards, pp. 64-66.

> He must transcend these propositions, and then he will see the world aright.
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> What one cannot speak about, one must pass over in silence.[79]

In this, Nieli sees a four-part movement:

(1) there is the mystical ascent of the ladder, which the *Tractatus* may or may not be helpful in facilitating - something Wittgenstein suggests when he opens the Preface warning that the book may be understood only by those who have already thought the thoughts it expresses;

(2) there is the vision of the world from the *ek-static* standpoint of one outside the world;

(3) there is the transcending of the propositions *via negativa*, thereby leaving by default what cannot be said; and

(4) there is silence in the face of what is left by default once what can be said is eliminated.[80]

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[79] *Tractatus*, sections 6.54 and 7.

[80] Nieli, p. 118.

Yet, one is not merely silent but, moreover, in awe in the face of what is seen in light of what has been transcended. That is because, in having achieved the ascent of language and abandoned language, one finally sees the world aright.

Inasmuch as language serves more as a barrier than as a facilitator of genuine understanding in Wittgenstein's system, the state of having-been-shown is far more personal and solitary than the state of having-been-told. This solitude is reinforced by Wittgenstein's construction of reality with the lone subject as its limit. In propositions 5.632 and 5.62 of the *Tractatus*, respectively, he points out that "[t]he subject does not belong to the world, but is a border of the world"[81] and "[t]hat the world is *my* world, is shown by the fact that the boundaries of language... mean the boundaries of *my* world"[82]. The subject is therefore outside the world and the world is there for the subject. This subject or 'I', says Nieli, is the 'I' of the *ek-static* which makes possible the unity of the world of experience and that which transcends it. The mystical experience that Wittgenstein is seeking to ground through demonstration is intensely personal and not in any way public, either immediately or indirectly through articulation.[83] To see oneself in

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[81] *Tractatus*, section 5.632. [brackets mine]

[82] *Tractatus*, section 5.62. [emphasis Wittgenstein's; brackets mine]

[83] Nieli, pp. 118-123.

the structure Wittgenstein proposes, as its limit, is also to recognize how great the solitude is, for one is not then free to use language to bring others to that point of awareness to share in the vision. How one reaches the point is as solitary as the point itself, because that which one cannot hear to be said cannot be said in order to be heard by another. Yet, while one cannot say accurately within the medium of truth-propositional discourse what it is that what Wittgenstein doesn't say says, it is clear from what Wittgenstein says in demanding silence that the demand for silence is always something that has to be said to create the space in which the showing occurs. The solitude is created by the silence but the silence is created by language. The do-not-say always has to be said for the self to reveal itself in its genuine relation to the world.

Nieli and Edwards have demonstrated effectively that Wittgenstein is not averse to appreciating the value of disciplines whose discourse fails to meet the test of clear truth-functional propositional discourse. Furthermore, Wittgenstein himself has made clear that ethics and esthetics, while not expressible in truth-propositional language, are not meaningless but transcendental.[84] Also, Wittgenstein has, in his Preface to the *Tractatus*, left open the possibility that thought can transcend that which can be clearly and sensibly articulated. It is a reasonable conclusion, then, that the thought motivating his effort in constructing the *Tractatus*, on his view, transcends the language he uses to

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[84] *Tractatus*, sections 6.421 and 6.522.

construct it and maintains its integrity and effect despite its ineffability.

Chapter III - Abiding Nonsense:
What What Wittgenstein Says He
Doesn't Say Doesn't Not Say

The preceding notwithstanding, Wittgenstein cannot so easily dismiss the implications of the failure of the language he uses in the *Tractatus* to meet the test of what can be said clearly and sensibly. If he were presenting articles of faith, it would be a different matter; but clearly, he intends the *Tractatus*, not only to clear a space for such disciplines as ethics in which truthful propositional discourse is on his view not an issue, but also to serve as a strict corrective against the metaphysical excesses of past philosophical schools so the nonsensical talk they proffered can be expunged from meaningful discourse and natural science can be grounded 'finally', 'unassailably', and 'definitively' (to use the terminology of his Preface) in "true" propositions about the factual world. If the effect of the application of the *Tractatus* is to be 'final', 'unassailable', and 'definitive', then arguably either the propositions composing the text must be clear enough to define those borders in logical space irrespective of their logical groundlessness or else the point the *Tractatus* is making must itself be so obvious *a priori* as to be 'final', 'unassailable', and 'definitive' irrespective of its articulability. The first of these two options seems untenable since it means the propositions employed in the *Tractatus* are at the same time sensible and nonsensical; and the second seems untenable

if for no other reason than that there is no prima facie justification for choosing this conception of the world over the alternatives.

Ernest Gellner in *Words and Things*[85] – his attack on linguistic philosophy and its progenitors – accuses Wittgenstein of attempting with the *Tractatus* to define and prescribe a unique and privileged language game which Wittgenstein presumes at the outset to be the only proper language game for meaningful discourse. In this language game, all propositions are homogeneous. Gellner describes it thus:

> Atomic propositions are envisaged as mirroring atomic facts – a notion which is a picturesque hypostatisation of the fact that communication requires some concomitant variation between the two communicating centres, and knowledge has traditionally been viewed as communication between fact and mind (or, in Wittgenstein's case, fact and language). Then, *non*-atomic propositions are seen simply as reiterations, combinations and denials of atomic propositions, built up from them and owing their truth or falsity entirely to them.[86]

As Gellner describes it, then, there is an immediate and nondistorting relation between fact and language which functions as a mirror. To the extent that the elements of the propositional discourse truly mirror the facts they purport to represent, the discourse comprising them is true. The function of philosophy is to slice away the nonsensical elements of discourse so all that remains is truth-functional propositions whose elements

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[85] Ernest Gellner, *Words and Things: An Examination of, and an Attack on, Linguistic Philosophy* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979).

[86] Gellner, p. 89. [emphasis and parentheses Gellner's]

can be tested against the factual world to determine whether what they assert to be the case is in fact the case: whether the propositions are true pictures of the world.

Wittgenstein's problem, says Gellner, is that the propositions of the *Tractatus* cannot purport to represent anything in the factual world because language and fact, taken generally, are not themselves facts in the world and the relation between them is also not a fact in the world. The only way language, fact and the relation between them could be taken as elements of the factual world is if there were a proper metalanguage standing apart from the one proper language of truth-propositional discourse; but Wittgenstein has already disallowed this possibility. As Gellner puts it, outside the proper language game, "meaningful discourse [is] impossible"[87]; "[o]ne cannot speak outside all speech"[88].

Wittgenstein's solution is apparently to treat the discourse of the *Tractatus* as neither truth-propositional discourse nor nonsense but a nebulous other type of discourse Gellner calls 'insinuation'. To insinuate is to state something and then withdraw from having said it, leaving the intended message intact while denying the language through which the message has been communicated. Gellner believes Wittgenstein must resort to such a device because the complex message of the *Tractatus* cannot demonstrate or show

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[87] Gellner, p. 89. [brackets mine]

[88] Gellner, p. 88. [brackets mine]

itself in the same simple way that an atomic proposition is said to show itself to be a true picture of the fact in the world it purports to represent. Wittgenstein himself writes that "[p]ropositions can represent the whole reality, but they cannot represent what they must have in common with reality in order to be able to represent it – the logical form"[89]. He repeats this in several ways: "[p]ropositions cannot represent the logical form: this mirrors itself in the propositions"; "[t]hat which mirrors itself in language, language cannot represent"; [t]hat which expresses *itself* in language, *we* cannot express by language"; [t]he propositions *show* the logical form of reality"; and "[t]o be able to represent the logical form, we should have to be able to put ourselves with the propositions outside logic, that is outside the world"[90]. Therefore, he says, the propositions composing the *Tractatus* are "senseless" and one must "surmount" them to "[see] the world rightly"[91]. The image of throwing away the ladder only after one has climbed it is a device used to demonstrate that the effect of the propositions of the *Tractatus* remains even after their validity has been denied. That is the essence of insinuation.

In Wittgenstein's defence on the matter of insinuation, one might argue the

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[89] *Tractatus*, section 4.12. [brackets mine]

[90] *Tractatus*, sections 4.121 and 4.12. [emphasis Wittgenstein's; brackets mine]

[91] *Tractatus*, section 6.54. [brackets mine]

Tractatus is not intended to function as a didactic device but is rather an esthetically-pleasing interpretation of that which is already understood to be true. This argument is bolstered by the opening paragraph of Wittgenstein's Preface where he makes clear only "those who have themselves already thought the thoughts" the book expresses are likely to understand it; it is "not a text-book"; and "[i]ts object would be attained if it afforded pleasure to one who read it with understanding".[92] On this interpretation, the kicking away of the ladder is not the activity of a student following the prescription of a teacher but rather a metaphorical illustration of what it is for a person who operates in the world of language to recognize the inadequacy of language to express an understood truth. This defence does not entirely save the *Tractatus*, though, because Wittgenstein does choose, as his artistic device, the form of didactics and does leave his prescriptions, once denied in the book's penultimate section, to look very much like insinuations. To the extent that a statement *functions* as an insinuation, it *is* an insinuation.

Gellner's difficulty with the *Tractatus* is that it is *entirely* grounded in this nebulous activity of insinuation. What is left to insinuation are several complex assertions that are fundamental to the whole project: that there are objects, facts, names and propositions; that the relation between facts in the world and language about the world is an immediate and undistorted 'mirror' relation; and that there is only one

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[92] *Tractatus*, p. 27. [brackets mine]

language game through which anything meaningful about the world can be stated. The difficulty with insinuation is that it abides a deep contradiction: the simultaneous affirmation of two mutually-exclusive assertions: that a statement both is and is not a sensible truth in a rational context.

The deep contradiction is demonstrated starkly when one considers the *Tractatus* in light of the enduring debate between realism and idealism with respect to the *Ding an sich* – the thing-in-itself. Generally speaking, the character of knowledge is such that it presents itself in an individual as being about something that is independent of its being known or spoken of. The difficulty is that, in presenting itself through the media of mind and language, knowledge conflates that which is known with the process by which it is known, leaving an assessment of the thing independent of the medium of knowledge impossible. The realist chooses to believe the object is there anyway, while the idealist concludes the thing-in-itself is forever outside cognitive bounds. For Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus*, the object is not unknowable but ineffable – a linguistic twist on idealism. Yet, Wittgenstein does not shy away from describing the way language and the world work, both together and independently of one another, even though he later disavows the description as meaningless. In undertaking to offer a description in the first place, Wittgenstein embraces a kind of realism. In other words, says Gellner, "the convenient doctrine of ineffability and 'the ladder' [enables Wittgenstein]... to choose both horns of

the dilemma at the same time".[93]

Wittgenstein tolerates this deep contradiction because of a belief that he feels is 'unassailable' and 'definitive': that there is a unique fundamental language that really does mirror the world in a direct, passive, undistorted and nondistorting way and that this 'truth' is obviously true to anyone who has seen it. Gellner's difficulty with this reasoning is that Wittgenstein allows elsewhere that people can be deluded about the relation between language and the world.[94] Therefore, the message inherent in the insinuation must be a complex one that lays out boundaries between what is true and what is not; otherwise, the insinuation cannot have the corrective effect against the metaphysical discourse it is intended to eradicate. On this reasoning and clearly parodying the final section of the *Tractatus*, Gellner writes in his own concluding sentence: "That which one would insinuate, thereof one must speak."[95] While he agrees with Wittgenstein that laying forth with clarity the foundations of epistemology is wrought with difficulties that may render the project impossible, he challenges Wittgenstein's suggestion that such foundations can simply be "guaranteed *a priori* to be innocuous"[96] on the basis of a prejudice that linguistic philosophers and those informed

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[93] Gellner, pp. 151-152. [brackets and omission mine]

[94] Gellner, p. 90.

[95] Gellner, p. 287.

[96] Gellner, p. 287.

by them can, without disturbing anything, undertake the exhaustive process of clarifying the propositions of natural science as well-formed propositions and thereby say everything that can be said at all about the world. The insinuations inherent in this prejudice, Gellner says, mean something only if they are articulated. "*Whatever can be insinuated can be said.*"[97]

Wittgenstein does not have the luxury of purging from the *Tractatus* the propositions he proffers as insinuations in order that the remnant (if there *is* a remnant) can stand on its own. The philosophical activity he advocates in the book is both described and grounded in the lattice-work he constructs involving objects and facts and their relation to names and propositions. This ladder cannot be kicked away in the book's penultimate section unless it has been ascended. Gellner says, this ladder "alone gives both point and justification"[98] to the activity Wittgenstein has defined as philosophy's appropriate function. Therefore, one of two things must be the case: either the argument about philosophy's appropriate function – which is central to the book – means nothing, or else the ladder remains, despite its disavowal, as a feature that is now "insinuated and/or presupposed"[99]. This means the propositions of the *Tractatus* cannot evanesce

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[97] Gellner, p. 285. [emphasis Gellner's]

[98] Gellner, p. 88.

[99] Gellner, p. 88.

despite Wittgenstein's insistence to the contrary. If his book is not to amount to nothing, its propositions stand as a demonstration of the employment of a metalanguage. That there is no way to ground this metalanguage is, in Gellner's judgment, sufficient proof that Wittgenstein's approach is neither nondistortional nor coherent nor effective. Therefore, according to Gellner, the *Tractatus* in the end cannot but disintegrate. "[W]e must see this doctrine itself as one philosophical doctrine amongst others. And then it is seen to be false."[100]

Gellner recognizes that proponents of the *Tractatus* see their project as surviving this attack because of a clever approach to the question of validation that has been a perennial Achilles heel of metaphysical systems and approaches. Traditionally, systems have been condemned for either slipping into an infinite regress of rationalizations, each of which presupposes a rational context beyond itself, or else putting a capricious end to justification through the adoption of "dogmatic and arbitrary" first principles. In having to choose between these two alternatives, he says, "[y]ou cannot win".[101] Gellner faults Wittgenstein and his successors in linguistic philosophy for creating a third option.

> If you cannot beat them, disqualify them! If you cannot prove rival views to be *false*, then say that they are *meaningless!* This is validation of one view by means of the exclusion of possible rivals from eligibility as

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[100] Gellner, p. 37. [brackets mine]

[101] Gellner, p. 3. [brackets mine]

candidates, in virtue of their claims to having "no meaning".[102]

The focus on meaning was grounded historically in the emergent emphasis on logic. Gellner credits logicians' solution to Russell's paradox, in particular, with opening up 'meaninglessness' as the strategy for discrediting philosophical rivals. Russell's paradox – that there is no solution to the problem of whether the class of all classes which are not members of themselves includes itself as a member – is solved by dismissing such problems of self-reference as meaningless. Once this class-based definition of logical meaninglessness is proffered in this context, it is applied to rival philosophical systems which are said to violate strict logical syntax through the misapplication of classes. Language that seeks to say something about the relation of language to reality violates the proscription against self-referential classes and is therefore meaningless.[103] In dismissing the systems containing such language as meaningless, linguistic philosophers concomitantly escape their rivals' criticisms; their rivals' attacks on the veracity of linguistic philosophy cease to be viewed as meaningful and linguistic philosophy is taken to survive by default as the only legitimate system by which veracity is definable.[104] By doing away with the legitimacy of questions about validation and offering in the place of this reliance on validation the naive belief in the simple immediacy of the language-world

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[102] Gellner, p. 3. [emphasis Gellner's]

[103] Gellner, p. 6.

[104] Gellner, p. 5.

relation, linguistic philosophers rid themselves (in their own eyes) of the need to ask on what ground their position stands. So, when Gellner concludes the *Tractatus* is false because it is self-contradictory, the linguistic philosopher will respond saying the criticism is meaningless because the activity of guaranteeing self-referential consistency is logically impossible, has nothing to do with veracity and is meaningless.

James Feibleman[105] recognizes, as does Gellner, the metalanguage inherent in Wittgenstein's presentation of the *Tractatus*, but he reaches the other conclusion: not that the metalanguage, being ungroundable, is the work's fatal flaw, but that the use of a metalanguage implies its implicit embrace. He sees Wittgenstein, not as eschewing second-order names – i.e., classes – but as relying on them.

Feibleman is intent on determining to what extent this duality of first-order language and metalanguage survives Wittgenstein's presentation, Wittgenstein's disclaimer notwithstanding. Feibleman is preoccupied with what he calls the notion of two-storeyness in philosophy, those two storeys being, first, discourse involving the objective realm of real objects and, second, discourse involving facts and the logical realm of names and propositions. He says the first and fundamental storey, if

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[105] James Feibleman, *Inside the Great Mirror: A Critical Examination of the Philosophy of Russell, Wittgenstein, and Their Followers* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1969).

unaccompanied by the superior storey involving logic, is nominalism, which holds that things named are real but there is no reality to the names or to the propositions which combine them apart from their objects. Wittgenstein clearly talks about the logical realm as if it is separate, whether he intends to sustain this separateness beyond this analysis or not; and to the extent that Wittgenstein does this, Feibleman considers this logical realm of Wittgenstein's and its elements to be real and to constitute the second storey of the system.

Wittgenstein's presentation elicits for Feibleman a host of questions: What mediates the combination of objects as facts? What mediates the combination of names as propositions? What mediates the correspondence between true propositions and facts? What is the status of the relational elements in propositions — elements such as 'and', 'or', and so forth — and classes? What is the status of false propositions? What grounds the totality of synthesizing and corresponding activities that compose experience? Arguably, Wittgenstein's presentation also dismisses some of these questions as meaningless — but since his presentation also dismisses much of itself as meaningless, to the extent that one gives any of it credence one may also give some measure of credence to these questions as well, at least tentatively.

In this light, we consider Feibleman's criticisms, beginning with the place of the subject in the *Tractatus*. Wittgenstein's propositions regarding the subject in the fifth

section of the *Tractatus*, Feibleman argues, establish a kind of solipsism. First, Wittgenstein circumscribes the world in terms of the limits of language.

> *The limits of my language* mean the limits of my world.
>
> [...] What we cannot think, that we cannot think: we cannot therefore *say* what we cannot think.
>
> [...] That the world is *my* world, shows itself in the fact that the limits of the language (*the* language which I understand) mean the limits of *my* world.
>
> The world and life are one.[106]

Next, he shows how the subject is simply the limit of the world.

> I am my world. (The microcosm.)
>
> The thinking, presenting subject; there is no such thing.
>
> If I wrote a book "The world as I found it", I should also have therein to report on my body and say which members obey my will and which do not, etc. This then would be a method of isolating the subject or rather of showing that in an important sense there is no subject: that is to say, of it alone in this book mention could *not* be made.
>
> The subject does not belong to the world but it is a limit of the world.[107]

By comparing the subject to the eye as the eye presents itself to the observer in the course of observation, he illustrates how the subject hides itself from direct view while at the

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[106] *Tractatus*, sections 5.6, 5.61, 5.62 and 5.621. [emphasis and parentheses Wittgenstein's; brackets and omissions mine]

[107] *Tractatus*, sections 5.63, 5.631 and 5.632. [emphasis and parentheses Wittgenstein's]

same time showing itself through its activity.

> *Where in* the world is a metaphysical subject to be noted?
>
> You say that this case is altogether like that of the eye and the field of sight. But you do *not* really see the eye.
>
> And from nothing *in the field of sight* can it be concluded that it is seen from an eye. [...][108]

Finally, he shows how the subject is seen to be the metaphysical subject of realism.

> Here we see that solipsism strictly carried out coincides with pure realism. The I in solipsism shrinks to an extensionless point and there remains the reality co-ordinated with it.
>
> There is therefore really a sense in which in philosophy we can talk of a non-psychological I.
>
> The I occurs in philosophy through the fact that the "world is my world".
>
> The philosophical I is not the man, not the human body or the human soul of which psychology treats, but the metaphysical subject, the limit — not a part of the world.[109]

In brief, Wittgenstein is saying the world as he experiences it and describes it — which is necessarily language-based and exhausts language — is seen from his own perspective; yet, the self from whose perspective experience is, forever hides itself from view. Solipsism leaves experience, not worldless, but subjectless; or rather, it reduces the

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[108] *Tractatus*, section 5.63. [emphasis Wittgenstein's; brackets and omissions mine]

[109] *Tractatus*, sections 5.64 and 5.641.

subject to an extensionless point of view which itself is not encountered, only posited tentatively. What remains of the self is not the psychological I but the metaphysical subject, presupposed by experience but not a part of the world of experience.

Feibleman, commenting on the preceding[110], indicates he finds in Wittgenstein essentially the same position on the subject that he finds in Kant: one that is not subjectivist in the sense of being a psychological subject, but one that is a limit on experience which can be noticed only indirectly. Wittgenstein rejects the thinking subject but points to the metaphysical subject as the limit abutting against experience, as it were, which is reminiscent of the Kantian I that accompanies all my representations but that itself cannot be seen, neither as the receptacle of thinking nor as its source. Even Wittgenstein's analogical 'eye' is a kind of I that accompanies all my representations: an eye is a presumed *sine qua non* of sight although it cannot possibly be a direct object of its own seeing activity.

While Wittgenstein, like Kant, refuses to give the subject status as an object of rational inquiry or philosophical knowledge, if anything Wittgenstein is more restricted in his capacity to even discuss the subject because of his insistence on the definitive role of the proposition in experience. If it is not a fact in the world, then the proposition has no

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[110] Feibleman, pp. 103-104.

business positing it; and Wittgenstein seems to leave no room for the subject to be a fact in the world. In proposition 5.631, he argues that experience does not divide between the in-here and the out-there, but rather is absolutely exhausted by the world; for even the experiences I take to be internal and personal are part of the total parcel of experience I call life. Feibleman says[111] that, in this, Wittgenstein, like Kant and Hume taken on their own terms, rejects subjectivism and the in-here/out-there, subject-object dichotomy, because there is no subjective, in-here remnant surviving when one considers what is the world of experience. "I am [exhaustively defined by] what I can experience from here, i.e. from me."[112] So, properly considered, Kant, Hume, and Wittgenstein dispense with the subject entirely; for, if the subject is not a thing in the world, then the philosopher, who is interested in developing a fundamental characterization of experience, will reject the subject-object dichotomy as being irrelevant to the meaningful analysis of experience. "Only by getting knowledge away from the object and from the subject can we see that it is not *knowledge* after all with which we are concerned but *system.*"[113] The hunt for knowledge is grounded in the prejudice that there is a subject whose perspective on the world might need to be informed by an ideal perspective, while the hunt for a system begins without the presupposition that experience is characterized perspectivally. So not

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[111] Feibleman, p. 103.

[112] Feibleman, p. 103. [brackets mine]

[113] Feibleman, p. 103. [emphasis Feibleman's]

only is there no *basis* for posing propositions about the subject in Wittgenstein, but there is moreover no *point*.

It is in Wittgenstein's construction of a system that Feibleman sees Wittgenstein's fundamental weakness: he assumes synthesis without elucidating how it is accomplished. Wittgenstein assumes he is proceeding scientifically, allowing the realm of facts, studied inductively, to elicit in the philosopher a true knowledge of how propositions are constructed and combined in relation to the facts. But Wittgenstein is assuming the validity of the synthetic activity he seeks to identify by positing construction as a presuppositionless given. When one inquires about the kind of synthesizing activity that is going on in Wittgenstein's system — the kind of synthesis that combines objects into facts, that adjoins facts to propositions, that combines names into propositions, and that combines simple propositions into complex ones in logical space — the problem one encounters, according to Feibleman, is that Wittgenstein has ignored the question of 'how' that his system leaves the reader to ask. As Feibleman puts it:

> The endeavour of the *Tractatus* is clear. It was to substitute the method of constructionism for the axiomatic method. Instead of the assumptions contained in the axioms, we would begin with atomic facts as given, although half assuming that the objects which the atomic facts combine are disclosed or at least disclosable by sense experience. In this way, a presuppositionless technique could be devised, the method of presuppositionless combinatorics.[114]

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[114] Feibleman, p. 119.

"Constructionism presupposes axioms and neglects to bring them out."[115] That is to say, it pretends to be inductive while proceeding on the basis of deduction from first principles. Ironically, says Feibleman[116], the scientific method Wittgenstein is trying to emulate also proceeds on the basis of both induction and deduction, since the mathematics in terms of which research is measured is itself deduced from first principles. But Wittgenstein will not own up to having employed first principles, and instead leaves questions about the *how* of synthesis *unanswered.*

Moreover, he leaves them *unanswerable* within his system. Of particular concern is the status of Wittgenstein's logical connectors. If only objects and the facts of which they are composed are real, and names and propositions do nothing but mirror the real, then are logical connectors such as 'and' and 'or' and object classes, themselves objects? For, even if Wittgenstein's propositions about the logical realm are a tentative ladder which must be kicked away once used so that propositions and facts collapse in on one another again, one is still left to ask what happens to the connectors if they have nothing factual with which to correspond. Obviously, says Feibleman, logic is not nothing, though one, reading Wittgenstein, might easily assume that since the logical realm wholly

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[115] Feibleman, p. 122.

[116] Feibleman, p. 126.

mirrors the objective realm, interconnective logic has nothing left to do.[117] If philosophy were nothing, Wittgenstein's attempt to reduce philosophy to an inductively-derived logical system would be pointless. So, logic and its elements, and the functions it allows the scientist to perform — such as classification — must not be nothing. Yet, one is left by Wittgenstein without the tools to discern what they might be.

In defence of Wittgenstein on the point of logical connection is John Passmore's analysis of how such connection works.[118] "Senseless, but not nonsensical"[119] is how Passmore describes the tautological discourse of mathematics and, by implication, logic. Such expressions as 'all', 'some', 'or' and 'not' have no analogue in atomic fact and do not represent. If, for example, 'not' were the name of a fact, then 'not-not-*p*' would not be logically equivalent to '*p*'. The use of 'not' indicates, not a fact, but the application of a logical operation. Peterson echoes the point when he writes:

> the logical constants – the connectives '∨', '&', '⊃' etc., the identity sign '=', and the quantifiers '( )' and '∃' – *are not names of substantive objects in the world.*[120]

It is Wittgenstein's assertion that every non-elementary proposition is a truth-function of

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[117] Feibleman, p. 123.

[118] John Passmore, *A Hundred Years of Philosophy* (Toronto: Penguin, 1994).

[119] Passmore, p. 358.

[120] Peterson, p. 48. [emphasis Peterson's]

elementary propositions. Logical connectors such as 'or' disappear when propositions are fully analyzed in truth-functional terms. The connector 'or' wholly displays itself when atomic propositions *p* and *q* are presented in a truth-table whose entries are 'true' for every conjunction except the conjunction of a 'false' for *p* and a 'false' for *q*. In other words, that is entirely what 'or' means. As Passmore puts it, "[t]his result can be alternatively expressed by saying that all propositions have the same general form: that of a selection out of the range of atomic facts, a selection made by negating certain combinations."[121]

All the truths of logic are considered by Wittgenstein to be tautologies, which are extreme cases of truth-functions of the form '*p* or not-*p*'. The proposition '*q*' can be recognized, for example, as the conjunction of '(*p* or *q*)' and 'not-*p*'. To say '(*p* or *q*) and not-*p* implies *q*' is to exclude no genuine possibility and, therefore, to say nothing new. The function of the truth-functional proof is to betray tautologies for what they are. Passmore says:

> the view that there are 'primitive propositions' of logic from which all the other propositions of logic ought to be deduced is a delusion. All the propositions of logic, he argues, stand on exactly the same footing; they all say the same thing, i.e. nothing at all.[122]

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[121] Passmore, pp. 356-357. [brackets mine]

[122] Passmore, pp. 357-358.

All tautologies show is how the symbolism works. The same is true for the tautologous 'equations' of mathematics. Tautologies and equations say only that a thing is identical with itself, which says nothing new. The antitheses of this statement – that a thing is not identical with itself or that a thing is identical with something other that itself – are nonsensical since they are inherently meaningless. A statement that is logically necessary is not nonsense, but it is senseless nonetheless because it says nothing that has to be said. There is no sense to be depicted. As Passmore puts it, tautologies are senseless while metaphysical talk is "nonsense, in the fullest sense of the word"[123].

Passmore's analysis regarding logical connection seems true to the *Tractatus*, yet Feibleman is evidently not convinced that Wittgenstein's employment of a mechanism of combinatorics does not require a more explicit grounding of its functional elements. It is not a minor issue. Logical connection and classification is not a small point in philosophy, and it poses a great challenge to the analysts. Feibleman points out that Russell, seeking to embrace logical nominalism as opposed to metaphysical realism, allows that a class is a name for the collection of objects which are its members, and he should therefore also allow that the class, once named, must itself be a real object; but he does not. While Whitehead addresses the dilemma by affirming both the reality of the collection of reals and the reality of classes, Wittgenstein rejects the reality of classes,

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[123] Passmore, p. 358.

leaving one to wonder in what way one can speak meaningfully of classes at all if propositions and facts are to be a snug fit.

Feibleman argues that Wittgenstein cannot, and in fact *does not*, have it both ways: that is, by rejecting the reality of classes while at the same time employing the logic of classes, classifications, and combinations. While Wittgenstein argues for presuppositionless combinatorics, Feibleman says something must underlie the combining of the name-words into elementary propositions and the elementary propositions into complex propositions, or else it is pointless for him to speak of simplicity, complexity, and analysis in the logical realm in the first place — and his whole project will have yielded nothing but babble. He concludes that, to the extent we follow Wittgenstein along on his journey through facts and propositions, we must suspend belief in one of his own tenets: namely, that combinatorics are presuppositionless. Feibleman says:

> ...knowing when to make a calculation and what sort of calculation to make implies a background of deductive schema in terms of which we are operating.... But while he attacked the axiomatic method in detail, he did not succeed in getting away from it in the background: it hides behind assumptions of his structure, for while we increase in generality as we go from atomic facts to elementary propositions to complex propositions, if we turn the system around and look at what we have, we will find that what we have is an axiomatic method, only we have to set it up in reverse. The axiomatic method begins with the axioms and reduces down to the theorems and from them to their applications in particular: first, particular

propositions and then atomic facts corresponding to these.[124]

In other words, although Wittgenstein maintains the position that he has achieved his system inductively by refusing to admit he has assumed the validity of the first principles on which his system is grounded, we who encounter his system are induced to recognize the unnamed first principles on which the edifice stands. Like the scientific model he seeks to emulate, his system only implicitly embraces the process of deduction from first principles while it pretends to eschew them. It leaves its *a priori* givens in the background, treating them as unpresupposed in order to allow their derivatives to present themselves as presuppositionless.

Unfortunately for Wittgenstein, says Feibleman, his system cannot be saved merely by attaching to his system the first principles he claims not to be using, because the first principles he uses, he uses inconsistently. Feibleman lists five axioms that are presupposed, though neither defined nor justified, in Wittgenstein's presentation[125]:

1) that a system of philosophy can be constructed on the basis of a presuppositionless combinatorics — a presupposition it would probably be logically impossible for any system to presuppose;

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[124] Feibleman, p. 120. [omissions mine]

[125] Feibleman, p. 121.

2) nominalistic logic — the reality of physical particulars witnessed by an evanescent intuitional logic that facilitates the distinguishing between sense and reference without itself being real;

3) metaphysical realism — the presence of an independent real world of logical propositions and their inter-relations;

4) epistemological realism — the supposition that the objective and logical realms are as they are independent of one's knowledge of them; and

5) constructionism — the supposition that atomic facts elicit a logic which grounds the representation and construction of elementary and complex propositions.

There is in these 'axioms', of course, mutual contradiction — for example, between (2) and (3) — which is precisely Feibleman's point: Wittgenstein not only uses these axioms while denying he is doing so, but also uses them in such a way that the final product is internally inconsistent. The elements of logic cannot be both nothing and something at the same time. "Wittgenstein assumes that there is no place in such a scheme for

metaphysics; he did not seem to understand that the scheme itself was metaphysical."[126] Feibleman is arguing that the only thing that can save the *Tractatus* from itself is an explicit affirmation of the reality of the logical realm — the affirmation of the legitimacy of two-storeyness (though this would mean paradoxically that the only way to save the *Tractatus* is to destroy it).

Following Wittgenstein in the errors of the *Tractatus*, among others, are the logical positivists, both European and American, Feibleman says. He accuses them of interpreting the *Tractatus* more narrowly than its own logic demands: for example, by omitting the metaphysical import of the construction from which propositions of existential import arise — "construction which consists in a finite world of propositions and of facts and of the relations between them"[127]. Logical positivists did not follow Wittgenstein entirely — or even entirely *honestly* — nor was their movement univocal or static over time. For example, some such as Carnap and Mach affirmed psychologism where Wittgenstein explicitly rejected the psychological subject. As Feibleman puts it, "where Mach wanted to get rid of the metaphysical idea of an objective world, Wittgenstein wanted to show by setting up an objective world how it would be possible to

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[126] Feibleman, p. 127.

[127] Feibleman, p. 128.

get rid of metaphysics"[128]. Still, there is in the logical positivist movement an extension of the same basic error Feibleman identifies in the *Tractatus*: essentially, the failure to account properly for synthesis.

As part of his critique of the *Tractatus* and its effect on those who follow it, Feibleman presents and critiques the six essential theses of logical positivism, focusing first on the Vienna School. The three practical theses are these[129]:

1) The only valid knowledge is scientific knowledge that is empirically verifiable;

2) The only valid interpretation of scientific knowledge is that offered by the Viennese positivists; and

3) The interpretation of the positivists is logical metascience.

In short, Feibleman dismisses each of these in its turn as presumptive.

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[128] Feibleman, pp. 134-135.

[129] Feibleman, pp. 135-136.

More problematical, perhaps, are positivism's three technical theses[130]:

1) Logic and mathematics are tautological;

2) The analysis of language solves all metaphysical problems; and

3) Whatever is not fact is feeling.

On the first of these, Feibleman accuses both Europeans and Americans holding this view — many of whom are avowed nominalists — not only of failing to recognize that the *Tractatus*, in developing Frege's ideal language of sense, concomitantly gives reality to the logical realm, but also of leaving their own undefined logical elements, such as Quine's 'variable', without a meaningful status. For them to affirm and extrapolate beyond Wittgenstein's presentation without affirming the logical metaphysics on which it must be grounded, he says, is inconsistent.

On the second of these, Feibleman argues that Wittgenstein did not dismiss metaphysical problems but simply "wished to pare down metaphysics to the point to

[130] Feibleman, p. 144.

which logic was able to carry it out"[131] and was prepared to retain some entities of logical metaphysics in the process, though there is disagreement on how much logical metaphysics he was prepared to tolerate. Clearly, Feibleman does not believe Wittgenstein was a nominalist — a one-storey philosopher — but was bright enough to recognize, in writing the *Tractatus*, that the logical realism it demanded and tentatively posited was sustained beyond the analysis; in other words, that once the ladder was kicked away, some logical metaphysics remained. Feibleman argues that for the positivists to cite Wittgenstein in rejecting metaphysical problems that Wittgenstein retains in his own system is inconsistent.

On the third of these, Feibleman argues that, by the positivists' own logic, their own system could be dismissed as a collection of value-based statements that the science it pretends to ground would not need if what they purported to articulate were valid. For them in their system to dismiss as meaningless the very kind of language that they themselves use in articulating their system is inconsistent and fatally problematical.

Feibleman thereby accuses the logical positivists of making the same fundamental error of which the early Wittgenstein is guilty if judged apart from his implied metaphysics: inconsistency; or, more specifically, rejecting metaphysical presuppositions

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[131] Feibleman, p. 147.

regarding synthesis that their own system both explicitly rejects and implicitly demands.

Positivists such as Carnap, of course, would not agree with Feibleman on this point. Indeed, Carnap[132] poses to himself the very question that lies at the heart of Feibleman's objection of self-inconsistency: How does one account for books espousing logical positivism if their propositions are neither inductively derived from experience nor deductively derived from the axioms of mathematics as demonstrable tautologies? Carnap concedes that Wittgenstein agrees his own statements about philosophy do not make sense, but adds:

> I cannot agree with him. In the first place, he seems to me to be inconsistent in what he does. He tells us that one cannot make philosophical statements and that whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent; and then instead of keeping silent, he writes a whole philosophical book. Secondly, I do not agree with his assertion that all his statements are quite as much without sense as metaphysical statements are. My opinion is that a great number of his statements (unfortunately not all of them) have in fact sense; and that the same is true for all statements of logical analysis.[133]

But critics of logical positivism consistently turn the philosophy against itself, arguing that a system that denies the validity of a logical realm of propositions that have reality apart from the facts they name, cannot account for itself. First, unless the

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[132] Rudolf Carnap, "The Rejection of Metaphysics", *20th-Century Philosophy: The Analytic Tradition*, Morris Weitz (ed.) (New York: Macmillan, 1966), pp. 207-219.

[133] Carnap, pp. 218-219.

combinatorial functions and products of logic can be accounted for abstractly in a meaningful way, then the talk of general classes of things that this system does is meaningless when classes are not real objects of fact. Second, talk of general classes of propositions — for example, 'elementary propositions', 'primitive ideas', 'primitive relations', and 'protocol statements' — that are fundamental to the system's formulation of its own enterprise is meaningless when propositions are not real objects of fact. Logical positivism, in as much as it explicitly rejects metaphysics in all its permutations, cannot give a self-consistent justification, either of what it does or of what it is. One can assert the tenets of logical positivism are meaningful only if one pretends they are not.

Feibleman says the same criticism applies to Wittgenstein. To give Wittgenstein the benefit of the doubt and grant him the removal of the ladder, thereby accepting that the *Tractatus* has left us without any of the second storey of logical metaphysics implied in his work, is to pretend there is meaning in that which, on its own terms, has none. The very kind of logical synthesis undermined by removing the ladder is the only thing that can give meaning to what has been articulated to that point. Synthesis is implied by and demanded for the logical connections and classifications and universalizations and other combinatorics. If what has been said is not nothing, then the ontological commitment that has been implied is not nothing either. One must accept the implication of ontological commitment, not only as it relates to the objects and facts of the world, but also as it relates to the reality of the combinatorial elements the presentation employs.

Feibleman argues that, as long as one who claims to be doing philosophy uses universals that are not names of facts but rather synthetic fabrications defined logically, then one is casting a vote for some degree of logical realism.

On this argument, then, Feibleman brings a weakness he sees in the *Tractatus*, also recognized by Gellner, to a different conclusion. While Gellner concludes Wittgenstein renders his treatise a work of nonsense by kicking away the very propositions with which it is written, Feibleman believes he can save the *Tractatus*, albeit with amendments, by concluding from Wittgenstein's decision to employ these propositions that he is not sincere in his stated intent to destroy the ladder that he has kicked away. Feibleman concludes the *Tractatus*, at its very essence, is proof that Wittgenstein maintains the validity of the second storey since that is the realm in which the *Tractatus* operates.

Peter Carruthers, like Feibleman, argues that the structure and movements of the *Tractatus* imply an ontological commitment. He comes to Feibleman's conclusion: that some of the tenets of the *Tractatus* must change to accommodate an ontological model.[134] One might argue that Carruthers, like Feibleman, gives more credence to the ontological model intended to rescue the text than to the text being modeled. Carruthers constructs

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[134] Peter Carruthers, *The Metaphysics of the "Tractatus"* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

his model to fit within three broad constraints: first, it must meet the explicit claims of Wittgenstein regarding the ubiquity of simples in all possible worlds, the exhaustive analyzability of elementary propositions into names of simples in immediate concatenation, the mutual logical independence of elementary propositions, and the capacity of the totality of elementary propositions, evaluated upon truth-functional analysis, to completely describe the world; second, it must meet the implied claims of Wittgenstein, elucidated by Carruthers, that simples are not universals but individuals existing necessarily at all possible times in all possible worlds and that the names in elementary propositions not only represent simples in immediate concatenation but are themselves in immediate concatenation and are therefore relational though not of the subject-predicate form; and, third, that one must be able to tell whether the references of two names are different or the same in order to be able to understand those two names as two names: in other words, that names are introduceable by means of a general rule that establishes *a priori* whether their references are the same or different. The model must neither conflate simples with sense-data, since this would deny simples the logical independence Wittgenstein insists they have, nor treat simples as very small physical objects, since this would deny them both the character of existence in all possible worlds and the logical independence that can be characteristic of no physical object (given that physical objects are subject to spatial and temporal constraints which some elementary propositions would then have to describe, ground and connect relationally in a dependent

manner).[135]

Carruthers' model involves discrete coloured point-masses in space-time ordered according to five dimensions: the first three determined by sets of parallel planes each set of which intersects the other two sets at right angles; the fourth being the temporal dimension; and the fifth being an approximation on a unilinear chromatic scale interpolated between origin 0 and maximum position 1. If 'a_{-3}', 'a_{-2}', 'a_{-1}', 'a_0', 'a_1', 'a_2', 'a_3', etc. are the names of the planes in one axis, 'b_{-3}', 'b_{-2}', 'b_{-1}', 'b_0', 'b_1', 'b_2', 'b_3', etc. are the names of the planes in the second axis, 'c_{-3}', 'c_{-2}', 'c_{-1}', 'c_0', 'c_1', 'c_2', 'c_3', etc. are the names of the planes in the third axis and 't_{-3}', 't_{-2}', 't_{-1}', 't_0', 't_1', 't_2', 't_3', etc. are the names of the coordinates in the time axis; and if the units 'n' of the colour axis are specified to represent decimal places on a unilinear chromatic scale such that colour (presumably 'wavelength' on this analogy) is defined with varying degrees of accuracy on the exponent 10^{-n}; then the point-mass indicated by, say, $a_4b_8c_{16}t_{32}2$ would be completely specified, in a logically independent manner, as the intersection of planes a_4, b_8 and c_{16} at time t_{32} whose colour falls within the range .01 or .11.[136]

Carruthers argues the strength of his model is that it accounts for the existence of

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[135] Carruthers, pp. 137-139.

[136] Carruthers, pp. 139-146.

simples in all possible worlds without proffering a particulate view of reality; it comprehends elementary propositions as proper names in immediate concatenation without reference to the subject-predicate form; it preserves the logical independence of elementary propositions; it grounds truth-functional analysis of elementary propositions and suggests the possibility of exhaustively describing the world through such analyses; and it suggests how the names of simples can be distinguished or identified *a priori*. The downside of Carruthers' model is that it demands an absolute, nonrelational view of space and time[137]: something not only frowned upon by many metaphysicians but also doubted by many modern physicists, not to mention its direct contravention of the tenets of the *Tractatus* regarding the establishment of an ontology of absolutes. Moreover, it seems to demand that the configuration of the analytical grid be defined in advance, since grids defined in different ways can account differently for the same point-mass. It also accounts poorly for analytic equivalence – the equivalence of the relations among objects to the relations among names – even with the imposition of a chromatic dimension, since ultimately it fails on the criticism that "a system which ascribes sense-data to physical subjects cannot comply with the requirement of logical independence"[138]. In view of the failure of the model on this point, he scales it back from the phenomenal version, designed to account for colour, to a less-comprehensive realist version in four

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[137] Carruthers, pp. 139-140.

[138] Carruthers, p. 146.

dimensions, excluding the chromatic scale.

Despite its inadequacy, Carruthers believes his realist model is not only appreciated by Wittgenstein as a metaphor for how the world works but indeed embraced in the stronger sense, as a definition of what obtains.[139] Carruthers says: "Since there are a number of good reasons for supposing Wittgenstein to have had our model in mind, and no good reasons against it, I propose that such an interpretation should be adopted"[140]. Again, he says "[i]t seems likely that Wittgenstein himself might have worked with the realist model, having it at the back of his mind (at least) in his thinking about elementary propositions"[141]. What is more troubling is that Carruthers says "the realist model remains the most plausible, *quite apart from* the consideration to do with Wittgenstein's attitudes towards metaphysics and epistemology"[142]. In effect, he is adding tenets to Wittgenstein's position and justifying the additions by deliberately ignoring and thereby subtracting from the *Tractatus* things Wittgenstein explicitly says.

What neither Carruthers nor Feibleman seems willing to recognize is that, in the end, whether Wittgenstein is sincere or not in rejecting metaphysics by excluding logic as

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[139] Carruthers, p. 142.

[140] Carruthers, p. 144.

[141] Carruthers, p. 147. [parentheses Carruthers'; brackets mine]

[142] Carruthers, p. 147. [emphasis mine]

a subject of meaningful discourse, exclude it he does. That exclusion undermines their conclusion that Wittgenstein's is a presentation of realist metaphysics – the conclusion they evidently argue is the only one that can rescue the *Tractatus* from the kind of charge Gellner levels against it: that it is nothing but irredeemable nonsense. By failing to take seriously the exclusion, they stall in the belief that the metaphysical statements Wittgenstein says he does not in the end intend to say do not on final analysis fail to say that which they at first appear to be saying. Abutting against their metaphysical models at all times is Wittgenstein's insistence that he is not grounding a metaphysical system. He concurs the *Tractatus* is nonsense, but for him this does not mean it is irredeemable, ineffective or meaningless. In this light, arguably it is wrong to conclude the *Tractatus* demands the embrace of metaphysics, the criticisms of Gellner, Feibleman and Carruthers notwithstanding.

Chapter IV - Rejecting Criticism:

What What Wittgenstein

Doesn't Say Doesn't Say

Some critics have speculated about alternate interpretations of the *Tractatus* that may allow Wittgenstein to escape some of the harsh criticisms of those who view this work of his youth as not being true to itself. Some of those critics seek to draw the *Tractatus* into the theses proffered by Kant and by Husserl. John Passmore says Wittgenstein, prior to writing the *Tractatus* in his youth, almost certainly had very limited exposure to philosophical works, the most likely candidates including the works of Kant and Husserl among a handful of others.[143] In this light, it may be helpful to look for implicit, if not explicit, reflections of Kant's and Husserl's theses in the *Tractatus* to determine whether and to what extent Wittgenstein shares their approaches and conclusions. There are benefits though also dangers in reading into a particular work certain influences that are not explicitly credited or articulated; however, there are also benefits in exposing divergences of argument that set one author apart from another, should such divergences be identified. In view of Wittgenstein's own challenge to his successors to articulate more clearly what it is that he believes he has said poorly, it has

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[143] Passmore, p. 352.

seemed to some not to be a wholly useless exercise to attempt to determine what may or may not be implied by what Wittgenstein does not explicitly say. What these interpreters determine, however, sometimes cannot stand up to the key theses of the text: namely, the propositions of the text itself are "senseless"[144], "[w]hat can be said at all can be said clearly; and whereof one cannot speak thereof one must be silent"[145].

4.1 A Kantian Analysis

David Pears, in his book *Wittgenstein*[146], contends that Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* is, in the Kantian tradition, a work of critical philosophy. In contrast to speculative metaphysics, critical philosophy involves employing a method of rigorous analysis whereby thought systematically examines itself in an attempt to delineate the structure and limits of thought.

Stephan Körner, in his introduction to Kant's philosophy[147], interprets critical philosophy in its historical context. Kant considers himself to have been awakened by

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[144] *Tractatus*, section 6.54.

[145] *Tractatus*, p. 27. [brackets mine]

[146] David Pears, *Wittgenstein* (London: Fontana/Collins, 1971).

[147] Stephan Körner, *Kant* (Markham, Ontario: Penguin, 1990). [particularly pp. 13-32]

Hume's rigorous approach to philosophy that dismissed all statements that were not analytic (such as mathematical statements) or empirically verifiable (such as those of natural science) as meaningless. On this analysis, which has also influenced Wittgenstein's heirs in the logical positivist movement, one who accepts this definition – that a meaningful proposition is one which is either empirical or analytic – must conclude that metaphysical propositions are meaningless since they are neither. Kant rejects Hume's dichotomy and establishes a new classification scheme based on two fundamental divergences from Hume's approach: first, Kant considers, not propositions, but judgments, the latter being propositions that are actually affirmed by someone; and, second, he further analyzes what Hume takes as analytic statements in order to reveal the difference between analyticity and a-priority. A judgment is analytic if the relation between its subject and predicate is such that the predicate belongs to the subject (as, for example, the predicate 'is a wet day' belongs to the subject 'a rainy day' in the judgment 'a rainy day is a wet day') or, as Körner rephrases it, "if, and only if, its denial would be a contradiction in terms or, what amounts to the same, if it is *logically* necessary or, again in other words, if its negation is *logically* impossible"[148]; otherwise, the judgment is synthetic (i.e. its negation is not self-contradictory). A judgment is *a priori* if it is logically independent of all judgments which describe experiences or even impressions of sense, though its derivation may be achieved through experience (for example, that an

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[148] Körner, p. 23. [emphasis Körner's]

equiangular Euclidean triangle is necessarily equilateral or that every father is necessarily male); otherwise, it is *a posteriori*. So, where Hume sees all meaningful propositions as being either analytic or empirical, Kant sees all meaningful judgments as being either analytic *a priori*, synthetic *a posteriori* or synthetic *a priori* (with analytic *a posteriori* judgments being impossible since there is an inherent contradiction in the term). The synthetic *a priori* category is Kant's invention and has no equivalent or foundation in Hume's work; but it is critical to Kant's project. Kant considers such judgments as 'every change has a cause' to be neither analytic (since the predicate is not contained in the subject, as Hume would agree) nor *a posteriori* (since it does not entail any particular proposition which describes a sense experience but rather has the character of a universal rule). He includes in this category certain metaphysical judgments as well as judgments of mathematics. Kant's approach to metaphysics is to establish a method by which the truth or falsity of its judgments can be ascertained. As Körner puts it, "[b]efore indulging in metaphysics we need a critique of reason to show how far or in what sense it is a possibility"[149]. Since the statements of metaphysics fall within the synthetic *a priori* category on Kant's analysis, "[t]he critical philosophy is essentially an inquiry into the nature and function of synthetic *a priori* judgements"[150].

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[149] Körner, p. 16. [brackets mine]

[150] Körner, p. 22. [brackets mine]

Körner argues that the objection that there are no such judgments as synthetic *a priori* judgments since a-priority implies analyticity, is based on an erroneous conflation of the two senses of necessity: the narrow sense in which a negation is a self-contradiction, which is reserved for analytic judgments, and the wider sense in which all judgments that are not logically dependent on particular empirical judgments are necessary, which includes synthetic *a priori* judgments. Judgments that are clearly not analytic can also clearly be of a different kind from empirical judgments. Körner says 'every change has a cause' is logically independent of empirical verification in a way that 'every man dies before the 300th year of his age' is not, yet it is not logically necessary in the way that 'a rainy day is a wet day' is logically necessary. So, while on Kant's view necessity and strict universality are adequate tests of the a-priority of a judgment, he identifies a different kind of necessity in synthetic *a priori* judgments. There is a universality to such judgments; but since they are synthetic, their negations are not self-contradictory, though the denial of certain 'absolute' synthetic *a priori* judgments – such as those of traditional logic – would have major implications for natural science and human thought in general. Because of the way he views synthetic *a priori* judgments, Kant's project of critically examining them involves determining their *a priori* constituents to determine what has to be the case for such judgments to be what they are and to set out the limits of such judgments to determine which judgments of metaphysics

are meaningful.[151]

On Pears' analysis, critical philosophy can take one of two paths. The data to be investigated

> may be presented in a psychological form, as ideas, thoughts and modes of thought: or they may be presented in a linguistic form, as words, sentences and types of discourse. Kant's critique starts from data of the first kind, and the second wave of critical philosophy, the logico-analytic movement of this century, starts from data of the second kind.... [Furthermore] it does not make any fundamental difference which alternative is chosen, because a significant sentence must express a thought, and a genuine thought must be expressible in words.[152]

Where Kant's method involves a critique of thought, Wittgenstein's method, according to Pears, is a critique of the language in which thought is articulated. Pears says of Wittgenstein:

> His philosophy was a critique of language very similar in scope and purpose to Kant's critique of thought. Like Kant, he believed that philosophers often unwittingly stray beyond the limits into the kind of specious nonsense that seems to express genuine thoughts but in fact does not do so. He wanted to discover the exact location of the line dividing sense from nonsense, so that people might realize when they had reached it and stop... [Complementary to his negative purpose was his positive intention] to succeed in understanding the structure of what can be said. He believed that the only way to achieve this understanding is to plot the limits, because the limits and the structure have a common origin.[153]

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[151] Körner, p. 31.

[152] Pears, p. 28. [brackets and omission mine]

[153] Pears, p. 5. [brackets and omission mine]

To put it another way: "Wittgenstein wanted to plot the absolute limits of language, just as Kant wanted to plot the absolute limits of thought."[154]

Kant's project is to determine, based on a critical analysis of the limits of thought, what one can know. Where Descartes argues that the doubting and therefore undeniably-existing *cogito* and the extended world are both real because they are grounded in a perfect and good God whose existence is implied by the presence in thought for the *cogito* of the idea of the perfect God, Kant begins with a much more impoverished starting point and never does reach the stage where he says the subject and the world are real. One might say Kant allows nothing but that things appear to be a certain way and seeks to determine nothing but the range of conditions that thought must bring to the world to ground the possibility of it appearing in the way that it does. He is seeking to strictly determine the necessary conditions of the possibility of things seeming to be the way that they are. His is a critical analysis of the limits of thinking and not the establishment of the metaphysical grounds for the existence of an independent world and thinking subject. About the world independent of his knowing it, Kant in the end says nothing except that nothing defensible about any such independent realm can be said; but, not saying anything, he does not deny it either. In this sense, Kant fits in the idealist

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[154] Pears, p. 37.

tradition; but he is a transcendental idealist, where 'transcendental' refers to laying forth the *a priori* conditions that must obtain to make possible our cognition with respect to the world. As Charles Crittenden puts it, "[a] transcendental argument is one intending to prove that certain concepts or presuppositions are necessary for language or thought"[155]. By focusing on *a priori* conditions, Kant initiates what he calls a Copernican revolution in philosophy, for he is concerned not with what the object must be like for it to affect cognition, but what cognition must be like for it to think about objects as it does.

It can be argued (as Crittenden has argued[156]) that Wittgenstein's project, similarly, is to determine what conditions must obtain for the world to be spoken about in the way that it is, and to defeat skeptical denials of these conditions on the basis of *reductio* arguments that expose inconsistencies in skeptical contentions against these conditions. It might be argued further that his project has nothing at all to do with establishing what 'really' might be the case independently of one's experience of the world. In other words, where Kant establishes what is necessary in the context of transcendental thought, Wittgenstein establishes what is necessary in the context of logical discourse. For Kant, transcendental thought accounts for all we can meaningfully

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[155] Charles Crittenden, "Wittgenstein and Transcendental Arguments", *Language, Logic, and Philosophy: Proceedings of the Fourth International Wittgenstein Symposium, 1979*, Rudolf Haller and Wolfgang Grassl (eds.) (Vienna: Hölder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1980), pp. 259-261. [brackets mine]

[156] Crittenden, p. 259.

know of the world, and for Wittgenstein, logical discourse accounts for all we can meaningfully say about the world. The world thus encountered is all one can meaningfully say there is. So, it is not that there is a real world that these critical philosophies retreat from addressing, but rather that there is nothing beyond what these critical philosophies address that can be meaningfully thought, says Kant, or meaningfully said, says Wittgenstein. Whether or not there is a reality 'beyond' the world we encounter is irrelevant and talking about it is meaningless. From the perspective of meaning, the world we encounter is whole.

On this analysis (though it strays somewhat from Wittgenstein's own terminology), Wittgenstein's facts and propositions are simply the two moments of the form of propositional discourse: the propositions are hypotheses pointing towards possible states of affairs while the facts are the whole range of possibilities to which propositions can point. It is not that objects are real and names are about them but rather that objects and names are two sides of the same coin: mutually-implicative aspects of the structure of the world through the eyes of logic. On this analysis, a proposition means nothing unless it has a focal point of intent and an object of experience means nothing except in the context of language, the grid in accordance with which the world materializes in experience. All the world – its objects and states and interconnections – is at its root these object-name moment pairs, made complex as fact-proposition moment pairs which present themselves as 'picture'-'depicted' pairs. The world is a logical space

containing moment pairs of all facts and the respective propositions that concern them.

Brian McGuinness (who rejects the metaphysical interpretation of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* and views its apparent realism as a heuristic device[157]) presents this analysis in a somewhat different way, identifying two different meanings of 'existence'. The world consists of facts, which exist; but these states of affairs are composed of objects, which also exist, though in a different way. Existence, as we ordinarily take it, is confined to the first of these senses.[158] Objects are not independent things in the sense anticipated by realists. They are

> not *in* the world any more than [they are] *in* thought or *in* language. Objects are the form of all these realms, and our acquaintance with objects (our contact with them, to borrow a metaphor from Aristotle) is not an experience or knowledge of something over against which we stand. Thus it is not properly experience or knowledge at all. Objects are *eti epekeina tēs ousias* (beyond being), and it is therefore misleading to regard Wittgenstein as a realist in respect of them. His position is one, as indeed he tells us, from which realism, idealism and solipsism can all be seen as one.[159]

McGuinness proffers this interpretation in view of Wittgenstein's stated intention to

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[157] Irving Block, "Introduction", *Perspectives on the Philosophy of Wittgenstein*, Irving Block (ed.) (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981), p. vii.

[158] Brian McGuinness, "The So-called Realism of the *Tractatus*", *Perspectives on the Philosophy of Wittgenstein*, Irving Block (ed.) (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981), p. 62.

[159] McGuinness, pp. 72-73. [emphasis and parentheses McGuinness'; brackets mine]

ground his project in logic. According to the dictates of logic, a proposition must be such that it and its elements can be specified independently of the existence of one state of affairs or another. The proposition must be able to capture any state of affairs, no matter what is the case.[160]

Such an interpretation accounts for a peculiarity Passmore identifies in the *Tractatus*: that some facts (*Sachverhalt*) can be only possible, not actual.[161] If facts were real things in the real world, it could hardly be the case that some of them are never actual; but Wittgenstein clearly allows that some of them are not.[162] All possibilities are comprehended in the logical space, but only some are verified through the application of truth-functional reasoning as being existent facts. The verification of a possible atomic fact is simply the establishment of its existence through a 'true' judgment regarding the atomic propositions concerning that atomic fact. The non-existence of an atomic fact, which betrays itself through a truth-functional analysis of its proposition, is a negative fact.[163] Erik Stenius contends Wittgenstein fits the false proposition within his picture theory by making a proposition of indeterminate truthfulness a "shadow" which does not

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[160] McGuinness, pp. 64-65.

[161] Passmore, pp. 353-354.

[162] For example, *Tractatus* sections 2.0123, 2.0124, 2.05, and 2.06.

[163] *Tractatus*, section 2.06.

have to bear similarity to what it represents.[164]

The way the 'picture'-'depicted' arrangement is worked out is described by Irving Block[165] move by move in the following way.

1) To say is to describe while to show is to enter into an immediate relation such that it is impossible to interpose a description in a showing relationship. This the *Tractatus* says at section 4.1212.

2) That logic makes language possible can be shown but not described.

3) The distinction between form and content shows itself in the difference between logical and empirical propositions inasmuch as logical propositions have truth and falsity because of their (formal) elements independently of external observations while empirical propositions point to external elements (content) on whose status questions of truth and falsity are answered.

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[164] Erik Stenius, "The Picture Theory and Wittgenstein's Later Attitude to it", *Perspectives on the Philosophy of Wittgenstein*, Irving Block (ed.) (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981), pp. 121-123.

[165] Irving Block, "The Unity of Wittgenstein's Philosophy", *Language, Logic, and Philosophy: Proceedings of the Fourth International Wittgenstein Symposium, 1979*, Rudolf Haller and Wolfgang Grassl (eds.) (Vienna: Hölder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1980), pp. 233-236.

4) Not only the tautologousness of a logical proposition is shown but also the sense of an empirical proposition. No rule can tell beforehand how to put together a sentence such that it will be sensible. Recognition of sense must precede the designation of 'noun' and 'verb', for example. The sentence must show that it is a sentence.

5) That there are no *a priori* rules for determining whether a string of words is a sensible sentence is another way of saying that a theory of meaning is impossible.

6) The picture theory outlined in the *Tractatus* simply shows how propositions depict facts of the world that make them true. Propositions depict facts by picturing facts.

7) Propositions can picture facts because they share a logical form.

8) However, the logic of the world shows what is possible, not what is actual.

9) To determine whether a proposition truly depicts what is actual, one must consider not form but content.

10) The truth or falsity of propositions can be determined because, according to logical atomism, propositions and facts similarly comprise simple elementary parts into which they are wholly analyzable.

11) The relation between simple objects and simple names is immediate (though Wittgenstein never at any point in the *Tractatus* gives an example of either).

12) The difficulty here is that names name objects that are the substance of the world, but names also reside in sentences whose status is purely formal and whose sense shows itself through this logical form. Put another way, its place in a sentence formally determines that a name is intended to be a name, but its status as a name also points to the existence of an object – its content.

13) For Wittgenstein, unlike Russell, however, the content is not constitutive of the name. The name intends a content, but it is determined *qua* name solely on the basis of its formal relation in the proposition. Block argues there is an incoherence in arguing a purely formal relation can determine the existence of an object.[166]

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[166] Block (1980), p. 235.

14) Block argues it is also incoherent to say, as Wittgenstein evidently does, that to know all an object's internal relations without knowing any of its external relations – in other words, to know all its possible relations without knowing its actual relations – is to know all that can be known about the object.[167] Content, then, involves what is possibly the case and not what is actually the case.

This picture theory of meaning Block says is internally incoherent and cannot withstand scrutiny as a philosophy of language. Of course, Wittgenstein does not maintain the theory as a philosophy of language since he disowns it at the end of the *Tractatus*; but, in the pages before it is disowned, it does seem to conjure up a world not unlike the Kantian world, in which the noumenal thing-in-itself is forever out of view and out of consideration.

The world Wittgenstein is constructing is not the ordinary world but a world rigidly and exhaustively determined in logical space as the collection of 'picture'-'depicted' pairs in intimate, indivisible combination. There is no subject-object division or idea-thing division or name-object division, except for the sake of the analysis which itself is later disowned. The division, the connection and the elements never present themselves directly: they appear only surreptitiously; but the necessity of the structure is

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[167] Block (1980), p. 235.

nonetheless a condition of the possibility of there being an experience of the world at all. Here, Wittgenstein seems to be constructing an 'ideal language': as Passmore puts it, "a language the terms of which are all of them precisely defined and the sentences of which unambiguously reveal the logical form of the facts to which they refer; such a perfect language must rest upon atomic propositions; the fundamental philosophical problem is to describe the structure of these atomic propositions"[168]. This form or structure, then, is the set of *a priori* conditions that must obtain for our world to be such as it is; and it is this form that Wittgenstein is talking about when he refers to facts and propositions, just as it is the form that Kant is talking about when he lays out his critique regarding synthetic *a priori* judgments.

Elena Panova[169] points out, however, that there is a discontinuity between Kant and Wittgenstein on this point. While Kant's deduction of transcendental logic is a "pure" deduction in the sense that it regards the phenomena of human experience rather than the things in themselves, Panova argues Wittgenstein's presentation rests on encountering logic not by seeing something as a state of affairs but rather by seeing that something *is*. Wittgenstein's logical structure of language is a reflection of the structure

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[168] Passmore, pp. 424-425.

[169] Elena Panova, "Kant's Influence on the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*", *Language, Logic, and Philosophy: Proceedings of the Fourth International Wittgenstein Symposium, 1979*, Rudolf Haller and Wolfgang Grassl (eds.) (Vienna: Hölder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1980), pp. 272-274.

of the world, not a transcendental representation of the phenomena as they appear. Wittgenstein believes the symbols of all languages are arranged in the same way that things are arranged in reality, so there is an immediate sense of the veracity of the picture that language presents of the world if that linguistic presentation is clear. Panova quotes Wittgenstein saying what a picture represents is its sense and the agreement or disagreement of its sense with reality constitutes its truth or falsity.[170] The world of Panova's Wittgenstein, then, is a materialist's world.

Pears[171] is interested more in the logical structure than in the material of Wittgenstein's world so he is much more open to it being a 'pure' analysis than is Panova. In his interpretation, he focuses on how Wittgenstein, like Kant, seeks to ground the logical necessity his presentation demands. On his analysis, Wittgenstein's project begins as a search for a foundation of logical necessity that Wittgenstein does not find in Russell's work. Logical necessity is not a dispensable feature of Wittgenstein's presentation. According to Pears, we clearly rely on logical necessity in describing the world: for, though it is a contingent fact that one thing is smaller than another, it is logically necessary that a thing be either smaller or not smaller than another. It is not possible to think otherwise. Therefore, logically necessary, or *a priori*, truths must be

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[170] Panova, p. 272. The references are to sections 2.221 and 2.222 of the *Tractatus*.

[171] Pears, p. 46.

satisfactorily grounded in an epistemological theory for that theory to be a meaningful articulation of the way things are. Wittgenstein holds that not only the limits of thought but also the limits of language are grounded in logical necessity and fixed *a priori*.

He grounds logical necessity by positing a simple yet comprehensive hand-in-glove conception of language and reality. That conception has two moments, which Pears calls X and Y. "X says that every factual proposition has a precise sense: Y says that the way in which every factual proposition gets this sense is pictorial."[172] A third auxiliary assumption, Z, is that "whenever two propositions are logically related to one another, there will be within one of the two, or within both, some logical complexity which analysis could reveal"[173], which means the simplest propositions, of which all complex propositions are composed, are independent of one another. All sensible ways of articulating language involve propositions, and propositions analyze without remnant into elementary propositions. The sense of any proposition is the fact of reality that answers the question the proposition poses. A proposition is true if the fact of reality it posits is the case. The facts of reality themselves are analyzable without remnant into atomic objects. In this way, Wittgenstein establishes almost a tautologous relationship between language and reality since they are mutually delimiting without remnant or

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[172] Pears, p. 60.

[173] Pears, p. 62.

confusion. This mutual delimitation, since it is grounded in the essential necessary structure of reality, is a relationship of logical necessity. There is no complexity or synthesis. The picture and the proposition are inseparable aspects of one another.

This relation is described by Lee[174] in Kantian terms. On Lee's view, the Wittgensteinian formula '*a*R*b*' contains not three terms but two in a dyadic relationship.

> In a perspicuous language, 'R' occurs, not by way of a name which names a real object in the empirical world (the real order), but by way of a configuration of objects.... Thus, relations are "ineffable": relations can be shown but are not nameable because relations are not nominata in the empirical world.[175]

In this sense, Lee argues, Wittgenstein and Kant are alike, both rejecting the ontological reality of abstract entities. In Lee's Kantian terms, "the synthetic unity of objects is effected, not apprehended"[176].

How Wittgenstein arrives at this hand-in-glove characterization of the language-reality relation is the subject of Pears' third chapter, the steps of which are these:

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[174] Kwang-Sae Lee, "Kant and Wittgenstein on Empirical Concepts", *Language, Logic, and Philosophy: Proceedings of the Fourth International Wittgenstein Symposium, 1979,* Rudolf Haller and Wolfgang Grassl (eds.) (Vienna: Hölder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1980), pp. 269-271.

[175] Lee, p. 270. [parentheses Lee's; omission mine]

[176] Lee, p. 270.

1) a factual proposition always shuts out a certain possibility, by the law of the excluded middle; for example, the proposition *p* shuts out the possibility *not-p*;

2) the law of the excluded middle "necessarily excludes" the possibility *half-p* (for it is impossible) while it "contingently shuts out" the proposition *not-p* when the proposition *p* is asserted to be the case;

3) every factual proposition that is not an elementary proposition analyzes into, and is logically equivalent to, other propositions that themselves shut out certain possibilities, and it can be rendered in terms of the relevant possibilities of these subordinate propositions; for example, if *p* analyzes into *q* and *r*, which shut out *not-q* and *not-r* respectively, then *p* can therefore be rendered in terms of the possibilities *q and r*, *q and not-r*, *not-q and r*, and *not-q and not-r*; and furthermore, the entire sense of the factual proposition is given in determining which of these possibilities it shuts out, which is to say "any factual proposition is a truth-function of the propositions in its analysis"[177];

4) every factual proposition is ultimately analyzable into elementary propositions, and every factual proposition is therefore a truth-function of the elementary

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[177] Pears, p. 71.

propositions into which it is ultimately analyzed;

5) excluded from factual propositions are the propositions of religion and morality;

6) Wittgenstein is noncommittal on whether the veracity of a proposition is determined by empirical means, for example through acquaintance in the Russellian sense;

7) like the solipsist, Wittgenstein is unable to say that certain named objects exist or do not exist from within his system of factual discourse for he cannot say what does not exist without naming and thereby positing it; so the existence of an object cannot be the subject of a factual proposition but rather it is the case that, in being named, the object is shown to exist and any proposition about the existence of that object is therefore a mere tautology;

8) if *not-p* is taken to be the neutral situation which obtains in logical space prior to the assertion of factual propositions, then what the proposition *p* does is exclude the possibility of *not-p*, leaving *not-not-p*, which is logically equivalent to *p*;

9) a proposition is not a static compound name, for it implies movement which either agrees or disagrees with reality;

10) the meaning of a name is its object, but there is something lacking in the name, namely the connection it demands to other names; which is to say "a name is an abstraction from a proposition, and, since a proposition is a semantic fact, a name is an element abstracted from a semantic fact"[178];

11) just as there are necessities governing the combinations of the objects which names name, so too in the same way there are necessities governing the combinations of names in propositions, and these necessities limit the space of possibilities for such combinations;

12) propositions which are tautologies shut out none of the possibilities into which they are analyzed; propositions which are contradictory shut out all of the possibilities into which they are analyzed; and factual propositions shut out some of the possibilities into which they are analyzed; and

13) tautologies and contradictions demonstrate how factual propositions can be valid; for valid propositions, when combined with their conclusions, are tautologies and, when combined with the negation of their conclusions, are contradictions.

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[178] Pears, p. 79.

Pears collapses Wittgenstein's system in the following way:

> The connection is that logic covers everything that can be said in advance of experience, everything that is *a priori*. Experience can only give us a world of facts, but this world floats in a space of possibilities which is given *a priori*. When logic discloses the structure of factual discourse, it also discloses the structure of reality which factual discourse reflects. These two structures, which are really one, may be regarded as a framework, or grid of co-ordinates, spreading through the whole space of possibilities in which the world of facts floats. The limit of this space, which is reflected in the limit of factual discourse, is determined by logic. For the point of origin from which the limit is calculated is plotted by logic, and the formula by which it is calculated is a logical formula.[179]

Furthermore:

> the general framework of any factual language is fixed objectively in advance. This framework is a truth-functional structure based on elementary propositions. When human beings devise a particular factual language, they must connect it up to this pre-existing structure. They have certain options about the ways in which they make the connections, but the structure itself is rigid.[180]

Arguably what Pears contends[181] is that, for Wittgenstein, the analyzability of the language-reality relation in this way is the logically necessary condition of the possibility of logic; and since logic is taken to be not only possible but in fact the case, then the condition obtains. This seems to be a transcendental argument with a very Kantian

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[179] Pears, p. 84.

[180] Pears, p. 85.

[181] Pears, p. 83.

conclusion: that if we operate within the condition that logic is the case, then Wittgenstein's language-reality relation is logically necessary. Of course, if we take the converse of the hypothetical and assume logic is not the case, then no conclusion is possible because that would be to employ logic while denying its efficacy. Only from within logic does the inquiry have purchase, and once the validity of logic is granted, logic demands Wittgenstein's conclusions about the nature of the language-reality relation.

The question is whether the presentation of those "necessary" (and therefore not factual or contingent) conclusions consists of tautologous *a priori* propositions, substantial and therefore synthetic *a priori* propositions, or propositions that belong with those of religion and morality in the region beyond what can properly be called propositions, whose function is to point while themselves shrinking from view.

Pears points out that Wittgenstein's options are severely limited. Wittgenstein's conception of necessity differs from Kant's. Kant holds that it is possible to deduce synthetic *a priori* truths - which, as we have seen, are non-analytic truths that necessarily hold within the bounds of factual knowledge; for example, that every event has a cause - and such truths are therefore not tautologous. On Pears' view, Wittgenstein holds that all necessity is logical necessity, and he contends that the necessary truths of logic are empty tautologies. He thereby abandons the notion of synthetic *a priori* truths, confining

necessity to tautologous propositions of logic. For him, while it is a contingent fact that a word has a given meaning, it is not contingent but rather necessary and tautologous that a certain set of circumstances will be the case if a proposition containing that word, once it has been defined, is true. What is more interesting to Wittgenstein is absolute necessity whereby one can define with certainty the absolute limits of any possible language. What he arrives at through his analysis is a dissection of language into elementary propositions. But his description of this dissection of language and his conclusion that the dissection and its conclusions are absolutely necessary truths about the structure and limits of language leave Pears frustrated; for those articulations of Wittgenstein, while purporting to be absolutely necessary, cannot be tautological, yet Wittgenstein has rejected the notion of synthetic *a priori* truths. So, while Kant may perhaps be able to assert his synthetic *a priori* conclusions with confidence, Wittgenstein cannot.[182]

Pears' assertion that Wittgenstein forbids, or intends to forbid, synthetic *a priori* propositions is not without its critics. Nicholas Gier[183], while conceding Wittgenstein appears to forcefully reject the concept in the *Tractatus* itself, contends the author

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[182] Pears, pp. 49-50.

[183] Nicholas F. Gier, *Wittgenstein and Phenomenology: A Comparative Study of the Later Wittgenstein, Husserl, Heidegger, and Merleau-Ponty* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1981).

nevertheless evidently either accepts the veracity of synthetic *a priori* propositions[184] or tolerates a "serious inconsistency"[185] in his approach to the concept during this period. Gier refers to an instance recorded in Wittgenstein's *Lectures on the Foundation of Mathematics* in which he defines as synthetic *a priori* the proposition (similar to that recorded in section 6.3751 of the *Tractatus*) that 'a patch cannot be at the same time both red and green'.[186] Further, he refers to Wittgenstein's statements in both *Philosophical Remarks*[187] and *Remarks on the Foundation of Mathematics*[188] that certain propositions of mathematics must be synthetic *a priori* propositions. To bolster his point, Gier takes a passage directly from two of Wittgenstein's writings – *Philosophical Remarks*[189] and *Philosophical Grammar*[190] – that states: "Isn't what I am saying what Kant meant, by saying that 5 + 7 = 12 is not analytic but synthetic *a priori*".

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[184] Gier, pp. 8, 13, 35, 88, 92, 157, 158, 171, 172.

[185] Gier, p. 157.

[186] Gier, p. 158.

[187] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Remarks*, trans. R. Hargreaves and R. White (Oxford: Blackwell, 1975), pp. 129, 218. In Gier, p. 158.

[188] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Foundation of Mathematics*, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe (New York: Macmillan, 1956), pp. 125-126. In Gier, p. 158.

[189] *Philosophical Remarks*, p. 129. In Gier, p. 35.

[190] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Grammar*, trans. Anthony Kenny (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), p. 404. In Gier, p. 35.

Whether or not Wittgenstein expressly rejects synthetic *a priori* propositions, or later changes his mind in this regard, may be beside the point. Thomas Morawetz[191], like Pears, contends Wittgenstein's apparent embrace of the indubitability of synthetic propositions is deceiving and grounded in a mistaken impression of Wittgenstein's ambiguous use of the concept of certainty. He says Wittgenstein answers the question of whether synthetic judgments are ever thought to allow no exception with the observation that such judgments are inherently context-dependent and subject to rejection when information changes or the context is altered. On Morawetz' view, Wittgenstein concedes there are synthetic propositions that appear to be indubitable, but only because taking them to be indubitable is a condition of the possibility of undertaking empirical inquiries to assess other synthetic propositions that are taken to be dubitable. For example, "[i]t is possible... to establish historical facts only if the *possibility* that there were events in time before the present moment is not questioned"[192]. Morawetz points out this is not to say absolute indubitability is ascribed to the synthetic propositions whose affirmation permits empirical inquiries to proceed. To say that some indubitable propositions are not absolutely indubitable is to contend that certainty has an ambiguous character, yet this on Morawetz' view is what Wittgenstein (like Kant before him, he says) contends. Certainty for such propositions is thereby defined within the context of

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[191] Thomas H. Morawetz, "Wittgenstein and Synthetic *A Priori* Judgments", *Philosophy, 49* (1974), pp. 429-434.

[192] Morawetz, p. 433. [emphasis Morawetz'; brackets and omission mine]

its role in inquiry and thought and not granted absolute status. One might say the indubitability of certain synthetic propositions is the condition of the possibility of natural science and synthetic *a posteriori* propositions and therefore the condition of the possibility of there being for us a world, yet still not certain in any absolute metaphysical sense. This view of certainty within the context of asserted conventions is echoed by Michael Dummett in his analysis of Wittgenstein's philosophy of mathematics.[193]

Pears, however, in outlining a range of four options, makes a different choice of what must be the case for Wittgenstein's project to be effective and internally consistent. He contends the four options are as follows:

1) the propositions of the *Tractatus* itself that purport to be true are indeed tautologies and therefore not substantial, or at most definitional;

2) the propositions of the *Tractatus* are synthetic *a priori* truths similar to Kant's and, moreover, Wittgenstein's apparent disavowal of such truths is deceptive;

3) the propositions composing the *Tractatus* only pretend to be necessary truths and

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[193] Michael Dummett, "Wittgenstein's Philosophy of Mathematics", *Philosophy of Mathematics*, Volume 11 of *The Philosophy of Wittgenstein*, John V. Canfield (ed.) (New York: Garland, 1986), pp. 114-115.

are in fact only conditional statements used to compose a theory, in the manner of logical positivism; or

4) the propositions of the *Tractatus* are, similar to those of religion and morality, of a different sort from ordinary propositions and ultimately evanescent, doing nothing more than showing what must be the case.

One might say, then, that Wittgenstein's *Tractarian* propositions are either tautologous, synthetic *a priori*, conditional or evocative. Consider each in its turn.

Pears collapses the first and fourth options into one. On his view, the content of the discourse strongly suggests his propositions about the tautological nature of the language-reality relation themselves purport to be more than tautologies or simple definitions and could be formulated differently without inherent contradiction. But could the overall project be a deep tautology, not unlike solipsism, which expresses indirectly a valid point which it cannot fully articulate? The question Pears asks is whether it could be articulated meaningfully at all: "According to him, what lies beyond the limits of language cannot be asserted in language, but can only be shown. But what would be the status of something that can only be shown?"[194] Recall that a tautology expresses no

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[194] Pears, p. 51.

factual state of affairs, yet it does not show nothing.[195]

In the end, Pears rejects the notion that the *Tractatus* may be a deep tautology. While Wittgenstein "expresses the valid point that factual discourse is limited from the inside, because the base on which it is constructed is what exists"[196], yet he does not employ the *Tractatus* to express a general tautology: for example, 'What is reflected in the mirror of language is reflected in the mirror of language' or 'There is what there is' or 'Reality has the character that it has'; but rather he uses it in an attempt to express the substantive truth 'Reality must have a certain character which can be specified'. Such an expression would raise substantive questions like 'Why must it have this character?', 'How is the essential nature of language discovered?', and 'What is the status of the propositions that describe it?'. Pears puts it this way: "either language may be defined, or its nature may be investigated empirically, and... the first of these two alternatives will yield an empty necessary truth, while the second will yield a substantial contingent truth."[197] Since the *Tractatus* evidently is not of the first type because of the questions it raises, then it must be a substantial truth, whether that be a substantial contingent truth or a substantial *a priori* truth.

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[195] Pears, p. 53.

[196] Pears, p. 86.

[197] Pears, p. 87. [omission mine]

Wittgenstein would not have been able to assert with consistency that the *Tractatus* is on the whole a substantial contingent truth since, first, he would have had to concede that nowhere in reality does one encounter what the book purports to describe; and, second, he would have had to acknowledge that to treat the propositions of the *Tractatus* as contingent propositions would be to imbue them with a character other than the true and necessary character that is demanded of propositions of philosophy.

Pears says "[t]he Kantian way between the horns of this dilemma was to argue that there are substantial necessary truths. If there is another way between them, it certainly is not indicated by Wittgenstein's doctrine of showing."[198] Since in Pears' assessment the propositions of the *Tractatus* are neither analytic nor contingent, therefore he concludes that Wittgenstein is employing synthetic *a priori* truths despite an apparent disavowal of them.

> An explanation of the word "must" is also required. Does it or does it not express a substantial necessary truth? If this question is not unaskable, the answer would seem to be that it does express a substantial necessary truth. The argument for this answer has already been given: surely there is a difference between the necessary truth of a tautology and the necessary truth of the theory which is presupposed by the system of factual discourse. But what did Wittgenstein take the difference to be? In default of a clear answer from him, it is natural to conclude that in the end his system is like Kant's, although on the way to this destination it exhibits many differences, one of which is incompatible with the journey.[199]

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[198] Pears, p. 87. [brackets mine]

[199] Pears, pp. 53-54.

Could the second option then be the case, despite Pears' pessimistic conclusion about it: namely, that while the propositions of the *Tractatus* are synthetic *a priori* truths similar to Kant's, Wittgenstein's apparent disavowal of such truths is deceptive? The *Tractatus* itself seems to agree with Pears on this point that such a conclusion is implausible. Wittgenstein seems determined, in the *Tractatus*, to reject the absolute indubitability of the synthetic propositions: for example, in his treatment of the law of causality where he makes explicit that the law of induction, being a "significant" proposition, therefore cannot be either a logical law or a law *a priori*.

> The so-called law of induction cannot in any case be a logical law, for it is obviously a significant proposition. - And therefore it cannot be a law a priori either.[200]

Pears' third option is that the propositions composing the *Tractatus* only pretend to be necessary truths and are in fact only conditional statements used to compose a theory, in the manner of logical positivism. Pears defines this option in his Introduction:

> Might not philosophy abandon its claim to an intuitive apprehension of the essential nature of language without at the same time abandoning any attempt to theorize? This possibility has been explored by Russell, Carnap, Quine, Strawson and many others.[201]

But Wittgenstein evidently dismisses this option in his Preface to this work, where he

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[200] *Tractatus*, section 6.31 and following.

[201] Pears, p. 39.

writes that "the *truth* of the thoughts communicated here seems to me to be unassailable and definitive" and "I am, therefore, of the opinion that the problems have in essentials been finally solved"[202]. To choose this option would be to place him in the camp of the logical positivists, who view their own project in this way; but Wittgenstein, though embraced by logical positivists, evidently does not consider his *Tractatus* to be such a work of contingent approximations.

In view of Wittgenstein's own characterization of the *Tractatus* near its conclusion, the more plausible option may well be the fourth, separated from the first: that the propositions of the *Tractatus* are, similar to those of religion and morality, of a different sort from ordinary propositions and ultimately evanescent, doing nothing more than showing what must be the case. This conclusion is suggested by Wittgenstein himself:

> My propositions are elucidatory in this way: he who understands me finally recognizes them as senseless, when he has climbed out through them, on them, over them. (He must so to speak throw away the ladder, after he has climbed up on it.)[203]

This relates directly to two statements in the Preface:

> ... the *truth* of the thoughts communicated here seems to me unassailable

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[202] *Tractatus*, p. 29 [*emphasis Wittgenstein's*].

[203] *Tractatus*, section 6.54. [parentheses Wittgenstein's]

and definitive.[204]

> Its [the *Tractatus*'] whole meaning could be summed up somewhat as follows: What can be said at all can be said clearly: and whereof one cannot speak thereof one must be silent.[205]

These three statements say, collectively, that 1) only what can be stated clearly can be stated at all; 2) the propositions of the *Tractatus* are senseless; and 3) what the *Tractatus* says is nonetheless unassailably true and can be understood as such. For these three statements to be meaningful collectively, it must be the case that truth is beyond that which can be stated clearly; or, to put it another way, truth transcends sense. Moreover, truth can be communicated by that which is senseless.

Since Wittgenstein clearly shows in the *Tractatus* that every factual proposition is a truth-function of the elementary propositions into which it can be analyzed without remnant, then truth - in this case the truths expressed in philosophy - must not be delimitable by factual propositions. It seems, instead, that these truths are demonstrable through discourse that only on the face of it conforms to the style of well-formed factual propositions. This conclusion is further supported when certain sections of the *Tractatus* regarding the world are juxtaposed against once another:

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[204] *Tractatus*, p. 29. [*emphasis Wittgenstein's*]

[205] *Tractatus*, p. 27. [brackets mine]

The world is everything that is the case.

The world is the totality of facts, not of things.

The world divides into facts.[206]

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.

If there is a value which is of value, it must lie outside all happening and being-so. For all happening and being-so is accidental.

What makes it non-accidental cannot lie *in* the world, for otherwise this would again be accidental.

It must lie outside the world.

Hence also there can be no ethical propositions.

Propositions cannot express anything higher.

It is clear that ethics cannot be expressed.

Ethics is transcendental.

(Ethics and aesthetics are one.)[207]

These sections, taken together, indicate that any statement that is held to be non-accidental - such as any statement of philosophy which is held to be true and necessary - not only is outside the realm of factual discourse but is also outside the world delimited

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[206] *Tractatus*, sections 1, 1.1 and 1.2.

[207] *Tractatus*, sections 6.41, 6.42 and 6.421. [emphasis and parentheses Wittgenstein's]

by factual discourse. It - like the statements of ethics - must be transcendental and not necessarily subordinate to the limitations imposed on factual discourse. Wittgenstein clearly leaves a space for such discourse, though he leaves that space defined only inasmuch as it is excluded from the realm of factual discourse and what it talks about is excluded from the world which facts compose.

Both Kant and Wittgenstein are careful not to exclude religion and morality from the realm of meaningful discourse, though they do leave them in precarious positions; and so too may be Wittgenstein's view of the proper place for philosophy. In Pears' analysis, the critical philosophies of Kant and Wittgenstein do not abandon speculative metaphysics but rather put it in its proper perspective as an extrapolation of thought and language often in the right direction but beyond what can properly be, in Kant's case, thought or, in Wittgenstein's case, articulated. Pears describes it as mistaking the geometrical points of a diagram for discrete features of the object described.[208] When discussing causality, for example, we are considering a feature of the grid thought imposes on reality rather than a feature of reality independent of thought; but Pears holds that for practical purposes, this loss of an independent metaphysical ground does not weaken the analysis since in either case causality is a feature of the world we apprehend. Thoughts and expressions with respect to causality can be explored to give us an

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[208] Pears, p. 29.

understanding of the structure of reality; but to suggest on the basis of speculative reasoning that causality is an objective feature of reality independent of thought is to move one step beyond what we have the foundation to say.

Certainly the disciplines of religion and morality cannot be what they are in the absence of speculative propositions. The questions at the root of these disciplines - Is there a God? Am I immortal? Am I free? - purport to regard matters wholly beyond the scope of the world of experience. Pears says critical philosophers have dealt with these disciplines in either of four ways: 1) by treating them as the subjects of scientific (or, more accurately, "pseudo-scientific") inquiry; 2) by rejecting them as dealing with nonsense; 3) by recognizing them as being outside the bounds of scientific knowledge and inquiry and therefore to some degree articulable even though, properly speaking, the logical construction of scientific inquiry is the only vehicle for sensible epistemological discourse; and 4) by viewing them and carefully describing them naturalistically as aspects of the way we are. Pears says Kant and the Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus* embrace the third strategy while Hume and the later Wittgenstein embrace the fourth. Having placed religion and morality outside the bounds of sensible factual discourse, the Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus*, in Pears' words, "might draw some subtle distinction between good and bad nonsense"[209] so as to preserve religion and morality as meaningful

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[209] Pears, p. 56.

disciplines. While these disciplines lack factual sense, they are not unintelligible; but to articulate them in descriptive terms would be to subordinate them to factual discourse, thereby changing them into what they are not.

Of course, it is somewhat beside the point that Wittgenstein leaves room for discourse about religion and morality since the *Tractatus* is not composed of discourse of these kinds. What the *Tractatus* evidently *is* composed of is discourse about the nature of reality and our apprehension of it that presents itself as speculative metaphysics and holds itself to be necessarily true. The question that must be asked still, then, is whether Wittgenstein leaves room to ground philosophical discourse as an exercise in pointing or showing such that the *Tractatus* can stand on its own terms without collapsing in self-contradiction? Consideration of this question is complicated by the fact that the later Wittgenstein views pessimistically the capacity of his earlier work to succeed on this point.

Arguably, through the eyes of the Wittgenstein who wrote in the *Tractatus* that its thoughts were true and its effectiveness in solving the problems of philosophy was complete, the *Tractatus* can stand with consistency on its own terms only if it is regarded as something akin to myth and moral doctrine, both of which are expressible only outside the realm of factual discourse. The *Tractatus* is myth in the sense that it expresses truth while itself collapsing in the metaphor of a discarded ladder. The *Tractatus* is moral

doctrine in the sense that it commissions the philosopher to weed out of factual discourse any statement - including any statement of speculative metaphysics - that does not survive the test of clarity: namely, that it is a truth-function of the elementary propositions into which it can be analyzed without remnant. It is noteworthy, in this regard, that Wittgenstein indicates "ethics and aesthetics are one"[210]. The greater part of the final sections of the *Tractatus*, where matters of religion and morality are discussed, is composed of negative propositions suggesting it is an active corrective against the excesses of speculative metaphysics. It may be the case, then, that the *Tractatus* is an ethical-esthetic work whose purpose is to set the limits of the factual world and its language which it transcends while imbuing us with not only true understanding of the world but also the moral imperative to purge from factual language any language about the world that fails to meet the truth-functional test. The truth expressed in the *Tractatus* in this way rests in the knowledge of the one who has thought it, in silence; and this is therefore why Wittgenstein says in his Preface that only those who have thought the thoughts behind it will understand it since, by implication, its truth does not rest in the propositions through which it is articulated.

If this analysis is taken to be accurate, then Wittgenstein need not ground synthetic *a priori* propositions since his philosophical discourse does not pretend to be

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[210] *Tractatus*, section 6.421.

anything other than myth with a moral imperative (in the Biblical sense, much as to say "In the beginning was the name, and the name was of the object, and the name and the object were one" and so forth). Pears argues that Wittgenstein is writing from within language, plotting its limits; and certainly Wittgenstein must work with words and propositions which are the stuff of which the world is made. Kant too works from within the system to plot its limits. Kant plots the limits of what can be thought while Wittgenstein plots the limits of what can be said while evidently leaving room to think truths which cannot be said; so is it enough to say Wittgenstein can avoid grounding synthetic *a priori* truths because his philosophy operates outside the limits he draws for the world where Kant's philosophy has nowhere to stand but within the world of thought that he delimits? That conclusion suggests Wittgenstein's is a speculative rather than strictly critical philosophy, and built of propositions that do not withstand the scrutiny of logic; so let us put aside that conclusion for now to consider the following.

The character of the conclusion of Kant's critical analysis is conditional: that such-and-such a characterization of the world is the condition of the possibility of our taking the world to be the way that we take it to be. In the end his system is a deep tautology: that we have to take the world to be thus in order to take the world to be thus; or x *iff* x; or $x \subset x$. Kant's system, in the final analysis, says that how thought is, is how thought is; and he never escapes from this to comment on reality beyond thought - the noumenal realm of the thing-in-itself. So Kant's synthetic *a priori* truths - such as that

about causality, which is not analytic because it could be otherwise without inherent contradiction - are necessary within the system and necessary within thought, but not absolutely necessary since there is no perspective from which the absolute can be comprehended. But why should it be for Kant that the truths of logic obtain? Why should it not be the case that $x \subset$ *not-x*? Is logic borrowed from outside the phenomenal realm, or is it part of the world? If the latter is the case, then Kant's reasoning is circular: for it is a circular to say it is logically necessary that logical necessity be the case. Yet without logical necessity, Kant has no tools with which to conduct his deduction. Therefore, either Kant's *a priori* truths are contingent on the acceptance of the validity of logic (which is to say they depend on the thesis that nothing can make sense unless making sense means something) and are therefore something less than absolutely necessary; or else his *a priori* truths are speculative, based on an assumption that logic really does obtain absolutely. What does this do to critical philosophy? Evidently it means that critical philosophy is a careful analysis of thought within the conditional framework that logic obtains. Critical philosophy, therefore, cannot say what philosophy purports to say: what is necessarily the case independent of contingencies. In either case, it is a speculative philosophy.

Wittgenstein is honest in placing logic outside the realm of factual propositions: in other words, outside the world. For example, consider the following sections of the *Tractatus*:

> Logical research means the investigation of *all regularity*. And outside logic all is accident.
>
> The so-called law of induction cannot in any case be a logical law, for it is obviously a significant proposition. - And therefore it cannot be a law a priori either.
>
> The law of causality is not a law but the form of a law.
>
> All propositions, such as the law of causation, the law of continuity in nature, the law of least expenditure in nature, etc. etc., all these are a priori intuitions of possible forms of the propositions of science.[211]

That there is any truth in the laws of logic is grounded outside the contingent world of factual propositions. As does Kant's system, Wittgenstein's defines the matrix that is imposed on our world. As does Kant's, Wittgenstein's presupposes that the matrix is a matrix whose elements govern by and are governed by logic. As does Kant, Wittgenstein takes the veracity of logic as given. As does Kant, the Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus* therefore employs speculative metaphysics as the grounds of his critical philosophy. But unlike Kant, Wittgenstein backs away from the system he has created, allowing the necessities established in his critical philosophy to be rendered nonsensical and therefore inarticulable. When Wittgenstein says the law of induction is not a law but the form of any law[212] and then backs away from having said anything meaningful, Wittgenstein is toying with the idea of synthetic *a priori* truths but then abandoning them as inarticulable,

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[211] *Tractatus*, sections 6.3, 6.31, 6.2 and 6.34 respectively. [emphasis Wittgenstein's]

[212] *Tractatus*, sections 6.32 and 6.36.

letting the kind of conclusion Kant reaches stand only as the implication that shows itself, not as a necessary truth that can be said. What Wittgenstein in the end backs away from saying, then, cannot be construed as saying the kind of thing that Kant says even though a Kantian conclusion may be the one he has in mind.

These questions of reference and the synthetic *a priori* need not arise, on Richard Rorty's analysis.[213] First, regarding the synthetic *a priori*, Rorty dismisses the Kantian presumption, presumed by others to obtain in Wittgenstein's analysis, that synthesis is meaningful and required for the analysis to proceed. To counter the place of synthesis in the analysis, Rorty questions the presumption that there is a manifold in the first place that needs synthesizing. He says "we are never conscious of unsynthesized intuitions, nor of concepts apart from their application to intuitions"[214]; but, while Kant uses this observation to justify a leap from knowing based on perceiving objects, in the Lockean sense, to knowing based on propositions which organize the world, Rorty challenges Kant's assumption that the unsynthesized intuitions of which he is not conscious are there as a manifold at all. He asks "how do we get our information about intuitions prior to synthesis? How, for instance, do we know that there is more than one of them?"[215] He

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[213] Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980).

[214] Rorty, p. 154.

[215] Rorty, p. 154.

expands on this criticism in the footnote:

> Suppose a mystic tells us that intuition presents us with unity – the white radiance of eternity – whereas conceptual thinking (like a dome of many-colored glass) breaks this up into a multiplicity. How could we decide whether he or Kant was right about whether unity was correlated with receptivity or with spontaneity? How could it matter?[216]

He argues that, if the synthesizing machinery and conceptual raw material of synthesis in the transcendental deduction are phenomenal, then we do have knowledge of them, despite Kant's presumption to the contrary. If on the other hand they are taken to be noumenal, then nothing can be known of them, including the little bit of information we need to get the deduction going. Without a foundation for the deduction, says Rorty, Kant's entire Copernican revolution – knowledge of the propositional which supersedes knowledge of the object – is impossible; but moreover, it is pointless, since the entire point of the revolution is to ground the synthetic *a priori*, which itself has not been established except through an unwarranted prejudice that undermines its a-priority.

This challenge would seem to leave the individual in a position of solipsism regarding what is the case and what is not; but Rorty deconstructs this myth, focusing his attention on the question of reference. He challenges the validity of questions about whether the elementary propositions of a Wittgenstein-like analysis only seem to refer to the real world or really do refer to the real world. Rorty says the distinction is grounded

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[216] Rorty, p. 154*n*. [parentheses Rorty's]

in an old but indefensible notion of duality that places the clouded mind over against the actual world. He says the notion was brought forward most recently in the argument by Hilary Putnam that there must be truth in reference to preclude the disastrous conclusion that no theoretical term ever refers. Countering Putnam's concern, Rorty notes that there is no assurance the terms of current scientific theory will be seen, in the light of future theories, as referring or that the terms of those future theories will be seen in the light of their successors as referring; so grounding a position whose intent seems to be to assert the contrary seems dangerously artificial and counterproductive. He calls reference an "all-or-nothing affair" whose function in theories does nothing to assuage fears that the world is not as the theory describes it.[217] Rorty questions the point of having theories in which meaningful reference is supposed to defeat skepticism, saying their function is grounded in the conflation of two beliefs taken together to undermine intentionalism: namely, the failure of the definition of reference that holds that an "S" refers to whatever entity would make most of someone's central beliefs about an "X" true; and the assumption that the validity of reference rests on one's having a corpus of true beliefs of the world.[218] In other words, intentionalism is seen to fail insofar as it cannot guarantee that the actual world is accurately mirrored in language. But Rorty points out that "reference" can mean either pointing (a factual relation) or mentioning (talking about

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[217] Rorty, p. 287.

[218] Rorty. P. 288.

something); and mentioning can "refer" to fictions as well as facts. He argues there is not only no need to posit 'really true' pointing reference as a check on justifiable (or "warranted assertible"[219]) mentioning, but no basis for such a posit. There can be no reference to truth, but only a justification of mentioning in contexts of various widths. Reference, then, is reduced to the act of measuring events according to the truth-functional prescripts of logic. He says those who argue a theory of reference is required are searching for either a general theory of meaning in accordance with which a historiographical presentation of philosophy and science can be achieved, or an epistemologically independent 'transcendental' standpoint from which one can judge the veracity of the representation-object relations that obtain in experience; the former he calls trivial and the latter – which is what 'theory of reference' is intended to mean – he calls impossible since the reasoning by which it is established is necessarily circular. He concludes "[o]ur best theory about what we are referring to is merely noncontroversial fallout from our best theory about things in general"[220]. We do not get beyond that point. Reading a theory of reference and synthesis into such a project, as Kant does, says Rorty, is more than can or should be done. Wittgenstein does not do it, nor does he need to do it.

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[219] Rorty, p. 294.

[220] Rorty, p. 294. [brackets mine]

4.2 A Phenomenological Analysis

Wittgenstein's project has also been compared to Husserlian phenomenology. Gier believes Wittgenstein was strongly influenced by Husserl and embraced concepts that were distinctly Husserlian, even in Wittgenstein's early period when the *Tractatus* was composed.[221] To demonstrate the point, he cites *A Companion to Wittgenstein's "Tractatus"* in which author Max Black argues there is in the *Tractatus* a "striking parallel" to Husserl's "pure logico-grammatical doctrine of forms".[222] Others who see similar parallels to Husserlian phenomenology in the *Tractatus* include C.A. van Peurson[223], Barry Smith[224], and James L. Marsh[225].

Leonard Goddard and Brenda Judge note a "striking similarity" in problems

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[221] Gier, pp. 99-101.

[222] Max Black, *A Companion to Wittgenstein's "Tractatus"* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1964), pp. 136-137. In Gier, p. 99.

[223] C.A. van Peurson, "Husserl and Wittgenstein", *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, 20* (1959), pp. 182-184. In Gier, p. 240*n*.

[224] Barry Smith, "Wittgenstein and the Background of Austrian Philosophy", *Wittgenstein and His Impact on Contemporary Thought: Proceedings of the Second International Wittgenstein Symposium, 1977* (Vienna: Hölder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1978), p. 33. In Gier, p. 99.

[225] James L. Marsh, "The Triumph of Ambiguity: Merleau-Ponty and Wittgenstein", *Philosophy Today, 19* (1975), p. 251. In Gier, p. 99.

identified and elucidated by Wittgenstein and phenomenologists.[226] Both Wittgenstein and Husserl attempt to get at the objects themselves, though what is meant by this must be qualified. For Husserl, the distinction between appearance and reality must be destroyed and replaced by an effort to get beyond the presuppositions of particular conceptual frameworks according to which objects are encountered, in order to grasp 'pure' phenomena. Husserl's student Merleau-Ponty qualifies this effort, noting there is only the world as experienced and not things-in-themselves behind that world. This, say the authors, is precisely what Wittgenstein seems to argue at one point in the *Tractatus*, particularly in his presentation of the 'I' in solipsism that limits experience.[227] Yet, they say, Wittgenstein also seems to be presenting an ontology of real objects, though there is little to define those objects beyond saying they are a limit on experience.[228] Carruthers, for his part, takes exception to their project, deeming them to be "obviously mistaken" in their presumption that Wittgenstein belongs in the continental tradition of epistemology that includes phenomenologist Husserl along with Brentano and Meinong.[229] The striking similarities, however, do warrant investigation.

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[226] Leonard Goddard and Brenda Judge, *The Metaphysics of Wittgenstein's "Tractatus"*. (Australasian Journal of Philosophy: Monograph Series) (Melbourne: The Australasian Association of Philosophy, 1982), p. 22.

[227] Goddard and Judge, p. 24.

[228] Goddard and Judge, p. 68.

[229] Carruthers, 189*n*.

Gier defines Wittgenstein's phenomenology in view of passages in *Wittgenstein und der Wiener Kreis* and *Philosophical Remarks*: "[p]hysics wants to establish regularities, it does not look for what is possible.... Phenomenology always deals only with possibility, i.e. the sense (*Sinn*), not with truth and falsehood"[230]; and "[p]henomenology only establishes the possibilities. Thus phenomenology would be the grammar of the description of those facts on which physics builds its theories"[231]. These passages suggest Wittgenstein sees his project as the search for the formal conditions of the possibility of the experience of facts. In Gier's view, Husserl and Wittgenstein share a belief that a philosophical grammar can be elucidated that is more fundamental than traditional logic, that is completely free of psychology and that relies on no application to empirical content.[232] By providing the tools for an architecture of logical forms, such a grammar allows the construction of true and false propositions without showing whether any particular proposition is true or false. Propositions that properly conform to the architecture have a sense and on that basis alone are candidates for actualization.

Gier identifies in the works of both Husserl and Wittgenstein a distinction

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[230] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Wittgenstein und der Wiener Kreis*, (Conversations recorded by F. Waismann), B.F. McGuinness (ed.) (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1967), p. 63. In Gier, p. 94. [parentheses Gier's; brackets mine]

[231] *Philosophical Remarks*, p. 51. In Gier, p. 94. [brackets mine]

[232] Gier, p. 99.

between nonsense (*Unsinn*) and senselessness (*Sinnlosigkeit* or, for Husserl, *Widersinn*). The distinction rests in 'the pure logic of meaning-forms'; in other words, the logic that allows a meaningful proposition to be distinguished from a meaningless proposition irrespective of its empirical application. In Husserl's presentation, grammatically proper propositions such as 'a round square' may not be nonsensical, since they follow the grammatical rules, but may be senseless, because their inherent tautologousness or, in this case, contradictoriness makes them absurd. Similarly for Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus*, propositions such as 'a round square' violate no rules of grammar so are not nonsensical but, since they say nothing meaningful given their inherently contradictoriness, they are senseless. Gier notes with interest that Wittgenstein here stands with phenomenologists in calling such propositions 'senseless' instead of standing with Frege in calling them 'referenceless'.[233]

Another distinction that obtains similarly in the works of Husserl and Wittgenstein is that between 'state of affairs' (*Sachverhalten*) and 'positive facts' (*Tatsachen*).[234] 'States of affairs' are formed by the relation (*verhalten*) of meaning-things (*Sachen*) to other meanings, while 'positive facts' are facts that are the case and can be sensibly perceived. Gier notes there is a further direct parallel on this point

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[233] Gier, pp. 100-101.

[234] Gier, pp. 103-104.

between Husserl's 'objective' and 'non-objective' *Sachverhalten* and Wittgenstein's 'existing' and 'non-existing' *Sachverhalten*. Wittgenstein discusses the existence and non-existence of *Sachverhalten* in section 2.06 of the *Tractatus*. Gier notes it is a matter of dispute whether *Sachverhalten* for Wittgenstein should be translated as 'atomic facts', as Ogden evidently believes, or 'possible facts'. Gier makes the case for the latter, arguing it is the only translation that makes possible Wittgenstein's statement elsewhere that a particular *Sachverhalte* is inconceivable.

A third similarity between Husserl and Wittgenstein, especially in the period following the publishing of the *Tractatus*, is the reliance on a kind of bracketing or *epoché*.[235] Gier says Wittgenstein demonstrates bracketing when he proscribes the use of hypothetical entities, whether they be those of traditional metaphysics or the theoretical entities of natural science. Only the phenomena of immediate experience can be considered proper candidates as intentional objects, and these intentional objects are taken not to be objects independent of the experience of them. Gier sees Wittgenstein's phenomenological program collapsed in a particular passage of Wittgenstein's "Some Remarks on Logical Form" in which he writes that a "logical analysis of phenomena themselves... [would supply us with the] forms of space and time and with the manifold of spatial and temporal objects, with colors, and sounds, etc.... all of which we cannot

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[235] Gier, pp. 104-109.

seize by our ordinary means of expression"[236]. While experience is bracketed during this activity, says Gier, this does not mean the 'I' who undertakes this activity is an object of its thinking. Rather, Wittgenstein, like Husserl's successor Heidegger, conceives of the self existentially as an already-given Being-in-the-world, not a figure guaranteed transcendentally through the synthetic activity of consciousness.[237] That the subject is not defined by or contained in either the phenomenological world or the phenomenological analysis is suggested, one might argue, in the fifth division of the *Tractatus*, where Wittgenstein says "I am my world"[238]; "[t]he subject does not belong to the world..."[239]; and "[t]he I occurs in philosophy through the fact that the 'world is my world'"[240]. In treating the world as 'my world' and bracketing it for a phenomenologically-reductive analysis, says Gier, Wittgenstein fits well into the phenomenological tradition.

While Gier believes Wittgenstein's embrace of phenomenology is progressive, materializing most strongly in his later writings, Thomas Munson believes Wittgenstein is pursuing essentially the same project in his latest writings that he had undertaken in the

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[236] Ludwig Wittgenstein, "Some Remarks on Logical Form", *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* (Suppl.), *9* (1929), pp. 163, 165. In Gier, p. 106. [brackets and omissions mine]

[237] Gier, pp. 108-109.

[238] *Tractatus*, section 5.63.

[239] *Tractatus*, section 5.632. [brackets and omission mine]

[240] *Tractatus*, section 5.641. [brackets mine]

Tractatus and, as such, it cannot properly be characterized as phenomenological. He says "despite incidental differences the Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus* and of the [*Philosophical Investigations*] are cut of the same cloth"[241] and there is a "continuous unity"[242] connecting the *Tractatus* to the *Philosophical Investigations*, with the former's reliance on logical atomism and logical positivism – two features that do not fit with the phenomenological approach, he argues. This criticism is far from devastating, given Wittgenstein's efforts to separate his work from, particularly, the logical positivists.

More damaging, it can be argued, is the criticism by Paul Ricoeur. In a 1966 lecture[243], Ricoeur undertakes a comparison of Husserl's phenomenology and Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*, finding a similarity of *intended* function linking the two. He says, just as Husserl seeks to ground a theory of meaning distinct from that of logical propositions, so Wittgenstein seeks to ground a picture theory distinct from that of truth conditions. Wittgenstein's reason for seeking this ground is that truth-functional propositions are not sufficient to account for his presentation in the *Tractatus*. Where truth-functional propositions have as their extreme forms tautologies and contradictions

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[241] Thomas N. Munson, S.J., "Wittgenstein's Phenomenology", *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, *23* (1962-63), p. 37.

[242] Munson, p. 49.

[243] Paul Ricoeur, "Husserl and Wittgenstein on Language", *Phenomenology and Existentialism*, E. Lee and M. Mandelbaum (eds.) (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1967), pp. 207-217.

which have no sense, "[t]he *Tractatus* must also take into account a nontautological concept of truth, truth as concordance between propositions and facts"[244]. While the picture and what it depicts in Wittgenstein's theory are related by identity, what is less clear is how the pictorial form works for facts that do not necessarily have existence: that is, pictures that represent possible facts, pictures that represent nonexistent facts and pictures that falsely represent existing facts.

> Here the "sense" is no more something in common, but an inner feature: there may be representation (*Darstellung*) without depiction (*Abbildung*). This concept of *Darstellung* as distinct from that of *Abbildung* is the closest to phenomenology.... As in Plato, the idea is an idea of something but not necessarily of something which *is*. Here phenomenology occurs.[245]

The problem for Wittgenstein's approach, according to Ricoeur, is that the phenomenology cannot be maintained because the possibility of reflexivity is eliminated. By forbidding the kind of reflexivity essential to phenomenology, Wittgenstein not only ensures the *Tractatus* is not a work of phenomenology in the Husserlian tradition but, more importantly, undermines his project.

This argument is explored by Robert Arrington[246] in a critical examination of

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[244] Ricoeur, p. 209.

[245] Ricoeur, p. 211. [parentheses Ricoeur's; omissions mine]

[246] Robert L. Arrington, "Wittgenstein and Phenomenology", *Philosophy Today*, *22* (1978), pp. 287-300.

Ricoeur's article. The article, Arrington says, concludes Wittgenstein is not a phenomenologist first or last. What the *Tractatus* needs and lacks, Arrington's Ricoeur says, is a phenomenological reduction that provides for intentional acts and their intentional correlates. The phenomenological reduction is denied because, first, Wittgenstein's account lacks reflexivity in its account of language and philosophy and, second, its account of propositions and meaning is harshly realistic. Reflexivity is denied through Wittgenstein's insistence that the proposition cannot depict the way in which it represents a fact. Reduction is denied because the proposition is itself a natural fact constituted by a concatenation of names. If the language and the world are viewed rigidly in this way, then it is not possible to step back and view the world as a system of meanings intended by a consciousness free from the constraints of the world of fact. Ricoeur argues that phenomenology requires a distance-creating movement of reduction followed by a reconciling return to reality – a duality or dialectic that Wittgenstein's project does not allow. Arrington acknowledges the *Tractatus* does not lend itself to reinterpretation in phenomenological terms because of the language it employs. He tests the hypothesis that undertaking a linguistic reduction may accomplish the bracketing phenomenology requires, but he rejects the result on the grounds that a 'mentioning' language completely bracketed from ordinary language is no language at all.[247] While Arrington sees similarities between Wittgenstein's project and those of

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[247] Arrington, p. 299.

phenomenologists, he concludes the projects are finally incompatible: Wittgenstein is not a phenomenologist.

4.3 A Semiotical Analysis

Some proffer a semiotical analysis of Wittgenstein's project. Cecil Brown[248] describes the Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus* as practising 'pure semiotics' where his later works abandon the fabricated universal transformational grammar characteristic of pure semiotics in favour of the observation and description that is characteristic of 'descriptive semiotics'. Practitioners of pure semiotics such as Noam Chomsky believe the capacity to operate in a language is grounded in a pre-existing structure of rules embedded in the speaker which give the speaker linguistic competence: the ability to use a language. "[T]ransformational grammar attempts to describe explicitly the rules to which a speaker of a language attends in order to use signs grammatically and meaningfully."[249] The base rules of the transformational grammar are fundamental to all natural language and can be filtered out to construct a fundamental abstract language that can be used to analyze any natural language. Brown says this transformational deep structure is the equivalent of the artificial language presumed by Wittgenstein when he writes the *Tractatus* and also by

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[248] Cecil Brown, *Wittgensteinian Linguistics* (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1974).

[249] Brown, p. 13. [brackets Brown's]

the logical positivists.[250] Brown credits Wittgenstein with introducing the notion of a fundamental artificial language into twentieth century philosophy when he advocates "the construction of a sign-language that excludes errors inherent in the grammars of languages"[251]. Inasmuch as it invents a language to talk about signs, Wittgenstein's project, says Brown, constitutes pure semiotics.

However, Wittgenstein's analysis in the *Tractatus* is criticized from a semiotical perspective by Paolo Teobaldelli.[252] On Teobaldelli's view, Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus* sets out to establish a gapless, mirror-like relation between thinking and reality such that thinking is nothing but a representation of states of affairs. Because of the identity of 'form of reality' and 'logical form', "language is the *medium* through which the facts of [the] world projected as facts in the logical space become perceptible"[253]. Teobaldelli sees a parallel to phenomenological psychology's '*ingenue realism*' in Wittgenstein's description of the proposition as a projection of a state of affairs, which projection comes to existence when the sense of the proposition – the object to which it refers – is thought. The proposition is the form of the sense of the object and not the sense itself; but in its

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[250] Brown, p. 14.

[251] Brown, p. 15.

[252] Paolo Teobaldelli, "Signification and Knowledge: A Semiotical Philosophical Analysis of Wittgenstein's Work", *Sincronía*, spring 1998. Retrieved 01 June 2000 from the World Wide Web: http://fuentes.csh.udg.mx/CUCSH/Sincronia/Spring98.html

[253] Teobaldelli, p. 2 of 14. [emphasis Teobaldelli's; brackets and insertion mine]

own cognitive dimension, the form *is* an object. Teobaldelli here compares Wittgenstein's analysis with Husserl's:

> Both try, as a matter of fact, to establish an *essential* relation between the physical object and the perceived, finding it for what concerns Husserl in the *apriori-form* of perception which resists to the transcendental reduction, and for what concerns Wittgenstein in the *logical form* which constitutes the mirroring of the object within the logical space. Both try to isolate a 'form', a dimension other than the empirical or phenomenic data which fulfils this space.[254]

The logical identity of logical form and the world escapes the Cartesian division of reality into the conscious and the physical, but it creates a new problem. Where the analysis fails, on Teobaldelli's view, is in its inability to express a self-reflective view or to account for semiotical states of affairs. Yet, to the extent that such representations are a part of natural experience, these representations do become objects. The difficulty is that propositions about such objects have as their sense the forms of other objects, and this evokes a triadic relationship rather than the two-moment relationship defined by Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus*. On this view, then, the *Tractatus* can embrace just two moments incorporating thinking and reality even though a third is implied.

The problem with this analysis is that it assumes Wittgenstein's is a faulty semiotical analysis that can be rescued by adding a third, reflexive moment. To add such a moment would be to ignore the fact that the self-reflective and semiotical propositions

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[254] Teobaldelli, p. 4 of 14. [emphasis Teobaldelli's]

the critic believes are essential to discourse are expressly rejected by Wittgenstein in the text, no matter how much it seems that Wittgenstein does employ such propositions to construct the text. Wittgenstein clearly believes one cannot separate out mental acts for propositional analysis, though he clearly also does not want to claim such cognitive activity is not going on. To distort Wittgenstein's work by adding tenets expressly rejected in his work is unjustifiable.

This semiotical analysis, like the phenomenological and critical analyses considered above, evidently faults Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* for failing to live up to standards that Wittgenstein himself has not set for the *Tractatus*. The *Tractatus* is not expressly set forth as a work of either Kantian criticism, Husserlian phenomenology or semiotics. While incorporating Wittgenstein's work into either of these traditions might provide comfort to the adherents of the respective traditions, particularly when they view his *Tractatus* as a difficult or ineffective work, it is unfair to twist Wittgenstein's words to produce a conclusion the *Tractatus* does not support and indeed clearly rejects on its own terms. To consider the *Tractatus* rightly, one must take it on its own terms and yield not to the temptation to force the work to conform to some other philosophical approach.

Chapter V - Embracing Operations:

What What Wittgenstein Says Doesn't Say

Taking Wittgenstein's philosophy on its own terms is the project of Mathieu Marion in his book *Wittgenstein, Finitism, and the Foundations of Mathematics* [255]. There he argues that, if for Wittgenstein philosophy has become an exercise in showing rather than saying, his approach is prefigured in his approach to mathematics. Marion's book is an elaboration on the theme that Wittgenstein's is "a form of reduction of arithmetic to a theory of 'operations' (as opposed to a theory of 'classes' such as that of Russell's *Principia Mathematica*)"[256].

Marion sets the stage for his argument by contending that the relative lack of attention for Wittgenstein's work on mathematics is based on the groundless popular view that his mathematical work is not merely of little significance but, moreover, flawed in its conception though not with fatal consequences for his other work. Marion disagrees on all these points, contending instead that his mathematical work is not only well-formed and cohesive in its conception but, moreover, at the very foundation of his

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[255] Mathieu Marion, *Wittgenstein, Finitism, and the Foundations of Mathematics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

[256] Marion, p. 3. [parentheses Marion's]

work in philosophy generally and for that reason of critical importance to one who would understand Wittgenstein's arguments generally, which his early critics - perhaps because of an anti-constructivist bias - did not.[257]

Marion begins by placing Wittgenstein's anti-Platonism in its historical context, delineating the battle between Leopold Kronecker, a nineteenth-century mathematician widely regarded as the father of modern constructivism in mathematics, and Georg Cantor. He argues that Cantor's set theory, which "cannot be dissociated from a Platonist philosophy"[258] because of its insistence on pre-existing formal sets, draws fire from Kronecker, who views mathematics as a construction-like exercise of calculating on the basis of arithmetical algorithms without reference to pre-existing sets. Though Wittgenstein probably never read Kronecker's work, Marion argues, his position is in line with Kronecker's and for that reason shares its cohesiveness. Marion quotes Wittgenstein writing:

> Mathematics consists entirely of calculations.
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> In mathematics *everything* is algorithm and *nothing* is meaning: even when it doesn't look like that because we seem to be using *words* to talk *about* mathematical things. Even these words are used to construct an algorithm.[259]

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[257] Marion, pp. vii-xi.

[258] Marion, p. 2.

[259] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Grammar* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1974), p. 468. In Marion, p. 4. [emphasis Wittgenstein's] Note that this is evidently a different

The Platonist-constructivist distinction is also articulated by Michael Dummett.[260] While for Platonists the mathematical objects are there with their relations to be discovered by the observer, for constructivists the observer constructs mathematical entities along the way. It follows, then, that for the Platonist, a mathematical statement's meaning consists in the proving true or false of its correspondence with a pre-existing reality. In contrast, for the constructivist,

> the general form of an explanation of meaning must be in terms of the conditions under which we regard ourselves as justified in asserting a statement, that is, the circumstances in which we are in possession of a proof. For instance, a statement made up of two statements joined by a connective is to be explained by explaining a claim to have proved the complex statement in terms of what a claim to have proved the constituent statements consists in; thus a claim to have proved ⌜A or B⌝ will be a claim to have a method leading either to a proof of A or to a proof of B.[261]

Although in Wittgenstein's view nothing in mathematics is meaning, yet we achieve revelations from mathematical proofs that spur us to try to express what cannot be expressed without violating the proper limits of language.

> The proof lets us see something. What it shows, however, cannot be expressed by means of a proposition. Thus it is also impossible to say, 'The axioms are consistent.' (Any more more [sic] than you can say,

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version of this text from the one cited by Gier and footnoted above.

[260] Dummett, pp. 110-134.

[261] Dummett, p. 111.

'There are infinitely many numbers.' That is everyday prose.)[262]

For Wittgenstein, mathematical terms are not signs standing for or describing pre-existing abstract structures beyond them. Rather than describe mathematics, its terms *do* mathematics; and we, too, are not able adequately to describe mathematics but can only *do* it. "And that of itself abolishes every 'set theory'", Wittgenstein writes.[263]

Following the nineteenth century, proponents of set theory pursue a somewhat altered approach. Peter Gustav Lejeune-Dirichlet proposes replacing the notion of a function defined by a formula with the notion of a graph where each value of x is presented with its corresponding value of y. This presentation is taken by its proponents to point to and elicit an awareness of an 'arbitrary function' beyond it. For this reason, the approach has become known an extensionalism, where the number pairs are taken to extend beyond themselves to the arbitrary formula which they elicit.

Those who reject extensionalism and adopt its converse, intensionalism, hold that the values of y correlating with their respective values of x are directly or indirectly defined in terms of some procedure of computation. In place of a disclosable arbitrary

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[262] *Ludwig Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle*, from the notes of F. Waismann (Oxford: Blackwell, 1979), p. 137. In Marion, p. 5. [parentheses in the quotation; brackets mine]

[263] *Philosophical Remarks*, p. 159. In Marion, p. 6.

function, the constructivists put a computational procedure by which values of y are calculated for their respective values of x. Historically, this led to the development of what has been called lambda-calculus: a calculus in which computational formulas are treated as operators which produce various results when the operations are applied to arguments, also called variables or objects. Marion explains it like this:

> The notion that lambda-calculus was originally devised to capture is... precisely not that of a function as a set of ordered pairs but, rather, that of a function as an 'operation' which may be applied to some 'object' to produce another 'object'. The latter notion was given the name of 'operator' in order to distinguish it from the set-theoretical notion of function. An essential difference between these two notions is that an operator is defined by describing how it transforms an input (i.e. by a 'formula'), without defining the set of inputs, i.e. without defining its domain. Moreover, there is no restriction on the domain of some operators. (Some operators are self-applicable, but that is not the case with functions.) To use again the terminology of intension and extension, we can say that the notion of operator is intensional, while the notion of function as a set of ordered pairs is purely extensional.[264]

Wittgenstein rejects the notion of extension as a remnant of Platonism, which he opposes both in its weak sense and in its stronger, more radical sense. Regarding the weak sense, he rejects the notion held by contemporary mathematicians such as Friedrich Waismann and others that after we have generated mathematics, we find our creation to be governed by rules we have not determined, as if the mathematics we have defined discloses a reality other than and beyond that which we have constructed. Wittgenstein argues, rather, that the mathematics we generate "is not a *description of something*, but

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[264] Marion, p. 12.

the thing itself. We *make* mathematics."[265] In other words, there is in mathematics no autonomy from those who create it and no form or essence beyond that which we define in creating it. Wittgenstein rejects Platonism in the strong sense by contending it is impossible to discover anything in mathematics, for it is entirely created in the same way that grammar is created.

Wittgenstein's rejection of mathematics as a description contradicts both Frege's foundations of arithmetic and Russell and Whitehead's *Principia Mathematica*. Wittgenstein argues the two enterprises are not wrong in content so much as misguided in intent. The *Principia* is intended to reproduce what the word 'infinite' really means when applied, but in fact the *Principia* - as would any other such theory - becomes bogged down in conceptual talk about its intent instead of merely presenting a series of calculations that stand on their own. Insofar as they reach to describe the activity of calculating and its limits instead of just calculating, such theories overstep their proper bounds and become, as Wittgenstein would put it, 'uninteresting'. Moreover, since the entire point of such systems of calculus is to define in this way the limits of application of calculations, they are uninteresting in their very essence and wholly misguided.

Wittgenstein's role with respect to the various systems of calculus he encounters,

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[265] Waismann, p. 34. In Marion, p. 14. [emphasis Wittgenstein's]

then, is not to revise them but rather to expose their pointlessness and to dissuade philosophers and mathematicians from bothering to invent them.[266] Marion's presentation illustrates how Wittgenstein's corrective is brought to bear on several fundamental matters of concern in mathematics and logic: for example, the nature and place of operations; zero and succession among numbers; generality; identity; numerical equivalence; and quantification. These matters are here discussed one by one, beginning with the shift Wittgenstein advocates away from the class-based calculus on which so many others grounded mathematics.

In place of the calculus, Wittgenstein proposes a new activity involving the elaboration of operations. In Marion's view, operations are central to Wittgenstein's articulation of a "logicism without classes" in the *Tractatus*. His logicism without classes is, in effect, a method of reasoning whereby elementary propositions evolve into more complex propositions progressively through the serial application of operations. In Marion's words, "any given (complex) proposition, from the set ξ of propositions is the result of successive applications of the operation N... to given propositions taken from the set of elementary propositions".[267] An operation is defined by the way in which an input is transformed into an output. The operation is an internal relation in the sense that two

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[266] Marion, p. 19.

[267] Marion, p. 22. [parentheses Marion's]

entities are internally related when it is inconceivable that they do not stand in such a relation. The output - a more complex proposition than the original - can in turn function as the base for the application of the operation to produce a still more complex proposition. Marion cites as an example the "series of forms" *a*R*b*:

$\exists x\ (aRb\ \&\ xRb)$
$\exists x, y\ (aRx\ \&\ xRy\ \&\ yRb)$
$\exists x, y, z\ (aRx\ \&\ xRy\ \&\ yRz\ \&\ zRb)$
and so on[268]

In Marion's notation, if we take the symbol *0* to indicate the relation or operation, the apostrophe in *0'* to indicate the result of the application of an operation, and *a* to represent the variable which is the point of departure for the application, then the successive application of the operation can be represented as the series *a, 0'a, 0'0'a, 0'0'0'a*, and so forth. The operation is simply that which must happen to a proposition to transform it into another. The operation asserts nothing by itself: only its result in relation to its antecedent asserts anything. One such set of operations - the truth-operations of truth-functions - is nothing other than a "mechanical expedient to facilitate the recognition of a tautology, where it is complicated", as Wittgenstein states it in 6.1262 of the *Tractatus*. Thereby, mechanical operations replace classes as intensionality replaces extensionality in Wittgenstein's approach. It is in terms of operations rather than classes that Wittgenstein's entire project is defined.

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[268] Marion, p. 24.

Marion next describes how Wittgenstein reduces the arithmetical notions of zero and succession among numbers to intensional operations. A variable x can be identified in terms of an operation Ω. If x is taken to be the starting point of the application of the operation, then the number of times the operation has been applied to produce x in this case is zero. In Marion's notation, $\Omega^{0'}x$ is identified with x and means the operation has been applied zero times to achieve a result. When the operation is applied one time, the unit S is introduced to indicate a single application of the operation, and the result of the application is the term $\Omega^{S0'}x$. When the operation is applied a further time, the subsequent successive application of the operation is denoted by the term SS, and the result of the application of the operation is the term $\Omega^{SS0'}x$. The subsequent term in the succession of terms will be $\Omega^{SSS0'}x$, and so forth. In this way, numbers are represented as the exponents of an operation rather than classes.

Wittgenstein's shift from classes to operations also applies in his treatment of generality. Generality, defined operationally, means first replacing the variable a in the logical prototype $a\mathrm{R}b$ with the variable x which collects all instances of $-\mathrm{R}b$ as a set, and then working out $\forall x\ (x\mathrm{R}b)$ as a truth-function. Wittgenstein believes many, including Russell, make the error of failing to distinguish the two forms of generality: one in the accidental or empirical sense and the other in the essential or non-accidental sense, where generality is established by the application of a formal rule to generate a series. The theory of classes in *Principia Mathematica* needs axioms - for example, the axiom of

reducibility and the axiom of infinity - which are not logical propositions but possess at best accidental general validity; however, since mathematics demands a generality that is not merely accidental, the theory of classes is therefore inadequate to ground it. What is needed is the treatment of mathematics as a system rather than the elaboration of generalities and totalities; and a system is defined, not as the delineation of class-like properties of propositional functions, but rather in terms of operations.[269]

Wittgenstein contends some of the critical foundational problems of mathematics are grounded in the attempt to replace the operations of arithmetic with classes. The problem emerges in the classical account of universal quantification as an infinite logical product and in the inductive definitions of numbers. For example, Henri Poincaré, in seeking to define the infinite class, concludes that mathematics cannot in the end be defined predicatively since the totality of the infinite is presupposed in its definition. For infinity to be the case prior to its being defined, it must obtain in the Platonic formal sense; or, to put it in the Kantian terms Poincaré prefers, mathematical induction must be synthetic *a priori*. Russell, too, betrays a desire to replace the operations of mathematics with classes. Marion quotes Russell in his *Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy*:

> What are the numbers that can be reached, given the terms '0' and 'successor'? Is there any way by which we can define the whole class of such numbers? We reach 1, as the successor of 0; 2, as the successor of 1; 3, as the successor of 2; and so on. It is this 'and so on' that we wish to

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[269] Marion, pp. 35-37.

replace by something less vague and indefinite.[270]

Marion writes that this is the source of the troubles for those who preach classes:

> This remark is rather important, because the expression 'and so on' that Russell wishes to eliminate is precisely the reference to the process of iteration which characterizes in the eye of constructivists the series of natural numbers. It is precisely in trying to eliminate this 'and so on', and therefore any reference to the potentiality of the processes involved, that Dedekind, Frege, and Russell produced their circular definitions.[271]

Their troubles include the paradox about classes that do or do not include themselves, which Russell felt compelled to address with his theory of types. But Russell's corrections ultimately fail, especially as Wittgenstein points out that Russell's reliance on the notion of 'a term in this formal series' in his class-bound approach to numerical succession is itself a formal concept that cannot be grounded except circularly. Wittgenstein, however, finds he does not need to eliminate the 'and so on' because for him mathematics is defined operationally as a recursive or iterative process. He states at section 5.2523 of the *Tractatus* that "[t]he concept of the successive application of an operation is equivalent to the concept 'and so on'".

Wittgenstein's contrast between what can be said and what can only be shown is

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[270] Bertrand Russell, *Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1919), pp. 20-21. In Marion, p. 41.

[271] Marion, p. 41.

apparent in his treatment of identity. While it is generally assumed that mathematical equality is a special case of logical identity, Wittgenstein not only contrasts the two but argues for the elimination of logical identity. Identity cannot be defined generally as a relation between objects - say, in the propositions $\exists x\ (x = x)$ or $\forall x\ (x = x)$ - because the general expression 'object' asserted in such propositions by the term x stands for a logical form, not a concept, and can therefore be expressed properly only by variables in well-formed propositions, thereby showing itself through the employment of these variables rather than being stated directly. Quoting two sections of the *Tractatus* (here abbreviated as *TLP*), Marion puts it like this:

> ...Wittgenstein could not see identity as a relation between objects: as a consequence of the ineffability of the name-object relation, the existence of an individual can only be shown through the use of its name: 'Identity of the object I express by identity of the sign and not by means of a sign of identity. Difference of the objects by difference of the signs' (*TLP*, 5.53). His argument against the notion of identity as a relation between objects is very simple and powerful: on the one hand it is indeed nonsense to say of two different individuals that they are the same; to say, on the other hand, of one individual that it is identical to itself is to say nothing (*TLP*, 5.5303).[272]

With respect to numerical equivalence, Wittgenstein rejects the arguments invoked by Frege and Russell because they assume what is to be proved. Frege argues that two sets F and G are numerically equivalent if and only if they are in one-to-one correspondence. Frege's argument stands only if the equivalence notion is conceptually

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[272] Marion, pp. 50-51. [parentheses Marion's; omission mine]

prior to the notion of number, for otherwise his definition is circular. Wittgenstein allows that a kind of correspondence can be produced through the action of pairing off members of sets; but he contends this is not at all what is meant by the concept of equivalence. For equivalence to be meaningful as a concept, it must first be established that the possibility of a one-to-one correspondence between sets can be established; and that possibility cannot be grounded except with reference to the notion of numbers. As Wittgenstein puts it, "the possibility must be an *internal* relation between the extensions of the concepts, but this internal relation is only given through the equality of the 2 numbers".[273] The notion of numerical equivalence rests on the Platonic assumption that the one-to-one correspondence between two sets obtains prior to and independently of their being counted. Wittgenstein makes clear his view by way of analogy: "A straight line is drawn only when it has been drawn. And this is how it is with numbers too."[274]

With respect to quantification, Marion elucidates the positions of Hermann Weyl, David Hilbert and Frank Ramsey on quantifying over infinite sets. In Weyl's view, propositions containing an existential quantifier - such as $F(a) \rightarrow \exists x\, F(x)$ - which purport to range over the totality of natural numbers do not in fact possess the full status of a judgment but are rather judgment-abstracts or rules for judging. So while one can speak

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[273] *Philosophical Remarks*, §118. In Marion, p. 79. [emphasis Wittgenstein's]

[274] *Ludwig Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle*, p. 165. In Marion, p. 83.

meaningfully of a judgment regarding all elements of a wholly-given set, universally quantified arithmetical propositions purporting to extend over an infinite domain are without meaning as judgments since demonstrating that such a proposition is the case is in principle impossible. It is at best a hypothetical proposition that makes a hypothetical claim rather than a judging assertion or statement. Similarly for Hilbert, propositions that purport to range over infinitely many numbers and to enclose infinitely many numerical equations are of a fundamentally different sort from finite elementary propositions and can be considered at best hypothetical judgments to which the law of contradiction, the law of the excluded middle and the possibility of negation do not apply. Frank Ramsey, similarly, distinguishes general propositions involving finite domains and concretely given objects from general propositions with open-ended domains which he calls 'variable hypotheticals'.[275]

Wittgenstein's conception of an operations-based, rather than a class-based, mathematics is radical; but Wittgenstein did not recognize at the time he constructed the *Tractatus* just how radical a class-eschewing approach would have to be. The *Tractatus* is founded on what Wittgenstein later recognizes to be a fundamental presupposition, itself grounded in a class-based prejudice, that there is a solitary formal language to which all other meaningful discourse can be reduced. He comes to realize his attempt to

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[275] Marion, pp. 84-94.

impose a rigid pre-assumed template on language and the world is doomed to reveal nothing more than his rigid presupposition imposes on language.

During what is called his middle period, Wittgenstein explores the more radical implications of the rejection of overarching classes. This shift, again, can be viewed in terms of its correlates in mathematical theory. Marion quotes Georg Henrik von Wright reporting from a 1939 conversation with Wittgenstein that "the biggest mistake he had made in the *Tractatus* was that he had identified general propositions with infinite conjunctions or disjunctions of singular propositions".[276] The new approach of separating the two Marion calls 'finitism'. The separation, critical for Wittgenstein, was of equal importance to Hilbert. For Hilbert,

> ... the sentential operators had to be truth-functional, so they could intelligibly apply only to propositions with determinate truth-conditions. Since Hilbert recognized that only justification conditions and not determinate truth-conditions can be associated with general propositions involving unrestricted quantification, he thought that not only the Law of the Excluded Middle but also *the whole calculus of truth-functions* fails to apply to infinitary propositions.[277]

In Wittgenstein's presentation of the finitist position following his conversion from his views of the *Tractatus*, generality involving unrestricted quantification is taken to be

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[276] Georg Henrik von Wright, "Wittgenstein's Views on Probability", *Wittgenstein et le Problème d'une Philosophie de la Science* (Paris: CNRS, 1971), p. 123. In Marion, p. 85.

[277] Marion, p. 90. [emphasis Marion's; omission mine]

inductive and hypothetical rather than assertorial, and therefore not of the form $\forall x\ F(x)$. Furthermore, since inductive statements are not proper statements, they cannot be negated, "the consequence of which being that the whole calculus of truth-functions does not apply - such propositions are neither true nor false - since the sentential operators, being truth-functional, could apply only to propositions with determinate truth-conditions".[278]

Inductive or recursive proofs, in contrast to the other proofs of mathematics (namely, the algebraic proofs), serve as templates (otherwise called schemas or laws) for the construction of equations. Given a free-variable formula F, its inductive proof involves replacing the functions of F with numerals and proceeding with the calculation to produce a variable-free formula. The inductive proof of F is transformed into a proof of a given instance of F. By continuing this process to produce a sequence of conditionals, the analyst is indirectly disclosing what the inductive proof is asserting about its generality but cannot directly state. In Marion's words, with reference to Wittgenstein's statements in *Philosophical Remarks* and the *Tractatus*, respectively:

> In order to extract the philosophical content of the notion of template, Wittgenstein asked: 'To what extent, now, can we call such a guide to proofs the proof of a general proposition?' (*PR*, § 164), and his answer was, in an application of the distinction between 'saying' and 'showing' (*TLP*, 4.121-4.1212), that the template does not *assert* its generality, but

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[278] Marion, p. 97.

shows it, in that it 'allows us to see an infinite possibility'....[279]

In Wittgenstein's words: "Its generality doesn't lie in itself, but in the possibility of its correct application. And for that it has to keep on having recourse to the induction."[280]

While such proofs can demonstrate their generality without our being able properly to state that fact, what we also cannot state with respect to these templates is their negation. Wittgenstein writes in *Philosophical Remarks* that one cannot imagine what it would be for 7 to be divisible by 3 into a whole number without remainder, and this is not because of an incapacity of imagination but rather because the negation of such an arithmetical phrase is a groundless grammatical fabrication rather than an empirical proposition. Language cannot properly express the negations of such phrases. In other words, since the function cannot be negated, we do not have a clear sense of the function itself.[281]

Wittgenstein's conception of the limitations of finitude on arithmetical propositions is encapsulated in the view that generalities purporting to articulate infinite lists are expressed functionally in terms of how one can arrive at particular solutions, not

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[279] Marion, p. 99. [emphasis and parentheses Marion's; omission mine]

[280] *Philosophical Remarks*, § 168. In Marion, p. 100.

[281] Marion, pp. 100-101.

conceptually as abstract wholes. A generality can therefore be set out in a proof structure such as [f(1), f(ξ), f(ξ + 1)] since it is the articulation of a step-by-step process for arriving at particular solutions; but it cannot be expressed or asserted as a variable sign such as $(x).fx$ since to put it thus would be to presume to describe a generality that cannot be described but can only be shown through more indirect means. Only with respect to finite collections of numbers can one talk about quantifying 'all' of them using a phrase such as $\forall x\ Fx$.[282]

Critical to Wittgenstein's shift away from the theses of the *Tractatus* is his recognition of difficulties with his conception of statements of degree. Marion argues Wittgenstein evidently first begins his move away from the theses of the *Tractatus* in 1929 by doubting the completeness of its truth-functional logic, particularly as had been laid out in proposition 6 of the *Tractatus*.[283] He contends Wittgenstein is led to make this move upon recognizing the incapacity of truth-functional logic to account for the fact that a point in the visual field cannot have two colours at the same time. Truth-functional logic, as articulated in the *Tractatus*, fails to account for the nonsensicality of the conjunction '*x* is red' and '*x* is green' since the conjunction of two true statements in the logic of the *Tractatus* is taken to be true when experience tells us the conjunction is

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[282] Marion, pp. 103-104.

[283] Marion, p. 110.

actually and necessarily false. Thereby, Wittgenstein comes to the conclusion that statements of degree are unanalyzable. They are not concatenations of complex propositions composed of elementary propositions by means of truth-functional operators. Otherwise, it would be meaningful to speak of adding reds of one degree to produce another, or of an object of one length being two objects of lesser lengths when in fact it is one new object.[284]

Since statements of degree are unanalyzable, therefore numbers must be part of elementary propositions. Citing Wittgenstein's essay "Some Remarks on Logical Form" as proof, Marion concludes this is

> a fairly obvious consequence of the fact that so-called 'statements of degree' are not analysable further: since such statements cannot be broken into further more elementary propositions, the multiplicity of the phenomena will not be captured by the use of the conjunction... and the proposition attributing a given degree will have to be elementary. In particular, it will have to contain in itself the same multiplicity as that of the given degree, and the use of numbers (e.g. to give the values of coordinates) seems necessary for the expression of that multiplicity.[285]

The conclusion that numbers must be part of elementary propositions is one that undermines the fundamental assertion of the *Tractatus* that elementary propositions are

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[284] Marion, pp. 120-121.

[285] Marion, pp. 122-123.

logically independent of one another.[286] Marion contends this shift is the key movement in Wittgenstein's abandonment of the *Tractatus* in favour of ordinary language philosophy, and Marion characterizes the shift by quoting the words of D. Stern:

> At first, [Wittgenstein] retained the Tractarian conviction that language is grounded on reference to objects, which he now identified with the contents of experience. This project of analysing the structure of the experientially given is briefly articulated in the paper "Some Remarks on Logical Form". At this point, in the early months of 1929, he conceived of the project as a matter of articulating a "phenomenological language", a language for the description of immediate experience. Later that year, he gave up the idea that philosophy ought to start from a description of the immediately given, motivated by the conviction that philosophy must begin with the language that we ordinarily speak.[287]

The shift is a profound one. What Wittgenstein starts with in the *Tractatus* is a basic assumption at the root of analysis: that there are simple objects which are named pictorially by simple names or symbols. The natures of the simple objects and simple names are not given. They are simply assumed to be the case and are designated, respectively, by letters *x, y, z* and *p, q, r*. This is the minimal assumption about form that is needed to get the analysis going. Elementary propositions, then, are the simplest naming symbols for the objects of experience; and the mutual independence of the elementary propositions is taken as given. But what Wittgenstein moves towards, after the *Tractatus* has been published, is the radically different assumption that propositions

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[286] Marion, p. 113.

[287] D. Stern, "The 'Middle Wittgenstein': From Logical Atomism to Practical Holism", *Synthese*, *87* (1991), pp. 203-226. In Marion, p. 113*n*.

that appear to be of the same kind in fact have nothing in common. The fundamental assumption of common simple form is rejected and abandoned. Wittgenstein himself characterizes this new view in a key passage, published posthumously in *Wiener Ausgabe, i: Philosophische Bemurkungen*:

> Imagine two planes, with figures on plane I that we wish to map on plane II by some method of projection. It is open to us to fix a method of projection (such as orthogonal projection) and then to interpret the images on plane II according to this method of mapping. But we could also adopt a quite different procedure: we might for some reason lay down that the images on [plane] II should all be circles, no matter what the figures on plane I may be. That is, different figures on I are mapped on to II by different methods of projection. In order in this case to construe the circles in II as images, I shall have to say for each circle what method of projection belongs to it. But the mere fact that a figure is represented on II as a circle will say nothing. - It is like this with reality if we map it onto subject-predicate propositions. The fact that we use subject-predicate propositions is only a matter of our notation; the subject-predicate form does not in itself amount to a logical form and is the way of expressing countless fundamentally different logical forms, like the circles on plane II. The forms of the propositions: 'The clock is round', 'The man is tall', 'The patch is red', 'The picture is pretty', have nothing in common.[288]

In other words, if the strictures of our notation impose too much on that which is being described in order to make the descriptions conform to an artificial predetermined form, they will distort what they pretend to capture; and this is the criticism Wittgenstein comes to level against his own *Tractatus*. The pictorial subject-predicate form of propositions is not fundamental. The fact that it is possible to describe a room by equations in terms of

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[288] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Wiener Ausgabe, i: Philosophische Bemurkungen*, (Vienna: Springer, 1994), p. 63. In Marion, pp. 115-116. [parentheses in the quote; brackets mine]

the distribution of colour on the surface without reference to relations among noun-named objects is proof that the subject-predicate form (or, put another way, the function-argument relational form) of propositions is not the underlying form. The underlying form, Marion concludes, is the logic of equations.[289]

In grounding numbers in elementary propositions and abandoning the notion of their logical independence, Wittgenstein is abandoning his project of reducing arithmetic to logical operations since truth-functional logic is no longer fundamental to arithmetic. He turns to an alternative, concluding that general arithmetical propositions - that is, propositions with a quantifier ranging over the natural numbers, commonly of the form $\forall x\ F(x)$ - can be correctly expressed, not as statements, but only by means of induction. In this way, Wittgenstein - during his transitional phase between the *Tractatus* and his later period - comes to view 'hypotheses' as "those operations by means of which constructions could take place in language outside the scope of truth-functional logic".[290] His task, in searching for a more comprehensive syntax and a logically perfect language, becomes a supplementary - "in a certain sense *a posteriori*" - analysis of the phenomena of ordinary language themselves: a "phenomenology" of logical possibility.[291]

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[289] Marion, pp. 115-119.

[290] Marion, pp. 122-123.

[291] Marion, pp. 124-126.

Wittgenstein uses the term '*phänomenologische Farbenlehre*'[292], which translates as a 'chromatic phenomenology' or a 'colour-taught phenomenology', no doubt referring to the failure of truth-functional logic to account for the contradictoriness of combined propositions regarding the colour of discrete points. The notation of such a phenomenology must express the entire multiplicity of possibilities while excluding impossibilities. In the ideal language, it should be impossible to state that which is nonsensical.[293]

Wittgenstein's phenomenology Marion sees expressed most succinctly in a collection of Wittgenstein's lecture notes:

> A hypothesis goes beyond immediate experience.
> A proposition does not.
> Propositions are true or false.
> Hypotheses work or don't work.
> A hypothesis is a law for constructing propositions, and the propositions are instances of this law. If they are true (verified), the hypothesis works; if they are not true, the hypothesis does not work. Or we may say that a hypothesis constructs expectations which are expressed in propositions and can be verified or falsified.[294]

Since a hypothesis of one form can range over an infinitude of possibilities, there is no

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[292] Marion, p. 126 and 126*n*.

[293] Marion, p. 128.

[294] *Wittgenstein's Lectures, Cambridge 1930-1932*, from the notes of J. King and D. Lee (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980), p. 110. In Marion, p. 129. [parentheses in the quote]

sense in which we can close in on its definitive veritability in all possible circumstances; and truth (verification) in respect of such hypotheses is therefore of a different sort from truth as it regards truth-functional statements. These hypotheses Wittgenstein labels '*Gesetze zur Bildung von Erwartungen*', which translates as 'laws for forming expectations'.[295] Hypotheses themselves can be neither true nor false, but only inductive applications expressed as particular phenomenological assertions can be judged true or false.

Marion here summarizes how Wittgenstein has lost his faith in his project of discovering the logical form or forms of elementary phenomenological propositions, and the consequences of this loss of faith. In place of the relationship between elementary and complex propositions of the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein now has a relationship between the assertions of phenomenological language and the hypotheses of physical language. It is the phenomenological assertions that can be verified or otherwise, while the hypotheses are merely laws in accordance with which assertions can be formed. All language, whether phenomenological assertions or hypotheses, is articulated physically and is part of the physical world: it is not a metaphenomenon somehow outside the world. Phenomenological assertions which purport to capture the world of experience themselves are played out in physical time, as is the process of verification applied to

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[295] *Philosophical Remarks*, § 228. In Marion, p. 131.

them. Time, therefore, is a factor in the description - in the assertions of phenomenological language - of immediate experience. Language, like physical life, streams out temporally, and the project of capturing the immediate instant of experience is therefore corrupted by the fact that language must stretch out beyond that which it seeks to capture. The physical therefore has priority over the phenomenological since the process of capturing the latter is subordinate to the former. This realization leads Wittgenstein to conclude "[t]he assumption that a phenomenological language is possible and that only it would say what we must express in philosophy is - I believe - absurd"[296]. Wittgenstein comes to realize phenomenological language is not a legitimate form of expression midway between science and logic. The attempt to set up such a language is therefore a futile project since there are no logical forms of elementary, phenomenological propositions awaiting discovery.[297] "[T]here is no such thing as a language whose grammar is determined by immediate experience."[298]

In abandoning the search for the ideal phenomenological language, Wittgenstein

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[296] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Wiener Ausgabe, ii: Philosophische Betrachtungen, Philosophische Bemerkungen* (Vienna: Springer, 1994), p. 102. In Marion, p. 140. [brackets mine]

[297] Marion, pp. 128-141.

[298] Marion, p. 143. This conclusion Marion attributes to Alva Noë, "Wittgenstein, Phenomenology and What it Makes Sense to Say", *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, 54* (1994), pp. 24-25. [brackets mine]

shifts his focus to ordinary language to determine what its use shows about the limits of what can be said. Marion here inserts two quotes from Wittgenstein's work which express well the nature and implications of the shift in focus.

> I used to believe that there was the everyday language that we all usually spoke and a primary language that expressed what we really knew, namely phenomena. I also spoke of a first system and a second system. Now I wish to explain why I do not adhere to that conception any more. I think that essentially we have only one language, and that is our everyday language. We need not invent a new language, provided we rid it of the obscurities that lie hidden in it. Our language is completely in order, as long as we are clear about what it symbolizes. Languages other than the ordinary ones are also valuable in so far as they show us what they have in common.[299]

> I do not now have phenomenological language, or 'primary language' as I used to call it, in mind as a goal. I no longer hold it to be necessary. All that is possible and necessary is to separate what is essential from what is inessential in *our* language.... if we so to speak describe the class of languages which serve their purpose, then in so doing we have shown what is essential to them and given an immediate representation of immediate experience. Each time I say that, instead of such and such a representation, you could also use this other one, we take further steps towards the goal of grasping the essence of what is represented. A recognition of what is essential and what is inessential in our language if it is to represent, a recognition of which parts of our language are wheels turning idly, amounts to the construction of a phenomenological language.[300]

In shifting focus from the search for a special privileged language of immediate experience to a comprehensive ordinary language, Wittgenstein opens up the space in

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[299] Waismann, pp. 45-46. In Marion, p. 142.

[300] *Philosophical Remarks*, § 1. In Marion, p. 142. [emphasis in the quote; omission mine]

which his philosophy moves beyond this transitional phase. The key difference between a hypothesis and a proposition that purports to assert something about immediate experience is nothing other than the way in which the words are used. A statement of one form can be turned into a statement of the other kind through a simple manipulation that shifts the way the statement is used in ordinary language. Granted there remains a difference between the various ways of speaking: not the difference he previously thought obtained, but a difference nonetheless. The task of his later work, then, is to articulate the way words and statements are used in the various kinds of language, to determine the regularities that make the various kinds of language what they are. It remains the case that there are statements which purport to be assertions and which are analyzed in truth-functional terms, but more fundamental than these are the norms which allow a statement to be an assertion or to be some other form of discourse. When he abandons the notion that there is a language of immediate experience, reliance on the hypothetical statements of induction as an approximation to an ideal language is abandoned in favour of a consideration of the many ways in which various kinds of language really do work. Wittgenstein seems to be realizing his search for the ideal language has been imposing something artificial on language when what his project should have been is to learn without prejudice what the various kinds of language are teaching.[301] What is fundamental is not the rules that make the various forms of language what they are and

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[301] Marion, pp. 142-146.

permit one to define the ideal rule-abiding language, but rather that there are various forms of language in the first place: "rules are not constitutive of language-games; rather, it is the language-games that are prior to rules"[302].

To describe where Wittgenstein ends up, it is a radical anti-Platonist standpoint where one must be vigilant against assuming the a-priority of that which is being shown. The method of showing - of proving - not only must define that which is being proven but must withdraw from assuming its existence already since to do so is to go beyond what can properly be thought or said. This is because existence itself cannot be taken to have *a priori* status. As Wittgenstein puts it in attacking intuitionism, it is not merely that:

> 'Every existence proof must contain a construction of what it proves the existence of.' You can only say 'I won't call anything an "existence proof" unless it contains such a construction'. The mistake lies in pretending to possess a clear *concept* of existence.... We have no concept of existence independent of our concept of an existence proof.[303]

One deals with possibilities: not empirical possibilities, but grammatical ones. Marion states:

> [T]his is how one should understand the 'grammatical' infinite according to Wittgenstein: an expression ending with the words 'and so on' does not point towards a possibility waiting to be realized (an empirical possibility) but shows a possibility of the symbolism, i.e. it does not forbid us to

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[302] Marion, p. 157.

[303] *Philosophical Grammar*, p. 374. In Marion, p. 174. [emphasis Wittgenstein's; omission mine]

> continue.... Wittgenstein is here not very far from his earlier distinction between 'saying' and 'showing'. A rule does not *assert* that it is infinite; it is not a statement about an infinite extension. Rather, it *shows* it by allowing us to 'see an infinite possibility'.[304]

Wittgenstein is serious about the groundlessness of extensionality, and therefore refuses to accept the a-priority of what is being described or the a-priority of the relative validity of the language being used to describe it. He is reduced to a very radical kind of empiricism in which even defining the approach is subject to the rigours of intensionality in which process takes precedence over result and operations take precedence over classes.

Dummett points out, however, that Wittgenstein does not end up at the extreme of subjective idealism such that the individual *creates* the world. Rather, Dummett posits between the radical Platonist and the radical constructivist an intermediate position according to which we picture "objects springing into being in response to our probing. We do not *make* the objects but must accept them as we find them"[305]. Wittgenstein would likely have difficulty responding to Dummett's assertion in this regard inasmuch as Wittgenstein's constructivist position leaves him unable to characterize the way the world is prior to or independent of his apprehension of it. For him to engage in such a debate

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[304] Marion, p. 181. [emphasis and parentheses Marion's; brackets and omission mine]

[305] Dummett, p. 134. [emphasis Dummett's]

would be for him to sink back into the very conversation he has tried to reject in writing the *Tractatus*. Granted, Dummett is careful to step away from this characterization of Wittgenstein's position, calling it a "picture" rather than an ontology.

In conclusion with respect to the evolution of Wittgenstein's position as epitomized by his changing conception of mathematics, Wittgenstein - in rejecting classes - is left with a dilemma: he cannot help but employ language in carrying out his work, yet the language he is forced to use is wrought with class-based extensional prejudices and presumptions which obscure the very points he is trying to make. Words conjure up phantoms and imbue them with a status that, on critical reflection, cannot be grounded. Wittgenstein's initial approach to his project is to define philosophy operationally, allowing strict truth-functional analysis to demonstrate through its activity that about reality which cannot be stated directly. But Wittgenstein comes to doubt that all language can be bound by the operations he defines, and fears he is imposing on language a rigid constraint instead of learning from language how it works. From beginning to end, Wittgenstein's project takes the form of a corrective on extension-based classism. What language can teach is at most how it works, not the independent reality of what it is talking about. Language creates the world, but there are norms about how it does this in various ways. The task of philosophy, then, is to learn how ordinary language ordinarily works and to let the way in which it works - i.e., its self-manifestation through the action of articulation - demonstrate how it functions. Therefore, while the role of language is to

'say', the focus of the philosopher is not on what is being 'said' but rather on what is being 'shown' by the various ways in which this 'saying' occurs.

Chapter VI - Conclusion:

How What What Wittgenstein Doesn't Say Says

Shows What What Wittgenstein Says Doesn't Say

We have seen in the second section of this presentation that Wittgenstein's intent in writing the *Tractatus* is to foster a corrective activity to purge from philosophy and science in general the language of metaphysics and to ensure the propositions of natural science are articulated clearly in such a way that their truth can readily be determined through truth-functional analysis. Clearly, Wittgenstein does not intend that his *Tractatus* should replace the metaphysical language it seeks to clear away, not because what he is writing is no better than what it replaces but because the whole point of the *Tractatus* is to foster an activity, not to foster discussion about the grounding of that activity. One who truly understands what the *Tractatus* is attempting to say will recognize the *Tractatus* itself cannot properly become a subject of discourse; and, as a corollary to that, one who makes the *Tractatus* the subject of discourse betrays a lack of understanding of its intent. In this way, the *Tractatus* is akin to the grounding of the religious fervour of the zealot or the meditational activity of the mystic in the sense that it can point to but not circumscribe the activity it engenders. To put it poetically, kicking away this ladder after ascending it means nothing other than that the point of ascending a ladder is not to contemplate the ladder but rather to get to where one is going. We have seen that the

Tractatus, like a Zen koan, gets in the way of one who seeks to understand its message because it seems to tolerate a deep contradiction by asserting in the form of a meaningful pronouncement a blanket denial that its pronouncements are meaningful. Inasmuch as it seems to engender a contradiction, the *Tractatus* leaves itself open to both criticism and reinterpretations, and it is these criticisms and reinterpretation that are addressed, respectively, in the third and fourth sections of this presentation.

We have seen in the third section that Wittgenstein cannot easily dismiss the implications of statements he makes and later denies when he kicks away the proverbial ladder, the chief of those implications being that his work either falls into self-contradictory nonsense or becomes the very kind of philosophy it is a corrective against. However, neither can we pretend Wittgenstein is not serious when he sets aside the ladder and calls his own words 'nonsense'. We have to take Wittgenstein at his word when he says the message of the work can be known to be true and seen to be efficaciousness even though its presentation is nonsensical. In this way, we recognize what is articulated despite his not wanting to say it without embracing that which is articulated as if it is not denied. By tolerating his work as a kind of myth about what already shows itself to those who have thought the thoughts he is expressing, we counter Gellner's criticism that the work demonstrates nothing and reject Feibleman's suggestion that Wittgenstein embraces the very metaphysical language, *qua* metaphysical language, that he later rejects. While Gellner is right that Wittgenstein and the logical positivists are operating within a

privileged circle when dismissing as meaningless all language that does not correspond to their preordained specifications and Feibleman is right as well that they nevertheless violate their own specifications by utilizing class-based language that can only be described as having second-storey metaphysical implications, yet something is shown, if not said directly, by the silencing of the *Tractatus* at its penultimate proposition; and what is shown arguably is not what Gellner and Feibleman conclude is shown.

It is no doubt because of Wittgenstein's obtuseness on the issue of self-contradictoriness that many have sought to reinterpret his work in light of other approaches to philosophy: the Kantian critique, phenomenology and semiotics. We have seen in the fourth section that there are great dangers in reading into Wittgenstein's work things that not only are not there to begin with but are expressly rejected in the work. While the *Tractatus* appears to reproduce certain aspects of Kant's critique of pure reason as a critique of language, particularly in the Copernican revolution it undertakes to focus on the propositional instead of the empirical, it also seems clear Wittgenstein rejects key moves in the Kantian critique by abandoning the synthetic *a priori*, embracing a more context-dependent notion of necessity and employing a notion of reference that wholly rejects the transcendental standpoint. While others infer Husserl's phenomenological influence from Wittgenstein's use of an ante-logical architecture of logical forms, a nonsense-senselessness distinction, a state-of-affairs-versus-positive-facts distinction and an epoché with intentional-intended noemic-noetic poles, we have seen how

Wittgenstein's denial of reflexivity prevents the activity of reconciliation that is integral to phenomenology. While the *Tractatus* also bears a resemblance to semiotical discourse inasmuch as it points to a universal transformational grammar, it has been noted the analytical movement Wittgenstein employs is a gapless dyadic relation rather than the triadic relation semiotical theory demands.

While the *Tractatus* evidently does not survive on the terms prescribed by these other analysts, the question remains whether the *Tractatus* stands on its own terms. Wittgenstein himself concludes that it does not. We have seen in the fifth section how a mathematical interpretation of Wittgenstein's project allows the reader to follow Wittgenstein in his evolution towards a new approach that, while abandoning certain positions of the *Tractatus*, nevertheless can be seen as a sort of radical completion of the enterprise. There is a sense in which the movement is an inevitable completion of his initial task rather than a repentance. Here we see how his denial of metaphysical discourse translates, mathematically, into the embrace of operations over class-based preordained formulas. We cannot forget that the *Tractatus* is set out from the beginning as the artistic rendition of a kind of apotheosis. One can never say what philosophy is: one can only do it. About what one is doing and the logical form that grounds this activity, one must be silent. The operation, then, is always something one does and never something one talks about doing, for the second-order description is completely other than the doing and completely groundless in its own right. Talking about doing is not

only a different kind of doing from the doing about which one is talking but, moreover, a doing that gets nothing done.

The movement through which Wittgenstein, in his mathematical evolution, goes can be described as the radical fulfillment of his statement at section 6.1233 of the *Tractatus* that "[w]e can imagine a world in which the axiom of reducibility is not valid. But it is clear that logic has nothing to do with the question whether our world is really of this kind or not"[306]. Wittgenstein expands on this point in the following section:

> The logical propositions describe the scaffolding of the world, or rather they present it. They "treat" of nothing. They presuppose that names have meaning, and that elementary propositions have sense. And this is their connexion with the world. It is clear that it must show something about the world that certain combinations of symbols – which essentially have a definite character – are tautologies. Herein lies the decisive point. We said that in the symbols which we use something is arbitrary, something not. In logic only this expresses: but this means that in logic it is not we who express, by means of signs, what we want, but in logic the nature of the essentially necessary signs itself asserts. That is to say, if we know the logical syntax of any sign language, then all the propositions of logic are already given.[307]

In other words, the medium is the message; and the medium is nothing static but an activity. This is Kronecker's anti-Platonist constructivist mathematics working itself out: never meaning or representing but always doing and, in doing, showing how necessity

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[306] *Tractatus*, section 6.1233. [brackets mine]

[307] *Tractatus*, section 6.124.

works itself out. On one aspect of mathematics after another – succession, generality, identity, equivalence and quantification – Wittgenstein shows how an operational presentation can account for the activity without reference to classes.

Following through on the radical implications of constructivism, Wittgenstein comes to realize that even the privileged position of logico-mathematical discourse is grounded in an untenable prejudice. He comes to recognize mathematics is but one of many fabricated languages in the world whose activity shows the workings of the world. Once he recognizes (as does Rorty) that, in Marion's words, "only justification conditions and not determinate truth-conditions can be associated with general propositions involving unrestricted quantification"[308], the stage is set for him to conclude that statements of degree are unanalyzable, numbers are part of elementary propositions, elementary propositions are not independent of one another, and measures to fit propositions into a rigidly perfect universal code are artificial and fatally distortional. Language still shows, through its operations, how the world is; but there is no particular privileged language to undertake this showing. Rather, one must give each different ordinary language game its due. His project not only remains therapeutic rather than didactic but indeed abandons the last vestige of didactics by relinquishing any hold, even a deceptively tentative one, on the possibility of a pure and perfect transformational

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[308] Marion, p. 90.

discourse.

Ironically, it is in correcting the inadequate critiques of the *Tractatus* that the efficacy of Wittgenstein's project manifests itself; for the *Tractatus* is just as effective in countering Wittgenstein's critics as it is in correcting the excesses of the philosophers who went before him. Addressing the criticisms by stripping away the meaningless excesses of their talk is a demonstration of what Wittgenstein views as philosophy's appropriate activity. It is a manifestation that what what Wittgenstein doesn't say says does indeed show what what Wittgenstein says doesn't say. The act of showing is the act of actively silencing critics whose criticisms are grounded in metaphysical systems Wittgenstein rejects.

Unfortunately for Wittgenstein's project, however, it is only from within the perspective he adopts that one can view his critics' express views as merely perspectival manifestations of language games in operation. It is only from the perspective of Wittgenstein's anti-standpoint position that his countercriticisms of his critics are effective; for surely within their systems, his criticisms are as meaningless as his critics' seem from his. Gellner has a point that there is something unsettling and unsatisfying about an approach that silences critics instead of debating them on common ground; but, then again, Wittgenstein has a point when he implies it is for metaphysicians to justify why the grounded position should be the default in the first place. When Wittgenstein

proffers no counter-ground but rejects the very notion of ground, silence becomes not so much an effective philosophical strategy as a diplomatic one, for there is clearly little point in debating metaphysics with those who approach the debate from this perspective. To the philosopher within the metaphysical tradition, Wittgenstein may look very much to be adhering with religious faith and fervour to a nonrational mystical position as grounded in prejudice as metaphysical discourse appears to be from the Wittgensteinian position. It leaves Wittgenstein vulnerable to the charge that his allegedly presuppositionless neutral position is beyond the grasp of reason and outside what is ordinarily taken to be philosophy. Since Wittgenstein would have to agree that there are no longer any meaningful philosophical propositions to utter, philosophy's authentic activity for him must be considered to be an activity whose measure is entirely in the eyes of the acolyte and whose learning occurs entirely through epiphany. That is, of course, precisely how Wittgenstein described his project in the opening lines of the Preface to the *Tractatus*: "not a text-book" but a book that "will perhaps only be understood by those who have themselves already thought the thoughts which are expressed in it"[309].

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[309] *Tractatus*, p. 27.

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