

TRACTATUS:
LOGIC AND THE CHALLENGE OF ETHICS

by

Sarwar Ahmed Abdullah

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ABSTRACT

The subject of this thesis is primarily the ethical point of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*. In the work, Wittgenstein investigates the connection between ethics and the world by examining the nature of the proposition. In the *Lecture on Ethics*, Wittgenstein reinvestigates this connection more directly by explaining the nature of the ethical expression. I argue that the ethical point of the book is to help one to understand the ephemeral characteristics of ethics insofar as they cannot be articulated by demonstrating what can be articulated. In the *Lecture*, Wittgenstein also points to a deep challenge encountering the Tractarian pictorial language. Logic reminds us that we are held captive by pictorial language and could never get outside it. Ethics, on the other hand, is a constant attempt to get outside of it by usage of simile. Although this attempt seems to be hopeless, it is unavoidable and significant. It characterizes the human condition.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED

NB	Notebooks (1914-16)
T	Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus
LE (and <i>Lecture</i>)	Lecture on Ethics
PI	Philosophical Investigations
PG	Philosophical Grammar
PR	Philosophical Remarks
PO	Philosophical Occasions
Z	Zettel
BB	Blue and Brown Books
CV	Culture and Value
RLF	Some Remarks on Logical Form

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CHAPTER1: INTRODUCTION

The subject of this thesis is primarily the ethical point of the philosophical view of Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, which is extremely important for understanding 'the unassailable *truth* of the thoughts that are communicated in the *Tractatus*' (*Preface*). In the work, Wittgenstein seeks the connection between ethics and the world by investigating and clarifying the connection between logic and the world, or rather—by investigating the nature of propositions and calming that propositions cannot express what higher (i.e., what ethics is concerned with). In this way, the ethical point of the book can be understood as an indirect way of helping us to understand why what ethics is concerned with cannot be articulated and why the world seems to be paradoxical. In *Lecture on Ethics* (1929) Wittgenstein nearly makes the same points by reinvestigating the connection between ethics and the world more directly—by investigating the nature of ethical expressions.

In the *Preface* (T, p.3-4), Wittgenstein writes, "what can be said at all can be said clearly, and what we cannot talk about we must pass over in silence". Thus, Wittgenstein writes, the primary philosophical aim of the *Tractatus* is "to draw a limit, not to thought, but to the expression of thoughts [propositions or language]". To draw a limit to thought, he says, is "to be able to think on both sides of the limit"—i.e., to be able to think what cannot be thought, and say what cannot be said. Thus, he concludes, "the limit can only

be drawn in language, and what lies on the other side of the limit will simply be nonsense”.

Taken by itself, the *Preface* suggests that there are two sides to the limit of language. On one side of the limit (beneath language), as Wittgenstein tells us later, lies the fixed *form* of the world. This form is what any ‘imagined world must have in common with the real world’.¹ It is what is always disguised by language;² what lies on the other side of the limit is “the sense of the world”³ — “the mystical”.⁴

Now, to be able to think both sides of the limit, in one sense, means to be able to represent *logical form* by means of propositions. But this is not possible, since it would require us to “station ourselves with propositions somewhere outside logic, that is to say outside the world”.⁵ In other words, “it would require that logic must go beyond the limits of the world; for only in that way could it view those limits from the other side as well”.⁶

The logical form of the world, though it is inexpressible, still lies within the realm of logic; that is to say within the world. It can be brought to light or shown by means of an ‘analysis’, whereas the sense of the world lies somewhere outside logic, that is to say outside the world; it is what is, as we said, mystical or higher.

¹ T§2.022

² T§4.002

³ T§6.4

⁴ T§6.522

⁵ T§4.12

⁶ T§5.61

What is higher is also inexpressible. However, unlike logical form, it cannot be brought to light by any means. It remains mystical. This is precisely, according to Wittgenstein, what matters to *ethics*—ethics concerns what is higher or mystical. Wittgenstein makes this clearer in *Lecture on Ethics* (1929), where he remarks that ethics springs from the desire to say something about the ultimate meaning of life and/or the absolute good or valuable [sic].⁷

However, one of the substantial results of Wittgenstein’s logical investigation of the nature of the propositions was this: ‘propositions can express nothing that is higher’ (T§6.42)—the sense of the world, the absolute good or value. Everything that lies outside logic (i.e., that is higher) is simply nonsense. As Peter Winch has put it, “we must simply learn to recognize nonsense for what it is and avoid it”⁸ by being silent (T§7). However, our difficulty, the author of the *Lecture* might say, is to stop or be silent—not to run up against the limits of language.

Furthermore, the *Lecture*, not the *Tractatus*, explicitly points to the challenge springing from ethics. This solution—being *silent*— is exactly what ethics constantly challenges. That is to say, ethics constantly violates the entire realm of the *unsayable* forced on us by *logic*—this running up against the limits of the logic of our language is ethics.

Because a proposition holds us captive and cannot let us describe what is higher, we seem to resort to what seems to be a “*simile*” (LE), in the hope

⁷ “Ethics”, p. 44

⁸ Winch, “Persuasion” in *Midwest Studies in Philosophy XVII* , p.123

of being able to describe and express what we cannot describe and express by means of a proposition. That is to say, in ethics, we usually use similes. The following correlated questions arise: (1) is it possible to describe and express what is ethical by means of a simile? (2) Can a simile lead us beyond itself; that is to say beyond the natural meaning of its words and describe what lies not inside, but outside the whole sphere of logic and the world?

In the *Lecture*, Wittgenstein deals with these questions by investigating the nature of the ethical (and the religious) expressions; and he ultimately, I believe, reconfirms the ethical point of the *Tractatus* by being more explicit— it is a *paradox* that the world should seem to have supernatural or transcendental sense and value.⁹

These questions are the main motivation for this work. In a way, the answers to the first two questions will also shed light on the whole sense of the *Tractatus*. But without looking at and examining the nature of propositions and what lies within the limit of logic (or the world)—*logical form*— it is hard to understand what the author of the *Tractatus* means or wants to express in the book. Hence, clarifying the nature of the propositions (or language) and their real logical forms as opposed to their apparent forms is a required task.

I begin Chapter 2 by laying out the bases that are essential for understanding and grasping the conception of ‘*logical form*’, which language

⁹ This is a claim that Wittgenstein makes in (LE p. 43) where he is concerned with ethical and mystical experiences. He wanted to say this: Ethics seems to be this *paradox*. So what am suggesting is that there is a strong connection between this claim and the

is supposed to hold in common with reality, and which *cannot* be put into words throughout, but can be *shown*. This is what sections 2.1-2.1.1 try to clarify by explaining the nature of a state of affairs. So, what expressed or said is the primary element of every given state of affairs and eventually the world. In other words, what cannot be described are ‘simple objects’ and/or their ‘internal properties. More precisely, I will clarify this notion of the unsayable or that can only be shown by contrasting simple objects, their combinations, and their internal and external properties and relations as a helpful approach to understanding logical form—what can be shown.

But, of course, our understanding will be incomplete without looking at the linguistic side of it. So, in sections 2.2—2.3.1 I will try to recapture the same points by following the same methods: by contrasting names and propositions, simple elements of pictures and pictures themselves, a senseless proposition and a meaningful proposition. I believe this way of reading the *Tractatus* should give us a clear view of the relation between an object and its representative in a proposition (a sign, and/or symbol), a state of affairs and a fact and their descriptions(an elementary and complex or proposition), and so on.

In the final section (2.4), I will return to the conception of a ‘logical form’. I will be considering two correlated questions: how can we know there is such a *form*? Is such a *form* is a creation of our thought? I believe, the *Tractatus* tells us we can know there is such a *form* from *logic alone*. In other

proposition (T§6.41), where Wittgenstein wanted to say that the sense of the world seems to be supernatural or transcendental.

words, such a form cannot contain more than logic alone can tell us. I should know it without referring to reality, as I show. This claim, though surprising, is less controversial than what I shall claim in answer to the second question: there is a significant sense in which logical form, at the level of the primary elements of language (and hence the world) is a product of language—“A proposition constructs a world with the help of logical scaffolding...” (T§4. 023).

I believe that Wittgenstein, by means of nonsensical propositions, suggests that propositions of logic could provide us with a kind of scaffolding by means of which one can construct the logical form of the world. We can, as Wittgenstein tells us at (T§5.555), foresee or know a priori *only* what we ourselves construct or invent. This, I take to be a direct support for my reading of logical form that is on the “non-realist” wing of Tractatus exegesis: logic alone tells us there must be a logical form. What we ourselves construct must already lie in our ordinary language. But since ordinary language, Wittgenstein tells us, is designed for entirely different purposes (T§4.002), a sign-language is necessary for this particular purpose— to reconstruct *forms* and bring them to light.

However, this interpretation, particularly regarding whether the form of the world is a creation of our language and thought, seems, if it suggests that this form is only a creation of our language, to come close to a version of what is so-called an ‘anti-realist’ or a ‘non-realist’ interpretation of the *Tractatus*. It is the interpretation that has been defended by such Wittgensteinian commentators, such as: Hidé Ishiguro, Brian McGuinness,

and others as opposed to the ‘realist’ interpretation of Max Black, David Pears, P. M. S. Hacker, Norman Malcolm and others. I will briefly call attention to McGuinness’s anti-realist reading and Malcolm’s realist reading, without further involvement. My purpose in pointing to this debate is to show that the question has given rise to a controversy which has, eventually, divided Wittgensteinian scholars.

Chapter 3 will focus on the aim of ‘philosophy’ as practiced in the *Tractatus*— which I believe to be twofold, positive and negative— by asking why Wittgenstein thought establishing a sign-language was necessary. While Chapter 2 focuses on the positive task of philosophy (Wittgenstein’s account of the logical structure of language and reality in the *Tractatus*), it is necessary to consider the negative task of philosophy: Wittgenstein’s concept of philosophy as process of clearing up confusions and dispelling illusions. I do this by contrasting Frege’s and Russell’s projects with that of the *Tractatus*.

In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein aims to set the limits to what can be said about the world; he also tries to show the real source of confusions in philosophy and close off the possibility of their appearing by creating an ideally perspicuous notation. This activity of clearing up is what philosophy is.

As Peter Winch has put it, “[t]here is indeed an immense gulf, which hardly anyone can fail to see, between Wittgenstein’s conception of philosophy and that of the mainstream”.¹⁰ Unlike the mainstream, Wittgenstein denies that there is any deep philosophical problem. The main task of philosophy is to show that there are no problems, only confusion.

That is to say, its task is to show that “the deepest problems are in fact not problems at all”¹¹ (T§4.003), or to show, as he tells us in the *Preface*, ‘why these problems or questions are posed’, and to elucidate why these posed problems or questions are nonsense.

Chapter 4 sheds light on the other side of the limit of the world and language by clarifying Wittgenstein’s view of *ethics*—what is ethical is inexpressible. In the *Lecture on Ethics*— For Wittgenstein, it seems to me, the seed of ethics is metaphysical—ethics, he says, springs from the *desire* to say something about the ultimate meaning of life. That is, human beings have an inclination to say something about the ultimate meaning of life, which, for Wittgenstein, is an inclination to run against the limits of language. This running up against the limits of language, Wittgenstein says, signals ethics—in ethics language is often misused. That is, in ethics, we often use expressions as similes: (1) We can think of ethical and similar expressions as having meaning as similes; and (2) expressions used as similes can describe what we cannot describe by means of propositions, since propositions cannot express and describe what is higher, so, a simile can lead us beyond itself. Now, a possible conclusion we can draw from those two claims would be that, by means of a simile, an ethical expression can express or describe what is higher or mystical.

It is this hypothesis that Wittgenstein examines and finally rejects. In fact, Wittgenstein might say that in this way I will realize the limits of my

¹⁰ Winch, “The Expression of Belief” in *Wittgensteinian In America*, 195.

¹¹ T§4.003

language in just another way—that even words that are used in this way, as similes, cannot lead me beyond themselves. That is why, Wittgenstein writes, this running up against our cage is “perfectly, absolutely hopeless” (LE, p.44). So, it seems to be reasonable to say that we are really enclosed in logic.

But the claim that neither propositional nor metaphorical language can describe what is higher suggests something stronger than just saying we are enclosed in logic. What it suggests (taking the *Tractatus* and the *Lecture* together) is this: Logic pervades the world and imposes sharp limits on language. Ethics constantly, though it is perfectly and absolutely hopeless, tries to run up against the compulsory limits of language.

Before I begin with spelling out the Tractarian ontology, it should be mentioned that all the remarks and passages from the later Wittgenstein to which I sometimes refer are only meant to help us to understand the *Tractatus* in his own terms. In other words, I am not concerned with whether there is any continuity between the early Wittgenstein and the later Wittgenstein.

CHAPTER 2: THE LOGICAL

“Logic pervades the world: the limits of the world are also its limits.”[T§5.61; my italics]

A picture (or a proposition—a proposition is a picture) must have something in common with what it depicts in order to be a picture of the other. That something is called: *a logical pictorial form*. This chapter addresses two related and controversial questions: how can we know there is such a form? (Wittgenstein himself asks this question (NB (3.9.14.) p. 2). The second one is whether *logical form* is a creation of our language and thought. Regarding the first question, I will argue that we must know it a priori and by logic alone; and in responding to the second question, I am also inclined to argue that it is a creation of our language, but this is not to say there is no such a thing as reality outside our language and thinking. This brings me close to Brian McGuinness’ non-realist reading of the *Tractatus* against, broadly, the so-called realist interpretation, Norman Malcolm as an example.

The *Tractatus* presupposes the non-spatiotemporality and the colourlessness of objects as simple or elementary constituent parts of reality. It also claims that only when it is combined, can an object have a form. The idea that we can picture objects as they are combined is to be understood to mean that objects are only understood when we have arrived at a full analysis of a state of affairs (a combination of objects with one another). By means of an analysis, we understand “only *how* things are, not *what* they are”.¹²

¹² T§3.221

The structure of this chapter is as follows. Section 2.1 and 2.1.1 clarifies those two claims mentioned above by contrasting objects and their combinations and the internal and the external properties of objects. In sections 2.2—2.3.1 I will try to recapture the same points by following the same methods: by contrasting and examining Wittgenstein’s notion of: names and propositions, primary elements of pictures and pictures, a senseless proposition and a proposition with a sense. I believe this way of reading of the *Tractatus* is a worthy approach to bringing out and understanding the relation between language and reality—i.e., between a name and an object, a proposition and a state of affairs, a picture and what the picture depicts, and eventually between a logical form of language and reality or the world. The last section, (2.4), deals with the two questions mentioned earlier— how can one know there is such a form? And is the form a creation of our thought?

2.1 The World: Objects vs. States of Affairs

Wittgenstein opens the *Tractatus* by saying: “[t]he world is all that is the case. [It] is the totality of facts, not of things...in logical space”.¹³ A fact, as he writes, is “the existence of states of affairs” or “atomic facts”.¹⁴ A state of affairs or an atomic fact is a “combination of objects (things)” or primary elements.¹⁵ However, “[j]ust as we are quite unable to imagine spatial objects outside space or temporal objects outside time, so too

¹³T §1, §1.1 & § 1.13

¹⁴ T §2. I should mention here that Ogden has translated the German word “*Sachverhalt*” as “atomic fact”. But as Michael Potter writes, we cannot be sure whether the decision to translate *Sachverhalt* as ‘atomic fact’ was originally Wittgenstein’s. Nonetheless, Wittgenstein did not actively object to it. (Potter, “Wittgenstein’s pre-*Tractatus* manuscripts: a new appraisal” in *Wittgenstein’s Tractatus: History and Interpretation*, p.35). I am using them interchangeably.

there is *no* object that we can imagine excluded from the possibility of combining with others”.¹⁶ First, I think, it fair to say that the notion, as it has been introduced by Raymond Bradley (also others), of “combinatorial possibilities”¹⁷ is somehow essential to the nature of objects.

Objects, apart from their possible combinations with one another, themselves appear to be nothing. Does that mean there can be no objects in their own right? In fact, Wittgenstein might say it would be just as nonsensical to assert that there is an object in its own right as to deny it. In other words, it is just nonsensical to ask whether an object exists, for, Wittgenstein might say, no proposition can be the answer to such a question.¹⁸ Not because the question is unanswerable, but because the question itself is nonsensical. The question itself is nonsensical because its existence is “shown in the very sign for [the] object”.¹⁹ Wittgenstein would also say that objects, as simple primary elements of states of affairs, are “given”.²⁰ We realize their existence as a “logical necessity”,²¹ and they can only be shown. These are all ambiguous claims, but they will become clear as we progress.

To say that an object, apart from its possible combination with other objects, is nothing is to say, as George Pitcher has observed, “it is unthinkable that, apart from a configuration with other objects, an object have[*Sic*] a color”²² or a shape. Hence, talk of objects independently of a situation, i.e., an object’s configuration with other objects, is

¹⁵ T §2.01

¹⁶T §2.0121

¹⁷ Bradley, *The Nature of All Being: A Study of Wittgenstein's Modal Atomism*, p. 47, 84

¹⁸T §4.1274

¹⁹ T§4.126

²⁰T§2.0124

²¹ NB(14.6.15.) p.60.

nonsensical too. In this sense, a combination or a configuration of an object with others, I suggest, can be considered as the context within which we can speak of the object, but this does not also mean that the object can be articulated or expressed. However, in order to throw further light on Wittgenstein's view of *objects* and their place in the *Tractatus*, we may need to begin by asking, in Wittgenstein's term, a nonsensical question: "What is an object?"

According to Wittgenstein, objects are essentially *simple*, *colourless* (shapeless and timeless), and *invariable*. They cannot be described or articulated; they can only be *named*. As simple or primitive entities, objects form *the substance* of the world. Thus, they cannot be *complex*.²³ The substance of the world is shown by logic. Now, it is worthwhile to consider the following two remarks from the *Investigations* and the *Philosophical Remarks* which are helpful in giving us a clearer picture of Wittgenstein's understanding of simple objects in the *Tractatus*.

§46. Socrates says in the Theaetetus: "If I make no mistake, I have heard some people say this: there is no definition of the primary elements—so to speak—out of which we and everything else are composed; for everything that exists in its own right can only be *named*, no other determination is possible, neither that it *is* nor that it *is not* . . . But what exists in its own right has to be . . . named without any other determination. In consequence it is impossible to give an account of any primary element; for it, nothing is possible but the bare name; its name is all it

²² Pitcher, *The Philosophy of Wittgenstein*, 119. According to Wittgenstein, "what I do not know" is what the proposition must *express, show*. (NB, 18).

²³T § 2.02, §2.0232, §2.027, §3.221, and §2.021. As Norman Malcolm has reported Wittgenstein had never decided upon anything as an example of a "*simple object*". He did not have any interest in asking and finding out whether such-and such is a simple or complex object. He thought that would be purely "*empirical matter*" (*Nothing Is Hidden*, 34) and has nothing to do with philosophy.

has..." Both Russell's 'individuals' and my 'objects' (*Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*) were such primary elements.²⁴

Also:

What I once called 'objects', simples, were simply what I could refer to without running the risk of their possible non-existence; i.e. that for which there is neither existence nor non-existence, and that means: what we can speak about *no matter what may be the case*.²⁵

All we know about the objects themselves is that they must be able to combine with one another in order to make up all states of affairs. We can only speak *about* them: [we] cannot *put them into words*".²⁶ That is to say, we cannot express them by means of a proposition. Propositions cannot say what they are.

Objects are simple or primitive and not further decomposable. They are simple in the sense that, unlike a complex of other objects, they cannot be analyzed further. They are colourless, indescribable, and invariable in the sense that they are common to all possible states of affairs. In a way, the simplicity, colourlessness, and invariability of objects could be seen in the right light by contrast with atomic facts or states of affairs, which are possible (or an actual) configuration.

²⁴ Regarding the ontological status of simple objects, you might want to consider the following two points: First, not only is Wittgenstein's view of simple objects similar to that of Plato's primary elements, but it also analogous to that of John Locke's substance, Leibniz's monad, and/or Kant's noumenon. For Locke, substance is this: *I know what-is-not*, for Leibniz, simple monads are *windowless* and, for Kant, noumenon is *unknowable*. Secondly, there is also a passage in Waismann's *Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle*, where Wittgenstein says it is nonsense to ask whether objects are "thing-like", "property-like", or 'relations' (p, 43).

²⁵ PR §36

²⁶ T§3.221

As *primary* elements of states of affairs, objects, Wittgenstein writes, “fit into one another like the links of a chain” and “stand in a determinate relation to one another”.²⁷ This *form* of the determinate relation is what he calls the possibility of the structure of the state of affairs or the atomic fact, out of which further facts (i.e., non-atomic or complex facts) are formed.²⁸ Unlike objects, states of affairs can only be described, not named, and they are independent of one another.²⁹

Furthermore, not only are objects simple and primary elements of a state of affairs, but they are also unchanging and stable. What is changing and unstable is their configuration, and this (i.e., the configuration of objects) is what forms states of affairs.³⁰ A possible (or an actual) form of configuration states a possible (or an actual) state of affairs. To say objects are possible elements of states of affairs is to say that objects internally “contain the possibility of all situations”—the existence and non-existence of states of affairs that are “surrounded by space-colour”—and that are simple and “independent” to the extent that “they can occur in all situations”; they are self-subsistent with respect to the states of affairs. “[T]his form of independence is a form of connexion with states of affairs”.³¹ In other words, to say that an object contains the possibility of all situations is to say if the object can occur in a space of possible state of

²⁷ T §2.011, §2.03, and §2.031. As Max Black has mentioned, at (T§2.03) Wittgenstein denies there is anything substantial in states of affairs—apart from the fact that the elements of the objects fit into one another like the links of a chain—holding the elements together. Black, *A Companion to Wittgenstein's "Tractatus"*, 66. Here you may consider this remark by Wittgenstein himself as well: “The fact that these links are so concatenated isn’t ‘composed’ of anything at all”. PR –Appendix-1(1931) p.303.

²⁸ T §2.032, §2.033, and §2.034

²⁹ T §3.144 and §2.061. That is to say, one cannot infer the non-existence of one state of affairs from the existence of another. Notice: Later, Wittgenstein acknowledged that he was wrong about this. See (Waismann’s *Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle*, 64).

³⁰ T § 2.027, § 2.0271 & § 2.0272

affairs, then, the possibility of the object's occurrence in the space of the state of affairs must already be in the object itself. That is to say, as Bradley has put it, "being situated in space is an essential property of any spatial object"³² (in the upcoming section, we will discuss 'property' in greater detail). This possibility, Wittgenstein would say, is the *form* of the object—its logical form—³³ "Space, time, and colour (being coloured) are forms of objects".³⁴ This suggests that all states of affairs, unlike simple objects in themselves, must be spatiotemporal in character—"the rule of logical structure of colour (logical impossibility), for example, rules out the possibility of the presence of two colours at the same place and time".³⁵ Hence, no possible (or actual) state of affairs can be imagined, for example, without space, if the object is a spatial object—by analogy, just as a "speck in the visual field, though it need not to be red, must have some colour...surrounded by colour-space",³⁶ so too there is no object not be imagined to be surrounded by colour-space. At any rate, since objects contain the possibility of all situations, in which they might figure, and since the possibility is the form of objects, and since space, time and colour are the forms of objects, what objects contain as their possibilities are varied—space, time, and colour. But this does not mean every object contains all three forms at the same time—i.e., "not every picture is, for example, a spatial one".³⁷

³¹T§2.014 , §2.0131, and §2.0122. Simple objects are independent of states of affairs, and states of affairs are also independent of our will (T§6.373).

³² Bradley, *The Nature of All Being*, p.213

³³ T§2.012, §2.0121, §2.013, §2.0141, and §2.18

³⁴ T§2.0251

³⁵ T.§6.3751

³⁶ T§ 2.0131

³⁷ T§2.182

What has been said thus far can be approached afresh and restated from a different direction—that is, by taking a closer look at an object’s internal and external properties and its internal and external relations with other objects.

2.1.1 Internal vs. External Properties and Relations

In the *Notebooks*, Wittgenstein says that “a property of a situation must always be internal.”³⁸ This, as Black has observed, “fits neatly with the idea that it is logically impossible to *say* anything about a [situation]”.³⁹ Internal property belongs to what is essential to the nature of its (the situation) constitutive parts. This can also be clarified in this way: For Wittgenstein, as Bradley has observed, “the actual relations in which an object stands are not at all constitutive of the nature of the object. They are not internal, but external; not essential, but accidental to its nature”.⁴⁰ This will become clearer later. However, this is one of the most fundamental theses of the *Tractatus*. In itself, it is a metaphysical claim—what is internal is what is unalterable and eventually essential to a proposition.

The possibility of all situations is, as Malcolm has put it, the object’s “internal properties”.⁴¹ If there is no object that we can imagine excluded from the possibility of its combining with certain other objects, then the same must hold for properties, or rather

³⁸ NB(21.9.14),p.6.

³⁹ Black, *A Companion to Wittgenstein's "Tractatus"*,p.195

⁴⁰ Bradley, *The Nature of All Being*, p. 23-4. Bradley also writes: “It has sometimes been supposed, for example, by Max Black [1964], that any property that is not internal but external must be a material property. Now if Black were right, then, since material properties are produced only by the "configuration" of simple objects and hence are possessed only by complex objects, it would follow that the only properties possessed by simple objects are internal ones” (Ibid., 87).

⁴¹ Malcolm , *Nothing Is Hidden*, 2.

their properties. This also explains why Wittgenstein considered objects in themselves to be colourless. So, we can say *properties* can be explained properly only in terms of *relations*, the relation of an object with others. Before we clarify this, we should also remember that there is an important distinction between an internal relation (or property) and an external relation (or property). An object has internal (essential) and external (accidental) properties. Here, before we explore the distinction is the key remark on an internal property in an example:

A property is internal if it is unthinkable that its object should not possess it.

(This shade of blue and that one stand, *eo ipso*, in the internal relation of lighter to darker. It is unthinkable that *these* two objects should not stand in this relation).⁴²

First, the remark itself needs to be clarified, for I think there is ambiguity in it.

It is often believed that an internal property is a property that an object possesses in itself. But this is not what Wittgenstein means. Wittgenstein is not saying that it is unthinkable or illogical that an object *in itself* should not possess an internal property—recall that objects in themselves, outside of states of affairs, are colourless, shapeless and timeless. So, it is a mistake, or rather—it is nonsense to say an object by itself possesses a property at all. What Wittgenstein is saying, as the example also suggests, is this: A property is internal if it is unthinkable, or, as Raymond Bradley has put it, “logically impossible”⁴³ that, in this case, these two objects should not stand in such a way as they stand to each other.

⁴² T§4.123. The signs too, Wittgenstein writes, must themselves “possess all the logical [internal] properties of what they represent” (NB(11.10.14)p.11).

⁴³ Bradley, *The Nature of All Being: A Study of Wittgenstein's Modal Atomism*, p. xv and see (chapter 2. Sec. 5) specifically page 34, where Bradley argues that Wittgenstein

Wittgenstein tells us, that between pure qualities of colour, only internal relations can obtain, and this is the essence of a colour...a colour cannot be thought.⁴⁴ What cannot be thought cannot be said either. In this way, one cannot say this shade of blue is lighter than that shade, for what is internal is simple and cannot be asserted by means of a proposition—the existence of an internal property or relation cannot be expressed by means of a proposition. Rather, “it expresses itself in the proposition representing the situation”.⁴⁵ It is just this *internal relation* of an object with other objects that brings its *form* into view. This internal relation is simple in the sense that it is not further analyzable; it shows itself in the proposition.

What determines a *form* of an object is the *substance*, and not any material or *external properties*.⁴⁶ This remark says that the substance of the world does not determine any material or external properties. It does not yet draw the contrast between materials or external and internal properties. Since there does not seem to be any fundamental distinction between an internal property of an object and its form, except that the form can be perceived as an *image* of the object (apart from its internal property, an object is nothing), Wittgenstein could have said, *the substance can only determine an internal property, and not any external properties*. And since it makes sense to speak about internal properties of an object only in terms of the object’s internal relations with other objects, Wittgenstein should have also said that what determines a form of an object is the *substance* and the *internal relation* together.

regarded ‘thinkability (imaginability or picturability—“Thinkability, imaginability, and picturability are equivalent”) as a necessary condition, not just a sufficient condition, of possibility’.

⁴⁴ In Waismann’s *Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle*, p.55.

⁴⁵ T§4.124

⁴⁶ T §2.0231

External or material properties, on the other hand, are represented only in states of affairs that are constituted by “the configuration of objects”.⁴⁷ In a sense, the external properties of objects always depend upon the way objects are combined with one another. So, unlike the internal properties of objects, they are not simple and unalterable, and therefore they are analyzable. Since the existence of the configuration of objects is a fact (an actual state of affairs), the external properties that can be stated are only features of an actual state of affairs. It might be worthwhile to consider the internal property as the inner aspect of a given state of affairs, and the external property as its outer aspect.

Whatever is internal is essential and unchanging; by contrast, whatever is external is accidental and changing. Now, Wittgenstein writes, “if we describe the state of affairs completely, the external relation disappears...Apart from the internal relation between the forms that always obtain, no relation need occur in the description”.⁴⁸ So, the internal relation is all that holds the elements of the state of affairs together; it is a “complete picture of [the] state of affairs. It is not possible to add anything later on”.⁴⁹

It follows from what has been said that “If I am to know an object, though I need not know its external properties, I must know all its internal properties”.⁵⁰ To know all its internal properties means to know all its internal relations. In other words, knowing all its internal properties is to “know all its possible occurrences in states of affairs”—its entire possible relations with other objects...“A new possibility cannot be

⁴⁷ T §2.0231

⁴⁸ In Waismann’s *Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle*, p.54-5

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 52.

⁵⁰ T§2.01231

discovered later”.⁵¹ Bradley refers to this possibility as “the formal property of *being able to combine with other objects so as to produce a state of affairs*, or more briefly as the formal property of *combinatorial potential*”.⁵² At any rate, that is all that is involved in knowing an object. As Malcolm says, there is nothing else involved in knowing a simple object than knowing its logical form, knowing its possibilities of combining with other objects or knowing its internal properties in contrast with knowing its external properties, knowing its actual combinations with other objects.⁵³

Since the world is the totality of states of affairs, and since states of affairs consist of possible combinations of simple objects with a fixed form, the world must have a fixed form; and if I am to know the world, I must know its fixed form. Unquestionably, the fixed form of the world, as Malcolm says, is a “fundamental conception of the *Tractatus*”.⁵⁴ It lies beneath language. In the *Notebooks* (1914-16), Wittgenstein writes, “We must know whether there is such a form at all. [And the question is:] How can we know?”⁵⁵ This question is what needs to be investigated carefully in the remainder of this chapter, and the answer specifically will be given in section 2.4.

2.2 Language: Names vs. Descriptions or Propositions

Since, according to the *Tractatus*, the logic of our language is “a mirror-image of the world”,⁵⁶ we can say, the world and its image must be in “one space”⁵⁷—“a logical

⁵¹ T§2.0123

⁵² Bradley, *The Nature of all Being*, p.84.

⁵³ Malcolm, *Nothing Is Hidden*, p.11.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p.1

⁵⁵ NB(3.9.14.)p, 2

⁵⁶ T§6.13

⁵⁷ PR§38

space”.⁵⁸ This is very important, for if each (i.e., language and the world) were in a different space, it would have been impossible to speak of an image or a picture of the world from the beginning (this will be evident later). We also need to bear something else in mind: Since the logic of our language is an image of the world, we should not be surprised to hear nearly the same points of those remarks about the world, facts and their constituent parts (i.e., simple objects) and the internal relations of these objects with one another in a state of affairs when Wittgenstein remarks about language, propositions and their constituent parts (i.e., simple names, or signs) and the internal relations of these names or signs with one another in an elementary proposition. I should also mention here that Wittgenstein’s conception of names could be seen in the right light in the context of his view of propositions.

It might be worthwhile, then, to begin by saying that just as the world is the totality of facts, not of thing or objects, so language is the “totality of propositions [not of names]”⁵⁹ in logical space, and the “totality of true propositions is the whole of natural science”.⁶⁰ Propositions represent all situations— the existence and non-existence of states of affairs or atomic facts.⁶¹ Like facts, propositions are divided into elementary or simple and non-elementary or composite propositions. A composite proposition is the proposition about a composite fact. An elementary or atomic proposition, on the other hand, is a constituent part of the composite proposition. All composite propositions can be analysed into elementary ones. However we might want to know how composite propositions are formed out of elementary propositions.

⁵⁸ T§2.11

⁵⁹ T§ 4.001

⁶⁰ T§4.11

⁶¹ T§4.1

Wittgenstein writes, all “propositions are results of truth-operations on the elementary propositions”.⁶² What is an operation? An operation (double negation, disjunction, and so on) is “the expression of a relation between the structures of its result and of its bases”⁶³— that is, the expression of relation between the structures of the composite propositions (result) and the elementary propositions (bases). We can also put it this way: “The truth-operation is the way in which a truth-function arises from elementary propositions”.⁶⁴ In other words, the truth-operation is the way in which every composite proposition arises—a composite proposition is “a truth-function” of elementary propositions.⁶⁵ So, a proposition is true (‘T’) or false (‘F’) if the proposition agrees or fails to agree with truth-possibilities of elementary propositions—the truth of the proposition is called “possible”.⁶⁶ Every composite proposition, Wittgenstein says, is “an expression of agreement and disagreement with truth-possibilities of elementary propositions”.⁶⁷ Therefore, the truth-possibilities of elementary propositions are the conditions of the truth and falsehood of composite propositions.⁶⁸ They provide “the basis for understanding all other kinds of propositions”.⁶⁹ They themselves, however, can only be understood in their own right— every elementary proposition is a “truth-function “of itself and logically independent of each other⁷⁰—“It is a sign of a proposition’s being elementary that there can be no elementary proposition contradicting it”.⁷¹ It is also

⁶² T§5.3

⁶³ T§5.22

⁶⁴ T§5.3

⁶⁵ T§5

⁶⁶ NB(12.11.14.)p.29

⁶⁷ T§4.4

⁶⁸ T§4.3 & §4.41

⁶⁹ T§4.411

⁷⁰ T. §5 and §5.134

⁷¹ T§4.211(Cf. PR§81)

important to mention that the connection between an elementary proposition and a situation is immediate.

Furthermore, Wittgenstein writes: “An elementary proposition consists of names. It is a nexus, a concatenation, of names...A name cannot be dissected any further by means of a definition: it is a primitive sign”.⁷² Names, in fact, form the substance of language. Hence, they cannot themselves be complex. In other words, an elementary proposition is a configuration of simple or primitive signs. The simple signs used in propositions are called simple *names*— a name is the simple symbol; and a sign is what can be perceived as a symbol.⁷³

The following points are fundamental to bear in mind first: firstly, just as objects are the simplest elements of the world, so names are the simplest elements of propositional language. It follows that a simple name is what is required for a proposition or a picture to be a possibly significant proposition. All possibly significant propositions require simple names. Secondly, the possibility of a proposition rests on the principle that an object has a sign as its proxy or representative.⁷⁴ Thirdly, there can be no significant sign that we can imagine excluded from the possibility of configuring with other signs: “A symbol (word) has meaning only in a proposition”.⁷⁵ Furthermore, the relation of a sign with others is meaningful only in a proposition. Fourthly, tautologies and contradictions, Wittgenstein writes, are the limiting case— although in both tautological and contradictory propositions, signs stand in certain relations to one another, these

⁷² T§4.22 and §3.26

⁷³ T§4.24 and §3.32

⁷⁴ T §4.0312

⁷⁵ Waismann’s *Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle*,p.89

relations have *no* meaning and are not *essential* to the *symbols*.⁷⁶ Finally, propositions *show*, but cannot represent, the fixed, logical form of the world.⁷⁷

The conception of *name* still needs to be clarified further. A name, Wittgenstein writes, *means* an object. For example, the meaning of the object ‘A’ is the same as its representative, the sign ‘A’.⁷⁸ So, a name or a primitive sign, as Malcolm says, “takes the place of”⁷⁹ an object in a proposition. But this does not necessarily mean names are things—“In our language names *are not things*: we don’t know what they are”.⁸⁰ One name, Wittgenstein says, “stands for one thing, another for another thing, and they are combined with one another. In this way the whole group—like a tableau vivant—presents a state of affairs”,⁸¹ or rather—“asserts the existence of a state of affairs...It is a sign of a proposition’s being elementary that there can be no elementary proposition contradicting it”.⁸² So, in it, names stand in a logically determinate relation to one another. That is to say, the relation between these simple names or primitive signs in elementary propositions is internal—internal to the proposition (a different relation constitutes a different proposition expressing a different state of affairs) but external to the object(it is internal to the object that it is *possible* to be part of this fact, not that it *is* part of this fact)—and this is what Wittgenstein also calls the “structures of the propositions”⁸³—the determinate way in which signs are internally related to one another is the structure of the elementary propositions, and *form* is the possibility of structure. And, “[w]hat

⁷⁶ T§4.466 and §4.4661

⁷⁷ T§4.121.

⁷⁸ T§3.202 and §3.203

⁷⁹ Malcolm, *Nothing Is Hidden*, p.3

⁸⁰ “Notes Dictated to Moore” from Rhees’ *Discussions of Wittgenstein*, p.25

⁸¹ T§4.0311

⁸² T §4.21 and §4.211

⁸³ T§5.2

corresponds to a determinate logical combination of signs is a determinate logical combination of their meanings”.⁸⁴ We said, a sign is what can be perceived as a symbol. So, “... a symbol must have the same structure as its meaning. That’s exactly what one can’t say. You cannot prescribe to a symbol what it may be used to express. All that a symbol can express, it may express. This is a short answer but it is true!”⁸⁵

It must be mentioned that when Wittgenstein says ‘one name stands for one thing, another for another thing,’ he is not saying that a name refers to an object apart from its possibility of combination with others. Like an object, a name, though it is an essential feature of a proposition is, by itself, empty, i.e., it has no meaning. Rather, in the nexus of a proposition a name has an object as its referent. The *Tractatus* (T §3.3), as Ishiguro has observed, “denies sense to anything smaller than a proposition”.⁸⁶ To put it in slightly different way, we can say that a sign by itself, to borrow a metaphor from the *Investigations*, seems “dead”.⁸⁷ It is alive only in a proposition. A propositional sign is a nexus of signs in its projective relation to the world.⁸⁸ What gives a sign life or meaning are the rules of logical syntax—a sign cannot be divorced from all its possible combinations with other signs, according to the rules of logical syntax.⁸⁹

Moreover, since a sign takes the place of a fixed object in an elementary proposition, the sign too must be fixed; it must have a fixed form. The fixed form of the sign is determined by the fixed use of the sign. In other words, Wittgenstein’s idea of the

⁸⁴ T§4.466

⁸⁵ NB, appendix III p. 129-130

⁸⁶ Ishiguro, “The So-called Picture Theory”, In *Wittgenstein: A critical Reader*, p.31

⁸⁷ PI §432. In other words, ‘a word or a sign by itself cannot express the *thought*’ (NB5.10.14)p.9

⁸⁸ T§3.14

⁸⁹ Black, *A Companion to Wittgenstein's "Tractatus"*, p.134

fixed object makes it impossible for a symbol—“a sign plus the rules of its use”—⁹⁰ not to have a fixed use— “The way in which language [signs] signifies is mirrored in its use”.⁹¹ Thus, the sense of the sign must be mirrored in its use. In this regard, Hidé Ishiguro is right when she writes, it is “a truism that a word [a sign] or a symbol cannot have the role of referring to a fixed object without having a fixed use”⁹² in a proposition.

Furthermore, a proposition “must be *essentially* connected with the situation. And the connexion is precisely that it is its logical picture”.⁹³ A logical picture, Wittgenstein writes, “can depict any reality whose form it has. A spatial picture can depict anything spatial, a coloured one anything coloured, etc.”⁹⁴ These pictures are neither the Cartesian innate idea nor the Lockean simple idea or the Humean impression nor the Moorean and Russellian sense data. Then, what is a picture? How is it connected with a situation? And, what holds a picture and what the picture depicts (a situation) together if there is anything? The following section will speak to these questions.

2.2.1 The logic of depiction: An Inner-Picture

The first thing we need to be reminded of is this: Space, time, and colour are indispensable elements of a picture and what the picture depicts.

Wittgenstein writes, just as a piece of musical notes is not just a blend of notes, a proposition is not just a blend of words on the printed page. Even though at first sight they do not seem to be pictures, these sign-languages, Wittgenstein says, prove to be

⁹⁰ Waismann’s *Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle*, Appendix-A, p.216

⁹¹ NB, 82.

⁹² Ishiguro, “Use And Reference Of Names” in *Studies in the Philosophy of Wittgenstein*, p.20

⁹³ T§4.03

⁹⁴ T§2.171

pictures.⁹⁵ If a blend of words is a picture, it must be a picture of something other than itself. That something is a reality. A proposition with a sense must be a picture of the reality, not of simple objects⁹⁶—simple objects themselves cannot be pictured. The first question that comes to mind is what a picture consists of.

Although what Wittgenstein says about a picture seems to add nothing substantial to what we have already grasped from his account of proposition, it “gives prominence to certain features of the grammar of the word “proposition””.⁹⁷ As the later Wittgenstein might say, it is worthwhile to approach what has been said thus far about the nature and relation of the proposition with the state of affairs afresh from a different direction and make new sketches.⁹⁸

A picture, or rather—a representational picture consists of primary elements. These elements are representatives of objects—the primary elements of a state of affairs. In it these elements stand to one another in a logically determinate way. This determinate relation is the *structure* of the picture, and the *possibility* of this structure is the picture’s *logical, pictorial form*.⁹⁹ In other words, the possibility of the structure of the picture, as Frank Ramsey has put it, is “the form of representation of the picture... [and] If the form of representation is the logical form, then the picture is called a logical picture”.¹⁰⁰ Again, “[p]ictorial form is the possibility that things are related to one another in the same way as the elements of the picture”.¹⁰¹

⁹⁵ T§3.141 and §4.011

⁹⁶ T§3, §4, and §4.01

⁹⁷ PG§ 113

⁹⁸ PI, p. vii

⁹⁹ T§2.13, §2.131, §2.14, §2.15, and §2.181

¹⁰⁰ Ramsey, “Review of ‘*Tractatus*’” in *Essays on Wittgenstein’s Tractatus*, p.11

¹⁰¹ T§2.151

A picture depicts “the inside of a room”,¹⁰² the inside of a situation, a reality, or a fact. Hence, a proposition is a picture of the inner side of a situation or a reality, i.e., of the internal relation of simple objects with one another in a logical space—(It should be remembered that space, time, and colour are indispensable elements of our picturing of an object as a particular state of affairs). Does that mean a reality has an inner and an outer side? I believe this is, in a way, what the distinction between the internal and external properties and relations (discussed in the earlier sections) suggests, among other things. But, in what sense can a picture be a picture of reality?

A picture, writes Wittgenstein, is “a fact... [; and] if a fact is to be a picture, it must have something in common with what it depicts.”¹⁰³ The picture agrees with fact or reality or fails to agree if and only if it has something in common with reality, and that something is nothing but, as we said, a logical form—i.e., the internal relation between a picture and what it depicts. That is to say, “[t]here must be something identical in a picture and what it depicts, to enable the one to be a picture of the other at all”.¹⁰⁴ What is this supposed to mean? “The logical identity between [picture] and [what it depicts] consists in its not being permissible to recognize more or less in the [picture] than in [what it depicts]”.¹⁰⁵ One may, then, ask: What can a picture tell me?

What the picture tells me is itself.


Its telling me something will consist in my recognizing in it objects in some sort of characteristic arrangement.(If I say: “I see a table in this picture” then what I say characterizes the picture—as I said—in the manner which has nothing to do with

¹⁰² NB(26.11.14.)p.34

¹⁰³ T §2.141 & §2.16

¹⁰⁴ T§2.161

¹⁰⁵ NB(4.9.14.)p. 3-4. In the *Philosophical Remarks*, Wittgenstein says “‘the sense [of a proposition or a picture] consists in the possibility of recognition’, but this is a logical possibility” (PR§82)

existence of a ‘real’ table. “The picture shows me a cube” can e.g. mean: It contains the form )¹⁰⁶

By saying it has nothing to do with “a real table,” Wittgenstein means it has nothing to do with an actual case, an actual table in reality— Recall: “logic deals with every possibility and all possibilities are its facts”.¹⁰⁷ We need not to know anything about an actual *table* in order to sketch a possible picture of it to ourselves.—“A picture contains the form of what it depicts”.¹⁰⁸ That is, the picture itself must already contain everything related to what it depicts without referring to an actual case, to a reality. We do not derive the picture of the object and its property from particular cases that occur to us, but possess them somehow *a priori*. So, what we possess a priori is the form of (the cube) that is contained and shown in the picture.¹⁰⁹ But doesn’t the picture have to agree with what it depicts? Surely there must be an agreement between them. But it is not the agreement between the table in the picture and an actual or real one. It is the agreement between what both hold in common, *a form*, the constituent parts of the table. Giving a little context should make Wittgenstein’s point more clear. Wittgenstein’s main target is Russell’s confusion between possibility and reality and between a description and the syntax of that description.

According to Wittgenstein, Russell could not see, e.g., space and *time* (recall: along with colour, space and time are the forms of objects) as forms of *representations* that are designed to express every possible experience. In fact, Russell tried to connect

¹⁰⁶ PG§115

¹⁰⁷ T§2.0121

¹⁰⁸ T§2.023

¹⁰⁹ NB(19.6.15.)p.65, and Waismann’s *Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle*, Appendix-A, 215. The form, Malcolm also mentions, is “completely a priori” (*Nothing Is Hidden*,p2)

them with the accidental propositions of the world. In other words, he tried to base a form of an object on an actual experience—constructing the points in space from actual events, not from the system of possibilities. But it is a grave mistake to reduce possibility to reality, according to Wittgenstein¹¹⁰—“if we get into a position where we have to look at the world...that shows that we are on a completely wrong track”.¹¹¹ Again, Wittgenstein might say, our task is “directed not towards phenomena, but, towards the possibilities of phenomena”¹¹²

Wittgenstein does not deny that the world must have substance— form and content. At (T§2.0211& §2.0212), he makes it clear that without substance, the world would be unthinkable, i.e., we couldn’t sketch any picture of it to ourselves at all. The substance, the simple objects, or the *form* of the world is what the logic of our language presupposes. Furthermore, this seems to return us to our earlier question (Sec. 2.1.1)—How can we know that there is such a form? I am still not willing to answer this question until we spell out tautologies and contradictions, briefly, in the following section.

2.3. The limits of Propositions: Tautology and Contradiction

As we noted, the truth-possibilities of elementary propositions are the conditions of the truth and falsehood of complex propositions. Later, Wittgenstein excludes two extreme cases, viz., tautologies and contradictions, $(p \vee \neg p)$ and $(p \cdot \neg p)$ from the possible group

¹¹⁰ Waismann’s *Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle*, Appendix A, p214

¹¹¹ T§ 5.551

¹¹² PI §90. Also PI§109 is a very helpful remark, where Wittgenstein seems to be referring to his old way of thinking, the *Tractatus*—“It is true to say that our considerations could not be scientific ones. It was not of any possible interests to us to find out empirically ‘that, contrary to our preconceived ideas, it is possible to think such-and-such’—whatever that may mean...And we may not advance any kind of theory.

of truth-conditions that are obtained from the truth possibilities of a given number of elementary propositions.¹¹³ These two extreme or limiting cases could also be made clear by contrast with genuine, significant propositions. Wittgenstein writes:

...In one of these cases the proposition is true for all the truth-possibilities of the elementary propositions. We say that the truth-conditions are *tautological*.

In the second case the proposition is false for all the truth-possibilities: the truth conditions are *contradictory*.

Propositions show what they say: tautologies and contradictions show that they say nothing.

A tautology has no truth-conditions, since it is unconditionally true; and a contradiction is true on no condition.

Tautology and contradiction lack sense.¹¹⁴

Since “the propositions of logic are tautologies”¹¹⁵ and tautologies lack sense, but are not nonsensical, they must be senseless. They belong to logical symbolism much as zero does to arithmetic.¹¹⁶ Remember, a proposition is a determinate logical combination of meaningful signs or symbols to which a determinate logical combination of their meanings, i.e., simple objects corresponds. Now, although tautological and contradictory propositions are a combination of signs or symbols and, in them, signs stand in certain relations to one another, these relations are meaningless, they are not essential to the symbols. That is why, unlike propositions with sense, they are not pictures or images of reality; they possess no sense to show. However, what they show is nothing, their

There must not be anything hypothetical in our considerations. We must do away with all *explanation*, and description alone must take its place”.

¹¹³ T§4.45 , §4.46

¹¹⁴ T §4.46 & §4.641

¹¹⁵ T §6.1

senselessness. In other words, they are empty, for there are no representatives of the logic of facts; the ‘logical constants’ do not represent anything,¹¹⁷ and that is also because there are no “logical objects”.¹¹⁸

As Michael Hymers has put it, even if “they [propositions of logic] are not representations or models of the world..., they still have truth-values”¹¹⁹ and belong to the essence of logic. That is to say, without tautologies and contradictions, no representation of the world would be possible— “Possible” here means the same as “conceivable”; but “conceivable” may mean “capable of being painted”, “capable of being modeled”, [and /or] “capable of being imagined”.¹²⁰

Tautological propositions are necessarily true, and contradictory propositions are necessarily false, while genuine propositions are possibly true and possibly false. To say a tautology is unconditionally or necessarily true is to say that the tautology’s truth is *certain*, to say a contradiction is unconditionally or necessarily false is to say that the contradiction’s truth is *impossible*. On the other hand, to say a proposition is either true or false is to say that the proposition’s truth is *possible*. The only certainty or necessity that exists, the only impossibility that exists, and the only possibility that exists are *logical*.¹²¹ Wittgenstein also remarks that the logical “certainty, possibility, or impossibility is not expressed by a proposition, but by an expression’s being a tautology, a proposition with sense, or a contradiction”.¹²²

¹¹⁶ T§4.4611

¹¹⁷ T §4.0312

¹¹⁸ T4.441

¹¹⁹ Hymers, *Wittgenstein and the Practice of Philosophy*, p.41

¹²⁰ PG, §82

¹²¹ T §4.464 and § 6.375

¹²² T §5.525

Here is another way to clarify what it means to say that a tautology and a contradiction say nothing or show nothing and a genuine or meaningful proposition shows what it says: Neither tautologies nor contradictions “represent any possible situations; the former admit *all* possible situations and the latter *none*”.¹²³ In other words, a proposition that is true (or false) for every state of affairs is not a combination or meaningful relation of signs with one another; “if they were, only determinate combinations of objects could correspond to them”.¹²⁴ On the other hand, a proposition with sense admits only a certain situation to be true (e.g., if it is raining, the proposition “It is raining” is true)—“If a proposition... is conceived as a picture of a possible state of affairs and is said to shew the possibility of the state of affairs, still the most that the proposition can do is what a painting or relief or film does: and so it can at any rate not set forth what is not the case”.¹²⁵ Wittgenstein also tells us that tautologies vanish inside all propositions, and contradictions outside them.¹²⁶ It could also be said:

In the tautology the elementary proposition does, of course, still portray, but it is so loosely connected with reality that reality has unlimited freedom. Contradiction in its turn imposes such limitations that no reality can exist under them.¹²⁷

Moreover, as we saw earlier, some propositions are, at least when analyzed, more fundamental than others—i.e., the elementary propositions are more essential than the composite ones. The latter are derived propositions. But this is not the case with tautological propositions; all tautological propositions, Wittgenstein remarks, are of equal

¹²³T §4.462

¹²⁴T §4.466

¹²⁵PI §520

¹²⁶T §5.143

¹²⁷NB(12.11.14)p.29

value. Every tautology itself reveals that it is a tautology.¹²⁸ But how are they related to other propositions and eventually to the world?

By analogy, the relations between logical propositions and non-logical propositions are similar to the relations between simple objects and states of affairs. They are independent of non-logical propositions, but this form of independence is also a form of connection with non-logical propositions. So this is the connection of senseless propositions with meaningful propositions. It makes sense to speak of tautologies in their connection to other propositions. Moreover, Wittgenstein writes:

The propositions of logic describe the scaffolding of the world, or rather they represent it. They have no ‘subject-matter’. They presuppose that names have meaning and elementary propositions sense; and that is their connexion with the world...logic is not a field in which we express what we wish with the help of signs, but rather one in which the nature of the absolutely necessary signs speaks for itself.¹²⁹

The meaning of a name is an object, and the sense of an elementary proposition is just what such a configuration expresses— it is worthwhile to remember that names take the place of simple objects in elementary propositions. It follows that the propositions of logic presuppose objects and states of affairs, the way things or objects are internally related to one another. In other words, they presuppose the form of the world— “The fact that propositions of logic are tautologies *shows* the formal— logical — properties of language and the world”.¹³⁰

¹²⁸ T§6.127

¹²⁹ T§6.124

¹³⁰ T§ 6.12. This remark also suggests that by internal properties (also relations) Wittgenstein meant *logical properties*.

At this point, like the later Wittgenstein, we can ask whether an inner picture stands in need of outer criteria—in our case, whether it stands in need of reality. Wittgenstein has already denied (T§5.551), as mentioned earlier, that there is any need to look at reality. But I have formulated the question in this way because, in a way, it is related to our earlier question about the form that was mentioned at the end of (section 2.1.1).¹³¹ The following section will speak to this concern.

2.4 Logic Alone!

The notion of the real *logical form* of the world, as Wittgenstein states, is hidden from us. But, now I turn to the question, “How can we know there is such a form” (NB (3.9.14.)? It is also worthwhile to discuss this question with the question of whether the form is something that is independent of our language or whether it is just a feature of our language. But first it should be noted that Wittgenstein does not try to examine the existence or non-existence of *logical form* (i.e., the question shouldn’t be taken as a skeptical one). At this point what Wittgenstein really tries to examine is whether one needs to go outside of logic in order to know logical form— the possible correlation between language and the world (between a name and a thing or a thought and reality). Another way of putting it is that he is concerned with the ground of our knowing the form and *the ground of our confidence*.¹³²

¹³¹ Although someone like Cora Diamond has already suggested that the *Tractatus* too contains the *private language argument*, this is not my concern. See Diamond’s “Does Bismarck Have a Beetle in his Box? The Private Language Argument in the *Tractatus*” in Crary and Read (ed.) *The New Wittgenstein*

¹³² NB(26.914.) p.6. My Italics

Wittgenstein writes: “Sign and relation determine unambiguously the logical form of the thing signified in a proposition”.¹³³ He also remarks that the “logical form of the proposition must already be given by the forms of its component parts”.¹³⁴ The component parts of the proposition are the primitive signs. But how can we know if there are such the forms? Wittgenstein responses: *From the signs. But how? When those signs are completely analysed.*¹³⁵ That is to say, by means of a logical analysis. This also suggests that signs that are employed in a given proposition can only be explained or analysed in logic, and so in this sense logic itself cannot be explained—it is “transcendental”.¹³⁶ And, as is obvious of the early Wittgenstein, this (i.e., logical analysis) is supposed to be the core task of philosophy (I will turn to this task in the next section).

What has been said seems to suggest that one must be able to know the forms from logic alone—i.e., without referring to reality. The idea that we can know the *form* without referring to reality is to be understood to mean that it can be known *a priori*. As we mentioned earlier, logic deals with the *possibilities* of phenomena and all possibilities are its facts.¹³⁷ These possibilities are objects’ internal or logical properties and are thought to be in them from the beginning. To know an object is to know all its internal

¹³³ NB(25.4.15)p. 43

¹³⁴ NB(1.11.14.)p.23

¹³⁵ NB(3.9.14.)p. 2(my italic) In *PR*, Wittgenstein reminds us that “the symbols do contain the form of colour and of space.” (*PR*, 78)

¹³⁶ T§6.13

¹³⁷ T§2.012. There is another way to makes sense of the above claim. Wittgenstein contrast logical necessity with causal necessity, and he rejects the latter, by saying that there is only logical necessity. He claims that in logic, as opposed to outside logic, nothing is accidental (T§2.012, §6.3). It follows that one should be able to know all the possibilities of an object’s combination with other object a priori. So, it is from logic alone that one can foresee or know a priori all possible forms of an object.

properties (back to §2.01231). That is to say, to know all its possibilities—the set of possibilities is the *form*—“the set of combinatorial possibilities”.¹³⁸

Furthermore, possibility, Wittgenstein tells us, is not “an empirical concept, but a concept of syntax”,¹³⁹ or rather—a concept of logical syntax. So is a *form*. To say the *possibility* and the *form* belong to logical syntax shows that they are features of the logic of our language. Since the possibility is inherent in the presupposed objects themselves and since it belongs to the concept of logical syntax, McGuinness is quite right to say “the presupposed objects, existing eternally and setting limits to what we can say, turn out to be really a feature of our thought and language – but a feature that eludes our powers of expression”.¹⁴⁰ This interpretation obviously stands against the so-called (broadly) realist interpretation. Indeed, ‘realism’ is a vague term and can be interpreted in more than one way. However, the realist interpretation that I have in my mind is the one that has been put forward by Malcolm. According to Malcolm, although the *form* (the presupposed object) of the world is presupposed by language and thinking, it is not a creation of language and thinking.¹⁴¹ It seems to me that (§5.555)—“...is it really possible that in logic I should have to deal with forms that I can invent? What I have to deal with must be that which makes it possible for me to invent them”— suggests the exact opposite of what Malcolm says and stands in favour of McGuinness’ interpretation. I believe, however, that there is further textual evidence in favour of McGuinness’s

¹³⁸ Bradley, *The Nature of All Being*, p.47

¹³⁹ Waismann’s *Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle*, Appendix-A, 214

¹⁴⁰ McGuinness, “Language and reality” In *Approaches to Wittgenstein: collected papers*, pp.95-6

¹⁴¹ Malcolm, *Nothing is Hidden*, pp.2-3, 12. In “Naming, Thinking and Meaning in the *Tractatus*”, Hacker has also defended Malcolm’s realistic interpretation.

position. So, let us take a closer look at the *Tractatus* in support of this interpretation—a non-realist interpretation.

The fundamental principle of logic, for Wittgenstein, is this: “whenever a question can be decided by logic at all it must be possible to decide it without more ado”.¹⁴² Reality, or, as Anthony Kenny says, experience of reality can tell us whether propositions are true, but it is not a matter of experience whether a certain proposition has a sense or a form.¹⁴³ In other words, it cannot be a matter of experience whether a proposition has a *form*. Logic, Wittgenstein writes, is “*prior* to every experience”—¹⁴⁴ “If the individual forms are, so to speak, given me in experience, then I surely can’t make use of them in logic”.¹⁴⁵ Then it follows that logic must make it possible for me to invent what I have to deal with—*forms*.¹⁴⁶ At this point, it is important to recall what we said earlier regarding the table and cube example: we possess their forms *a priori*. Wittgenstein asserts this idea at (T§6.33)—we do have a priori (non-contingent) knowledge of the possibility of a logical form. At (T§5.556.), he also makes it clear that we can foresee or know *a priori* only what we ourselves invent or construct. This construction, as Wittgenstein remarks in the *Philosophical Grammar*, “belongs to the concept of language”.¹⁴⁷

There is a similar passage in the *Notebooks*, where Wittgenstein makes virtually the same point by concerning himself with the general form of proposition — “...it must be possible to erect the general form of a proposition, because the possible forms of

¹⁴² T§5.551

¹⁴³ Kenny, Wittgenstein, p.77

¹⁴⁴ T§5.552

¹⁴⁵ NB(19.6.15.) p.65

¹⁴⁶ T§5.555

¹⁴⁷ PG§71

propositions must be a priori”.¹⁴⁸ Again, what we possess a priori is a feature and creation of our language. And, Wittgenstein tells us, “[we] possess the ability to construct languages capable of expressing every sense, without having any idea how each word has meaning or what its meaning is”.¹⁴⁹ Furthermore, this a priori knowledge cannot be expressed. In other words, as McGuinness writes, “in our ability to apprehend a fact we have a sort of a priori knowledge, which there is no way of expressing. In our awareness of the essence of a proposition we are aware of the essence of a fact and thus of the essence of the world”.¹⁵⁰ But how can such a language be constructed? Wittgenstein answers: “with the help of logical scaffolding, so that one can actually see from the proposition how everything stands logically *if it is true*”.¹⁵¹ So, the proposition points to a situation and says: “*this* is how it is and not: *that*”.¹⁵² But remember that a proposition cannot point to what is simple. So, what is “given us *a priori* is the concept of: *This*.— Identical with the concept of the *object*”.¹⁵³ The concept of ‘this’ points or shows the ways things are if they are true.

I tell someone “The watch is lying on the table” and now he says: “Yes, but if the watch were in such-and-such a position would you still say it was lying on the table” And I should become uncertain...If someone were to drive me into a corner in this way in order to shew that I did not know what I meant, I should say: “I *know* what I mean; I mean just THIS”, pointing to the appropriate complex with my finger. And in this complex I do actually have the two objects in a relation.—But

¹⁴⁸ NB(21.11.16) p, 89. Also see Waismann’s *Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle*, *Appendix-A*, p.217— the *form* is what we know here and everywhere *a priori*.

¹⁴⁹ T§4.002

¹⁵⁰ McGuinness, “Picture and Forms”, In *Approaches to Wittgenstein: collected papers*, p.80

¹⁵¹ T§4.023

¹⁵² NB(6.615)p.65

¹⁵³ NB(16.6.15)p.61

all this really means is: The fact can *somehow* be portrayed by means of this form too.¹⁵⁴

Now I turn to a possible objection against the interpretation that I have favoured.

Since Wittgenstein at (T§2.0211-§2.0212) tells us that if the world had no substance, we could not sketch any picture of it, why shouldn't we call him a realist? Or as McGuinness has put it, "if, after all, objects are required by Wittgenstein's theory of language, then why should we not call him a realist in respect of them?"¹⁵⁵ McGuinness answers, because "Wittgenstein's objects are not concrete objects which may sensibly be said to exist or not".¹⁵⁶ What McGuinness says is right and can be supported by the remark we quoted earlier from the *Investigations* (§46), where Wittgenstein draws an analogy between the *Tractatus*' 'objects' and the *Theaetetus*' 'primary elements'—'neither that it is nor that it is not'(see section 2.1). This shows that, in fact, objects of the *Tractatus* are not concrete at all.

At any rate, the form of the way things are in the world, including the world itself, can be shown, but it cannot be put into words. That is to say, we cannot use language to say, e.g., things have essential or formal and internal properties. But why not? A more precise answer will be given in the next chapter (section 3.2). So, it follows that logic, or, better, the rules of logical syntax set limits to what can be asked and said.

Logic must look after itself.

If a sign is *possible*, then it is also capable of signifying. Whatever is possible in logic is also permitted. (The reason why 'Socrates is identical' means nothing is that there is no property called 'identical'. The proposition is nonsensical because

¹⁵⁴ NB(22.6.15)p.70

¹⁵⁵ McGuinness, "The Supposed Realism of the *Tractatus*", In *Approaches to Wittgenstein: collected papers*,p.93

we have failed to make an arbitrary determination, and not because the symbol, in itself, would be illegitimate.)

In a certain sense, we cannot make mistakes in logic.¹⁵⁷

So, not only does logic exclude contradictory propositions a priori, for they are logically impossible (always false), but it also rules out certain combinations of signs, not because they are false, but because they are nonsensical. In other words, “the rules of language exclude nonsensical combinations of signs”¹⁵⁸ or pseudo-nonsensical propositions that can be found in philosophical works, and Wittgenstein tells us that philosophy is full of them.¹⁵⁹ And this is a result of failing to hold a correct logical point of view: “While thinking philosophically we see problems in places where there are none. It is for philosophy to show that there are no problems”.¹⁶⁰ This is will be the subject of the next chapter alongside Wittgenstein’s attitudes towards ordinary language.

But first, it is worthwhile to remind ourselves of what has been done thus far in this chapter. I have tried to make it clear that what makes the connection of language with the world possible, clear, and meaningful is logic. We mentioned that logic is transcendental and is the condition of the world. We also mentioned that the logic of our language is a mirror-image of the world. This image, Wittgenstein told us, lies beneath language, and he has reminded us that we possess the ability to construct sign-languages capable of revealing what everyday language disguises—logical image or form. In other words, language cannot represent the logical image of the world; it is mirrored in it (i.e.,

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., p.93

¹⁵⁷ T§5.473

¹⁵⁸ PR§54

¹⁵⁹ T§4.003

¹⁶⁰ PG§9

it is mirrored in propositions). The logical form of the world is, as argued, a creation of our language and thinking and can be known a priori, without referring to reality.

CHAPTER 3: PHILOSOPHY AND PHILOSOPHICAL CONFUSIONS

Why does Wittgenstein find making up an artificial sign-language to be necessary if it is true that our everyday language is in perfect logical order? This is the question with which this chapter is concerned. This question can be clarified and answered by looking at the role and practice of philosophy in the *Tractatus*.

Not only is the aim of philosophy in the *Tractatus* to bring to light what is hidden—i.e., the logical form and/or structure of propositions— but it is also to show that there are no philosophical problems. In other words, The *Tractatus* carries with itself two aims: positive or constructive and negative or destructive. By positive, all I mean is that the *Tractatus* tries to bring to light logical form by means of an *analysis*. By negative, I simply mean, a remark from (BB) might be useful here, this: in philosophy, “Whenever we make up ‘Ideal languages’ it is not in order to replace our ordinary language by them; but just to remove some trouble caused in someone’s mind”.¹⁶¹ By an ideal language, Wittgenstein means ‘conceptual notations’—“we shall also try construct new notations”¹⁶²

Now, both Frege and Russell were concerned with ordinary language and attempted to construct a logically perfect languages in order, in some sense, to replace our ordinary language by them. This will be discussed further shortly.

Though I have already discussed the positive or constructive aim of the *Tractatus* in the preceding chapter, I will elaborate on it more in the present section by emphasizing Wittgenstein’s attitude towards ordinary language; in the next section, I will turn to its

¹⁶¹ BB, p. 28

¹⁶² Ibid., p.23

destructive aspect and briefly explain in what sense the propositions of the *Tractatus* should be understood as *important nonsense*.

3.1 Language 'Without Philosophy'

Throwing light upon the nature and logical structure of language itself before philosophy takes any role is essential, not only to understanding why Wittgenstein calls most philosophical questions and propositions nonsensical pseudo-propositions and others patent nonsense, but also to recognizing the difference between them; further, it helps us understand what kind of task Wittgenstein ascribes to philosophy not as a *body of doctrine* but rather as an *activity* (T§4.112 emphasis added). Wittgenstein also remarks that “[w]ithout philosophy thoughts are, as it were, cloudy and indistinct: its task is to make them clear and to give them sharp boundaries”.¹⁶³ This task essentially consists of a logical clarification of indistinct thoughts.

Both Frege and Russell considered most of the traditional philosophical problems as pseudo-problems and illusions arising from our failure to realize that our ordinary language is in *imperfect* logical order. So, everyday language, on their accounts, is thought to be deficient and unreliable; hence, they called for a logically perfect language, an ideal sign-language, in order to protect thoughts from any illusion, error, or confusion.¹⁶⁴ Frege, e.g., compared everyday language to “the hand”, which, he thought, in spite of its adaptability to the most diverse tasks is still inaccurate. What we need, he thought, is “artificial hands”, (i.e., a logical sign-language) that work with more accuracy

¹⁶³ T§4.112

¹⁶⁴ Frege, *Conceptual Notation and Related Articles*, p.84

than natural “hands” can provide.¹⁶⁵ Russell, too, wrote, “common language is not sufficiently logical... We must first construct an artificial logical language before we can properly investigate our problem”.¹⁶⁶ Although Wittgenstein appears to hold a similar attitude towards ordinary language, his attitudes remain entirely different from those of Frege and Russell. Let us start first with the following remarks from the *Tractatus* and the *Notebooks*:

Everyday language is a part of the human organism and is no less complicated than it.

It is not humanly possible to gather immediately from it what the logic of language is.

Language disguises thought [logical structure and/or form]. So much so, that from the outward form of the clothing it is impossible to infer the form of the thought beneath it, because the outward form of the clothing is not designed to reveal the form of the body, but for entirely different purpose.¹⁶⁷

Also

All philosophy is a ‘critique of language’... It was Russell who performed the service of showing that the apparent logical form of a proposition needs not to be its real one.¹⁶⁸

And

Behind our thoughts, true and false, there is always to be found a dark background, which we are only later able to bring into the light and express as a thought.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., p.86

¹⁶⁶ Russell, *Inquiry into meaning and truth by Russell*, p. 330

¹⁶⁷ T§4.002

¹⁶⁸ T§4.0031

¹⁶⁹ NB(8.12.14.)p.37. This remark from PI§102, although Wittgenstein here seems to criticize his early thought, can help us what this metaphor “dark background” means. “the logical structure of propositions appear to us as something in the background—hidden in the medium of the understanding.”

In some sense, the above remarks seem to stand in support of Russell's interpretation of the *Tractatus*. Russell wrote: "In the part of his theory which deals with symbolism [Wittgenstein] is concerned with the conditions which would have to be fulfilled by a logically perfect language".¹⁷⁰

It is widely accepted that Russell wrongly took Wittgenstein to be concerned with a logically perfect language. As Ramsey has pointed out Russell makes a "very doubtful generalization".¹⁷¹ Max Black has also pointed out that "the main trend of the book is against [Russell's interpretation]".¹⁷² Black refers to T§5.5563, where Wittgenstein states that "all the propositions of everyday language, just as they stand, are in perfect logical order". But someone may still say: the idea that we need a sign-language or new suitable notations and analysis shows that this perfect logical order need not be clear in ordinary language. Thus, in some sense, Russell seems to be right. Here is a passage in which Wittgenstein appears to be speaking more explicitly in favour of Russell's interpretation and contradicting the passage quoted earlier from (BB): whenever we make up ideal languages (or new notations) it is not in order to replace our ordinary language by them. Wittgenstein writes:

The idea is to express in an appropriate symbolism what in ordinary language leads to endless misunderstandings. That is to say, where ordinary language disguises logical structure, where it allows the formation of pseudopropositions, where it uses one term in an infinitely of different meanings, we must replace it by a symbolism

¹⁷⁰ Russell, T. *Introduction*, p. ix-x. Russell was, indeed, not alone in holding such a view. Irvin M. Copi also wrote "The tendency to reject ordinary language seems to me to be predominate"; see Copi's "Objects, Properties, and Relations in the '*Tractatus*'" in *Essays on Wittgenstein's Tractatus*, p. 168

¹⁷¹ Ramsey, "Review of '*Tractatus*'" in *Essays on Wittgenstein's Tractatus*, p. 9-10

¹⁷² Black, "Some Problems Connected with Language" in *Essays on Wittgenstein's Tractatus*, p.97

which gives a clear picture of the logical structure, excludes pseudo-propositions, and uses its terms unambiguously[Cf T§3.323 and T§4.002].¹⁷³

Although Wittgenstein does not seem to maintain a clear attitude towards ordinary language in the *Tractatus*, it seems to be clear enough that he was not concerned with a logically perfect language. And all that Wittgenstein means when he says that ‘we must replace ordinary language by a symbolism’ is this: we must employ a symbolism which gives a clear picture of the logical structure, excludes pseudo-propositions, and uses its terms clearly. So, the Tractarian symbolism language might be better understood as an ideally perspicuous notation that would try to reveal the essence (i.e., the logic) of language and present “the a priori order of the world: that is, the order of *possibilities*, which must be common to both world and thought”.¹⁷⁴

That is, the real form of a given proposition or a clear picture of a thought, which lies behind thought itself and is disguised by everyday language and which cannot be grasped *immediately*, is what philosophy, by means of ideally perspicuous notations and analysis, must bring to light. In other words, T§4.002 suggests that the logical form is disguised in our language, i.e., it is ‘cloudy and indistinct’ (T§4.112) or ‘dark’ (NB, p.37) and needs philosophy (and ideally perspicuous notations) to have ‘light’ coast on it—to be revealed.

Furthermore, at (T§4.002), Wittgenstein makes it clear that we need a “suitable notation”¹⁷⁵ because it is impossible to gather immediately from ordinary language itself

¹⁷³ RLF, in PO, p. 29-30

¹⁷⁴ PI§97. Although here Wittgenstein criticizes his own early thought and acknowledges that the attempt to grasp the essence of language was an illusion, it helps us to understand the main purpose of the *Tractatus*.

¹⁷⁵ T§6.122

what the logic of language is. That is to say, an ideally perspicuous notation can be considered as an indirect way of getting “round and approach from behind in thought, and so snatch a glimpse of what it is impossible to see from the front”.¹⁷⁶

Moreover, ordinary language itself is designed for entirely different purposes. Nowhere in the *Tractatus*, has Wittgenstein mentioned what those purposes might be. However, there is a remark in the *Investigations* (§25) that might be of some help here. As part of its most primitive form, ordinary language is designed for “[c]ommanding, questioning’, recounting, chatting [and so on]”.

Furthermore, the idea of the apparent/real form dichotomy (T§4.003) also seems to me to suggest (loosely) a metaphysical, linguistic, dualistic view: what appears in and to everyday language is just the apparent form. That is to say, the real logical form of the world can appear in and to everyday language only as the apparent form; the real logical form seems to be always hidden. It can never be shown to an ordinary naked eye, but it can only be brought to light by an analysis (remember that an ‘apparent proposition’ is just another name for a ‘pseudo-proposition. This will be clearer in the next section, 3.2).

However, this is how the condition of language in the *Tractatus* is pictured to be: cloudy and indistinct, and this, as Cora Diamond writes, opens up certain possibilities of philosophical confusion.¹⁷⁷ Here, it is reasonable to say that the source of all possible confusion is “the power language has to make everything [in the foreground or front] look the same”.¹⁷⁸ That is, Wittgenstein writes:

¹⁷⁶ Z §262

¹⁷⁷ Diamond, “Logical Syntax in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*” *The Philosophical Quarterly*, v55 n 218, 2005, p.80

¹⁷⁸ CV, p.22

In everyday language it very frequently happens that the same word has different modes of signification—and so belongs to different symbols—or that two words that have different modes of signification are employed in propositions in what is superficially the same way.

Thus the word ‘is’ figures’ as the copula, as a sign for identity, and as an expression for existence; ‘exist’ figures as an intransitive verb like ‘go’, and ‘identical’ as an adjective; we speak of something, but also of something’s happening.

(In the proposition, ‘Green is green’—where the first word is the proper name of a person and the last an adjective—these words do not merely have different meanings: they are different symbols).¹⁷⁹

Then, Wittgenstein mentions that “[i]n this way [the way signs are frequently used] the most fundamental confusions are easily produced (the whole of philosophy is full of them)”.¹⁸⁰ That is to say (back to the *Preface*), the reason these confusions arise is that the logic of our language is misunderstood. So, it should be clear that Wittgenstein is not saying everyday language gives rise to these confusions; remember he warned us that everyday language is designed for entirely different purposes.

But then, why does Wittgenstein mention everyday language? Well, to show us the source of philosophical confusions and errors. In other words, we can easily get confused by “the union under one head”¹⁸¹— i.e., by the “uniform appearance of words”.¹⁸² For example, think about the sign ‘green’ in the above example. The same sign is used as the proper name ‘Mr. Green’ and as an adjective ‘green’, and the sign ‘is’ is used as the ‘copula’, as a sign for ‘identity’ and as an ‘expression for existence’.

¹⁷⁹ T§3.323

¹⁸⁰ T § 3.324

¹⁸¹ PI §561

Additionally, some kinds of confusions may arise when one says: ‘green is green’: one could mean: ‘(a) Mr. Green is green’; or ‘(b) Mr. Green is Mr. Green’, but no one denies the meaning of (a) is different from that of (b). Whether one uses the sign ‘green’ as the proper name or as an adjective changes the meaning of the sign ‘is’ as well. In (a), James Conant notes, the sign ‘is’ symbolizes the ‘copula’, while in (b) it is used as the sign of identity.¹⁸³ According to the ordinary language version of (a), Conant says, “‘green’ can be seen to be not merely ambiguous with respect to its meaning..., but ambiguous with respect to its logical type... The point of the example is to show us that we cannot gather from the notation of ordinary language how a given sign (e.g. ‘green’, or ‘is’) symbolizes in a given sentence”.¹⁸⁴ And a further point is to show that “[o]ur use of the same sign to signify two different objects can never indicate a common characteristic of the two, if we use it with two different modes of signification”.¹⁸⁵

However, regardless of all ambiguities surrounding the meaning of a word or a sign used in propositions of everyday language, the meaning of the word or the sign plays an essential role in it. We need, Wittgenstein argues, a language in which “the meaning of a sign should never play a role”.¹⁸⁶ But this is not in order to “reform language”,¹⁸⁷ but to eliminate a particular misunderstanding and eventually to bring to light what lies beneath language.

¹⁸² PI §11

¹⁸³ Conant, "Two Conceptions of Die Überwindung der Metaphysik" p. 27

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 28

¹⁸⁵ T §3.322

¹⁸⁶ T§3.33

¹⁸⁷ PI§132

3.2 'Seeing Problems in Places Where There Are None'

What seems to be clear is that Wittgenstein finds neither Frege's nor Russell's artificial language to be capable of avoiding possible confusions suggested in '§3.323'. That is to say, Frege's and Russell's sign-languages, as Diamond has put it, "open up" rather than "close off such possibilities"—¹⁸⁸ the possibilities of misunderstanding. So, neither the conceptual notation of Frege nor that of Russell can be considered as a strong and firm 'ladder' to climb (to use Wittgenstein's metaphor at 6.54) in order to be able to emerge into the light from all confusions, where one can now 'see the world aright', i.e., see the real logical form of things, not the shadows or the apparent logical form ; and the weakness of their 'ladder' would , according to Wittgenstein, be due to their failure to hold a "correct logical point of view".¹⁸⁹ But to be able to see the world aright means one finally realizes one's own limits. In other words, the *Tractatus* seems to be suggesting that when all possibilities of misunderstanding are removed and when what is hidden (i.e., the real logical form) is brought to light, then one will realize *the limits of the logical world by realizing the limits of her language and world.*¹⁹⁰ I will return to this issue in the final chapter.

However, now you may wonder what the correct logical point of view would be. Here is what Wittgenstein says (T§ 3.325):

In order to avoid such errors [recall T§3.323]we must make use of a sign-language that excludes them by not using the same sign for different symbols and by not using in a superficially similar way signs that have different modes of

¹⁸⁸ Diamond, "Logical Syntax in Wittgenstein's Tractatus" p.80

¹⁸⁹ T §4.1213

¹⁹⁰ T§5.6 and §5.61

significations: that is to say, a sign-language that is governed by *logical* grammar—by logical syntax.

(The conceptual notation of Frege and Russell is such a language...fails to exclude all mistakes).

But Wittgenstein also reminds us that “[a]ny correct sign-language must be translatable into any other in accordance with such rules [definition]: it is *this* that they all have in common”—¹⁹¹ “Only what they have in common mirrors anything”.¹⁹²

Then at (T§6.126), he writes: “...without bothering about sense or meaning, we construct the logical propositions out of others using only *rules that deal with signs*”.

In a conversation with Wittgenstein, Schlick asks him:

Schlick: But how do I know that precisely these rules are valid and no others? Can I now be wrong?

Wittgenstein: ...In grammar you cannot discover anything. There are no surprises. When formulating a rule we always have the feeling: That is something you have known all along. We can do only one thing—clearly articulate the rule we have been applying unawares. If, then, I understand what the specification of a length means, I also know that, if a man is 1.6m, he is not 2m tall...It is impossible to understand the sense of such a statement without knowing the rule.

If I understand the sense of a statement about colours, I also know that two colours cannot be at the same place [contradiction], and so forth.¹⁹³

Now I return to the remarks (T§3. 323 and §3. 325) — In order to avoid certain errors, we must make use of a sign-language that is governed by logical syntax. By syntax, Wittgenstein means “the rules which tell us in which connections only a word gives

¹⁹¹ T§3.343

¹⁹² Waismann’s *Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle*, p.49

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, pp.77-8

sense, thus excluding nonsensical structure”.¹⁹⁴ This is what, according to Wittgenstein, the conceptual notation of Frege and Russell fails to achieve. Let us clearly this further.

Not only have Frege and Russell failed to establish a sign-language that is capable of excluding possibilities of philosophical misunderstandings and confusion, but they have also failed to see that ordinary language is designed for entirely different purposes. Again one of the main points of (T §3.323) is to show the problem with Frege’s and Russell’s sign-languages. In a way, the problems that Wittgenstein finds in Frege’s and Russell’s sign-languages are analogous to those that can be found in ordinary language. That is, they have used the same sign for different symbols and used signs that have different modes of significations in a superficially similar way. This is just another way to say that Frege’s and Russell’s notations fail to make thoughts that are cloudy and indistinct clear and give them sharp boundaries.

Again, our concern, as Wittgenstein said, is *what we can speak about no matter what may be the case*. This is, as he once described to Russell, the *cardinal* problem of philosophy: What can be expressed by language (i.e., what can be thought) and what cannot be expressed by it, but only shown.¹⁹⁵ In other words, philosophy consists in the clarifications of propositions, or rather—“the clarification of the syntax of language...Syntax is the totality of rules that specify in what combinations a sign has meaning. It describes nothing, it sets limits to what can be describable”¹⁹⁶ by showing what is indescribable. Wittgenstein continues by saying: Whatever can be thought or said

¹⁹⁴ RLF, in *PO*, p. 29

¹⁹⁵ Letter to Russell, Quoted from Hacker’s article “When The Whistling Had to Stop” in *Wittgenstein: Connections and Controversies*, p. 141

¹⁹⁶ Waismann’s *Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle*, Appendix-A, p.220

must be possible to be expressed clearly by means of language or a proposition. But the proposition cannot say what is so important; it cannot say what it has in common with reality—logical form. The logical form is shown in it, and it belongs to *what can be shown, cannot be said*.¹⁹⁷ To say it is shown is to say it is given by the constituent parts of the proposition (i.e., by its primitive names or signs). So, “nothing that is necessary for the understanding of all propositions can be said”.¹⁹⁸ In order to illustrate Wittgenstein’s points about some philosophical confusions or errors, we might need to look at two cases: logical identity and formal concepts. Without spelling out Frege’s and Russell’s view (by itself a large undertaking), I will briefly mention some points that Wittgenstein found to be problematic in Frege’s and Russell’s notations.

Wittgenstein remarks that it must be obvious that “identity is not a relation between objects”.¹⁹⁹ He mentions that if two objects are different, then it makes no sense to say they are identical. And to say an object is identical with itself is to say nothing (tautology).²⁰⁰ This must show that “[t]he identity sign, therefore, is not an essential constituent of conceptual notation”.²⁰¹ However, one way to avoid the possibility of the ‘identity error’, he argues, is to construct a sign-language of which the identity sign ‘=’ is

¹⁹⁷ T §4.114, §4.116, §4.12, §4.121, and §4.1212(my emphasis).

¹⁹⁸ NB(3.11.14),p.25

¹⁹⁹ T§5.5301. Frege, in “On Sense and Reference”, asks whether identity is a relation, a relation between objects, or between names (or signs) of objects (p. 45). He writes that in his previous work ‘Begriffsschrift’, he assumed to be a relation between the later (i.e., signs). So, in the he deals with the same question, but here, he thinks it is a relation between objects—the morning star and the evening star is the same. They have the same reference though these two sentences have different meaning.

²⁰⁰ T§5.5303

²⁰¹ T §5.533. The identity sign is an essential constituent of the conceptual notation of Frege and Russell.

not an essential part—identity of object can be expressed “by identity of sign, and not by using a sign for identity”.²⁰²

Wittgenstein also speaks of another source of confusion and nonsensical pseudo-propositions, in the following way:

Wherever the word ‘object’ (‘thing’, etc.) is correctly used, it is expressed in a conceptual notation by a variable name.

For example, in the proposition, ‘There are 2 objects which...’, it is expressed by ‘ $(\exists x, y) \dots$ ’.

Whenever it is used in a different way, that is as a proper concept-word, nonsensical pseudo-propositions are the result.²⁰³

What Wittgenstein tries to do is to replace (or reform) the conceptual notation of Frege and Russell with a more accurate one. He argues that we must not mention the meaning of signs when we establish the rules for them.²⁰⁴ This suggests that the rules of logical syntax must determine how a symbol is used with a sense. So, without its logico-syntactical employment, we would not be able to use a sign, correctly, which can have meaning only in a proposition. Two questions arise here: (i) Can there be confusion between a sign and its logico-syntactical employment? And (ii) why must we not mention the meaning of signs employed in propositions?

In regard to the first question, we need to recall that, in T§5.557, Wittgenstein reminds us that logic must not clash with its application, and this suggests that no sign

²⁰² T§5.53. This, in a certain way is supposed to be a solution to some of Russell’s problems, definition of identity ‘=’ (T§5.5302) and ‘axiom of infinity’ (T§5.535) bring with them. Certainly Frege was also puzzled by using a sign for identity (See “On Sense and Reference”) and certainly others.

²⁰³ T §4.1271

²⁰⁴This is what the proposition (T§3.331) seems to imply.

should clash with its logico-syntactical employment. For example, using the same sign for different symbols will more likely lead to a collision.

In response to the second question, Wittgenstein would say, if we have to mention the meaning of a sign, then we have to look at the world for an answer. What Wittgenstein means is this: “It is the peculiar mark of logical propositions that one can recognize that they are true from the symbol alone”.²⁰⁵

So, the sign-language which Wittgenstein calls for is a sign-language that is governed by ‘logical syntax’, in which “[n]o sign leads us beyond itself”,²⁰⁶ and “everything is all right”.²⁰⁷ It permits only what is “possible” and nothing “illogical”.²⁰⁸ That is to say, what logic permits is that it must be clear that every sign must have only one mode of signification. It is the language within which no misleading sense can be given;²⁰⁹ it is the language that also makes it clear that it is “impossible for a judgment to be a piece of nonsense”.²¹⁰ It is the language of imagining, for only what can be imagined can be thought—i.e., “the language of imagining does not allow us to imagine anything [nonsensical]”.²¹¹ In short, it is a sign-language by which most nonsensical pseudo-propositions can be avoided and which will eventually show that there are no philosophical problems.

Regarding the second case, Wittgenstein also remarks that the only correct way to use formal concept-words like ‘object’, ‘fact’, ‘complex’, ‘number’, and so on is to express them by their expressions or representational signs— that is, “by variables[a

²⁰⁵ T§6.113

²⁰⁶ P G, # 71

²⁰⁷ T§4.1213

²⁰⁸ T§5.473 & § 5.4731

²⁰⁹ T §5.4732

²¹⁰ T§ 5.5422

propositional variable], not by functions or classes (as Frege and Russell believed)".²¹² Here are some examples, as provided by Wittgenstein, of using the word 'object' or 'thing', as 'a proper concept-word': "There are objects", "1 is a number", or "There is only one zero". These are all examples of nonsensical pseudo-propositions or apparent propositions. They are nonsensical propositions, for they try to say what can only be shown—

Just think that, what you want to *say* by the apparent proposition "There are 2 things" is *shown* by there being two names which have different meanings (or by there being one name which may have two meanings). A proposition e.g. $\phi(a, b)$ or $(\exists \phi, x, y).\phi(x, y)$ doesn't say that there are two things, it says something quite different; *but whether it's true or false, it shows* you what you want to *express* by saying: "there are two things."²¹³

In brief, to say formal concepts have a correct use is to say "[w]hen something falls under a formal concept as one of its objects, this cannot be expressed by means of a proposition. Instead it is shown in the very sign for this object".²¹⁴ In other words, one cannot express what falls under a formal concept by means of words that are designed for entirely different purposes, at least not without danger of being misleading— "The form of a proposition ["There are 2 things"] is obtained by turning its words into variables while leaving their meaning out of considerations".²¹⁵

Furthermore, Frege thought, because the proposition 'Socrates is identical' or 'the good is more or less identical than the beautiful' is legitimately constructed, it must have

²¹¹ PI §512

²¹² T §4.1271

²¹³ NB, Appendix III p. 130

²¹⁴ T §4.126

²¹⁵ Waismann's *Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle*, Appendix-A, p.220.

a sense. In response, Wittgenstein says: although the proposition ‘Socrates is identical’ is legitimately constructed, it has no sense. And that is because the person who utters it has “failed to give a *meaning* to some of its constituents”.²¹⁶ That is, the person has not “given any adjectival meaning to the word ‘identical’”.²¹⁷ At T§6.53, Wittgenstein tells us that to fail to give a meaning to certain signs in a given proposition is to say something metaphysical. It seems to follow that to say ‘Socrates is identical’ is to say something metaphysical. In other words, to speak nonsense means to try to speak metaphysically. Hacker thinks that such a nonsensical or metaphysical proposition falls into the class of “overt nonsense” or immediate nonsense, as opposed to “covert nonsense”.²¹⁸

But isn’t the *Tractatus* itself, in some ways, metaphysical, at least, in that it contains some metaphysical statements?²¹⁹ No doubt. The most obvious metaphysical feature of the *Tractatus* is the concept of ‘simple objects’ and the idea of ‘the prior order of the world—the order of *possibilities*. But just as sometimes we have to make an ideal language (i.e., constructing new notations) for particular purposes—to remove possibilities of misunderstanding, so too sometimes we have to speak metaphysically in order to get rid of metaphysics, as McGuinness rightly points out— “Wittgenstein’s method has its own temptations – not only in that it allows itself to use or feign to use a

²¹⁶ T§5.4733

²¹⁷ T§5.4733

²¹⁸ Hacker, *Insight and Illusion*, p.18. Hacker distinguishes ‘overt nonsense’ from ‘covert nonsense’. Unlike those fall under the overt nonsense, those that fall under the covert nonsense are nonsense because they violate, Hacker says, ‘the bounds of sense’. To violate the bound of sense means to say what cannot be said (what is shown).

²¹⁹ In PI 116, Wittgenstein seems to be making it clear that in the *Tractatus*, he had used words like: ‘knowledge’, ‘object’, ‘proposition’, ‘I’, and so on, in the metaphysical sense. But whether he was aware of this at the time when he was writing the *Tractatus* seems to be a different matter.

whole metaphysics in the task of getting rid of metaphysics”.²²⁰ In effect, this also explain the nonsensical propositions of the *Tractatus* themselves (T§6.54)—

My propositions serve as elucidations in the following way: anyone who understands them will eventually recognize them as nonsensical, when he has used them—as steps—to climb beyond them. (He must, so to speak, throw away the ladder after he has climbed upon it.)

He must transcend these propositions, and then he will see the world aright.

In what sense do the nonsensical propositions of the *Tractatus* can serve as elucidatory propositions?

As Hacker has observed, the propositions of the *Tractatus* need to be taken as “illuminating nonsense”²²¹ or “helpful nonsense”²²² as opposed to “real nonsense, plain nonsense”.²²³ They are illuminating in the sense that they can help us to see the real structure and/or form of our thought (i.e., a logical form) that cannot be gathered immediately from propositions of our ordinary language themselves. You may still ask: What is that something that needs to be illuminated in order to let us to see the world

²²⁰McGuinness, p. 102. In a way, it is not hard to imagine an irony in Wittgenstein’s position; it is an irony to try to get rid of metaphysics and nonsense by using a whole metaphysics and nonsense (e.g., objects are colourless). This ironic position is not a unique position to be held. I can point to a few examples here: Karl Marx tried to interpret the world in order to get rid of all philosophical interpretations of the world and change it —‘the philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways. The point, however, is to change it’. Or, as once Neil Postman, in his book, *Amusing Ourselves To Death*, one said: “It is an irony that I have confronted many times in being told that I must appear on television to promote a book that warns people against television” p.159.

²²¹ Hacker, *Insight and Illusion*, p.26.

²²² Anscombe, G. E. M. *An Introduction to Wittgenstein's "Tractatus"*, p. 162.

²²³ Diamond, “Throwing Away the Ladder” in *The Realistic Spirit*, p.18. Diamond, also others, has argued that the *Tractatus* does not recognize any categories of nonsense, good and bad or illuminating and dark nonsense. Also see, (“Ethics , Imagination and the *Tractatus*” in *The New Wittgenstein* ,pp149-73., especially p. 160. I wonder what Diamond might say about what her own interpretation of the *Tractatus*! Does she also recognize it as *plain* or *illuminating* nonsense?

aright? Well, as we quoted earlier from the *Notebooks* (See Sec.3.1), it is the *dark background* lying behind our thought that needs to be illuminated—the inexpressible. In a sense, it seems to be reasonable to say that ‘showing’, since ‘what can be shown’ is what is inexpressible, is the background against which whatever proposition one expresses has meaning—language contains what can only be shown (i.e., logical image or form), but it cannot express it. In order to be able to express what can only be shown, language should have to be able to station itself outside logic. In other words, you need a language, which hasn’t got logical forms in question, and “it is impossible that this should be a *proper* language”.²²⁴

The familiar objection to the *Tractatus* is that it ends to be paradoxical or self-defeating. But, as Allan Janik and Stephen Toulmin have pointed out, it is certainly “difficult for academic philosophers to arrive at any other conclusion...Wittgenstein’s propositions are neither statements of a scientific nature, nor are they metalinguistic. Rather, they are *aphorisms* which, by giving a generalized critique, at the same time convey a world-view”.²²⁵

To sum up this section, the idea of constructing a logical sign-language, as mentioned, is twofold: to bring into light what is hidden and to rule out nonsensical combinations of signs—nonsensical pseudo-propositions.

As it has been clarified earlier, objects can be named but not described (T§3.221); they make themselves manifest in the propositions that represent the relevant facts. Once they are put into words or expressed by means of propositions nonsensical pseudo-propositions would be the result. The same point has been articulated by drawing

²²⁴ NB (Appendix-II) p.107

²²⁵ Janik and Stephen Toulmin, *Wittgenstein’s Vienna*, 199-200.

the distinction between internal or formal and external properties and relations and formal concepts and concepts proper. Recall T§4.124 & §4.125: the existence of an internal or a formal property of a possible situation and the existence of an internal relation between possible situations cannot be expressed by means of propositions. Rather, they make themselves manifest in the propositions that represent the relevant situations and are concerned with the relevant objects. And at (T§4.126), Wittgenstein remarked that a thing that falls under a formal concept as one of its objects cannot be expressed by means of a proposition. Rather, it makes itself manifest in the proposition. Wittgenstein tells us, the general propositional form— this is how things stand— is the essence of language, and thus the essence of the world.²²⁶ In a word, language cannot express what belongs to its essence, and thus what belongs to the essence of the world; rather this shows itself in language. In this way, as we saw earlier, the conceptual notation of Wittgenstein is such a language that is supposed to exclude all nonsensical pseudo-propositions by prohibiting someone from putting into words what can only be shown.

The idea of *logical form* is not the only inexpressible idea that gives the impressions that there is another side to the limits of logic. There is, indeed, much more that is also inexpressible, such as the entire realm of the ethical, aesthetical, and mystical. The former (the logical form) lies deep underneath our language and could be brought to light with the help of logical scaffolding (i.e., by means of a proper sign-language or an appropriate symbolism). By giving us proper notations, a proper language, logic alone, in some sense, should be able to stop us from exceeding the limits of language and speaking nonsense.

²²⁶ T§5.471, §4.5, and §5.4711

As we mentioned in the introduction, one of the essential objectives of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* is to bring out the connection between ethics and the world. This will be the main concern of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4: THE ETHICAL

“Man has to awaken to wonder—and so perhaps do peoples. Science is a way of sending him to sleep again.” [CV, p.5; my italics]

In chapter two, I have tried to make the connection between logic and the world clear. I have attempted to defend a “non-realist” interpretation of *logical form*; logic alone tells us there must be something identical in language (i.e., any language) and what language pictures— changeless logical form. We construct logical form with the help of logical scaffolding. That is to say, we have the ability to construct a world with the help of logical scaffolding by constructing a proposition, so that one can see from the proposition alone the picture of the world’ logical form: how everything stands logically if it is true. Further, I have argued that this logical form is a production of our thought and can be known a priori. In other words, what can be known a priori is only what we ourselves construct (T§4.002, §4.023, §5.555, and §5.556). I have also tried to show that Wittgenstein’s the so-called picture theory of meaning suggests that we can never get outside language. In this chapter, I will attempt to clarify the connection between ethics and the world by articulating a mystically motivated apophatic subjectivity that emerges from Wittgenstein’s ethical view in his *Lecture on Ethics*. One of the substantial points of this chapter is to call attention to an inescapable tension between logic and ethics. While logic imposes sharp limits on language—i.e., logic makes it impossible for us to get outside language— ethics constantly tries to run up against the compulsory limits of language; ethics by means of similes tries to get us outside language. Another aim is to speculate that Wittgenstein’s account of ethical expressions by means of a simile tells us something about the propositions of the *Tractatus* itself (T§ 6.54) — in some sense,

anyone who understands the author of the *Tractatus* eventually recognizes that his propositions are important *nonsense*. That is to say, one can understand the ethical point of the book—why what ethics is concerned with cannot be expressed but shown.

In the *Lecture*, Wittgenstein seems to define ethics as the mystical impulse attempting to reach out to ‘the sense of the world’ (T§6.41), ‘the meaning of life’, ‘the absolute good’, and/or ‘the absolute valuable [sic]’ by means of a simile (LE, p. 44). The question, then, is whether we can reach out to the sense of the world which lies outside the world by means of a simile. I will examine this question in the final section by clarifying Wittgenstein’s examination of the nature of the ethical expressions. The tension between logic and ethics becomes noticeable, once we examine this nature. But first, I will try to clarify the inexpressibility of ethics.

4.1 The Inexpressibility of Ethics

In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein says ethics (and aesthetics) is “transcendental”.²²⁷ Ethics, Wittgenstein implicitly says, is concerned with what is higher— what lies outside the world— ‘the sense and value of the world’. He writes (T§6.41):

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.

²²⁷ T§6.421

Here Wittgenstein makes the connection between the sense of the world and ethics clear. The sense of the world lies outside the whole sphere of the facts of the world. But, “the facts of the world are not the end of the matter”.²²⁸ There are, indeed, Wittgenstein says, other things that propositions cannot express; they show themselves. They are what is mystical.²²⁹ Propositional language can only express what is within the world (i.e., facts). Since, as he claims, no proposition can describe or express what is higher, it follows that there can be no propositions of ethics, and, therefore, what ethics is concerned with cannot be articulated.²³⁰ He places ethics, as Bertrand Russell has observed, “in the mystical, inexpressible region”.²³¹ In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein does not seem to be saying more about ethics.

However, nearly a decade later, Wittgenstein comes back, gives a lecture on Ethics (1929), and clarifies his Tractarian view by a close examination of the nature of ethical and religious expressions.

In the *Lecture*, Wittgenstein gives us a rough idea as to what ethics is concerned with by saying that ethics is the enquiry into ‘what is good’, ‘what is valuable’, ‘what is really important’, ‘the meaning of life’, ‘what makes life worth living’, or ‘the right way of living’. Each of these expressions, Wittgenstein says, is used in two different ways: ‘the trivial or the relative sense’ and the ‘ethical or absolute sense’.²³² In ethics, these seem to be used as *similes*. This, then, sounds as if Wittgenstein would say we must be able to describe and express what is higher by means of a simile. In fact, Wittgenstein would confirm the exact opposite and consider all expressions that fall into the entire

²²⁸ NB (1914-16), p. 74

²²⁹ T§S6.522

²³⁰ T§6.42

²³¹ Russell, T. *Introduction*, xxiii-xxiv

realms of the ethical and the mystical as nonsense. Yet, they are important nonsense, for they try somehow to express a deeply important human impulse. I will clarify what has been said thus further, but for now I should mention that the nonsensical ethical expressions must be kept apart from those we discussed in the preceding chapter. Unlike the nonsensical pseudo-propositions, the ethical ones are unavoidable. That is to say, unlike the other kind, they cannot be expressed by means of, for example, propositional variables. It is also important to keep apart what can be shown by means of analysis (as we discussed in the preceding two chapters) and what makes itself manifest—the ethical/mystical.

In his *Lecture on Ethics*, Wittgenstein tells us that *ethics* springs from “the desire to say something about the ultimate meaning of life, the absolute good, the absolute valuable [*sic*]”.²³³ So, it is an attempt to express the *absolute* or what seems to be a *paradox*, as he calls it later in (LE)—“It is the paradox that an experience, a fact, should seem to have supernatural [or absolute] value”.²³⁴ This is true of the *Tractatus* itself as well. It is a paradox that the world should seem to have supernatural meaning. But our difficulty seems to be this: there is no language by which we can talk about what is the ethical and mystical. As Wittgenstein states, “it is impossible there to be propositions of ethics. Propositions can express nothing that is higher”.²³⁵ Thus, every attempt to express what is higher or lies outside the world “leads to nonsense”.²³⁶ It is an attempt that runs up against the limits of language. And such an attempt, Wittgenstein says, is “perfectly, absolutely hopeless... But it is a document of a tendency in the human mind which I

²³² “Ethics”, p. 38

²³³ *Ibid.*, p.44

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, 43.

²³⁵ T§6.42

personally cannot help respecting deeply and I would not for my life ridicule it”.²³⁷ This suggests that although the nonsensical ethical expressions are nonsense, they express a deeply important human impulse.

Again, what is mystical is this: “Feeling the world as a limited whole”.²³⁸ Now, the only meaningful and sayable propositions, according to ‘§6.53’, are those of natural science. In the *Notebooks*, Wittgenstein says, the “urge towards the mystical comes of the non-satisfaction of our wishes by sciences. We feel that even if all *possible* scientific questions are answered *our problem is still not touched at all*. Of course in that case there are no questions anymore; and that is the answer”.²³⁹ The upshot of the *Tractatus* is put in the following way: the only strictly correct method in philosophy is “to say nothing except what can be said, i.e. propositions of natural science—i.e. something that has nothing to do with philosophy”.²⁴⁰ And, “What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence”.²⁴¹ This is, in Wittgenstein’s own words, *the ethical point* of the whole book—to remain silent. In a letter (1919) to Von Ficker, Wittgenstein describes the whole point of the *Tractatus* in the following way:

It isn’t really foreign to you, because the book’s point is ethical... my work consists of two parts: the one presented here plus all that I have *not* written. And it is precisely this part that is the most important one. For the ethical gets its limit drawn from the inside, as it were, by my book; and I am convinced that this is the *ONLY rigorous* way of drawing that limit. In short, I believe that where *many* others today

²³⁶ Waismann’s *Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle*, p.93.

²³⁷ “Ethics”p.44

²³⁸ T§6.45

²³⁹ NB(25.5.15)p.51. [Cf.T§6.52]

²⁴⁰ T§6.53

²⁴¹ T§7

are just *gassing*, I have managed in my book to put everything firmly into place by being silent about it.²⁴²

I will return to the ethical point of the *Tractatus* in the final section of the present chapter.

According to Wittgenstein, as Kevin M. Cahill suggests, most, if not all, people have within them the germ of such a desire but that they have fallen into some sort of confusion—one must refrain from the temptation to make this desire seem like any ordinary desire, whose context could be given in ordinary-physical- language.²⁴³ So the worst philosophical confusions arise when we try to apply our ordinary-physical-language in the area of the ethical. This will become clearer in the following section.

However, what seems to be obvious is this: the idea of being silent is deeply challenged by our strong *desire* to say something about what is higher and inexpressible—i.e., an inclination to outrun the limits of our language and say what cannot be said.

4.1.1 Ethics: A Simile

In the *Tractatus*, all that Wittgenstein says about ethics (and aesthetics) is this: ethics cannot be put into words. Ethics is not concerned with facts. It is concerned with things that are, indeed, on the other side of the limit of language, i.e., a realm of value. He also remarked that all that propositions can deal with are things that lie within the world and, therefore, they cannot deal with or express what is higher. And remember Wittgenstein's main point about ordinary language (T§3.323)—we need to be aware of at least two

²⁴² Quoted in Cora Diamond's "Ethics, Imagination, and the Method of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*" in *The New Wittgenstein*, p.152.

²⁴³ Cahill, *The Fate of Wonder*, p.45.

things: first, that ordinary language is designed for entirely different purposes (and we often cannot express what we want to express). Second, it frequently happens that words that have different modes of signification are employed in propositions in what is superficially the same way [for example, consider the ethical and non-ethical use of the term ‘right’, ‘good’, etc., as we see shortly]. So, in philosophy, at least in some cases, confusions possibly arise. Such possible confusions (T§3.323), Wittgenstein argued, can be avoided by making use of a sign-language (T§3.325). But this solution does not seem to be available in the area of ethics. That is to say, nonsensical expressions cannot be avoided by means of a sign-language. Ethics seems to challenge the logic of our language. At any rate, it seems to be reasonable to say that here we are dealing with an entirely different *nonsense* of which (at the end of ‘LE’) Wittgenstein declared that he could not help but deeply respect.

In LE, he remarks that “a certain characteristic misuse of our language runs through all ethical and religious expressions”.²⁴⁴ That is, in ethical and religious discourse, words are usually used as similes. The following questions are to be considered: (1) Does a simile contain and convey supernatural meaning? (2) Can we express by means of a simile what we cannot express by means of an ordinary and a logical proposition? In other words, can a simile lead us beyond itself and describe what is higher? Can a simile go beyond the limit of language?

Wittgenstein’s answer to the first question is suggested in this passage: “Our words used as we use them in science, are vessels capable only of containing and conveying meaning and sense, natural meaning and sense. Ethics, if it is anything, is

²⁴⁴ “Ethics” p.42

supernatural and our words will only express facts”.²⁴⁵ This suggests that ethical terms cannot be expressed differently from our ordinary or natural expressions. Language can only express the world of facts. In Wittgenstein’s later language, a “*picture* held us captive. And we could not get outside it”.²⁴⁶ Since what is ethical lies outside the world of facts, what is ethical cannot be pictured and described. Everything that one can depict and describe by means of a proposition must be “within the world. An ethical proposition never occurs in the complete description of the world, not even when [one is] describing a murderer. What is ethical is not a state of affairs”.²⁴⁷ In the *Lecture*, Wittgenstein explains this by means of the following simile: if an omniscient person wrote all he knew in a big book, then the book would contain the whole description of the world— but it would contain nothing ethical.²⁴⁸

All describable facts, according to Wittgenstein, stand on the same level, just as all propositions do.²⁴⁹ For example, “[t]he murder will be standing on the same level as... the falling of a stone. Certainly the reading of this description might cause us pain...but there will simply be facts, facts, and facts, but no Ethics”²⁵⁰ or absolute value. If there is absolute value, it must lie outside all happening in the world.

So far as facts and ordinary-physical-language or propositions are concerned, there is only “relative value and relative good, right, etc”.²⁵¹ In other words, “[I]anguage can only say those things that we can also imagine otherwise”.²⁵² Let us explain this

²⁴⁵ Ibid., p 40

²⁴⁶ PI§115

²⁴⁷ Waismann’s *Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle*, p. 93.

²⁴⁸ “Ethics” p. 39

²⁴⁹ Ibid., p.39[Cf, NB(12.10.16)p84]

²⁵⁰ Ibid., 40

²⁵¹ Ibid.,40

²⁵² PR§54

further by looking at two different usages of the word ‘right’ that Wittgenstein explores in the *Lecture*: ‘the trivial or relative’ and ‘the ethical or absolute’ uses of the term.

Wittgenstein writes, all verbal expressions by which we describe what is ethical (aesthetical, mystical, etc.) “*seem*, *prima facie*, to be just *similes*. Thus it seems that when we are using the word right in an ethical sense, although, what we mean, is not right in its trivial sense, it’s something similar”.²⁵³ Wittgenstein illustrates this by giving the following example: “If I say this is the *right* road I mean that it’s the right road relative to a certain goal. Used in this way [i.e., in the relative sense, or in the ordinary-physical sense]...[the expression does not] present any difficult or deep problems. But this is not how ethics uses [it]”.²⁵⁴ This is not what the word ‘right’ means in an ethical sense. In other words, to use it in the ethical or the absolute sense— i.e., in the non-ordinary-physical sense— is to use it as a simile. But first let us see what the words ‘right’ and ‘good’ could possibly mean when it is used in the ethical or absolute sense as opposed to the relative sense. Wittgenstein writes:

“[T]he absolutely right road.” I think it would be the road which *everybody* on seeing it would, *with logical necessity*, have to go, or be ashamed for not going. And similarly the *absolute good*, if it is a describable state of affairs, would be one which everybody, independent of his taste and inclinations, would *necessarily* bring about or feel guilty for not bringing about. And I want to say that such a state of affairs is a chimera. No state of affairs has, in itself, what I would like to call the coercive power of an absolute judge.²⁵⁵

The *ethical* or *absolute* use of terms such as: ‘right’, ‘good’, etc., if they are describable states of affairs, express *necessity*. Absolute or ethical judgments are determined by

²⁵³ “Ethics”, p.42

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p.38

logical necessity, and remember that logical necessity lies outside the world of facts. But since what is ethical is not a state of affairs, or since no state of affairs, in itself, contains absolute value, then, Wittgenstein asks, why are we still tempted to use such expressions as ‘the absolutely right road’ or ‘the absolute good’? What have we in mind and what do we try to express?

Wittgenstein explains what he means by absolute or ethical value by referring to some of his own experiences that have nothing to do with ethics. At any rate, he writes, “when I have it [i.e., referring to an experience of his own] *I wonder at the existence of the world*. And I am then inclined to use such phrases as ‘how extraordinary that anything exist’”.²⁵⁶ But such a verbal expression given to that experience, Wittgenstein says, is *nonsense*—to say ‘I wonder at the existence of the world’ is to *misuse the language*. One can wonder at something being the case which one could *not* conceive not to be the case. One wonders at “the size of this dog because one could conceive of a dog of another” (an ordinary size). He continues by saying: “But it is nonsense to say that I wonder at the existence of the world, because I cannot imagine it not existing”.²⁵⁷ In both the *Tractatus* and the *Notebooks*, Wittgenstein keeps reminding us that “what cannot be imagined cannot even be talked about”.²⁵⁸ At this point, the following two suggestions will be useful for understanding the nature of this sort of nonsensical expressions: first, it is worthwhile to consider, as Wittgenstein himself once suggested, ‘unimaginability’ as a criterion of nonsense—“there is something right about saying that unimaginability is a

²⁵⁵ Ibid., p.40

²⁵⁶ Ibid., p.41

²⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 41-2

²⁵⁸ NB(12.12.16)p.84

criterion for nonsense”.²⁵⁹ Since one cannot imagine the world not existing, then the person who wonders and says ‘how extraordinary that anything exist!’ must be speaking something nonsensical or metaphysical. Secondly, Wittgenstein once wrote, “It is often possible to show that a proposition is meant metaphysically by asking ‘Is what you affirm meant to be an empirical proposition? Can you conceive (imagine) is being otherwise?’”²⁶⁰

But this doesn’t necessarily mean one should not speak nonsense at all. In certain cases, not mentioning outside philosophy, in philosophy, speaking nonsense sometimes seems to be necessary (the *Tractatus* itself is a good example). Wittgenstein is warning us: “Don’t for heaven’s sake, be afraid of talking nonsense! But you must pay attention to your nonsense”.²⁶¹ More can be said, here, but this would take us beyond the scope of this thesis.

Once more, although ethical, aesthetical, religious expressions touch on something deep— what is essential and intrinsically significant to the world—they are nonsensical. What they concern cannot be thought, and “what we cannot think we cannot say either”.²⁶² This should lead us to the other question although we have already touched on it. The question was: can we express or say by means of a simile what we cannot express by means of an ordinary and an empirical proposition? Before we examine this question, it is worthwhile for us to redraw the connection between the *Tractatus* (also the *Notebooks*) and the *Lecture on Ethics*.

²⁵⁹ Z §268

²⁶⁰ PG§83

²⁶¹ CV, p.56

²⁶² T§5.61

In the *Notebooks*, Wittgenstein mentions to us that his whole task consists in explaining the nature of propositions,²⁶³ and this is, to some degree, our concern in the preceding two chapters. However, earlier in the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein told us that propositions could not express what is higher (i.e., what is ethical, mystical, etc.), and he also told us that there were no propositions of ethics. Wittgenstein said this just after stating that “[a]ll propositions are of equal value”.²⁶⁴ Logic (or logical propositions) concerns the possibility of the existence and non-existence of independent states of affairs. On the other hand, ethics essentially concerns what is higher. What is ethical, as Wittgenstein keeps insisting, is not a state of affairs. And what is higher cannot be expressed. Yet, we attempt to express what is ethical. The words in which ethical and religious experiences are described are metaphorical (similes). However, this is what Wittgenstein’s task in the *Lecture on Ethics* consists of. He tries to explain the nature of ethical and religious expressions.

Ethical and religious expressions seem to be primarily, as we said, metaphorical. In ethics (and religion) we use words like ‘good’ ‘right’, and so on as a metaphor or a simile in order to describe what is indescribable. To use them in this way, as similes, means to misuse them²⁶⁵—i.e., it means to run against the limit of language. Language is a vessel capable only of containing and conveying natural meaning and sense. In other words, language can only say things that we can also imagine otherwise. However, when we often use words as similes, we try to say those things that cannot be imagined to be

²⁶³ NB(22.1.15.)p.39

²⁶⁴ T§6.4

²⁶⁵ Recall, in the *Tractatus* (T§4.1272), as we discussed in the preceding chapter, Wittgenstein speaks of the way the word ‘object’ can correctly be used. But this is not what he means when he speaks about misusing words in ethics. In fact, misusing words in ethics seems to be the very essence of ethics.

otherwise. What cannot be imagined to be otherwise cannot be expressed or said; it makes itself *manifest*—what one *means* cannot be expressed or said. To say what cannot be said is to speak nonsense. For example,

[W]hat the solipsist *means* is quite correct; only cannot be said, but makes itself manifest.

The world is *my* world: this is manifest in the fact that the limits of *language*...mean the limits of *my* world.²⁶⁶

Thus, what the solipsist says, although what he *means* is quite correct, is nonsense. Let us consider another example from the *Lecture*.

Wittgenstein asks us to consider an imaginary case, where, all of a sudden, someone “grew a lion’s head and began to roar.” This would surely shock everyone and would be as extraordinary a miracle as one could imagine. Suppose one describes this fact by saying: “It is a miracle”. But if it is a fact, then it must be describable, and science can prove it. Wittgenstein tests this hypothesis by suggesting having a doctor investigate the case scientifically and even to let him vivisect the person.²⁶⁷ No miracle is noticed! Now, when we look at it in the scientific way everything miraculous has disappeared.²⁶⁸ But, this does not mean “Science has proved that there are no miracles”; all it means is that “the scientific way of looking at a fact is not the way to look at it as a miracle”.²⁶⁹ But didn’t Wittgenstein earlier say in ethics and religion, we often use words as similes? Well! The person uses the word ‘miracle’ as a simile (in an absolute sense) in order to describe a fact, which should seem to have supernatural or absolute value. Although what

²⁶⁶ T§5.62

²⁶⁷ “Ethics”, p. 43

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p.43

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p.43

the person means by the words ‘miracle’, ‘fact’, and ‘value’ is not what these words mean in their trivial or relative sense, they have similar meaning. Wittgenstein would repeat his main point about such experience in the following way:

But a simile must be the simile for something. And if I can describe a fact by means of a simile I must also be able to drop the simile and to describe the facts without it. Now in our case as soon as we try to drop the simile and simply to state the facts which stand behind it, we find that there are no such facts. And so, what at first appeared to be simile now seems to be mere nonsense.²⁷⁰

The word ‘miracle’ is used in both an ethical or absolute sense (from the person’s personal standpoint) and in its relative sense (from the scientific point of view). Which one of these uses is the correct one? Wittgenstein answers this question by saying (though he does not refer to the same example here):

I am tempted to say that the right expression *in* language for the miracle of the existence of the world, though it is not any proposition in language, is the existence of language itself. But what then does it mean to be aware of this miracle at some times and not at other times? For all I have said by shifting the expression of the miraculous from an expression *by means* of language to the expression *by the existence* of language, all I have said is again that we cannot express what we want to express and that all we *say* about the absolute miraculous remains nonsense.²⁷¹

So, we cannot express what we *want* to express by means of a simile. In a way, what Wittgenstein is attacking is the idea that a simile can lead us beyond itself. In other words, Wittgenstein’s message can be better understood and appreciated if we recall his

²⁷⁰ Ibid., p.42-3

²⁷¹ Ibid., p. 43-4

so-called his ‘picture theory’. In the *Lecture*, Wittgenstein expressed it by saying that our words are vessels, capable only of containing and conveying relative meaning. In the *Investigations* (as we quoted earlier), he says, ‘A picture held us captive. And we could not get outside it’. It makes sense, then, to say that the relative or trivial meanings of words hold us captive, and we cannot get outside them. Now, to use words as similes (at least in ethics and religion,) is to use them in an absolute sense; and to use them in this way is to try to go beyond the relative sense of the words, which is impossible. To put it in slightly different way, language is like a cage or Platonic cave; and it is impossible to get outside it—“This running against the walls of our cage is perfectly, absolutely hopeless [this is what all the given example were meant to show]”.²⁷² It is hopeless, for what one wants to do is to express values (back to T§6.41) that lie outside the facts of the world.

Furthermore, what all the examples stated and illustrated in the *Lecture* show is this: “Here we have a different experience...And now I say: if we have this experience, then, we have arrived at the limits of language”.²⁷³ Again, we cannot express what we *want* to say. To say nothing can be said, again, is to say “we get to the boundary of language which stops us from asking further questions. We don’t get to the bottom of things, but reach a point where we can go no further, where we cannot ask further questions”.²⁷⁴ Again, some of us might share the ‘feeling [of] the world as a limited whole’.²⁷⁵

²⁷² Ibid.,p.44

²⁷³ “Philosophy#88” in PO, p.167

²⁷⁴ Wittgenstein’s Cambridge Lectures (1930-32). Quoted from James Levine’s “Logic and Solipsism” in *Wittgenstein's Tractatus: History and Interpretation*, p.207(f. 51).

²⁷⁵ T§6.45

In any case, just like the solipsist, what the person having an extraordinary experience (the ‘absolute safety’, ‘the wonder’, and so on) *means* is quite correct, only it cannot be said. It shows itself—what is a miracle is that language exists. This probably calls our attention back to the *Tractatus* (§6.44): “It is not how things are in the world that is mystical, but that it exists”.

In the *Notebooks*, Wittgenstein remarks that the “urge towards the mystical comes of the non-satisfaction of our wishes by sciences. We feel that even if all possible scientific questions are answered our problem is still not touched at all. Of course in that case there are no questions anymore; and that is the answer”.²⁷⁶ The upshot of the *Tractatus* is put, by Wittgenstein, in the following way: the only strictly correct method in philosophy is “to say nothing except what can be said, i.e. propositions of natural science—i.e. something that has nothing to do with philosophy”.²⁷⁷ Further, “What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence”.²⁷⁸ Again, the solution of the problem of the meaning of life (i.e., what is ethical) is either ‘to put everything firmly into place by being silent about it’, or, hopelessly, to try to ‘break out of the cage’ and *in so doing*, run up against the limits of language or, perhaps, like some of the mainstream academic philosophers, to try to come up with another theory.

The irony is that Wittgenstein in both the *Tractatus* and the *Lecture* (here by giving us examples) has to run up against the limits of language in order to show us how to put everything firmly into place by being silent about it. Moreover, explaining what is ethical (also philosophical) by means of a *theory* is something which Wittgenstein could

²⁷⁶ NB(25.5.15)p.51. [Cf.T§6.52]

²⁷⁷ T§6.53

²⁷⁸ T§7

not help rejecting on ethical grounds. In a conversation with Schlick, Wittgenstein (echoing Socrates in *Meno*) said:

If I were told anything that was a *theory*, I would say, No, no! That does not interest me. Even if this theory were true, it would not interest me—it would not be the exact thing I was looking for.

What is ethical cannot be taught. If I could explain the essence of the ethical only by means of a theory, then what is ethical would be of no value whatsoever.

At the end of my lecture on ethics I spoke in the first person: I think that this is something very essential. Here there is nothing to be stated anymore; all I can do is to step forth as an individual and speak in the first person.²⁷⁹

Finally, at this point, it is appropriate to relate the main point of the *Lecture* to that of the *Tractatus* (the *Preface* plus T§6.54). The fundamental point of the *Lecture* was to show that what is ethical lies outside the facts of the world (i.e., outside the scope of ordinary and scientific language). Thus, our language cannot express what is ethical. That is to say, as Wittgenstein concludes the *Lecture*, ‘we cannot express what we want to express’. Wittgenstein could have said, what the ethical person *means* or *wants* to say is quite correct; only cannot be said or expressed, but *shows* itself. To whom? To a subject, “the metaphysical subject”²⁸⁰ who “does not belong to the world: rather, it is a limit of the world”.²⁸¹ However, what the ethical person tries to say or express is nonsense; for

²⁷⁹ Waismann’s *Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle*, p. 116-7. I think, Wittgenstein’s unoriginal thesis ‘ethics cannot be taught’ makes more sense once it is compared to logic—logic can be taught by schemata of the following kind “(‘T’ means ‘true’, ‘F’ means ‘false’; the rows of ‘T’s’ and ‘F’s’ under the row of elementary propositions symbolize their truth-possibilities in a way that can easily be understood)” (T§4.31).

²⁸⁰ T§5.641

²⁸¹ T§5.632

the person tries to say what cannot be expressed. I believe, it is in this sense that the propositions of the *Tractatus* are nonsensical—anyone who understands what Wittgenstein *means* (i.e., anyone who understand the *unassailable truth* that the *Tractatus* wants to express) eventually recognizes them as nonsensical. Yet, as said in the preceding chapter, they are important and, in Hacker’s terms, *illuminating nonsense*, and the truth of the nonsensical expressions of ethics. Again, they are supposed to be illuminating, at least, to the metaphysical subject.

To sum up this chapter: In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein says that what is the ethical lies out the scope of the facts of the world; hence, it cannot be put into words since language can express nothing that is higher—ethical. What is ethical is simply mere nonsense. In the *Lecture on Ethics*, Wittgenstein confirms his *Tractarian* view and clarifies further by referring to his personal experiences most of which have nothing to do with our ordinary and academic understanding of ethical experiences are. But this was an important aim of the delivering of the *Lecture* itself. In other words, the *Lecture* was supposed to be on *Ethics*. Surprisingly, Wittgenstein, as I said, by means of examples (personal experiences) tried to explain why he thinks ethics cannot be explained, expressed, taught, and eventually is nonsense.

At the end of the *Lecture*, Wittgenstein tells us that ethics can be no science. That is to say, what ethics is concerned with cannot be expressed and described by means of a *theory*. Now you might want to consider this remark from his lecture on *Philosophy*: “A simile is part of our edifice; but we cannot draw any conclusions from it either; it doesn’t lead us beyond itself, but must remain standing as a simile”.²⁸² Although a simile cannot

²⁸² “Philosophy” in PO, p.177

lead us beyond itself, as quoted earlier, Wittgenstein would say, but “[d]on’t for heaven's sake, be afraid of talking nonsense! But you must pay attention to your nonsense”.²⁸³

²⁸³ CV, p.56

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein remarked that a proposition is a picture of reality, and for a picture to be a picture of reality, the picture must have something in common with it in order to be able to depict it correctly or incorrectly. That something is what Wittgenstein has called a *logical form* (space, time, and colour) of a proposition. In other words, for a proposition to be a meaningful proposition (i.e., to have a sense) and be able to describe any reality, there must be something identical, Wittgenstein said, in a proposition and what the proposition describes. Moreover, as I clarified in the second chapter, logical forms are unalterable, and Wittgenstein argued that there must be simple objects if any given reality is to have an unalterable logical form. It is reasonable to say that logical forms are forms of simple objects. It also follows that simple objects must be unalterable. Furthermore, Wittgenstein told us that what is not unalterable is the configuration of objects, and this is what produces realities. In reality, objects stand in a logically determinate relation to one another. Logical form, however, is the possibility of the structure of such a logical determinate relation of simple objects in a given reality.

However, this is what most matters to logic, a form (or forms) of reality. In other words, logic deals with every possible reality. One of the central questions of this thesis was whether forms of reality were a creation of our language and thinking or something independent of our language and thinking.

I have argued that a form(s) of reality is a creation of our language and thought. Amongst Wittgenstein scholars Brian McGuinness (also others) has been in favour of this interpretation as opposed to, for example, Norman Malcolm. Some of those remarks that I believe make this interpretation a more promising and truthful one are: (§2.0123,

§2.01231, §2.026, §5.514, §5.551-§5.555, §6.124-§6.126). Indeed, ‘§5.555’ explicitly supports this interpretation. There, Wittgenstein argues that what he has to deal with must be that which makes possible for him to invent them (forms).

It is not reality, but how we represent reality, that is a creation of our language. If it were not a creation of our language and thinking, we could not be able to bring it into light at all. In other words, logical analysis can bring to light only what we ourselves invent or construct. But, of course, this is not to say it is a product of our imagination. It is something that is hidden in our language, and we reconstruct it ‘with the help of a logical scaffolding’ (T§4.023).

I have also argued that if the logical pictorial form of reality were not a creation of the logic of our language and thinking, then we couldn’t know it a priori—remember that the presupposed objects must contain all their possibilities; and each possibility is their form. So to know an object is to know all its possibilities, and this is what we mean by ‘knowing a form a priori’. What is a priori (possibility or form) is a concept of our logical syntax (i.e., it is a feature of our logical syntax), and we can know a priori only what we ourselves create. It follows that it does not stand in need of outer criteria, i.e., reality—I considered referring to reality as outer criteria—‘logic alone’ carries this message with itself.

The crucial point of this thesis was to call attention to the relation between logic and ethics— the logic of our language is challenged by ethics. For the ethical part of the *Tractatus*, I have referred to the *Lecture on Ethics*.

The most two important points that tie the *Tractatus* and the *Lecture* together are: language can express only what is within the world and nothing that is higher. This seems

to be very straightforward. The second most fundamental point, as I earlier expressed, is this: ‘a picture held us captive. And we could not get outside it, for it lay in our language and language seemed to repeat it to us inexorably’ (PI§115). Ethics, however, springs from the desire to get outside a picture and picture what cannot be pictured or express what cannot be expressed by means of any language. To put this point in slightly different way: I am inclined to argue that Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus*, taken together with the *Lecture*, is an epitome of unavoidable tension or clash between logic on the one hand and ethics on the other hand although both are transcendental.—Logic pervades the world and imposes sharp limits on language. Ethics constantly, though it is perfectly and absolutely hopeless, tries to run up against the compulsory limits of language.

Finally, the prison of propositional or pictorial language that makes it impossible for us to express what is higher, as suggested in chapter 2, is a product of our thought. Wittgenstein told us that we have the capacity to construct the rules (syntax is the totality of rules) for a sign-language (i.e., an ideally perspicuous notation) in order to set the limits to what *can* be said and what *cannot* be said. In *Philosophical Grammar*, Wittgenstein seems to acknowledge that the prison of the Tractarian propositional or pictorial language was a “false”²⁸⁴ prison. The point, then, that seems to be subject for further debate is whether there can be such an ethical language-game, according to the later Wittgenstein’s conception of ‘language-games’.

²⁸⁴ PG, p. 211. David Pears has used this phrase “a False Prison” as part of the title of one of his books— *The False Prison: A Study of the Development of Wittgenstein's Philosophy*.

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