

**WITTGENSTEIN'S TRACTATUS AND THE LIMITS OF
LANGUAGE**

ILHAAM ISAACS

**MSocSc DISSERTATION
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
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Introduction

Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy is closely bound up with his conception of language. In fact, one could say that the status he designates to philosophy is a logical outcome of his conception of language. In both the Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, and the Philosophical Investigations, Wittgenstein attempts to articulate a conception of language by exploring its essence - that is, its structure and function. What this amounts to is giving an account of the limit of language - an account of which types of expression count as meaningful. So doing, the bounds of sense would be drawn. To use Wittgenstein's terminology, 'what can be said' and 'what cannot be said' would be clearly delineated. Since language is the expression of thought, an account of the limit of language amounts to an account of the limit of thought. And an account of the limit of thought is an account of the limit of what can be done intellectually.

The boundary, we come to see, is drawn differently for different reasons in the two books. The Wittgenstein of the TLP believed that the logical structure of language lies beneath its surface structure. It is something hidden and not perspicuous to language-users. By excavating its structure, he would thus reveal the limit of language and hence the limit of thought. On the TLP account of language, philosophical propositions come out as an attempt to go beyond the bounds of sense. Philosophy, as it is traditionally practised, does not, according to Wittgenstein, fall within the limit of thought. It does not fall within the bounds of what can be done intellectually. Philosophical propositions are attempts to say what cannot be said. They are attempts to transcend, *in language*, the limit of language, and hence the limit of what we are able to do intellectually. Any attempt to transgress the bounds of sense ends, according to Wittgenstein, in nonsensical discourse. That is, it does not qualify as meaningful discourse. Philosophical propositions, being such attempts, are thus meaningless or nonsensical. They are not false, but simply lack sense. They are pseudo-propositions.

As with the TLP, where Wittgenstein's views on philosophy were seen to be the logical consequences of this account of language, so too with the PI. However, the PI endorses a conception of language different to that of the TLP. But the conception of

philosophy remains, in essence, the same. And his task is the same: to draw the limit of sense - to indicate what can be said and what cannot be said, and hence draw the limit of what we can do intellectually. Whereas the early Wittgenstein believed that he had discovered the essence of language and thus revealed the limit of language, the later Wittgenstein (post-TLP Wittgenstein) does not speak of *the* language but of different *uses* of language or 'language-games'. Consequently, there is no such thing as *the limit* of language, but *limits* of language. There are thus no absolute criteria of meaningful propositions. What qualifies as a nonsensical proposition - one that cannot be said - is now given relative to a particular language-game or use of language. On the PI's account of language, philosophical propositions come out meaningless relative to a particular language-game, namely, factual discourse. That is, taken as factual statements (which is how philosophers take them), they are meaningless. In the PI philosophical propositions turn out to be attempts to pass off non-factual propositions as factual ones. It is in this sense that they transgress the bounds of sense. They go beyond what can be meaningfully said in the language-game they purport to belong to.

My thesis will concentrate on Wittgenstein's account of language and metaphysics in the TLP. Although I have already begun a fair amount of work on issues in the PI, I have restricted myself to presenting a general outline of some of the key differences between the TLP and the PI, since a detailed analysis is beyond the scope of the present work.

Abbreviations

I have used the following standard abbreviations in my thesis:

- TLP 'Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus', Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974 (Pears and Mcguinness translation)
- PI 'Philosophical Investigations', Basil Blackwell, 1953 (G.E.M. Anscombe translation)

[A] LANGUAGE AND THE WORLD

In the TLP Wittgenstein arrives at certain conclusions about the nature of philosophical statements. These conclusions are the outcome of his account of language. What I want to examine here is what that account is and how it generates the conclusions it does.

Wittgenstein's account of language has two notable features:

- (i) It is an account derived from *a priori* considerations of language
- (ii) It takes the form of a *critique* of language

In both these respects, his account is Kantian in spirit. Below I give a brief introductory exposition of these two aspects.

(i) Wittgenstein's inquiry into the nature of language takes the form of the question: how is language possible? His account starts with the existence of factual language. It is a fact that language is possible. We do succeed in making statements about the world. What Wittgenstein wanted to know is, what makes this possible? He was thus looking for the *a priori* conditions for language to work. In the PI, where he comments on his views in the TLP, he says:

... the crystalline purity of logic was, of course, not a *result of investigation*: it was a requirement. (PI 107)

In other words, *that* language had such and such features was a requirement, was necessitated, in order for language (fact-stating discourse about the world) to be possible. Importantly, this account of language is not something discovered. It is not the result of an investigation. It is demanded *a priori* to explain the connection between language and the world. Again in the PI we find him saying:

We ask “*What is language?*” “*What is a proposition ?*” And the answer to these questions is to be given once for all; and independently of any future experience. (PI 92)

This again indicates his conviction that his account must be an *a priori* one¹ - that is, one that must be given independently of any experience. In this way Wittgenstein’s inquiry echoes that of Kant. To wit: Kant started off by acknowledging that we have knowledge (he did not go the sceptical route and ask whether we can claim to have any knowledge). What he wanted to know was, what made knowledge possible. Wittgenstein, in producing an account of language by asking how language is *possible*, proceeds thus in the Kantian spirit. Just as Kant took knowledge for granted, Wittgenstein took fact-stating discourse for granted, and asked which conditions must obtain.

(ii) Wittgenstein’s account of language amounts to a *critique* of language. A critique of language is an account of the *limits* of language - an account of which expressions can properly be said to belong to language. In Wittgenstein’s account of what makes language possible, the world (or rather, the logical structure of the world) plays a limiting role with regard to language. This is how. The specific words in our language are a matter of convention. That we call a cat, and not a dog, ‘cat’, is arbitrary. We could just as well have called a cat ‘dog’ and a dog ‘cat’. However, the way in which we combine words in a sentence is not entirely arbitrary. There are correct and incorrect ways of combining words. What determines what counts as a correct combination is what Wittgenstein calls ‘the logical structure of the world’. The logical structure of the world limits the kinds of ways words can be combined in sentences. In this sense it determines which expressions are to count as belonging to language. Language, then, is limited or bound by the logical structure of the world. Now, since the domain of language is the domain of thought, to say that language is limited is to say that thought, or the thinkable, is limited. Wittgenstein is hereby putting a limit on what can be done intellectually. By providing an account of language where language turns out to be limited, Wittgenstein’s account is again Kantian in spirit. Kant, in his

¹ This can be contrasted with the PI account of language: in the PI an account of language is *not* to be given *a priori*, it is to be an empirical account - one that is discovered; secondly, in the PI there is no such thing as an *answer once and for all*.

Critique of Pure Reason, attempted to articulate the limit of *pure reason*. And here in the TLP, Wittgenstein attempts to present the limit of *language* (thought), and consequently the limit of what can be done intellectually. These two features of Wittgenstein's account of language are important to bear in mind as a back-drop against which to examine the claims he makes about the nature of language. It will help to give context to his statements about language and in so doing throw light upon the general direction of his exposition.

In the process of explaining how language is possible, Wittgenstein makes a number of claims about the structure of language, the structure of the world, and the relation between language and the world. These claims he believes are *a priori* necessary ones: ones which state what *must* obtain if language is possible. His statements about the world are consequences of his theory of language. However, in the TLP Wittgenstein places the former claims first. Some commentators have found this to be the wrong way around. If language reveals the (logical) characteristics of the world, then the story should be told in that order - that is, the exposition about language first, and then the exposition about the world. Consequently, these commentators (for example Kenny)², when presenting an exegesis of Wittgenstein's work, start off by first examining those statements in the TLP which deal with propositions, and then follow with an exegesis of his account of the nature of the world. Other commentators, however, have thought it important to stick to the order in the TLP. Fogelin³, for example, sees the method of the TLP as natural. It begins with the claim that the world is all that there is (the totality of facts), and then goes on to examine an important subset of this totality, namely, those facts (language, or the propositions of language) that are used to represent other facts (the structure of the world). Thus, maintains Fogelin, irrespective of how the argument may proceed, the account of language presupposes the account of the world. Another commentator, Fann⁴, holds a similar view, but for different reasons: although Wittgenstein's statements about the world are conclusions from the exposition on language, the latter is preceded by the former because the former (his account of the world) anticipates, and is required by the theory

² Kenny, A., 1973.

³ Fogelin, R., 1976, p3.

⁴ Fann, K.T. 1969.

of language which follows it. Moreover, although it is language which reveals the structure of the world, the latter idea (that the world has a fixed logical structure) is one that Wittgenstein already contemplated, in rudimentary form, *before* working out his account of language. Thus we find him saying, in Notebooks (page 53)⁵ :

The great problem round which everything that I write turns is: Is there an order in the world *a priori*, and if so what does it consist in?

Norman Malcolm claims that Wittgenstein's view of the logical structure of the world is one of the ideas that inspired his writings in the TLP. His entry on page 53 of Notebooks, as well as another entry on page 62 in Notebooks⁶ ('The world has a fixed structure'), seems to confirm this view. It seems then, that although language reveals the structure of the world (for Wittgenstein), the idea of the world having a (fixed) structure may have preceded his claims about language.

In my exposition I will follow the latter two commentators and present Wittgenstein's theory of the world first. Apart from their considerations, my other reason for proceeding in this way is simply that it appears, to me at any rate, that understanding his statements about language is facilitated when one approaches them against the backdrop of his account of the world. I thus proceed by giving his account of the world first.

[B] THE STRUCTURE OF THE WORLD

The world, according to Wittgenstein, is the totality of facts in logical space. A fact is the existence of a state-of-affairs. A state-of-affairs is a configuration or combination of objects. An object is a simple substance. Every object, to be an object, must be able to enter into combinations with other objects. The possibility that each object has of combining with other objects, is called its 'space.' The totality of such space is called *logical* space. Since objects always occur in combination with other objects, the basic

⁵ Notebooks, p53 quoted in *ibid.* 1969, p6.

⁶ Notebooks, p62 quoted in *ibid.* 1969, p6.

constituents of the factual world are elementary facts. Elementary facts have two aspects: (i) they consist of objects and (ii) objects are arranged in particular combinations. The world then consists ultimately of the totality of elementary facts. So the task of explaining how factual discourse is possible is the task of explaining how it is possible to use language to represent elementary facts. This is Wittgenstein's ontology in brief. There are a number of features pertaining to his notions of 'object', 'fact', 'state-of-affairs' and 'logical space' which are going to play a role in his argument later on. I want to turn to these notions now, but this time by making systematic reference to the text. The TLP opens with the following propositions:

1. The world is all that is the case.

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

1.11 The world is determined by the facts, and by there being all the facts.

1.12 For the totality of facts determines what is the case, and also whatever is not the case.

1.13 The facts in logical space are the world.

The first proposition is elucidated by the second. In the second, he distinguishes between *facts* and *things*. At this point there is too little information to say what this distinction consists in. Proposition 1.11 basically asserts the same thing as proposition 1.1 - that is, that the world consists of the totality of facts, but the emphasis is different. To wit: the import of proposition 1.1 seems to be to make a distinction between *facts* and *things* whereas proposition 1.11 articulates a *principle of closure or limitation*¹. Although it cannot be seen at this point, this closure principle, which rules out as *part of the world* whatever does not fall within the domain of facts, will allow Wittgenstein to argue that something cannot lie within the world unless it is fact. At proposition 1.13 the notion of 'logical space' is introduced: 'The facts in logical space are the world.'

This notion, we will come to see, is going to play a persistent role in the rest of the text. To understand this notion of logical space, the next set of propositions must be considered.

2. What is the case - a fact - is the existence of a state-of-affairs.

¹ Fogelin, R., 1976, p3.

2.01 A state-of-affairs (a state of things) is a combination of objects (things).

2.021 In logic, nothing is accidental: if a thing *can* occur in a state-of-affairs, the possibility of the state-of -affairs must be written into the thing itself.

A state-of-affairs consists of a combination of objects. These objects must, of necessity, be able to combine with other objects. ('In logic nothing is accidental.') The possible combinations that an object can enter into with other objects lie in the *nature* of the object. (They are written into the thing itself.) Wittgenstein uses the notion of *space* to convey, in a metaphorical way, the idea of an object's possible combinations with other objects. Every object carries with it a space of possibilities which are internal to the object (TLP 2.01231). The totality of such 'space' surrounding an object - that is, the totality of logical possibilities (possible combinations with other objects), make up 'logical space'.

Wittgenstein's account of the world is an atomistic one. The world ultimately consists of individual objects which enter into combinations with each other to produce change: the substratum of change, namely, the individual objects, are not *themselves* subject to change. However, his account differs from classical atomism in that it is not a straightforwardly *combinatory* one². That is, Wittgenstein does not seem to be saying that all objects admit of the *same* range of possible combinations (as is the case in classical atomism), and thus that logical space would be the totality of possible ways in which objects can combine. Rather, and although Wittgenstein does not specifically say so, his language seems to suggest that *different* objects have *different* ranges of possible combinations with other objects. There are different categories of objects which combine accordingly. Consider:

2.0123 If I can know an object, I also know all its possible occurrences in states-of-affairs.
and

2.01231 If I am to know an object, though I need not know its external properties, I must know all its internal properties.

² This is an issue raised by Fogelin, R., (1976), and I discuss it briefly in the passage which follows.

If all objects are the same - that is, if they all admit of the same possible combinations in states-of-affairs and thus have the same internal properties - then it seems out of place to make special mention of the fact that if one knows an object one knows its possible combinations. It would be out of place, since, if all objects were the same, then knowing the combinatory possibilities of one would mean knowing the combinatory possibilities of all. In the light of this, logical space can be cashed out as follows: although all objects admit of possible combinations (all objects can occur in states-of-affairs), different kinds of objects combine differently. It is essential to all objects that they be possible constituents of states-of-affairs, but *which* combinations they can enter into is 'written into their natures'. (TLP 2.012) Logical space then, amounts to the totality of possible ways in which objects can combine, where different kinds of objects admit of different kinds of combinations.

We now have an idea of what logical space is. This puts us in a position to explain 1.1: 'The world is the totality of facts, not of things.' Earlier, we had too little information to explain why this is so. Propositions 2 and 2.01 plus the notion of logical space make the issue clearer:

2. What is the case - a fact - is the existence of a state-of-affairs.

2.01 A state-of-affairs (a state of things) is a combination of objects.

Logical space, to recall, is the the totality of possible combinations of objects.

If the world was the totality of things, then the world would have consisted of the totality of states-of-affairs (the totality of possible combinations of objects). But, proposition 2 tells us that a *fact* is the *existence* of a state-of-affairs, suggesting that the scope of states-of-affairs is wider than that of facts - that is, facts are only the states-of-affairs which exist. There are other states-of-affairs, other combinations which do not exist. Only those that *exist* make up the world. The world then, is the totality of facts, not of things. To say that a state-of affairs exists is to say that it is actual. Those states-of-affairs which do not exist are *possible* states-of-affairs. So, in the world only certain combinations are actual. But objects admit of other combinations. These combinations are the *possible* configurations or states-of-affairs. The totality of such *possible* combinations is called *logical space*. In the TLP we also come across the notion of *form* or *logical form of the world*. This notion, it turns out,

is identical with that of *logical space*: the totality of possible states-of-affairs is the *form of the world*. About the form of the world we are told that it is unchanging. It is fixed. (The fixed form of the world consists of objects. (TLP 2.023)). Although the actual combinations may change, the possible combinations do not. The form of the world is not subject to change since the possible combinations of objects remain unchanged. The form of the world is the form of any possible or conceivable world. ('It is obvious that a conceivable world, however different it may be from the real one, must have something - a form - in common with it.' (TLP 2.022)). In any possible world, although the facts may be different to those of the actual world, it cannot differ in form - that is, any possible world must admit of the same set of objects with their limited and fixed range of possible combinations. Objects form the substratum of both the actual and the possible world. The form of the world is *a priori*. It is logically prior to all experience and all change: it is what makes change possible; it is what makes contingencies possible. No combinations can occur outside this fixed form.

Recall that in answering the question 'How is fact-stating discourse possible?', Wittgenstein makes a number of inter-related claims about the world, language and the relationship between language and the world. If fact-stating discourse is possible, then *the world* must admit of certain features, *language* must have certain features and *language and the world* must be related in a certain way. I have already looked at Wittgenstein's ontological claims about the world. I now turn to his account of language. His inquiry into language took on the following form:

- (i) what is the structure of language?, and
- (ii) what is the function of language?

He furnishes two accounts to answer these questions:

- (i) the truth-function theory of language, and
- (ii) the picture theory of language

Now, since he believed that language is the totality of propositions, the questions become:

- (i) how are propositions related to one another? and

(ii) how are propositions related to the world?³

I deal with these questions in turn.

[C] THE STRUCTURE OF LANGUAGE

According to Wittgenstein, if we can use language to talk about the world, then some propositions must be directly connected to the world, in the sense that their truth-values are not determined by other propositions but by the world. This led to the bifurcation of propositions into complex (non-elementary) propositions and elementary (basic) propositions. All ordinary propositions are complex. These can be analysed into simpler propositions. These in turn can be analysed into (absolutely) basic

propositions, which admit of no further analysis. These are elementary propositions.

Complex propositions are related to elementary propositions in that they are *truth-functions* of elementary propositions - that is, the truth-value of complex propositions depends on the truth-value of elementary propositions. The truth-value of elementary propositions, however, depends on the world. (An elementary proposition is true if it is a description of the way the world is - if some feature of the world makes it true).

Although Wittgenstein was sure *a priori* that there must be elementary propositions, he was unable to give examples of them (since he was unable to perform, in practice, a complete analysis of complex propositions). On this matter he tells us:

The *application* of logic decides what elementary propositions there are. What belongs to its application, logic cannot anticipate. (TLP 5.557)

Here Wittgenstein indicates that analysis of propositions belongs to the *application* of logic. *His* investigation, by contrast, is a purely logical one, so the question of what elementary propositions there are has no bearing on his investigation.

The question now is: what exactly is the relation between language and the world, such that language is *about* the world? The answer to this question leads on to the second

³ In Notebooks (p 39) we find testimony to his concern with the nature of the proposition: 'My whole task consists in explaining the *nature* of the proposition.'

horn of Wittgenstein's inquiry into language - namely, the function of language. The question here is: how is language (how are propositions) related to the world?

Wittgenstein's account of the function of language hinges on an important feature of language hitherto not discussed. It is as follows: Propositions (elementary propositions) consists of primitive signs called 'names' - a proposition is 'a nexus, a concatenation of names' (TLP 3.26). Thus we have the following picture of the structure of language: Names combine to make up elementary propositions. Elementary propositions combine to make up complex propositions. Complex propositions are truth-functions of elementary propositions. Since certain propositions must be about the world, these 'names' must somehow be in direct contact with the world. The contact point between language and the world then, is at the level of names. Names refer to objects. So the contact point between language and the world is at the level of names and objects. Because a name is a primitive or *simple* sign (it is not a product of parts), it refers to *simple* objects (which are not products of parts). Simple objects are a logical necessity. We know this *a priori*. Why? Wittgenstein believed that the meaning of a name is the object it denotes. Hence, if there are no objects, names would not denote anything. Elementary propositions which are constituted by names would thus not be *about* the world. But elementary propositions *are (must be)* about the world. (Language *is* possible.) Therefore there must be objects.

It has been said that the contact point between the world and language is at the level of names and objects. However, when we make statements about the world, we use *propositions*. To understand how fact-stating discourse is possible, we thus need to understand the relation between language and the world at the level of *propositions*. We need to know what the relation between propositions and the world is. In TLP 3.3 Wittgenstein says: 'Only propositions have sense; only in the nexus of a proposition does a name have meaning.' Earlier, however, we saw that the meaning of a name is the object it denotes. In the light of TLP 3.3 we thus see that there is more to the story of the meaning of a name. To wit: the meaning of a name is the object it denotes, *but it only so denotes if the name occurs in a proposition*. This correlates with how objects occur - we know from our discussion of Wittgenstein's ontology of the world that objects

always occur in some or other *combination* with other objects. At this point we can see some further parallels between language and the world: for a sign to be a name, it must occur in the nexus of a proposition. For something to be an object, it must occur in the nexus of a combination of objects (a state-of-affairs). So we have:

LANGUAGE

names

elementary propositions

THE WORLD

objects

states-of-affairs (elementary facts)

As the discussion proceeds we will come to see several things :

(i) that the parallels between language and the world are such that the structure of language *mirrors* the structure of the world.

(ii) that the structure of language *reveals* the structure of the world.

(iii) that the structure of the world is going to play *a limiting role* in fact-stating discourse.

The above points will become evident when we discuss the second horn of Wittgenstein's inquiry into the nature of language, namely, the Picture Theory of language. I turn to that now.

[D] FUNCTION OF LANGUAGE: THE PICTURE THEORY

The question to be addressed here is 'how is it possible to make statements about the world?', or, 'how is it possible for a set of marks on paper to *mean* something or to represent a situation in the world?' We saw earlier that, for Wittgenstein, if an expression is to count as a proposition, it has to have a truth-functional structure - that is, it has to be analysable into elementary propositions, the truth-value of which depends on the world. Propositions are *about* the world, since their constituent parts - elementary propositions - are *about* the world. The question of how fact-stating discourse is possible is then more accurately phrased as: 'what is the relation between *elementary* propositions and *elementary* facts, such that elementary propositions represent elementary facts?' Wittgenstein advanced his Picture Theory as an answer to

this question: fact-stating discourse is possible because propositions *picture* the world (states-of-affairs in the world).

To focus on this idea of picturing, let's consider what goes on in a normal picturing situation. When a painting pictures or depicts a scene (let's say, using Wittgenstein's example, the scene is that of an accident), then (i) the picture must contain all the salient elements in the actual scene (in order to be *about* that scene), (ii) the picture must depict the *way* things are related to each other in the actual scene. It is not enough that the elements in the picture *correspond* to reality (that is, that each element in the picture can be mapped onto an element in reality which it allegedly depicts). In a car accident scene, the cars may be positioned in some specific way relative to each other. If the elements in the picture are not arranged in the way the corresponding elements in reality are, then, despite element correspondence, it is still not a picture of the scene. It would only be a picture if the elements in the picture are related in the same *way* as the elements in reality. In other words, they must be structurally *isomorphic*. It must be made clear at this point that because a painting is used here as an example of a picture, one might think that a further aspect must obtain for something to be a picture of a situation in reality, namely, that the elements in the picture must *resemble* the elements in reality (barring scale etc.). This, however, is not a feature of all pictures. A map, for instance, can be used as a picture of a landscape, but there may be no resemblance between the elements of the map and the elements of reality. Only condition (i) and (ii) are (must be) satisfied.

Let us now look at how Wittgenstein puts the matter. He introduces his comparison between a proposition and a picture at TLP 2.1.

- 2.1 We picture facts to ourselves.
- 2.11 A picture represents a situation in logical space, the existence and non-existence of states-of-affairs.
- 2.12 A picture is a model of reality.
- 2.13 In a picture objects have the elements of the picture corresponding to them.
- 2.131 In a picture the elements of the picture are the representatives of objects.
- 2.14 What constitutes a picture is that its elements are related to one another in a determinate way.
- 2.141 A picture is a fact.

2.15 The fact that the elements of a picture are related to one another in a determinate way represents that things are related to one another in the same way.

Line 2.12 tells us in a very general sense what Wittgenstein means by a picture - it is a *model* of reality. Lines 2.13 - 2.14 tells us more specifically what being a picture or a model consists is:

- (i) The elements of a picture must correspond to objects (in the world).
- (ii) Elements and objects must correspond in the sense that elements represent or stand for objects.
- (iii) The elements must be related to one another in a determinate way.
- (iv) The way the elements are arranged in a picture must mirror the way things are arranged in the world.

From this we can see that the picture theory is two-sided:

(a) Lines (i) and (ii) talk about picturing in terms of the relation between objects and elements of a picture. The issue here is *how* the elements of a picture are related to the objects in the world which they represent. Wittgenstein refers to this as the *pictorial relationship*.

2.1514 The pictorial relationship consists of the correlations of the picture's elements with things.

(b) Lines (iii) and (iv) talk about picturing in terms of the relation between the *arrangement* of objects on the one hand, and the *arrangement* of the elements of a picture on the other. And here the issue is *how* a picture represents *how* things are related to one another. Wittgenstein refers to this as *pictorial form*.

2.151 Pictorial form is the possibility that things are related to one another in the same way as the elements of the picture.

Each element in a picture stands for something in reality. And so too with a proposition which is itself a model of reality. So, for example, in the proposition 'The book is on the table', the words 'the book', and 'the table' each stand for an object, the word 'on' stands for a relationship.¹ However, there is more to picturing than just the correspondence between the elements of a picture and objects in the world.

¹ It must be noted, however, that taking 'book' and 'table' etc. as objects, is only a way of honing in on what Wittgenstein means by his Picture Theory. Tractarian objects are not the objects of everyday

The elements in a picture constitute a picture because they are arranged in a determinate way and this arrangement depicts the arrangement of objects in the world. Now with respect to ordinary pictures, how this happens is quite clear. The elements in reality and the elements in a picture resemble each other *physically*. Take the drawing of a face for example. There is a physical resemblance between the drawing of face and an actual face: certain of the physical lines of the drawing represent the eyes since (allowing for scale, dimension etc.) they look like (an) eye(s). What makes this physical resemblance possible is the fact that the elements in a picture are arranged *spatially*. And this spatial arrangement depicts the spatial arrangement of objects of the world. The proposition, according to Wittgenstein, is also a picture of reality, but clearly it cannot model reality in the way a picture does. The physical marks that constitute a proposition do not resemble objects in the world. Moreover, the way a proposition depicts the arrangement of elements in a state-of-affairs cannot be the way a picture does. A picture depicts *spatial* arrangement. A proposition does not. Perhaps, one may think, the comparison between a picture a proposition is merely a metaphor. One could say that, just like the relationship between the word ‘book’ and an actual book is *conventional* (we could easily have called a book ‘tug’), *that* a particular arrangement of elements depicts the arrangement objects in a state-of-affairs is also purely conventional. Thus a proposition is like a picture in that both represent states-of-affairs, the former by being related naturally, the latter by means of a conventional relation. However, this is not what Wittgenstein had in mind. The analogy goes further than this. What we are going to see now is (i) that the spatial arrangement is going to turn out to be *inessential* to the relation between pictures and the world and (ii) what a picture essentially depicts is something *logical* -that is, the *logical*, as opposed to the *spatial* arrangement of objects:

2.182 ‘Every picture is *at the same time* a logical one. (On the other hand, not every picture is, for example, a spacial one.)’

That is, pictures and reality share logical (or pictorial) form.

2.151 ‘Pictorial form is the possibility that things are related to one another in the same way as the elements of a picture.’

experience (such as books ,tables, and stones). But since we (and Wittgenstein) cannot give examples of such Tractarian ‘objects’, we use everyday examples just to make the point.

Let us look more closely at this idea of logical or pictorial form. The notion of logical form can better be understood if one considers this notion in connection with objects. According to Wittgenstein, if an object can occur in a state-of-affairs, the possibility of that combination must be written into the thing itself. These possibilities (the possible combinations it can enter into with other objects - its combinatory potential) is its *logical form*. Objects have logical form or exist in logical space. Furthermore, according to Wittgenstein, *names* only have meaning in the context of a proposition. It is the relation to other elements within a logical structure that turns a mark into a name, gives it meaning. Now, since an object necessarily exists in logical space, and given that the meaning of a name is the object it denotes, the logical relations between objects in a states-of-affair, and the relations between names in a proposition must be *isomorphic*. The relations must picture or mirror each other. Norman Malcolm² puts the matter like this:

At 3.22 Wittgenstein says '*Der Name vertritt im Satz den gegenstand.*'

The verb '*vertreten*' means to 'deputize for' or to 'act for', so that 3.22 is best translated as 'In a proposition a name deputizes for an object'. (Compare this with the Pears and McGuinness translation: '....a name is the representative of an object.')

Now, if someone deputizes for someone else, then the deputy takes on the *powers* of whoever he is standing in for. In an elementary proposition, a name takes the place of an object. However, an object is not a word (or any other linguistic sign), so it cannot occur in a sentence. But a name can. A name 'acts for' an object. Being deputy for an object, a name then takes on all the combinatory powers that the object has for which it deputizes. The combinatory powers of the name, however, would be exercised not in the medium of reality, but in the medium of language. So to say that a name deputizes for an object is to say that all the combinatory powers of the object are duplicated by the name. Thus the logical relations between objects and those between names are isomorphic. It is *this* logical relation between objects in a state-of-affairs, or names in a proposition that Wittgenstein calls *logical form* (or pictorial form). Pictorial form is the combinatory potential of names in a proposition. The following may illustrate the issue at hand: a book can enter into a number of combinations with other objects - it can be on top of, between, next to, or near to various other objects. But a book cannot

² Malcolm, N., 1986, p3.

be the *colour* of something, nor can a book be *between* its own pages. The latter two relations are combinations which are impossible for a book to enter into. They are not included within the logical space of this object. Now the word 'book' admits of the same combinatory possibility that the object does. (Remember that this is so because (i) names deputize for objects, (ii) a sign is a name only in the nexus of proposition and (iii) the meaning of a name is the object it denotes; objects occur in logical space or have logical form, therefore, the way a name is combined in a proposition, it would seem, must reflect the way objects are combined in a state-of-affairs. Thus the logical form of a proposition supervenes on the logical form of a state-of-affairs. Words can be combined in that particular way because objects are combined in that particular way). The name 'book' cannot be used as a colour predicate in a sentence. For example, one cannot say 'the tomato is book'. Nor can one combine the word 'book' with other names to form a sentence like 'the book is in between its own pages', since in reality a book cannot be in between its own pages. Thus to say a picture or proposition and a state-of-affairs in the world share logical form is to say that both exhibit the same logical relations between objects and names respectively.

An important qualification must be made with respect to propositions and logical form. One might get the impression that the logical form of a proposition is exhibited by the way it looks on a page - by the way words are arranged in a sentence.

However, how words are arranged, say, on a page (or in a spoken sentence) reflects *grammatical form* (or surface structure), but grammatical form, as Wittgenstein emphasizes in the TLP, is often misleading as to *logical form*. Consider the expressions 'the rose is red' and 'the morning star is the evening star'. Both have the same *grammatical form*. They are both of the form 'x is y'. However, they do not share the same *logical form*. To wit: the word 'is' has three distinct symbols as its logical analogues, namely, the copula, the sign of identity and the existential quantifier. This kind of homonymity is deceptive. In the first expression 'is' is used to predicate something (of a rose), and in the second it is used as a sign of identity. But, though the morning star *is* identical to the evening star, the rose is not identical to its redness. And, though redness is predicated of the rose, the evening star is not a predicate of the morning star.

Furthermore, we also find expressions which may look or sound different (have different surface grammar) but really have the same logical form. Logical form can thus not be read off the appearance of a sentence on a page. The logical structure, we will come to see later, lies *beneath* the surface structure. (It can only be revealed by excavation - by logical analysis). But more of this later.

The upshot so far is this: A string of words qualifies as a proposition if the words are combined in a way which reflects the way objects are combined in a state-of-affairs. A string of words admits of logical form only if its combination mirrors the combination of objects in a state-of-affairs. What confers propositional status on a string of words is that it admits of logical form.

How far have we progressed with the task of explaining how fact-stating discourse is possible? It was said that, for Wittgenstein, if it is possible to make statements about the world, then language must have a certain structure and function. The structure of language must be truth-functional. Since language is about the world, some propositions must be in direct contact with the world, such that their truth-values do not depend on other propositions, but on the world. The propositions that are in direct contact with the world are elementary propositions (elementary propositions are those propositions which result from an analysis of complex propositions). Elementary propositions are truth-functionally related to complex propositions. The truth of complex propositions depends on the truth of its constituent parts (elementary propositions) and the truth of elementary propositions depends on the world. Furthermore, since elementary propositions are about the world, one needs to account of how such propositions relate to the world. Wittgenstein furnished his Picture Theory as an answer. A set of marks becomes a proposition about the world if the words correspond to objects (where the words in the sentence *represent* objects in a state-of-affairs) and the *way* in which the words are combined in a sentence mirrors the way objects are combined in a state-of-affairs: they must share logical form. The important point here is not *merely* that they *must share logical form*, but that a sentence *admits* of logical form in the first place only if its word combination mirrors the object combination in a state-of-affairs. Hence the logical form of the world

confers the status of proposition on a string of words. In short, the world plays a limiting role with respect to language - it determines what is to count as a proposition and what is not. Since the totality of propositions makes up the whole of language, the world (the logical form of the world) puts a limit on what is to count as language. Whatever does not admit of logical form is not part of language, or, in Wittgenstein's dictum, '*cannot be said*'. Thus the limit of language - the criterion of what is to count as a proposition - is drawn against the logical form of the world. Only statements which admit to a certain structure and function can properly be said to be propositions. Only *they* are part of language. Finally, although the logical structure of the world confers propositional status on a string of words, this structure of the world is *revealed by language*. It is only via Wittgenstein's *a priori* reflections on language that the structure of the world is revealed.

We have seen that Wittgenstein draws the limit of language against the logical form of the world. We have noted that language reveals the structure of the world.

Furthermore, we have seen that the structure of language and the structure of the world are isomorphic. Language is a mirror image of the world. In summary: Language consists of propositions. Propositions can be truth-functionally analysed into elementary propositions. Elementary propositions consist of names in immediate combination. These names refer directly to objects. Elementary propositions are logically isomorphic with (are logical pictures of) elementary facts. Elementary facts consists of objects in immediate combination. Elementary facts combine to form complex facts. Complex facts make up the world. Thus the structure of language is truth-functional and the function of language is to picture the world. This is the limit of language. Language is a mirror-image of the world. So the limit of language amounts to the limit of the world. (TLP 5.6 'The limits of my language mean the limits of my world.')

Some new terminology must be introduced at this point. Any sentence which counts as a proposition has, in Wittgenstein's dictum, *sense*. To say it has sense is to say that it depicts the logical form of the world. Any sentence which lacks such a structure and function lacks sense. Those sentences which have sense admit of a truth-value: they

can be either true or false. Those sentences which have sense (which are bona fide propositions) are those which *can be said*. To *say* anything, in Wittgenstein's system, is to depict or to picture or to describe something. To say that a proposition *can be said* is to say that it depicts the logical form of the world (a possible state-of-affairs). Now, since a proposition depicts a possible state-of-affairs, and language consists of the totality of propositions, the whole of language amounts to a complete description of the totality of logical possibilities.

[E] GEOGRAPHY OF THE TRACTATUS

To draw the boundary of sense was the aim of the TLP, and was, it seems, what Wittgenstein believed was achieved. In LR¹ we find him saying that the cardinal problem of philosophy is the theory of what can be expressed by propositions (by language) and hence by thought - and what cannot be expressed by propositions. Elsewhere he says that his main aim is to set a limit to thought - to delineate what can be said from what cannot be said. However, although this is true, it doesn't bring out or represent the full achievements of the TLP. Despite the impression of a *dichotomy* having been drawn, there really is a *trichotomy*. There is not merely a distinction, we will come to see, between those expressions which have sense and those which do not. Rather, the latter category of expressions is further sub-divided into the *sense-less* and the *nonsensical*. So there is a distinction between sense, senseless and nonsensical.

In the category of sense fall the propositions of natural science. These propositions have truth-value. They are empirical propositions. They can be *said*. They are *descriptions* of the phenomenal world. In the category of the *sense-less* fall the propositions of logic. A proposition has sense in so far as it is a logical picture of the world. Thus propositions, if true, cannot be true *a priori*, they must be true *in virtue* of the world. But logical propositions are true *a priori* (they are tautologies, their negations are contradictions (T. 6.1. and 6.11)), therefore such propositions cannot be logical pictures of the world. They do not describe the world. They do not *say* anything. 'The propositions of logic say nothing.' (T.6.11). They are sense-less. However, they are not nonsensical, for they *show* '... the formal logical properties of language and the world.' (6.12) - the limit of language and (thus) the limit of the world.

¹ Letters to Russell, p71, quoted in Anscombe, op. cit., p161, quoted in Fann, K.T., 1969, p22.

The propositions of logic can also be referred to as *syntactic* propositions, since they concern the syntactic aspect of language. In the category of nonsensical fall the propositions of philosophy (those of metaphysics), ethics and aesthetics. They are neither 'empirical,' nor 'logical'. They are, according to Wittgenstein, attempts to transcend, *in language*, the limit of language, and hence the limit of the world. They are not *descriptions* of the world. Their structures do not depict the logical structure of the world (or rather they *lack* structure, since an expression is only said to have structure if its word combination pictures object combination in the world). Consequently, they do not *say* anything.

Most of the propositions and questions to be found in philosophical works are not false but nonsensical. Consequently, we cannot give any answers to questions of this kind, but can only establish that they are nonsensical. Most of the propositions and questions arise from our failure to understand the logic of our language. (They belong to the same class as the question whether the good is more or less identical with the beautiful.) (4.003).

The point here is that nonsensical 'propositions', although resembling genuine propositions in surface structure (surface grammar) do not, as far as their underlying grammatical structure is concerned, depict any state-of-affairs (elementary fact) in the world. Because surface grammar conceals the underlying logical structure, we are misled: we take these nonsensical 'propositions' to be genuine or bona fide propositions. Nevertheless, although such propositions do not *say* anything, what they *attempt* to talk about *is*, in some way, real. The ethical, metaphysical, aesthetic, although they cannot be said, can be *shown*. Propositions, which attempt to express these, are attempts to say that which cannot, by its very nature, be said. 'They are what is mystical.' (4.115). Although Wittgenstein claims that the mystical cannot be said but only shown, he does not spend much time in the TLP indicating or explicating *how* the mystical can be shown. This is perhaps so since, as Fann² says, his main concern in this book is to *show* that the mystical cannot be said. How then are we to understand the idea that the mystical can only be shown? Perhaps the issue can be brought out by recalling a remark from Ramsey which, if taken as Fann³ suggests as *missing*

² Fann, K.T., 1969, p33.

³ Fann, K.T., 1969, p33.

Wittgenstein's point, serves to help us understand what Wittgenstein may have had in mind: 'But what we can't say we can't say, and we can't whistle either.'⁴ According to Fann, this remark of Ramsey's misses Wittgenstein's whole point: the inexpressible (the mystical) cannot be said (by means of *factual discourse* - the natural sciences), but can be shown (by music, art, literature, prayer). Just like the logician can, by arranging symbols in a particular way, *show* the limit of the world, music and art, by a particular arrangement of notes and colours, can show something (and this includes showing by whistling).

In what follows I want to give a more detailed account of this trichotomy.

Wittgenstein's primary concern was to draw the limit of language, and since language is the vehicle of thought, the limit of thought, and hence the limit of intelligibility. He was concerned to show that what we can do intellectually is limited. Since language is a mirror-image of the world, *by drawing the limit of intelligibility*, he has hereby drawn the limit of *the intelligible*. There are things which do not fall within our capacity to express or think. There are things which we cannot deal with intellectually. We cannot deal with them intellectually because our intellectual powers are constrained by what is in the world, firstly, and secondly, by the fact that we can think about things because propositions (our language, our medium of thought) are logical pictures of the world. But if something is not *in* the world, there can be no picture of it. Language can thus not capture it. It can thus not be thought, or be dealt with intellectually. Sentences which attempt to *say* that which cannot be thought have no truth-value: since they are not pictures of the world, we cannot ascribe to them truth (conformity with the world) or falsity (non-conformity with the world).

In setting a limit to language, Wittgenstein distinguished between propositions which have sense and those which do not. Since language is a mirror-image of the world, the world is hereby divided into the *factual* and the *non-factual*. But we have seen that we are not dealing with a straightforward dichotomy. Wittgenstein's *trichotomy* can be diagrammatically illustrated as follows⁵ :

⁴ Fann, K.T., 1969, p32, (quoted from F.Ramsey, 'The Foundations of Mathematics', London, 1931, p238).

⁵ Adapted from Peterson,D., 1990, p167.

REPRESENTATIONAL LANGUAGE (SENSE)	NON-REPRESENTATIONAL LANGUAGE (SENSE-LESS)	NONSENSICAL DISCOURSE (NONSENSE)
THE WORLD OF FACTS	THE SYNTACTIC	THE MYSTICAL

The TLP advances a philosophy of language - an account of what makes fact-stating discourse possible. Fact-stating discourse is possible because language is a mirror of the world. Wittgenstein called language the 'great mirror'. (T5.511) (The metaphor of a *mirror* will become useful in articulating Wittgenstein's trichotomy⁶.) But the TLP is not merely concerned with *representation* - that is, it is not merely concerned with how language represents factual reality. Rather, it concerns both representation and non-representation. To wit: in addition to explaining how factual discourse is possible (how language represents factual reality) it is also concerned with those things *internal* and *external* to language which *cannot be represented*. So the TLP is not thus merely concerned with one side of the mirror, namely, the reflection or representation of the factual world in language. It also addresses, firstly, those features which are internal to the mirror - the syntactic, or *syntax* - those features which *do* the reflecting, but are *themselves* not reflected. According to the TLP, we are in the grip of an illusion whereby we believe that these syntactic features lie *outside* the mirror and are accordingly *reflected* by it. We think that syntax is a feature (state-of-affairs) *in* the world. But this is not so. Syntax is a feature of *language*, not the world. Secondly, it addresses the realm of the mystical. This domain is also not reflected by the mirror, but unlike the domain of syntax (which comprises features *internal* to language), the mystical is *external* to language. However, it is not part of the factual world (which also lies outside the mirror but is reflected by it); rather it lies *behind* the mirror. Accordingly, it cannot be reflected by it. Thus there is *representational language* which address the world of facts. There is *non-representational language* which comprises the *internal workings* of our representational system. This inner system of language consists of a network of syntactic relations - internal properties and relations between propositions - which *does* the reflecting, but is itself not reflected. It is not part of the factual world - of that which is reflected. Syntactic relations concern

⁶ Peterson (1990) deploys the Tractarian notion of 'the mirror' to set out Wittgenstein's trichotomy. I found this useful and follow him in this respect.

features of language itself, not features lying outside language. So, for example, one would say that logical relations never obtain between *facts* but only between *propositions*. Thus where there is a logical relation between two sentences, it is because of the syntactic (internal) relations between them, and not because of any feature of the world. If, however, we attempt to talk *about* these syntactic relations - that is, if we attempt to *use language* to represent these relations in the way we normally use language to represent the factual world, we hereby depart from bona fide representation. We would fail to *say* anything. We have not formulated any propositions. Such attempts to describe syntactic relations amount to using language in a reflexive and non-representational way. To this category Wittgenstein assigns, in addition to logical propositions (which, incidentally, he discusses at the greatest length), propositions of identity, modality, mathematical propositions, scientific theory and those kinds of philosophical propositions which he believes lead philosophers into philosophical error. Lastly, there is *nonsensical discourse*. This category can be divided into two. There are those expressions which result from confusions in syntax. (They constitute illicit combinations of words for example: 'green ideas sleep furiously', or Wittgenstein's famous 'the good is more or less identical with the beautiful'. Most of the propositions in philosophical discourse (metaphysics) are, according to Wittgenstein, of this sort. The second kind of nonsensical discourse comprises those expressions which attempt to say something about the domain of the mystical (that which lies behind the mirror - ethics, aesthetics, religion). It is an attempt to use our representational system to reflect that which it *cannot* reflect. The mystical is ineffable - it is that which, although *real*, cannot, by its very nature, be described in language. Of these things which we cannot speak, Wittgenstein says we must 'pass over in silence.' (TLP7). These expressions are intrinsically malformed, since they too combine words in ways which do not reflect any possible state-of-affairs in the world. They constitute *misuses* of language.

Thus the TLP has not simply articulated a theory of language. It has in addition shown that language has *limits* - that there are things which it cannot represent. It has thus (i) drawn a distinction between descriptive and vacuous discourse, and a parallel distinction between the describable and indescribable, and (ii) articulated a distinction

between the syntactic and the mystical, and in so doing distinguished non-representational (senseless discourse) from nonsensical discourse. Any sentence which attempts to describe the mystical, or which talks of the syntactic as if it belongs to the domain of facts, is a misuse of language. It purports to be fact-stating but actually *says* nothing. It is a pseudo-proposition.

[F] INTRODUCING THE PROPOSITIONS OF LOGIC

Wittgenstein's ineffabilia can be divided into two, namely, the syntactic and the mystical. The mystical cannot be said because it lies *behind* the mirror of language. The syntactic cannot be said because it is *internal* to the mirror: it cannot be represented because it belongs to the mechanism which makes representation possible. The propositions of logic, as has been said earlier, are of this kind. Now I take an introductory look at the propositions of logic.

Thus far we have seen that logic is not an external feature of reality. Rather, the domain of logic is the domain of the syntactic. Furthermore, we have seen that the propositions of logic are not representational: Wittgenstein's truth-functional analysis of the propositions of logic shows that their truth derives not from the way the world is, but from their structures. The propositions of logic are thus shown to be part of the symbolism of language - part of the rules on the basis of which representational propositions are constructed. But if they are non-representational - if they tell us nothing about the way things are (happen to be) in the world, why would they be of any importance? Their value, according to Wittgenstein, lies in the fact that although they don't *say* anything, they nevertheless *show* the formal features of our representational system. To understand how the propositions of logic *show*, we first need to be clearer on the nature of logical propositions. In TLP 4.46 Wittgenstein says:

Among the possible groups of truth-conditions, there are two extreme cases. 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. In the first case we call the proposition a *tautology*; in the second, a *contradiction*.

Tautologousness (and contradiction) are, for Wittgenstein, the mark of a logical proposition. The propositions of logic are such that, whatever the circumstance, they will always be true or false. They thus lack sense: a proposition has sense if some feature of reality makes it true (or false) - if it is a picture - but because the propositions of logic are true (or false) *whatever* the circumstances might be in the world, they are thus not pictures of the world. The reason such propositions are not pictures of reality (the reason they are true whatever the circumstances) is because they are constructed such that their sign-combination *cancels out* all content. A proposition has content (represents some feature of the world) if it pictures a definite possibility out of various possibilities. Logical propositions, by contrast, *picture nothing in particular*. Given their sign-combination, their representational capacity *cancels out*. To wit: when I assert that it is raining, I am depicting some feature of reality; when I say that it is not raining, I am again picturing some feature of reality, and saying of it that it is *not* so - that is, I am negating it. But in both cases I am saying (picturing) *something*. However, if I put these propositions together (as in 'either it is raining or it is not raining', or 'it is both raining and not raining', I fail to say anything in particular: what I say in the first part of both propositions is canceled out by what is asserted in the second part. Consequently, these propositions *say* nothing. As Wittgenstein says, '....I know nothing about the weather when I know that it is either raining or not raining.' (TLP 4.461)

But if such propositions don't *say* anything, are they to be regarded as propositions? The answer is in the affirmative. At TLP 4.4611 Wittgenstein says: 'Tautologies and contradictions are not nonsensical.' The reason for their not being regarded as senseless is that tautologies and contradictions, although they *say* nothing, are nevertheless not *illicit* combinations of signs: one can construct a truth-table for tautologies and contradictions by following the same rules as one would in constructing a truth-table for any other (meaningful) proposition. Meaningful propositions can be analysed into elementary propositions which picture the world. It

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that in language signs are not combined that way. The propositions of language represent some feature of the world. They have sense. 'p v -p' is vacuous, therefore by its vacuity it shows that signs ought not, in language, to be combined that way. When they are they fail to represent. One becomes aware, by means of such a proposition which says nothing, of rules which reflect logical form - rules which enable us to construct, out of its constituent symbols, propositions that *do* say something. The general point here is that degenerate cases are illuminating just in virtue of their

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degeneracy. But the 'showing' capacity of tautologies does not end with revealing *the* essential features of language alone. Because, for Wittgenstein, the underlying (logical) structure of language matches the underlying structure of the world - what makes manifest the logical structure of language must - *eo ipso* - make manifest the logical structure of the world.

The fact that propositions of logic are tautologies shows the formal-logical- properties of language and the world. (TLP 6.12)

Furthermore, Wittgenstein's contention is not merely that the propositions *show* (but cannot say) logical form - but that what cannot be said by propositions of logic, cannot be said by *any* proposition whatsoever. The syntactic is wholly indescribable. There are two reasons for this.

(i) An expression is a genuine proposition only if it pictures a possible arrangement of objects in the world. Just because our representational system is not an object in the world, no proposition can be a picture of it. Moreover, the syntactic cannot be represented just because the syntactic is precisely what makes representation possible. In Wittgenstein's discussion on solipsism he makes a point which is pertinent here: the *eye* is what does the seeing - is what makes seeing possible. However, the eye cannot *itself* be seen precisely because it is what *does* the seeing. (The eye cannot be found anywhere in the visual field). So too with syntax - because it is what makes language possible, it cannot be captured *by* language.

(ii) Another reason for regarding logic as indescribable is because logical propositions are *necessary* truths (true for all possible substitutions of its constituent propositions). Genuine propositions, by contrast, only assert what *happens* to be true. Genuine propositions are concerned with contingencies, logical propositions are not. Therefore, the domain of logic cannot be captured by exclusively *contingency-expressing* propositions.

Thus far the following has been established:

(i) The propositions of logic, though they do not say anything, nevertheless show something about the logic of our language.

- (ii) Logic (the syntactic) is wholly indescribable. Not the propositions of logic - nor any other propositions, can *say* anything about it.
- (iii) The disintegration of sense in logical propositions manifests not merely the logic of our language but, because logic and the world share the same structure, the logical structure of the world.

However, it is not only via these senseless propositions that we come to see the structure of the world. Wittgenstein claims that pseudo-propositions (nonsensical propositions) are similarly revealing. The pseudo-propositions he has in mind are those which make up the TLP. He regards them as pseudo-propositions because they lack sense not on account of being *vacuous* (like logical propositions) but on account of lacking logical structure. (Their sign combinations are not licit - they cannot be analysed truth-functionally). They are thus not pictures of the world. These propositions are attempts to talk about both the logic of our language and the logic of the world. His claim is that the recognition that such sign-combinations are nonsensical shows us something about the formal-logical properties of the world. Through the recognition of nonsensical propositions, one can come to 'see the world aright'. This category of showing will be taken up later when I discuss his account of philosophical propositions.

An important point which comes out of his discussion on logical propositions is that the only necessity is logical necessity : logical propositions are necessarily true. But, because logical propositions are non-representational, there are therefore no logically necessary facts which correspond to such logically necessary propositions. And so the only necessity is logical necessity.

[G] THE PROPOSITIONS OF LOGIC

In the preface to the TLP, Wittgenstein tells us that the reason philosophical problems are posed is because the logic of our language is misunderstood. The implication is that if the logic of our language is correctly understood, these problems will not be raised. Philosophical problems are the result of grammatical or logical confusions - the results of combining words in ways which are illegitimate and hence do not reflect the logical

structure of a possible state-of-affairs. We do so (that is, combine words in this way) because language conceals its underlying logical structure. To wit: surface grammar disguises the underlying logical structure. We are thus misled and apt to make mistakes. We combine words in ways which do not reflect the logical form of the world. Consequently, such propositions do not *say* anything - they do not describe any possible state-of-affairs. They are thus not true nor false, and consequently devoid of sense. They purport to represent something factual, but actually do not. They are, in this respect, like statements such as 'the good is more or less identical with the beautiful'. However, there is a sense in which they are *different* to the above nonsensical expression. Whereas the above expression is merely nonsensical (mere babble), the propositions of logic *show or display* structural properties of thought. They are *not* thoughts (representations of reality) themselves. Rather, they display those features of our thoughts (and hence our language) which make representation of the factual world possible.

Petersen¹ uses the analogy of a *die* or *mould* for stamping metal cups, to make this point: the die is not *itself* used for drinking. Rather, it acts as the mould which determines the form of the cups, and it is these cups which the mould *provides* us with which is used for drinking. He goes on to say that the mistake which Wittgenstein is pointing out is that of confusing the function of the die with the function of the cup whose form the die provides. But, according to Wittgenstein, it is not just in the area of philosophy where these confusions are found. The propositions of logic, probability, mathematics, as well as scientific laws and theories fall in the same camp: they are all syntactic expressions - expressions which display the mechanism which generates a body of propositions rather than propositions themselves. Wittgenstein's concern is to purge the domain of the factual from what really belongs to the syntactic.

I have chosen to examine three kinds of propositions as illustrative of this aspect of Wittgenstein's project, namely, the propositions of logic, the laws and theories of science, and the propositions of philosophy. Wittgenstein's treatment of the propositions of logic is, however, not merely illustrative of his project: it will serve

¹ Peterson, D., 1990, p132.

later on as a *paradigm case* showing how failure to understand the logic of our language has led to mistaken treatment of propositions. To wit: logical propositions share the same *surface* structure with regular representational propositions, but really differ in their underlying logical structure, and are, on account of this, treated as representational propositions. This leads to numerous philosophical problems. However, these problems are really just pseudo-problems - that is, problems which result from failing to understand the logic of our language. My reason for including his treatment of the propositions of science is so as to make more accessible the kind of claims Wittgenstein makes about the propositions of philosophy.

Wittgenstein's treatment of these issues is reminiscent of the Kantian conviction in the Critique of Pure Reason: for Kant, much of what we think of as external features of reality are actually structural features of the mind through which we conceive the world. Space and Time, for example, are not, for Kant, external features of the world. Rather they are features of our mind, through which we experience the world. Hence Space and Time are not 'out there', they are not features of the world, they are those features which make our experience of the world possible. (Since I have introduced this comparison, I might just add, for the sake of accuracy, that although the thrust of their arguments are similar, there are nevertheless differences. For one, Kant was concerned with what makes *experience* possible. Wittgenstein couched the problem in terms of *thought*, because it is in *thought* that we represent reality. Secondly, whereas for Kant, that which makes experience possible is located in, and contributed by, the mind, for Wittgenstein it is *logical syntax* - a set of rules determining whether a combination of signs is meaningful, which make thought possible.

Wittgenstein's account of the propositions of logic follow (as just mentioned) in that Kantian tradition and stands opposed to what one can call an 'external-feature' account of logic. The following three accounts are representative of such 'external-feature' accounts:²

- (i) Psychological account: This account, formulated by psychologistic logicians, Boole and Erdman, regard logical truths as truths about how the mind works. They are

² Glock, H., 1996, (p198-99) presents a nice summary which I adapt here.

descriptions of how we happen to think. The subject of these descriptions - our basic mental operations - are determined by the nature of the human mind - that is, the specific logical patterns or forms our thought takes derives from our mental make-up. Logic, being located in the domain of psychology is thus in the factual world.

- (ii) Platonistic account: Platonist like Frege argue that logic truths are about our thought and their structures. However, they do not belong to our mental machinery. Rather, they are abstract entities existing in a 'third realm' beyond space and time. The propositions of logic are descriptions of these abstract entities.
- (iii) The third account is that held by Russell. According to him, the propositions of logic are descriptions of the most general and pervasive aspects of reality. Propositions of logic provide us with the most general form of facts by abstracting (the most general features) from the material features of non-logical propositions.

Now the most obvious feature which these three accounts have in common is that they take the propositions of logic to be *descriptions* of something or other. For them, propositions of logic are in this sense just like our ordinary propositions which represent the world. Hence, their truth-values, just like ordinary propositions, depend on the world. Ordinary propositions, however, can be either true or false: if the world *is* as they describe, they are true, otherwise, false. Logical propositions are, however, *necessarily* true. They are tautologies (true in all possible worlds) and their negations are contradictions (false in all possible worlds). Nevertheless, their truth-value still depends on the world. The world contains logically necessary facts - and it is *these* facts which account for the necessity of the propositions of logic. Thus the subject-matter of such propositions lies outside of language, is reflected by language and, is that which accounts for the truth-value of such propositions.

In contrast to this position, the TLP holds that logic is not a special body of external facts, whether facts about our mind or about the most pervasive features of reality or about a platonic 'third realm'. Rather, logic is *intra-linguistic*. It is the about *structure* of thought, and hence the structure of our language. Talk about logic is talk about the *syntactic* features of our language. Logic is the domain of that which is *internal* to our

representational system. It does not belong to the domain of facts described by our representational system - rather it belongs to the (structure of the) system itself. So, whereas what I call the 'external view' takes logic to be something which is reflected *by* the mirror, Wittgenstein maintains that it belongs *inside* the mirror.

In the TLP, Wittgenstein advances his position by presenting a cluster of inter-related arguments which make the same point from different angles - namely, that the propositions of logic do not describe some state-of affairs in the world. Out of the range of arguments, I have selected Wittgenstein's treatment of *logical constants* for examination. Apart from being illustrative of his move to render logic syntactic, this particular argument is also what kick-starts the whole project. To wit: what Wittgenstein calls his '*Grundgedanke*' (Fundamental Thought) plays a pivotal role in the spate of arguments - and it is the consideration of the status of logical constants which is the subject of this 'Fundamental Thought':

The possibility of sentences is based on the principle that objects have signs as their representatives. My fundamental thought is that the 'logical constants' are not representative; that there can be no representatives of the *logic* of facts. (TLP 4.0312)

The importance of the 'Fundamental Thought' cannot be overstated. As Max Black³ puts it: 'The rejection of logical objects marks a climax in Wittgenstein's inquiry. ... His entire conception of logic turns on this.' According to Wittgenstein's picture theory, a concatenation of signs represent some aspect of reality if each sign can be correlated with an object in the world. Any group of signs which do not satisfy this condition does not qualify as a proposition. However, the apparent existence of logical propositions presents a challenge to Wittgenstein's Picture Theory and accompanying atomistic ontology. To wit: if there are logical propositions, then each item in such a proposition must correspond to some object in the world. Typically, such logical propositions contain logical constants (the connectives ' \vee ', '&', ' \supset ' etc. the identity sign '=', and the quantifiers ($\exists x$) and (x)). There would thus have to be logical objects corresponding to such logical terms. But Wittgenstein stands strong in his conviction,

³ Peterson, D., 1990, p48, quoted from M. Black (1964): A Companion to Wittgenstein's 'Tractatus', Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, p264.

as his 'Fundamental Thought' expresses, that there are *no* logical objects. His solution to the problem consists in what Fogelin⁴ aptly calls a 'disappearance theory' of logical constants. His response consists of analyzing expressions which contain logical constants in such a way that these apparently *referring* expressions are simply eliminated. But before we take a look at the solution, let's have a look at the kind of complications which arise if logical constants are treated as referring expressions.

Argument from Equivalence:

Although this argument is used to support the 'Fundamental Thought' (logical constants are not representatives), which serves to open the way to Wittgenstein's theory of truth-functions, it relies on an element which belongs to the theory of truth-functions itself. (This, suggests Peterson⁵, is presumably the reason for the argument appearing *after* Wittgenstein had worked out the details of the theory of truth-functions). Let's look at the argument.

T.5 A sentence is a truth-function of elementary sentences.

T.5.4 At this point, it becomes manifest that there are 'logical objects' or 'logical constants' in Frege or Russell's sense.

T.5.41 The reason is that the results of truth operations or truth-functions are always identical whenever there are one and the same truth-function of elementary sentences.

Wittgenstein's point here is that if two sentences have the same truth conditions, then they have the same *sense*, and hence say the same thing. So, for example, if the sentence 'it is raining' is made true by certain conditions (when it is in fact raining) and false by others (when the sun is shining and there is no rain), and another sentence 'abracadabra' is said to be true (and false) under precisely the same conditions, then these two sentences have the same sense (say the same thing), depict the same possible state-of-affairs. Now, we find that with expressions of logic, two sentences can have the same sense even if their logical constants are *different*. For example $p \supset q$ and $\neg p \vee q$ have precisely the same truth conditions. It follows then that they *say* the same thing. However, if we were to treat the logical constants of ' \supset ' ' \neg ', ' \vee ' as referring terms,

⁴ Fogelin, R., 1976, p36.

⁵ Peterson, D., 1990, p53.

then the two expressions ought to have the different senses. They ought to depict different possible states-of-affairs, since p , q , \supset , \vee , \neg would all refer to different objects. To wit: the expression $p \supset q$ would depict a complex fact consisting of the positive facts p and q , and the relation of material implication. And the expression $\neg p \vee q$ would depict a complex fact consisting of the negative fact $\neg p$, the positive fact q , and the relation of disjunction. However, these two expressions have the same *truth conditions* and hence the same *sense*. They depict the same possible state-of-affairs. Given this, then logical constants cannot stand for logical objects. Logical constants are thus not referring terms - and there are consequently no such things as logical objects. Propositions containing logical constants are thus not propositions in the ordinary sense, since in ordinary propositions every sign stands for an object. The following questions now arise:

- (i) How are we then to conceive of logical constants - if they are not referring signs, what then are they? And
- (ii) What are we to make of what we call the propositions of logic - if they are not propositions in the normal sense (depicting possible states-of-affairs), what then *are* they?

The first question can be answered by examining what was called Wittgenstein's 'disappearance theory' of logical constants. This account will show us that the propositions of logic expressed by sentences containing logical constants (that is, sentences couched in *Russellian notation*) can be replaced by sentences couched in notation where such constants are absent, namely, in Wittgenstein's *tabular notation* and *truth-function notation*. The point here is, given that such alternative notation is possible - that we can express logical propositions without using signs which might be thought to refer to logical objects - it becomes clear that logical constants *do not* refer. If they did, then eliminating them should have affected the equivalence - that is, propositions in Russellian notation would not have been equivalent to propositional signs in tabular or truth-functional notation. But they are.

Let's first have a look at Wittgenstein's truth-functional notation. Normally, the truth-function definition of, for example, material implication is as follows:

p	q		p \supset q
T	T		T
F	T		T
T	F		F
F	F		T

What we have here is an expression ‘(p \supset q)’ and by means of the truth-table we are given its truth-conditions. Thus the definition of ‘(p \supset q)’ is given in terms of its truth-conditions. Wittgenstein’s move, however, is to present the truth-table *itself* as a propositional sign. But his format differs significantly from the one above:

‘ p		q		’
T		T		T
F		T		T
T		F		F
F		F		T

The significance of the quotation marks is to indicate that the *whole* expression, including the T’s and F’s corresponds to the expression ‘(p \supset q)’ in Russellian Notation. Now, given that the left-hand column of the truth-table is always fixed in the same way, there is no need to repeat it, and we need only refer to the right-hand column. The right-hand column can be written out horizontally as follows: ‘(TT T) (p,q)’ or more explicitly ‘(TTFT) (p,q)’. We thus end up with an expression which is totally devoid of logical constants. But the expression (in tabular notation) is both conceptually clear and theoretically adequate⁶ : from our knowledge of (the construction of) truth-tables, it is clear that ‘(TTFT) (p,q)’ means p \supset q (and *not*, p \vee q). And so:

It is clear that a complex of signs ‘F’ and ‘T’ has no object (or complex of objects corresponding to it, just as there is none corresponding to the horizontal and vertical lines or to the brackets. - They are no ‘logical objects’.

Of course the same applies to all signs that express what the scheme of “T’s and ‘F’s express. (TLP 4.441)

⁶ Fogelin, R., 1976, p38.

Wittgenstein's tabular and truth-functional notation show that a pictorial view of logical constants is false. The thesis that propositions containing logical constants can be transformed into truth-functional notation is going to play a crucial role in Wittgenstein's conviction that logic is syntactic (that logical propositions say nothing about the world but display or show the *structure* of propositions). The truth-values of logical propositions, we have come to see, are determined by the logical structures of the sentences involved, and not, as is the case with regular propositions, by anything in the world. Logical propositions are not made true by the world - as 'the cat is on the mat' would be. Rather, we assign truth-values to such propositions simply on the basis of their *structure*. This suggests that logical propositions are syntactic - that is, they are not *about* the factual world, since nothing in the world determines their truth-values. They are not descriptions of any possible state of affairs. They merely *display* the syntax of our language. They display the rules according to which we construct sentences. 'p-v-p' is a *rule* which shows that when constructing a proposition it is only of the form p *or* of the form -p. The relation between logical propositions and other propositions can perhaps be brought out by considering the relation between the *rules* of a game and the particular *moves* in a game. The moves are fixed by the rules: the rules determine what kind of moves can be made. The *moves* are like the *genuinely descriptive sentences* we construct in language whereas the *rules* are like *logic* - fixing the *kind* of sentences we can construct.

Directly after Wittgenstein explicates his truth-functional account, he applies it to both ordinary complex propositions and tautologies and contradictions (4.4, 4.46 and 4.66) and then presents what he calls 'The General Form of a Proposition':

It now seems possible to give the most general propositional form : that is, to give a description of the propositions of *any* sign-language *whatsoever* in such a way that every possible sense can be expressed by a symbol satisfying the description, and every symbol satisfying the description can express a sense, provided that the meanings of the names are suitably chosen.

It is clear that *only* what is essential to the most general propositional form may be included in its description - for otherwise it would not be the most general form.

The existence of a general propositional form is proved by the fact that there cannot be a proposition whose form could not have been foreseen (i.e. constructed). The general form of a proposition is: This is how things stand.

Why does he give this general form now (and not in the earlier passages where he talks about the structure of language)? Because now that he has presented a truth-functional account of logical constants, he has at the same time furnished us with a truth-functional account of propositions. We know now that complex propositions are truth-functions of elementary propositions, and elementary propositions are pictures of the world (states-of-affairs in the world). Given this, a complex proposition is then too a picture of the world, and, as it stands, it simply describes or depicts the world. It, so doing, simply tells you *how things are*. Thus the logical form which is common to all propositions is 'This is how things stand'. If we abstract from the *particular* content of *any* proposition, they will all have this general (logical) form.

And thus by investigating the essence of language (its structure and function), Wittgenstein came up with essence of a proposition, the formula or code by means of which we can identify a bona fide proposition.

[H] THE PROPOSITIONS OF SCIENCE

An important point which can be derived from the discussion on logical propositions is that the only necessity is logical necessity. Logical propositions are non-representational. There are therefore no logically necessary facts which correspond to such propositions. Thus the truth-values of such propositions do not derive from some feature in the world. Rather, their truth-value derives from the *structure* of such propositions. Necessity, therefore, pertains to syntax. Thus there is no necessity but logical necessity. This position poses a problem for another area of discourse, namely, scientific laws and theories. The laws and theories of science are traditionally taken to be necessary assertions, descriptions of ways in which the world necessarily is - or descriptions of features which, as a matter of necessity, obtain in the world. Wittgenstein deals with this challenge by denying that they are propositions. The laws of science are not descriptions of necessary features of the world. Rather, he claims, they are *insights* about the *forms* of laws. They are insights into the *structure* our descriptions of the world take. At 6.34 Wittgenstein says:

All such statements, including the principle of sufficient reason, the laws of continuity in nature and of least effort in nature etc., etc. - all these are *a priori* insights about the forms in which the sentences of science can be cast.

and at 6.32

The law of causality is not a law but the form of a law.

The latent idea here is that the way we think about the world, the way we represent the world is governed by *rules* of representation. These rules fix the kinds of thoughts we have - the kinds of propositions we assert. They are hence the forms in which propositions are cast. What we take to be the laws of nature are really just insights about these rules, about the forms which determine the kinds of propositions we assert. At 6.35 Wittgenstein makes an analogy between these rules and a *net* and says:

Laws like the principle of sufficient reason etc., are about the net and not about what the net describes.

Thus scientific laws concern syntactic features rather than facts in the world, and the point is that the world is not described by such scientific principles, but by what the principles provide us with - that is, the world is described by the propositions churned out by the moulds which are the scientific laws. Scientific laws are not descriptions, they are what *provide* descriptions. The analogy used earlier¹ of a die for stamping metal cups is directly applicable here. The die (or mould) is used to stamp metal cups which are to be used for drinking. The die is not *itself* used for drinking. It is the *metal cups* the die provides us with which is used for drinking. By the same token, the laws are not *themselves* (used for) descriptions of the world. Rather, it is the *propositions* (the forms of which) the *law provides us with*, which are used for describing the world. Taking the laws of nature to be descriptions is like confusing the function of the die with the function of the cup. Just as the function of the die is to fix the form of the cup, the function of the net is to fix the form of our thought. It determines the way in which we represent the world. And the mistake we make is to *project* the form of a proposition *onto* the world, taking it to be a feature *of* the world, when in reality it is a feature of that which makes our representation of the world possible. This last point is an important one. It's not just the case that the net fixes the kinds of propositions we make, but that the net is what makes representation of the world possible. The point can be brought out by considering the following analogy. Suppose our only way of seeing the world is through spectacles which are tinted green. The world thus appears to us to have a green tint. The mistake would be to think that the greenness is a feature of the world, when in reality it is a feature of the spectacles which make it possible for us to see the world in the first place.

Wittgenstein's point is similar to Hume's treatment of causality. According to Hume, *that* one object causes a change in another is not a *feature* of the world. Causation is not *in* the world, it is not there as another feature along with the objects. Rather, it is a *projection* from our minds, produced by repeated observations of constant conjunctions. For Wittgenstein too, causation is not a feature of the world. But he differs from Hume in that, whereas for Hume, *that* one event causes another is

¹ Peterson, D., 1990, p132.

something we *come* to assert on account of repeated observations of constant conjunctions, for Wittgenstein, *that* one event causes another is our *way* of representing the world. It is hence '*there*' right from the beginning. We do not observe the world and *then* come to assert that one event causes another. Rather, *that* one event causes another is, in a sense, the *eyes* through which we 'see' the world (or make sense of the world). Furthermore, whereas for Hume causality is just another feature of the way we *happen* to think (it is a psychological feature of our minds), for Wittgenstein, causality is a *pre-condition* of thought. It is one of the 'rules' which make representation possible.

Thus the scientific laws which we take to be descriptions of the world are really concerned with the rules which we are, in a sense, in the *grip* of: we say that every event having a cause is a necessary feature of the world - things are, of necessity, organized like that. But really it is not the world that is necessarily like that. Rather, it is that *we* cannot think otherwise. *The necessity is not a factual one, but a logical one.* It is a necessity which pertains to our language (to syntax). The following example of Wittgenstein at TLP 6.3611 brings this point out clearly:

... when people say that neither of two events (which exclude one another) can occur; because there is *nothing to cause* the one to occur rather than the other, it is really a matter of our being unable to describe one of the two events unless there is some sort of asymmetry to be found. And if such asymmetry *is* to be found, we can regard it as the *cause* of the occurrence of the one and the non-occurrence of the other.

Mounce² elucidates the point as follows. Suppose I said that it won't rain tonight because it didn't rain last night and conditions are exactly the same. Suppose now that it *does* rain. I will then have to admit one of two things: either that conditions are tonight, unbeknownst to me, different to last night, or that something has happened without a cause. Wittgenstein's point here is that the facts can never force us conclude the latter alternative. This illustrates the *hold* that causal thinking has over us. Because we are in the *grips* of such forms of thinking, the events can never force us to conclude that something happened without a cause. In the event that we *don't* find a cause, we

² Mounce 1981, p76.

will then take whatever allows us to distinguish between the two events *as separate events* and posit it as the *cause* of that event. That is, in the absence of finding any difference (which would explain why one event occurred and another did not), we will resort to that in virtue of which we can say that there are two events and then regard *that* difference as the cause of the one event occurring and not the other. So, in the case of the our earlier example, if we find no difference in the weather conditions on the two successive nights which would explain why it rained the one night and not the other, we will *not cease* to look for a cause. (Looking for causes is the *form* of our representation - that every event has a cause is the form into which our propositions about the world are cast). In the absence of finding a cause, we will then take whatever distinguishes the two events as *two* events (in the case of our example, different times of month or year) and then regard *that* as the *cause* of the one event obtaining and not the other. Thus the assertion 'every event has a cause' is not a description of the world. Rather, it is a function of our 'cause and effect' grid. To say 'A has a cause' is not to say anything definite about A at all. Insofar as A is a distinct thing, it *must* differ from other things. And, since any difference between A and, say, B can be treated as a cause of A, to say A has a cause is really to say nothing at all. The point comes through even clearer if we consider, as Mounce³ suggests, an example used by Wittgenstein many years later: Suppose we took two seeds from two different plants of the same kind, one from plant A, one from plant B. When we plant them, the (resultant) plant A differs from the one which developed from seed B. Our first reaction is to suppose that there *is* a difference between the two seeds, it's just that we have failed to detect it. However, suppose this happened continuously, without our being able to find a difference between the two seeds; what will we conclude? This situation is like the one we examined earlier. In that example we had two conditions exactly alike, but the one resulted in rain whereas the other did not. Likewise in this example, we have two conditions exactly alike (seeds), but the one results in a plant with certain characteristics, the other with other characteristics. Wittgenstein's point here, as earlier, is that in the event of not finding a cause, we will never conclude that there is no cause. In this particular case, Wittgenstein says, we will conclude that the cause of the two plants developing differently has to do with their origin : the one seed

³ Mounce 1981, p76.

produced *this* kind of plant because it comes from such-and-such a plant, the other produces another kind of plant because it comes from a different plant. Thus in the event of not finding an obvious difference between the two seeds, we will take whatever distinguishes them as two or as distinct - in this case their origin - and posit *this* as a cause for the difference between their resultant plants. The two seeds, *just in so far* as they are two, are bound to differ from each other in some or other respect. Our cause and effect grid seeks out *any* difference, even if it means resorting to the latter kind, so as to posit one event as the cause of another. Thus, that the two seeds *must* differ in some way if they produce different kinds of plants, is not a factual matter (it is not a feature of the factual world). Rather, it is a matter of logic: *we* demand that every event must have a cause. It is very possible, according to Wittgenstein, that some event can happen without a cause, but *we* will think it *illogical*. It is not the world that is such that every event has or must have a cause. Rather, we assert that every event has a cause because we cannot think otherwise. Thus that every event has a cause is not a law-like description of events in the world, rather it is an insight into the *form* of a law - it concerns the rules in which propositions about the world are cast.

Wittgenstein illustrates this point further by using the idea of a net which determines the kinds of thoughts we have. He makes the following analogy. Newtonian mechanics (an example of scientific theory) is like a fine *square* mesh across a white paper which is covered with irregular black spots. We can describe the distribution of spots by means of the net. However, we can obtain an equally accurate description by using a *triangular* mesh. The different meshes are, to use a term of Putnam's, 'different ways of cutting the world up' - different forms of representation, 'different systems for describing the world.'⁴

Two points must be noted here:

- (i) Wittgenstein's position is not one of extreme relativism. He is not saying that the facts of the world are determined by the theories we hold about them.
- (ii) The 'net' is not wholly uninformative; though it *is* the case that the net (the laws of science) are not descriptive and so tell us nothing about the world, there is another

⁴ Mounce 1981, p78.

sense in which the net *can* tell us something about the world (though not by description).

I deal with (ii) first:

In TLP 6.342 Wittgenstein says:

..... the possibility of describing the world by means of Newtonian Mechanics tells us nothing about the world: but what does tell us something about it is the precise way in which it is possible to describe it by these means. We are also told something about the world by the fact that it can be described more simply with one system of mechanics than with another.

Wittgenstein's point here is that although the net itself tells us nothing about the world, its *capacity* to provide a complete description *does* tell us something about the world. The distinction he is making here is one between what is said about the world by a form of representation itself, namely *nothing*, and what is said about the world by adding that a particular form of representation affords a complete description of the world - and in this second case, a great deal is told. In TLP 6.3431 he says further:

The laws of physics, with all their logical apparatus, nevertheless speak, however indirectly, about the objects of the world.

For example, say we used a net of exactly circular cells to describe the surface of black square patches. In this case no complete description will result unless an infinitesimally fine mesh were used. However, the *nature* of the net plus the fact that it is unsuitable for describing the surface *would* tell us something about the surface, namely, that the black patches were not circular, or rather, that they are *not* of such a shape as can be represented by a circular mesh. Thus Wittgenstein is not saying that any net will do: some nets are more suitable than others. Consequently what he is *definitely not* saying is that any way of 'cutting up the world' produces an equally accurate description of the world: the different descriptions are not on par. Thus Newtonian mechanics and Theory of Relativity do not merely provide two different (but equally accurate) descriptions of the world. It may be that what Newtonian mechanics allows us to see is less accurate than what Theory of Relativity does. Hence his position is not one of

extreme relativism. And so the related point at (ii) is made: the net is not wholly uninformative. *That* a particular net provides a more complete description tells us something about the world.

Earlier on in our discussion on the propositions of logic the following point was made. Tautologies, just in virtue of their being degenerate cases of propositions, tell us something about the world. And the general point made was that degenerate cases, just in their degeneracy, are informative. Now a similar point is made: *that* one thing is more suitable than another tells us something about the *nature* of that which it is used for. And here the general point is that successful cases, just because they are successful, are informative.

Before I sum up, a point of distinction must be made. When Wittgenstein discusses the laws and theories of science, his general point is that they *say* nothing. They do not describe any feature of the world. They concern the syntactic and are insights into the forms of representation. As an example of a scientific law, he cites the law and cause and effect (every event has a cause) and as an example of scientific theory he mentions Newtonian mechanics. He makes the point about Newtonian mechanics being a system of description by comparing it to a mesh used to describe some surface. Furthermore, he indicates that if the net were changed, one would have a different description. The point to be noted here is not merely that *if* the net were changed, the description would be different, but that the net *can* change - as is evident with a change from a description of the world by means of Newtonian mechanics to one by means of Theory of Relativity. (What exactly is responsible for this change is not important here, the point is that it *can* change.) However, the point made using the law of cause and effect is somewhat different. (Wittgenstein himself does not mention this.) To wit: it is still true that *if* our forms of representation were different, we would describe the world differently (the world seen through green tinted glasses will look different to the world seen through blue tinted glasses). However, the difference here is that the mesh, or net, as he calls it, is not one that we (can) adapt and therefore not one that we *could* change. The law of causality concerns the *form* of representation, where this form is a *pre-condition* for representation. Such a law is then more primitive, one could say,

than the laws of Newtonian mechanics. Although the facts can force us to abandon a scientific theory (Newtonian mechanics), they can never force us to give up the 'law' that every event has a cause.

The main concern has been to present Wittgenstein's view that what we often-times take to be descriptions of the world is really something syntactic. And the content of such assertions are not features of the world, rather, they concern the pre-conditions for representation - the pre-conditions for thought and hence the pre-conditions for language. To this end, Wittgenstein's comments on the *laws of nature* (causality) are more pertinent than his comments about Newtonian Physics in making the point that the laws and theories of science are aspects of our representational system. This is so because the claim with the causality example is that the laws of science concern the pre-conditions of representation; the analogy of the *net* however, is useful only in a limited way - that is, insofar as it illustrates the point that our descriptions of the world are 'moulded' by the net.

[I] THE PROPOSITIONS OF PHILOSOPHY

The move in the TLP, it has been suggested, is one of purging the domain of representational discourse of expressions which really concern the syntactic, and are thus non-representational. With regard to the propositions of logic, it was maintained that such propositions fail to say anything, since they do not fix any determinate area in logical space. Rather, they concern syntax. They show or display the logic of our language. Furthermore, what they are purportedly about is not something factual: syntax is not a feature (a possible state-of-affairs) in the world. It belongs to the inner domain of the Great Mirror - to the *mechanism* of representation. This mechanism is wholly inexpressible - it cannot be described by any proposition at all. But it can be *shown*, by (i) the vacuity of the propositions of logic, and (ii) by genuine (contingent) propositions. As for the propositions of philosophy, Wittgenstein says at TLP 4.003:

Most of the statements and questions to be found in philosophical works are not false but nonsensical.

The propositions of philosophy, we will come to see, are given a similar treatment to those of logic :

- (i) they are regarded as non-representational,
- (ii) they are relegated to the domain of the syntactic
- (iii) what they are purportedly about, namely, essential features of reality, are not features of reality at all. Rather they are aspects of our representational system
- (iv) these aspects are wholly indescribable. They cannot be said, but they can be shown, by genuine representational propositions.

This is the short story. I examine these issues in more detail below.

The notion of philosophy which is at issue in the TLP is philosophy conceived of as a discipline which attempts to study the essential features of thought, reality and the relation between them. Wittgenstein's claim is that propositions which purport to be about such essential features are nonsensical. In order to understand what he means by nonsensical, it will be useful to review his reasons for rendering the propositions of logic as senseless. Logical propositions, as we have seen, *say* nothing. The notion of *saying* is closely bound up with that of *sense*. A proposition with sense fixes an area or situation in logical space. What the proposition says (its sense) *is* just that particular division it makes in logical space. Tautologies and contradictions, however, make no such division in logical space.

A tautology leaves open to reality the whole of logical space: a contradiction fills the whole of logical space leaving no point of it for reality. Thus neither of them can determine reality in any way. (TLP 4.463)

Tautologies and contradictions thus lack sense. They do not depict any determinate situation, and thus fail to *say* anything. However, although they lack sense, they are not nonsensical, since, as we have seen, their signs are combined legitimately. They are well-formed. Philosophical propositions also lack sense and are accordingly non-representational - but for a different reason. And this is the very reason for which they are rendered nonsensical. Philosophical propositions are nonsensical because their sign-combinations are *illicit*. They fail to fix an area in logical space because no object -

combination maps onto their particular sign-combination. In short, their sign-combination contravenes logical syntax.

It is worthwhile to note that for Chomsky, even if an expression is syntactically well-formed, it can still be regarded as 'semantically anomalous'. In other words, its semantic status is not guaranteed by its syntactic structure. So, for example, 'Colourless green ideas sleep furiously' is, for Chomsky, syntactically well-formed but 'semantically anomalous'. For Wittgenstein, however, if an expression is nonsensical (perhaps the analogue of Chomsky's 'semantically anomalous') it is just so because it is not well-formed - because it breaks the rules of syntax. (Remember that he draws the limit of language against the logical form of the world - that is, against the totality of possible states-of-affairs. If a sign-combination does not reflect a possible state-of-affairs, it fails to qualify as a proposition - as part of language.) In the propositions of logic, signs are combined in just the same way as they are when they occur in a genuine proposition. The 'v', in 'pv - p' (a tautology) function in the same way as the 'v' in 'pvq' (a regular proposition with sense). With philosophical propositions, however, words are (have to be) used or combined quite differently. How we are to understand this 'different way' in which words in such a proposition are combined is intimately linked with what we attempt to express with such propositions. To wit: philosophical propositions, as we have said, are attempts to talk about the *essence* of reality. Because of this, words now have to be used reflexively - that is, they have, in a sense, to be turned in on themselves and, accordingly, be used in quite new senses. The sense in which such words are used departs from the sense in which they are used in ordinary (genuine) propositions. Wittgenstein's criticism is that these new (philosophical) senses can be given no coherent explanation. If meanings depart from ordinary senses, then we fail to *say* anything by these words. Any attempt to explain such meanings using *ordinary* terms just *domesticates* the words and demonstrates that such a word cannot really have a meaning which departs from its meaning in a genuine proposition; alternatively, if we *stipulate* a 'new' meaning for such a word, then we are simply dealing with two *different* symbols.

The bottom line is that language is limited to describing possible states-of-affairs. It achieves such a function because its logical form mirrors that of states-of-affairs in logical space. Possible states-of-affairs are combinations of objects. The combinatory possibilities are written into the objects themselves. The combinatory possibilities of objects are *fixed*. There are no combinatory possibilities outside of these. The limits of conceivability are fixed by these possible combinations. Any word-combination which is not in accordance with a possible object-combination falls outside language. It transgresses the limits of intelligibility. So, because any attempt to talk about essential features of reality results in the contravention of syntax, any attempt to talk about essential features of reality attempts to go beyond what we can do intellectually. Such attempts produce nonsensical expressions, since these expressions are not governed by syntax.

Though the point is a quite general one, the idea that philosophical propositions transgress the limits of language (contravene the rules of logical syntax) is best explained in connection with the discussion in the 4.12's in the TLP on *formal concepts*. According to Wittgenstein, formal concepts such as 'object', 'number', 'colour' (ontological categories), and 'name', 'proposition' (logico-linguistic categories) in their ordinary language use, function as *variables*. For example, we say: 'There are two objects which ...', which, in logical notation is expressed as ' $\exists x \exists y \dots$ '. Or 'The colour is too bright' is expressed as ' $(\exists x) Cx. \dots$ '. Such words function as variables over which properties can be predicated. However, in philosophical propositions we attempt to use such words as *predicates*. Typically, they get used as '*proper-concept words*'. For example, we say: 'Red is a colour', 'Seven is a number'. Here 'colour' and 'number' are used as predicates. And whenever such words are used as proper-concept words (and thus as a predicates) '... nonsensical pseudo-propositions are the result.' (TLP 4.1272). So, although one can say 'there are books', one cannot say 'there are objects'. According to Wittgenstein, when words such as 'object' and 'colour' are used as predicates, they can be given neither sense, nor *Bedeutung* (reference).¹ A word or name, to recall, only has a meaning (referent) in the context of

¹ No *sense* because they are combined illicitly; no *reference* because the sentence in which they occur lacks logical form.

a proposition, so, if an expression does not qualify as a genuine proposition its words lack referents.

Now, apart from the mere fact that formal concepts are not *normally* used as predicates, what, according to the TLP, is actually wrong with using them thus? To understand this we have to understand the role predicates play in ordinary language. We can examine this by making reference to TLP 3.31. Here Wittgenstein claims that a symbol (a sign together with its sense) contributes toward the sense of a proposition (makes a semantic contribution). Thus, if an expression is used as a symbol (that is, if it is used to make a contribution towards sense) but fails to, it is not a genuine symbol and hence any sentence which contains it is not a genuine proposition. To elaborate:² take the expression 'red is a colour'. Anyone capable of understanding this expression must already know the various uses (combinatory possibilities) of the word 'red'. They must already understand *that* red is a colour (and not a number, say). Thus to say of red *that* it is a colour it to make no semantic contribution to the sentence which has not *already* been made by the word 'red' alone. 'red is a colour' does not *say* anything. Rather, it stipulates a rule for the use of the word 'red', or better, it gives the rule for the combinatory possibilities of 'red' (that is, that it is to be combined as a colour-word and not, say, as a number-word). In the dictum of Wittgenstein's later work, 'red is a colour' is an act of *naming* and since '[n]aming is so far not a move in the language game.' (PI 49), one is thus not saying or communicating anything. 'Red is a colour' is more like stage-setting: it provides one with names *so that* communication can take place by using them. It's like setting up the chess board and indicating what is what on the board, that *this* piece is to act as king and another as queen, etc. Setting up the board like this is not yet playing the game - setting up the board like this does not yet count as a *move* in the game. Likewise, naming is only setting up the stage *in order for* a game to be played, hence naming is not yet a move in the language game. Now, failure to make a semantic contribution to the semantic content of a sentence renders such a term, as well as the proposition in which it occurs, meaningless. All philosophical propositions which employ such formal concepts - propositions such as 'red is a colour,' 'seven is a number', 'John is an object', 'being red is a concept' -

² I take this way of setting out the issues from Carruthers 1981.

admit of the same defect. The specific point that is being made here is that an expression like 'red is a colour' is not a representational proposition, because 'is a colour' is already, in a sense, contained in 'red'. (If you understand 'red', you already understand *that* it is a colour.) No semantic contribution has been made in the sense that nothing more is added by 'is a colour'.

This defect, however, is a consequence of a more general objection: in 'red is a colour', 'is a colour' has no meaning. That is, in 'red is a colour' we have failed to give a meaning to 'is a colour'. To understand this point we need to refer to TLP 5.4733. Wittgenstein uses the example of 'Socrates is identical' and says that this sentence says nothing because we have failed to give 'identical' any adjectival meaning. If a proposition '..... has no sense, that can only be because we have failed to give a meaning to some of the constituents.' This general objection derives from Wittgenstein's *compositionalism* - the idea that the sense of a proposition is determined by the meanings of its constituent expressions. ('Like Frege and Russell, I construe a proposition as a function of the expressions contained in it.' TLP. 3.318). The 'compositionalism' argument goes like this: the meaning of a name is determined by the object it stands for. Objects possess logical form. The logical form of objects is their possibility of entering into certain combinations with other objects. Objects, and accordingly, their names, fall into different logical categories: 'seven' can only be combined as in, for example 'give me more than seven apples', but not as in 'seven is too bright'. The combinatory possibilities of 'seven' exclude the latter combinations. When names are combined according to the combinatory possibilities of the objects for which they stand, such a combination depicts a possible state-of-affairs. If they are not, the expression fails to depict a possible state-of-affairs. The reason it fails is that the constituent names have incompatible meanings (the objects for which they stand do not combine in that way). We have, in this case, mixed up categories and committed what in Rylean terms would be called a 'category mistake'³. In 'Socrates is identical', 'identical' functions as an adjective - but the combinatory possibilities of 'identical' preclude such a function. The same point was made earlier ('red is a colour', 'seven is a number'), and it was emphasised that such a 'category mistake' amounts to

³ Ryle's notion of 'category mistake' was inspired by these issues in the TLP.

transgressing the limits of sense. To utter such statements would thus be to talk unintelligibly.

In summary, the issue stands like this: the problem with philosophical propositions is that their sign-combinations are illicit. They commit a 'category mistake'. More specifically, these propositions *say* nothing because we have failed to give a meaning to some of the expressions in them. The particular sense in which we have failed to give a meaning to some of the expressions is by using formal concepts as genuine concepts. The result of this is that such expressions (formal concepts) fail to make a semantic contribution to the sentence, and thus the sentence as a whole lacks sense.

Why then *do* we make philosophical propositions? There are two issues which contribute toward this. Firstly, we have a tendency to 'talk' about the essence of reality, and secondly, we misunderstand the logic of our language. Because ordinary language disguises its underlying logical structure, we are provided with a false promise that talk of essential features is possible. Thus, we have a tendency to want to talk about the essential features of reality. However, if we understood the logic of our language correctly, we would see that we cannot engage in such talk. We would see that if we attempted to, we would utter statements which contravene logical syntax, and we would thus not be saying anything intelligible. (This is of course not to suggest that what we attempt to talk about is nonsense, or not real. It's just that we find that we cannot put such (shall we say) 'insights' into words. They cannot be captured by language.) It might strike one as a little odd that I refer to expressions such as 'red is a colour' as 'insights'; one would expect an insight to be more significant. However, the examples I have used above, although they *are* 'insights' according to Wittgenstein, are nevertheless among the banal ones. They are insights into the logic of our language. Perhaps an expression such as 'language and the world share logical form' would qualify as a more significant insight. It is significant because it tells you something about the relation between language and the world and how language is possible, and it qualifies as an insight rather than an expression in language, since it is an attempt to talk about an essential feature of the world. As such it is regarded, together with expressions such as 'red is a colour', as failing to *say* anything.

If we understood the logic of our language we would not 'give in' to such tendencies - we would not say what cannot be said. Rather, we would heed the final admonition of the TLP: 'whereof we cannot speak, thereof we must remain silent.'

At the end of the TLP Wittgenstein says (of the propositions of the TLP): '...Anyone who understands me eventually recognises them as nonsensical...'. He thus designates the same status to the propositions of the TLP as he does to those of metaphysics. Why? Because the propositions of the TLP, like those of metaphysics, attempt to make claims about the essential nature of representational discourse, and in so doing employ formal concepts as genuine concepts (for example, 'the world is the totality of facts'; 'objects have logical form', etc.), hereby transgressing the rules of syntax. There is a difference, however, between the propositions of the TLP and those of metaphysics. Whereas those of metaphysics are merely nonsensical (although disguised and not such obvious nonsense as 'gloocugloo!' is) the propositions of the TLP are regarded as elucidations: they enable one, according to Wittgenstein, to see the world aright. The propositions of the TLP say what cannot be said, but in so doing, they 'get the picture across'. And once one has the picture, one sees that one cannot strictly speaking (that is, according to the dictates of the TLP) say these things. This being the case, the propositions of the TLP do not qualify as *propositions* in the TLP's sense of the word.

I have said above that the propositions of the TLP say what cannot be said. The problem with this, however, is that if certain things cannot be said, how can one claim that they have been said? The way to understand this is to realise that the propositions of the TLP are really only attempts to say what cannot be said, and *as such* they don't qualify as language. Rather, they qualify as belonging to the category of 'ways of showing' that was mentioned earlier - singing, whistling, praying, poetry, art etc. Taken as belonging to this category, they are *another way of showing*, and that is probably why, for Wittgenstein, they are valuable. However, if they are (mistakenly) taken as *saying* anything - if they are taken as, strictly speaking, intelligible - they become a problem, for then they come to be treated as genuine discourse, and then we are tempted to ask of them all the questions that can be asked of issues expressed in

genuine discourse. These questions would then be, strictly speaking, illegitimate ones - ones which are the result of misunderstanding the logic of our language. They would be misuses of language, and are not to be taken seriously - that is, they are not to be taken in the same way we take questions in genuine representational discourse.

Three categories of nonsensical discourse can be identified in the TLP.

(i) patent nonsense (Chomsky's 'green ideas sleep furiously').

(ii) disguised nonsense ('every event has a cause', 'red is a colour'). (These expressions contravene syntax and as such are not genuinely representational. However, they are not mere nonsense in that they actually concern syntax - they are attempts to talk about what cannot be spoken of. They are also not patent nonsense, in that it is not obvious that they contravene syntax, in the way, say, Chomsky's example clearly does.)

(iii) elucidatory nonsense. (These expressions (like the ones of the TLP) are nonsensical in that they contravene syntax, but unlike the second category of nonsense, they are not a *display* of the rules of syntax, as we have earlier suggested is the case with expressions like 'red is a colour'. Rather, they are attempts to talk directly about the structure of language. For example, 'A picture is a fact.' (2.141), 'A name means an object. The object is its meaning.' (3.203).)

There is a further distinction between traditional metaphysics and the propositions of the TLP. Whereas the former *purport* to be about the most essential features of the world (for example, 'every event has a cause is a feature of the world') but are really, according to Wittgenstein, aspects of syntax or our representational system, the propositions of the TLP concern our representational system directly. More specifically, Wittgenstein's concern in the TLP is to understand the nature of representation by coming to understand the nature of the limits of thought (and by implication, the world). To echo Kant: 'The ground of the relation of representation to its object "constitutes the key to the whole secret of hitherto still obscure metaphysics.'⁴ Both Kant and the Wittgenstein of the TLP were convinced that the only proper way to do

⁴ Kant, Emmanuel : Kant - Philosophical Correspondence 1759-99, pp71-72, (Letter to Marcus Hertz, Feb. 21, 1772), quoted in Stern 1995, p66.

philosophy is to come to understand the limits of intellectual discourse - for Kant, the limits of (pure) reason, for Wittgenstein (who articulates intellectual discourse in linguistic terms) the limits of language and (what amounts to the same thing) the limits of thought. As for traditional metaphysics, the TLP objection is that despite the fact that it purports to be *about* the world, it is in fact *not* about the world. In fact, it is not *about* anything at all, since it does not constitute genuine representational discourse. Rather, it displays (in some cases) the rules of our language. (The expressions 'every event has a cause', 'objects are extended,' etc. do not tell us anything about the world. Rather, they concern the mode of representation. They belong to the *forms* by means of which we represent the world.) The point that is being made here is that although *both* the propositions of (traditional) metaphysics and those of the TLP are rendered nonsensical, the former *purport* to be about the world, but *actually* concern syntax, whereas the latter are a *patent* attempt to talk about syntax (if only to say that syntax cannot be spoken about!). The TLP articulates this concern with syntax (the limits of representational discourse) in terms of, as we have seen, the distinction between what *can be said* and what *cannot be said* but only *shown*. What unites them, however, is that they both *actually* concern syntax - and it is for this reason that the same criticism is leveled against them. They are nonsensical because they attempt to talk about what cannot be said in representational discourse.

It might be objected at this point that, contrary to what I have said above, Wittgenstein does not confine himself to talk about our representational system exclusively: he *does* make ontological claims, and quite a number of them too! What then makes his project different to that of traditional metaphysicians? The distinction can perhaps be brought out like this. Whereas traditional metaphysicians engaged in what one could call *speculative* or *dogmatic* metaphysics, Wittgenstein's project is an *a priori* one. Wittgenstein's ontological claims are demanded *a priori* (and so too, he believed, were his claims about language): if representational discourse is possible, then language must have such and such features. One of these features is that language and the world are logically isomorphic. Given this as well as other features of language (that there necessarily are simple or primitive linguistic entities, namely, names, and that the meaning of a name is the object it picks out, so there must be ontologically equivalent

entities to these names, namely, simple objects, etc.), the world *must* be thus and so. The account of the world which Wittgenstein offers is thus an *a priori* one. Language *must* be such and such, and given the relation between language and the world (a relation which he too believed was demanded *a priori* if representational discourse is possible), the world *must* have certain features. This is not so with speculative metaphysics; that is, the speculative metaphysician's ontological accounts are not arrived at in this way.

It is important to realize that Wittgenstein's concern to articulate the nature (and hence the limits) of representational discourse really is just an implication of a more central and dominant concern. The real driving force behind his work is to articulate a distinction between *showing* and *saying*. Wittgenstein's reply to Russell's preliminary questions about the TLP confirms this:

- Now I'm afraid you haven't really got hold of my main contention, to which the whole business of logical propositions is only a corollary. The main point is the theory of what can be said by propositions - i.e. by language - (and, which comes in the same thing, what can be *thought*) and what cannot be said by propositions, but only shown; which I believe, is the cardinal problem of philosophy. -⁵

In fact, the distinction between what can be said and what can be only be shown pervades the TLP from its preface to its closing admonishing lines: 'What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence.' And in a letter to von Ficker we read that the TLP 'consists of two parts: the one presented here plus all that I have *not* written. And it is precisely this second part that is the important one. My book draws limits to the sphere of the ethical from the inside as it were, and I am convinced that this is the *ONLY rigorous* way of drawing these limits...'.⁶ Thus Wittgenstein's intention is to draw a distinction between what can be said and what cannot be said - *from within*, that is - by saying only that which *can* be said. Why must the limits only be drawn from within? Because it is only 'within' that makes sense. (The limits must be drawn in *language*.) What lies on the 'other side of the limit' is, as Wittgenstein says, simply nonsense. But the TLP, *in*

⁵ Letters to Russell, Keynes and Moore, p71, Aug. 19, 1919, quoted in Stern, D 1995, p70.

⁶ Paul Engelmann, Letters from Ludwig Wittgenstein, pp143-44. The letter was written in 1919, quoted in Stern, D., 1995, p8.

attempting to achieve its objective, ends up by *itself* crossing the limits. The situation is as follows: Wittgenstein's intention is to draw the limit by saying only what can be said - and in so doing indicate what cannot be said precisely by *not* saying it. Now such an objective could perhaps be achieved by *literally* saying only what can be said (saying only that which conforms to the rules of syntax). What one would end up with by doing so is an *inventory* of all sayable expressions.⁷ For example: 'the cat is on the mat', 'the cat is not on the mat', 'the dog is on the roof', 'the dog is ...' and so on. The entire inventory of sayable expressions would thus constitute 'what can be said' - and the limit would hereby have been drawn from within. (An objection could be raised to this idea of an inventory: an inventory comes to an end. Only 'so many things' constitute an inventory - whereas the list of what can be said is, by contrast, endless. In response, perhaps one could say that such a very long(!) inventory would constitute better obedience to Wittgenstein's admonitions: rather say *less* than what can be said than attempt to say what *cannot* be said! It could be argued that by doing it this way (that is, taking a go at drawing the limits from the inside - providing an inventory), Wittgenstein's point would not be made. By saying only that which can be said (providing an inventory), no clear indication would have been given that language has limits. So Wittgenstein's intention of saying only what can be said and hereby pointing to the fact (or rather, showing) that language has limits (and that the limits must not be crossed) would not be executed.⁸ However, rather than giving an inventory, Wittgenstein wanted to give the 'general form of a proposition' - a formula, or trademark, as it were, characteristic of all genuine propositions. So, rather than having a list of all genuine propositions, we would instead be equipped with a formula that would enable us to recognize those propositions which can be said. Hence Wittgenstein set out to present a *critique* of language - an account of *the essence* of language (its structure and function). A *formula* (rather than an *inventory*) is what he thought he would present us with. And this is just where the trouble lay: saying what a proposition (essentially) involves, as we shall see, understanding (saying or thinking) *what it is not*. In short, saying what a proposition *is* involves attempting to take an 'outside' perspective - a perspective where you can 'see' (and hence say) what counts as a

⁷ Holiday, A. (Personal correspondence, 1997.) Anthony Holiday is a senior lecturer in Philosophy at the School of Government at the University of the Western Cape.

⁸ My supervisor, Paul Taylor, raised this point in a conversation.

proposition. But this then amounts to crossing the limits - it is no longer a view 'from within'. And, since 'what lies on the other side is simply nonsense', such an outside perspective, which is required *in* giving a general 'formula' of the proposition, constitutes nonsensical discourse. Hence Wittgenstein's description of the propositions of the TLP as nonsensical. They attempt to talk about syntax - the pre-conditions of representational discourse - but it is precisely syntax which is ineffable.

However, although the propositions of the TLP cannot be said, what they attempt to talk about - syntax - can be *shown* by the propositions of logic (tautologies and contradictions) and by ordinary *bona fide* representational discourse.

Apart from the fact that the TLP says things which cannot be said - for example, that language and the world share logical form, that there are objects, etc. - it is itself replete with admonitions against what cannot be said, and these admonitions themselves constitute 'what cannot be said.' For example, Wittgenstein admonishes against saying *that* there are scientific laws. If we are in the grip of a scientific law, then we cannot say that we are, since this would amount to saying precisely that which the law forbids us from saying.⁹ Saying *that* there are scientific laws amounts to an attempt to transgress the limits of language. However, such an admonition *itself* constitutes transcending the limits of representational discourse. To wit: saying that we *are* in the grips of scientific laws as well as saying that we should not say that we are in the grip of these laws are both nonsensical. If you cannot say that our representational system is such and such, then by the same token we cannot say *that* we cannot say that it is such and such.

Let us have a look at Wittgenstein's admonitions. The following, according to the TLP, are among those things that cannot be said:¹⁰

- I. *the pictorial form common to the picture and what it is a picture of* (2.172 - 2.174). Pictorial form cannot be pictured *by* the picture; rather, the picture *displays* it.

⁹ The earlier discussion on colour conventions make this point; in addition, a more extended account of bipolarity, which I will present a bit later, helps, as well, to make this point a bit clearer.

¹⁰ Adapted from Glock, H., 1996, pp 330-31.

II. *the meaning of signs, and that two signs share the same meaning* (3.33ff; 6.23).

The meanings of our signs are what *enable* us to talk about the world; however, we cannot talk *about* the meaning of our signs - this is once again, an attempt to 'get outside' our language. There is no meta-language in which to talk about the meanings of our symbols. Any account of semantics already assumes our semantics.¹¹ Semantics is inexpressible, but it can be *shown*, by ordinary propositions. We cannot say *that* two signs are equivalent; however, *that* they are is manifest in the two expressions themselves.

III. *that a symbol represents an object or a number* (4.126). We cannot say that an object falls under a formal concept - that is, we cannot, for example, say *that* red is a colour, or *that* seven is a number ('is a colour', and 'is a number' are formal concepts); rather, *that* this is so shows itself 'in the very sign for this object.'

'A name shows that it signifies an object, a sign for a number that it signifies a number, etc.)

IV. *the sense of a proposition*(4.022, cf 2.221, 4.461). A proposition *shows* its sense; propositions show what they say; tautologies and contradictions, for example, show that they say nothing.

V. *the logic of facts* (4.0312). The point here is that of the *Grundgedanke* - that is, that logical constants do not represent objects. Logical constants can thus not be said.

VI. *the logical form of a proposition and reality* (4.041, 4.12 ff). Though a proposition can represent the whole of reality, it cannot represent what it must share with reality so as to depict it - that is, logical form. Rather, logical form is *mirrored* in propositions; propositions display logical form.

¹¹ See my earlier discussion of a Tractarian response to Russell's comment in the preface to the TLP that we can invent another language with a different logic to our present language, one that can be used to talk *about* our present language, and in so doing avoid the charge of circularity).

VII. *that a proposition concerns a certain object* (4.1211, 5.535). If a proposition concerns a certain object, then the proposition itself *shows* that this is so. One cannot say *that* this is so, for this would amount to regarding the phenomenon as a possibility, and clearly it makes no sense to talk of a proposition's concerning a certain object as a *possibility*. A proposition 'fa' shows that the object 'a' occurs in its sense.

VIII. *that something falls under a formal concept* (4.126). (This was discussed earlier.)

IX. *that the propositions of logic are tautologies, and that they do not refer to logical constants* (4.0621, 4.461). That a proposition is vacuous cannot be depicted. Rather, it shows itself in the fact that its sign-combination cancels out its representational capacity. Nothing in reality corresponds to logical constants (4.0621), but this cannot be said; rather, it shows itself in the fact that, for example, 'p' and '-p' *say the same thing* - that is, the same state-of-affairs corresponds to both.

X. *that one proposition follows from another* (5.12 - 5.132). When the truth of one proposition follows from the truth of another, this shows itself or is displayed by the structure of the propositions.

XI. *the limits of language and the world* (5.5561, 5.6f, 6.124). We cannot represent the limits of the world - for that would pre-suppose an understanding of what lies on 'the other side of the limit'. We cannot say the world has this in it, but not that. (5.61). To say this would involve going beyond the limits of the world (beyond 'what is in it'), and, since the limit of language is the limit of the world, going beyond the world is an attempt to go beyond language. But 'what lies on the other side is simply nonsense', so we cannot talk about the limits. Rather, they show themselves in genuine representational discourse and its limiting cases (tautologies and contradictions).

XII. *that there are laws of nature* (6.36). To say this is an attempt to talk *about* our limits, to talk about our condition, what we are in the grips of (since the laws of

nature constitute part of the inner workings of language). Rather, *that* there are laws of nature makes itself manifest in genuine representational discourse.

XIII. *the propositions of the TLP itself* (6.54). They are nonsensical because they attempt to say what cannot be said, namely, syntax - the preconditions of representational discourse. Here too, what these propositions attempt to say *shows* itself *in* language.

The above list can be categorized as follows. What is inexpressible includes:

- a) the logical form shared by propositions and what they depict. (The harmony between thought and reality is inexpressible.)
- b) the meaning (*bedeutung*) of signs and the sense (*sinn*) of propositions. (Semantics is inexpressible.)
- c) logical relations between propositions. (Rules of logical inference are inexpressible.)
- d) the logico-syntactic category of signs. (Formal concepts are pseudo-concepts.)
- e) the logical structure of thought and the world. (The limits of thought are inexpressible - can only be set from within.)

The bottom-line here is that the pre-conditions of symbolic representation cannot themselves be represented. One cannot *think* the preconditions of thought, since any representation is the representation of a possibility, and the preconditions of representation are not a possibility - that is, they are not something that representation could *lack*. Representation is the representation of possibilities. And, if one can think or entertain a possibility, it implies, according to the TLP, that one can think what would be the case should that possibility not obtain. Now one cannot entertain the preconditions *as a possibility* - since it makes no sense to 'think' the absence of such preconditions. The very attempt is incoherent. For example, one cannot think or entertain the *absence* of logical form, since it is precisely logical form that makes thinking possible. Moreover, 'entertaining' logical form really is not doing anything at all - there is no intellectual activity outside logical form. Furthermore, an attempt to think the limits boils down to an attempt to straddle the limits - to have one foot on

either side, but again, what lies on the other side is, according to the TLP, simply nonsense. Syntax (the pre-conditions of thought) is therefore ineffable - it cannot be expressed in language.

Up to this point it has simply been *asserted* that the essence of a proposition is that it depicts a possible state-of-affairs - that is, a state-of-affairs which could either obtain or not obtain. As such, a proposition is essentially bipolar. What has not been explained are Wittgenstein's *motivations* for this position.

To say that a proposition is bipolar is to say that it is capable of being true *and* capable of being false. This contrasts with the notion of *bivalence*, which states that a proposition is *either* true *or* false. For example, the proposition 'the cat is on the mat' is bipolar, since it is possible for it to be both true and false (true when the cat is on the mat, false when the cat is not on the mat). The expression 'the world has logical form' is bivalent, since it can *only* be true (is necessarily true). There are no circumstances under which it could be false. Wittgenstein's conviction is that propositions which admit of bivalence and not bipolarity, are not genuine propositions. Why? Some historical details are pertinent here.

The view originated with Frege, who claimed that names and propositions have both a sense and a meaning (*referent*), where the meaning of a proposition is one of the two 'logical objects', namely, the TRUE and the FALSE. Wittgenstein initially followed Frege in claiming that a proposition has a meaning, that is, that a proposition stands for (some or other) object, just like names do. However, he maintained that the meaning of a proposition is not a logical object (its truth-value), but the fact (a state-of-affairs) which corresponds to the proposition. On the bases of this - that is, that the meaning of a proposition is the state-of-affairs which corresponds to it - it turns out that the meaning of 'p' and '-p' are identical: the fact which 'p' picks out is the very *same* fact that '-p' picks out. How is this? The proposition 'p' asserts that something is the case, namely, p. The proposition '-p' asserts that something is *not* the case, namely, p. Thus a proposition and its negation pick out the *same* state-of-affairs, since the fact that makes it true is the very same fact that makes it false. What 'p' depicts is the self-same thing which '-p' depicts, only '-p' asserts that this is *not* how things are. Thus to

understand a proposition is to understand what it depicts in its positive and negative sense.

It can now be seen why, on this account, essential features cannot be represented. Consider the expression 'the world has logical form'. If this is a genuine proposition, then it must pick out a state-of-affairs which, although it *does* in fact obtain, *need* not obtain (that is, *it must pick out a situation the negation of which is possible*). But this is not so with the sentence in question. One cannot (sensibly) negate 'the world has logical form', since the negation does not present a conceivable or genuine possibility. That is, a world that lacks logical form is not a world (in the Tractarian sense) at all. Logical form is a precondition of sense: to talk of a world that lacks logical form is to talk *incoherently*. A world that lacks logical form is not a recognizable (*describable*) world at all. The essential feature of a proposition is that it picks out a situation that need not obtain. Essential features are necessary features. Hence their denial does not pick out a genuine possibility. It allegedly picks out a situation where the *necessary features* (the preconditions) are absent - which is, as I've said, an unintelligible situation. Thus propositions which talk of essential features are not genuine propositions.

One may hone in on the issue further by thinking about it like this. Think of logical space (the domain of intelligibility) as the area inside a square. Now think of a state-of-affairs - say, a cat on a mat - as a point in logical space. To say that a cat is on the mat is like throwing a net over that area (that is, a determinate area) in logical space. However, if you were to assert a necessary statement (a statement which makes a claim which is true in all possible situations) you would, in effect, be casting your net over the *whole* of logical space. And what you hereby rule out is, in a manner of speaking, what lies on the '*outside*' of the logical space. However, as has been explained, the idea of something lying on the '*outside*' of logical space is unintelligible. But of course one cannot rule out the unintelligible, because the unintelligible is the *unthinkable*. (It is not that one *cannot* in the sense that one is *unable to*; rather, the point is that it is *incoherent* to talk of 'ruling out the unintelligible.')

What lies on the other side of logical space is just nonsense, or rather, *talk* of what lies on the other side

is just nonsense. So, because what a proposition like this *rules out* is not conceivable, we cannot, according to Wittgenstein, be said to conceive of what it *asserts*. When we cast the net over the whole of logical space, when we cast our net over *all* possibilities, we cannot be said to be truly representing. The idea here seems to be that to conceive, to make sense of, necessarily involves identifying something *out of a range*, or, in a manner of speaking, against a background of something else - of something 'other than it'. A case can be made for this idea as follows. If I identify, say, a chair in my room, in so doing I *differentiate* it from other objects in my room. I deploy individuation criteria, criteria which separate or distinguish my chair from other objects in my room. This is the only way in which I can pick my chair out. So, differentiation or distinguishing always takes place from amongst what the differentiated is not - that is, by distinguishing something from what it is not. To pick out anything is to pick out one thing *rather than* another. But if no such thing is going on - that is, if I'm not picking out one thing *rather than another*, or if I'm not picking out one thing *from amongst others* - then I cannot be said to be picking out (anything) at all. The idea is like this. I can only talk of 'day' by contrast with 'night'. The notion of 'day' only makes sense if it can be distinguished from something which is 'other' than 'day'. It would not make sense to say that I understand the notion of 'day', but I don't understand the notion of 'night'. (Another example is that one cannot be said to understand 'here' if one cannot understand 'there'.) The point then is that making sense always involves a contrasting background. By 'contrasting background' I mean an understanding of what something is *not*. Now, when the net is cast over the *whole* of logical space (as is the case with a necessary proposition) no such background or contrast is present. There is no such thing as picking out *this rather than that* going on. Why not? Because what lies on 'the other side' is simply nonsense - unintelligible. Casting the net over the whole of logical space is like claiming to have made sense of 'here' without at all understanding the notion of 'there.' In summary, philosophical propositions are non-representational because they make claims about essential features of reality. Such claims are characteristically 'necessary' claims. However, a 'necessary' claim does not rule out a *genuine* possibility, and therefore does not count as a genuine proposition. What are regarded by traditional philosophy as *essential features* of the reality, Wittgenstein takes to be not features of reality at all; rather these features belong to the pre-

conditions of sense. (A statement like 'objects are extended' which may be taken by traditional philosophers as a statement about the *essential* nature of objects, will be regarded by Wittgenstein as an aspect of syntax - a *rule* governing the combinatory possibilities of the words 'objects' and 'extended'.

The point here is that language cannot state necessary features, since the denial of such a statement does not constitute a conceivable situation. The propositions of philosophy, those of logic and the laws and theories of science are such attempts - and consequently fail to be representational. Language can only state contingencies. The propositions above, however, are attempts to state what cannot be otherwise.

In the opening paragraphs of Philosophical Remarks¹² Wittgenstein tries to explain the reasons why the rules reflecting syntax cannot be said. He discusses the issue in terms of 'grammatical conventions of colour words'. He says:

If I could describe the point of grammatical conventions by saying that they are made necessary by certain properties of the colours (say), then that would make the conventions superfluous, since in that case I would be able to say precisely that which the conventions exclude my saying.

The point here is that any attempt to justify a rule must appeal to some contingent state-of-affairs (a state-of-affairs which *could* be otherwise). But if that is the case, then the rules become *superfluous*. The rules are supposed to prohibit certain kinds of expression - they are supposed to tell you which kinds of expressions are well-formed and which kinds are not. However, if what justifies the rules is some contingent state-of-affairs, then precisely that which the rules prohibit as sayable can be said. Recall that in a genuine bipolar proposition, its assertion rules out a conceivable situation.

¹² Philosophical Remarks §4, quoted in Stern, 1995, p44.

If a bipolar proposition 'justifies' a rule, then *its* assertion must rule out a situation which is conceivable. But given the function of the rules, it turns out that the rules will rule out as conceivable precisely what the justification implies *is* conceivable. The rules thus lose their prohibitory function. With regard to colour propositions, the convention permits, say, 'reddish-blue', but not 'reddish-green'.¹³ According to Wittgenstein any attempt to justify this would render the conventions superfluous. Why? Any justification would, according to Wittgenstein, have to appeal to the properties of colours. However, since it is conceivable that the colours lack these properties (colours having certain properties are contingent states-of-affairs), precisely that which the conventions prohibit would then be conceivable. The conventions would not act as grammatical rules. The general point is that because language can only state contingencies, any attempt to justify what is taken to be a necessity would itself be a contingent statement. The rules of language, because they are necessary, therefore cannot be accounted for. Furthermore, any attempt to account for the rules must be expressed in a contingent proposition, the denial of which constitutes a genuine possibility. But this possibility is what the rule is supposed to rule out. Rules can therefore not be accounted for. In Wittgenstein's Lectures¹⁴ we read:

Language can express one method of projection as opposed to another. It cannot express what cannot be otherwise ... what is essential to the world cannot be said *about* the world for then it could be otherwise, as any proposition can be negated.

However, although such necessity (syntax) cannot be stated, *that* the rules are necessary expresses itself in the (linguistic) rules that certain expressions are permissible and others not. The immediate consequence of the claim that syntax cannot be accounted for - that we cannot say what linguistic rules are *in virtue of* - is that any attempt at a theory of meaning is impossible - *in principle*. That which makes meaning possible cannot be the subject on investigation, since such an investigation would constitute, on Wittgenstein's grounds, meaningless discourse - an attempt to transcend the bounds of sense.

¹³ I take this example from Stern, 1995.

¹⁴ Wittgenstein's Lectures, Cambridge, 1930-1932, 1930, p34, quoted in Stern, 1995, p45.

In his introduction to the TLP Russell¹⁵ suggests a way out of this impasse. He maintains that the kind of problem Wittgenstein indicates only arises for someone who attempts to account for the logic of his language *in* that very language. The way out of this, Russell suggests, is to construct a meta-language - a language which admits of a different logic to that of the object language, and which is to be used to talk *about* the object-language. The propositions of the meta-language, because they conform to different rules, would admit of senses. So whatever one said in this language *about* the object-language would qualify as meaningful. But Wittgenstein would never accept this. Talk of a meta-language, according to Wittgenstein, fails to appreciate the heart of the issue. To wit: any language one could construct must conform to certain rules - the *same* rules. The notion of syntax Wittgenstein was dealing with was much more primitive than Russell understood it to be. Wittgenstein's use of syntax was not language-specific, differing from language to language. It refers to the very mode of representation - *any* representation. It is the very *possibility* of representation. Any logics which one could construct must conform to these logical rules. These rules are the *preconditions of thought*. Any expression which fails to conform to these rules does not count as language. Thus these rules are the rules for any meaningful language. So a 'meta-language', if it qualifies *as* a language at all, will not differ in logic from the object language - in which case it *isn't* a 'meta-language' such as Russell had in mind. Russell's solution thus does not work. Syntax cannot be stated in *any* language. Wittgenstein's denial that a meta-logic is possible does not (merely) rest dogmatically on the claim that there is just one logic which counts as the pre-condition of intelligibility. In Philosophical Grammar¹⁶ we find him saying that logic *determines* what is necessary - there is no meta-logic which makes logic necessary. He supports this claim with a *regress* argument: If it were possible to account for the necessity of logic in some meta-logic (that is, if logic could be grounded in some meta-logic), then that only postpones the problem; for we would have the selfsame problem with such a meta-language: what grounds *this* logic? The situation would thus lead to an infinite regress. We would end up with, as he claims in Lectures on the Foundations of Mathematics¹⁷, an 'infinite hierarchy' of meta-languages. Furthermore, any artificial

¹⁵ Russell, B., (introduction to TLP), translated by Pears, D.F. and McGuinness, B.F., 1974.

¹⁶ Philosophical Grammar, pp 126-7, quoted in Glock, H., 1996, p245.

¹⁷ Lectures on the Foundations of Mathematics (14), quoted in Glock, H., 1996, p246.

language draws on ordinary language to clarify (at least some of) its expressions. If a language were not translatable in this way - that is, if all its concepts or expressions were such that they were *not* (or couldn't be) cashed out in ordinary language - a multitude of problems would arise. For one, if ordinary language is, as it surely is, the only language we 'find ourselves with', how do we gain access to such a wholly untranslatable language? Secondly, and importantly, such an idea inherits all the objections Wittgenstein levels against the idea of a 'Private Language' in the PI - a private language there being a radically untranslatable language. Glock¹⁸ puts the matter succinctly: ordinary language is the semantic bedrock, and there is no semantic exit from this language - not upwards via a hierarchy of meta-languages, nor downward to reality (I think he has 'ostensive definitions' in mind here). And in the PI 120 we find Wittgenstein saying:

When I talk about language ... I must speak the language of everyday. Is this language somehow too coarse and material for what we want to say? *Then how is another one to be constructed?* - And how strange that we should be able to do anything at all with the one we have! In giving explanations I already have to use language full-blown (not some sort of preparatory provisional one)

The point is thus clear: ordinary language is all we've got. Any move that we make is via *this* language. There can be nothing more basic nor more sophisticated than this. Wittgenstein levels the same criticism against any attempt to do meta-mathematics (that is, any attempt to provide foundations for mathematics, as Frege and Russell attempted). In RFM¹⁹, for instance, we find him commenting on any attempt to ground mathematics in a more basic calculus. He says that 'they are no more the foundation of mathematics for us than the painted rock is the support of a painted tower.' (It appears that what Wittgenstein means here is that a painted rock *appears* to support a painted tower, but because it is merely part of a *painting*, there is no real support going on. In the same way, a more basic calculus may appear to do the job of grounding or supporting mathematics, but there is no real support going on. I suppose one could also say that, just as in the case of the painting, where a painted tower -

¹⁸ Glock, H., 1996, p246.

¹⁹ Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics (378), quoted in Glock, H., 1996, p244.

because it is part of a painting - does not stand in need of the support it appears to be getting (from the painted rock), so it is with mathematics too. It does not stand in need of the support that one thinks one is giving it by means of a more basic calculus.)

Intelligibility is limited to picturing contingent states-of-affairs. Syntax can thus not be expressed in representational language. The question then arises: if this is so, how then *does* one understand logic? (If conceivability is limited to the representation of possible states-of-affairs, and syntax cannot be represented, how do we grasp or latch on to syntax?) Wittgenstein's insistence that syntax cannot be represented is based on the conviction that our grasp of syntax is *radically* different from our grasp of objects or states-of-affairs: understanding syntax and understanding contingent propositions involve two radically different kinds of activities - so different, in fact, that the difference cannot even, as Stern²⁰ suggests, be captured by a *categorical* distinction. What is meant by 'categorical distinction' can be explained in the following way. Take two disciplines, geography and biology. These two differ in subject-matter - they deal with different domains of reality. Geography describes the natural features of the surface of the earth; biology deals with living organisms and the structure and life of plants and animals. The *kind* of intellectual appreciation required to understand biology is the same as that required to understand geography. Now compare biology, on the one hand, and music, on the other. When one listens to music one is doing something very different from when one reads a sentence in biology, or when one entertains a biological fact. Two *different* intellectual appreciations are involved. Thus the two are not distinguished in terms of subject-matter; rather, the difference between them is in terms of intellectual capacity. This distinction is categorical - you are engaged in different *sorts of activity*. Now when Wittgenstein insists that there is a difference in our grasping of logical form on the one hand and our grasping of facts on the other, the distinction he has in mind is, as Stern emphasises, even more radical than a categorical one. It is a distinction between what can be said and what cannot be said *at all*. So the difference between our grasp of logic and our grasp of facts is *not* a difference in intellectual appreciation (as with biology and music). Rather, there is, in a sense, *no intellectual appreciation of logic*. Syntax cannot be thought. *Our grasp of*

²⁰ Stern, D., 1995, p47.

syntax is not an intellectual activity at all. When we listen to music (or do biology) we are *attending* to some or other phenomena (albeit in different ways). Not so with our grasp of syntax.

But if our grasp of syntax is not an intellectual activity at all, what does it consist in? Wittgenstein's answer is that although syntax cannot be *said* (that is, described or conceived of), it can be *shown*, and is grasped by our 'seeing' it - not *as* one 'phenomenon' amongst others, but *in* our conceiving of some possible state-of-affairs. (I have already discussed the notion of showing in connection with the propositions of logic. I intend here to re-state some points made earlier for the sake of elaborating on them in the context of a more general discussion of the notions of showing, syntax and those propositions that concern syntax - namely, logic, metaphysics, and the laws and theories of science.)

The distinction between saying and showing can be brought out more strongly by considering the role Space and Time (and Forms of Judgement) play in the work of Kant. Space and Time are, for Kant, the pre-conditions of experience. They are not objects *of* experience. We do not experience Space and Time; rather, we experience *in* Space and Time. Space and Time are not objects (or states-of-affairs) *in* the world. Rather, they are the *mode* of experiencing objects. But why can we not *experience* Space and Time although we experience *in* Space and Time? According to the TLP, when one understands *that* something is the case, one hereby also understands what is *not* the case. One can only be said to understand 'the cat is on the mat' if one can make sense of 'the cat is not on the mat'. As we have seen, the idea is that a proposition can be said to pick out a conceivable state-of-affairs if its negation is also conceivable. The reason why Space and Time cannot be experienced (or thought) is because we cannot pick them out as a states-of-affairs amongst other state-of-affairs. Since we are in the grip of conceiving *in* Space and Time, non-Space and non-Time are nothing: we cannot think non-Space and non-Time. And for this reason we cannot be said to (be able to) *think* Space and Time. We cannot think it because we cannot distinguish it from non-Space and non-Time. The important point being made here is as follows. The fact that we cannot be said to distinguish Space and Time from non-

Space and non-Time *means* that our grasp of Space and Time is not a matter of distinguishing anything *at all*. To make the same point about syntax: understanding or grasping syntax *isn't* a matter of conceiving or thinking or representing or distinguishing anything *at all*. Our grasping of syntax is an *altogether* different affair. The rules governing our language cannot be represented because it doesn't make sense to talk of distinguishing them from anything else. Anything which fails to embody these rules is meaningless. We thus cannot *say* what the rules of our language are because we cannot conceive 'non-rules'. 'Non-rules' are unintelligible. And the reason 'non-rules' are unintelligible is because we are 'in the grip' of the rules. With respect to the notions of Space and Time again: although Space and Time cannot be represented, they can, nevertheless be *shown* in our thoughts about the world. *That* we represent or experience in Space and Time can be seen *in* our thinking about, or understanding, say 'the cat is on the mat'. But our 'seeing' Space and Time is not like our seeing the cat on the mat. It is not a matter of distinguishing one thing from amongst others. It is not something we think *about*, or reflect on - it is not an object of our thoughts. Rather, it is just present in our thinking *about* this or that. We grasp it *in* our grasping that the cat is on the mat. The matter can be brought out by some reflections on our visual field, where by visual field I mean whatever it is possible for me to see.²¹ I cannot *represent* my visual field, for then I would have to see it as one thing amongst others. I would have to be able to distinguish my visual field from what is *not* my visual field. However, my visual field is all I've got. (What is in my visual field is all I can, in principle see). Any discriminations I make are made *in* my visual field. If I were to represent my visual field I would have to see *it, as well* as what is not my visual field. But it doesn't make sense to talk of my *seeing* what is *not* in my visual field - my visual field *is* just the scope of my seeing. In fact, it is even misleading to talk this way. It gives the impression that there is something which lies beyond my visual field. But, the point is rather that the term 'visual field' applies, or is limited to, my seeing. It thus doesn't make sense to talk of something lying 'outside' my visual field. And, my grasp of my visual field is not like my grasp of something *in* my visual field (my cat) - its a different kind of grasping altogether. It is somehow just '*there*' *in* my grasping *of* my cat.

²¹ I do not mean possible for me to see at any one time, but possible *in principle* for me to see.

The point can be made less abstract by considering again what Wittgenstein says about formal concepts. We cannot say or think *that* seven is a number, because seven's not counting as a number is not a genuine possibility (bipolarity again). But, *that* seven is a number is *shown*, and can be *seen* in certain kinds of expressions - expressions where seven is used *as* a number. If I said 'there are less than seven apples', I can properly be said to be representing a possible state-of-affairs. However, *in* my thinking this possibility, I grasp (I already understand) *that* seven is a number. My grasping that seven is a number makes it *possible* for me to grasp that there are so many apples. But the two 'graspings' are of a different kind. In the one case I am representing or thinking a possible state-of-affairs, in the other, I am not representing or thinking (something) *at all*. We cannot grasp or think that which makes (a particular thought, (or rather, Thought) possible, because we are limited by what makes thought possible, *to* thinking certain things. If our thought is limited to 'a,b,c,' - but 'Ø, â' makes thought possible, then of course we cannot think 'Ø, â' precisely *because* we are limited to 'a,b,c,' and *only* 'a,b,c.' If thought is limited *by* 'Ø, â,' *to* 'a,b,c,' then 'Ø, â' counts as *nonsense* - or rather the thought *that* 'Ø, â', counts as nonsense. It is unintelligible. Furthermore, if we could think 'Ø, â', there would in turn be something in virtue of which that was possible, and so on, ad infinitum. Thinking would thus not get off the ground.

What I have been discussing can be summarised as follows. Metaphysical propositions are non-representational. They say nothing because they lack sense. And they lack sense because their sign-combinations lacks logical form - that is, their sign-combinations contravene syntax. The motivation behind such putative propositions derives from an urge to talk about the 'essential' or 'necessary' features of reality. However, what such utterances amount to are not descriptions of any sort. Rather, they are insights into the inner workings of language. The characteristic feature of such attempts is that formal concepts are used as genuine concepts. This is the *specific* sense in which such utterances contravene syntax (they are not *mere* babble). We have discussed, furthermore, that what these utterances in fact concern, namely, syntax, cannot at all be represented. Syntax is wholly unintelligible (unrepresentational). The

reason for this is that any attempt to represent syntax will lack bipolarity. To wit: attempted talk of syntax does not exclude a genuine possibility - what it rules out does not fall within logical space.

What I want to do now is examine the reason why logical form cannot be represented by presenting a parallel discussion on the ineffability of (what Wittgenstein calls) the 'metaphysical subject'. (I will use 'MS' as an abbreviation for 'metaphysical subject'). The connection between the two issues is as follows. Any attempt to give an account of syntax is like an attempt to give an account of the MS. And, we shall see, neither works for pretty much the same reasons. More specifically, what I want to do is twofold. Firstly, I want to motivate the claim that in the TLP the metaphysical subject is identical to language. Schlossberger (in his article 'The Self in Wittgenstein's Tractatus')²² has important things to say on this topic, and I take a look at his paper. Secondly, I want to look at why, according to the TLP, the MS is ineffable. This discussion is intended to bolster the contention that syntax is ineffable.

In the TLP Wittgenstein makes several claims about the MS, of which I list a few below:²³

- A. In a sense, there is no subject.
- B. In a sense, there *is* a subject.
- C. The subject is not *in* the world.
- D. The subject is the limit of the world.
- E. The subject does not think or entertain ideas.
- F. The relation of the self (subject) to the world is analogous to that of the eye and the visual field.
- G. In some sense the subject and the world are one and the same.

We already know that Wittgenstein talks about both the MS and language as being limits of the world. And we have also seen that the *sense* in which language limits the

²² Schlossberger, E., p142 in Wittgenstein and his Impact on Contemporary Thought, ed. E. Leinfellner, 1978.

²³ I take this list from Schlossberger, E. (his list is longer; I only list what is going to be relevant to my discussion).

world is that language fixes what counts as the world. Language, according to the TLP, is not merely a set of symbols which only come to life in the context of a linguistic community (as, we will see, is claimed in the PI). Rather, language is *signs that signify*. The power of language to represent is *built* into language itself. Language is *at once* a 'point of view'. And this is the sense in which language is a limit of the world: being a 'point of view', language determines what counts as world. In our earlier discussions the point was made that the meaningfulness of language derives from its possessing logical form. It is in virtue of an expression's possessing logical form that it counts as a genuine representational proposition. However, putting the matter this way does not properly bring out the sense in which language is a *point of view*. Schlossberger makes the point like this. Language - a picture - '*reaches up*' to reality (2.1511); language *projects* reality. Language, in short, is intentional.

Let us now consider a feature of picturing. In his book Reason Truth and History Hilary Putnam²⁴ poses the question whether the figure which a colony of ants happen to have produced while crawling through a sand patch, and which happens to resemble Winston Churchill, is to be taken *as a picture* of Churchill. His answer is in the negative. It would only be a picture *of* Churchill *if*, in addition to some form of resemblance, *someone* had intended it *as* a picture of Churchill. Roughly, intention plus resemblance equals a *picture*. Of course for the Wittgenstein of the TLP, this is also the case: mere isomorphism is not enough for meaningfulness. (After-all, if language and the world are logically isomorphic, why should the representation not work the other way round? Why should it not be said that it is the world that pictures, or is a picture of, language?) But according to the TLP, the meaningfulness of language does *not* derive from someone's intending it to stand for such-and-such. Rather, meaningfulness is inherent in language itself. Syntax has a life of its own. Linguistic symbols mean this or that by themselves. Of course it is *we* who use language to mean or say this or that; so it is not quite accurate to say that language means this or that by itself. The point, rather, is that language, in the TLP, is pre-made - it has meaning independently of us. Being ready-made, all we have to do is use it. (As we will see, the view of language presented in the PI is quite different - namely, that it is our *use* of symbols which invests them with meaning). This is the sense in which language is a

²⁴ Putnam, H. 1981.

point of view. A point of view is, one could say, a particular way of 'cutting the world up'. A point of view is, as it were, a 'conceptual scheme'. (The notion of 'conceptual scheme' is risky here. Ordinarily, when we talk of a conceptual scheme, we mean one way of looking at the world, from amongst various ways, where the various ways are incompatible or incommensurable with each other. However, when I use the term 'conceptual scheme' I do so only to bring out the 'point-of-viewness' of language as conceived in the TLP. I don't have the other connotations associated with the notion in mind).

The discussion so far seems to raise a problem. Two somewhat separate issues seem to be blurred. The one is the idea that language is *at once* a point of view; and the second is the question of *what sustains* meaning. The problem comes about in the following way. It has been noted that, for the TLP, the 'perspectival' nature of language is inherent in language itself. Now, the TLP pins this 'perspective' nature down to objects and their inherent combinatory possibilities, in short, to logical form. (Logical form fixes what counts as language.) Thus the meaningfulness of language is ascribed to logical form - that is, logical form sustains meaning. However, putting the matter this way seems to rob logic of its autonomy. It seems to undermine the idea that the meaningfulness of language is inherent in language itself. If language is *at once* a point of view, then language is autonomous - that is, language itself contains its own representational power. But if this is so, what role does the logical form of the world play? More specifically, how is it possible to ascribe the meaningfulness of language to logical form while at the same time preserving the idea that language is inherently representational? The two issues thus are: (i) language is intrinsically meaningful, and (ii) logical form sustains meaning. We know from earlier discussions that it is a futile and misguided effort to try and ground syntax - to try and reduce it to something more basic, to seek foundations. Still, however, there *is* some way in which the TLP offers as a grounding for syntax and that is the logical form of the world - the totality of possible combinations of objects. The situation stands like this: what fixes what counts as syntax (rules of sign-combinations) are the possible combinations of objects. And the possible combinations of objects derive from the *nature* of these objects. The combinatory possibilities are 'written into' the objects themselves. Logical form thus

sustains meaning. But one cannot really say that logical form *grounds* meaning - that is, that it is *in virtue* of logical form that syntax is what it is, although it would seem that one *should* be able to say this for the following reason. If, for example, I were to account for syntax in terms of some more basic logic (as had been attempted with mathematics, where Frege and Russell sought to reduce and hence 'ground' mathematics in some more basic calculus), then (ignoring its feasibility) I should be able to say that this system (this more basic calculus) *grounds* syntax. It is the *foundation* of syntax. It is *in virtue* of such-and-such that syntax is what it is. Surely the same can be said here. If logical form fixes syntax, then logical form is the foundation of syntax. But this would go against the spirit of the TLP. Syntax, according to the TLP, cannot be reduced. Logic is autonomous. How then are we to conceive of the role logical form plays, without jeopardizing the autonomy of syntax? I suggest the following: syntax and the world are (to be thought of) as *one*. It must be noted that although, in the introductory passages of the TLP, Wittgenstein talks about the world as *actual* states-of-affairs - that is, states-of-affairs which obtain - his use of the term 'the world' is not consistent throughout. This is particularly evident in the passages on Solipsism:

The limits of language are the limits of the world. (TLP 5.61).

As well as:

Where *in* the world is a metaphysical subject to be found? (TLP 5.633).

This kind of talk gives the impression that 'the world' is to be understood here as 'the intellectual world,' the world of possibilities. 'The world' is just 'what is conceivable,' 'what is intelligible,' 'what is describable.' Now, when one talks about language, one is, in the TLP, talking about *thought*, about *intelligibility*. And talk about 'the world' amounts to talk about the intelligible. Put differently, language is a point of view. But 'the world' also amounts to 'a point of view', since 'the world' is the world of logical possibilities. Hence the claim: logic and the world are one. So we can save the idea that the logical form of the world is the *foundation* of syntax if we recognise that the logical form of the world *is* just the logical form of thought. Both refer to the totality of possibilities. The world and syntax are one and the same.

I've given reasons for thinking of language as a point of view. Why should we think of the self (MS) as a point of view? Points C, D, E and F suggest this. Just like the *eye* is not *in* the visual field, but that which provides or generates the visual field - that which makes a visual field possible in the first place - so too with the subject. It is not *in* the world (D), rather it is what makes the world possible (what makes the point of view possible). Note here that if the subject is what makes a view possible, and that view is the world, on the one hand, and if the subject just *is* the point of view, on the other, then (G) follows: in some senses the subject and the world are one and the same. It is important to note that the subject (MS) is not *something* which means. The self, rather, is the 'meaning-self'. The subject is the meaning-subject. The subject is the 'cutting-up-the-world' subject, the 'intentional-subject.' The subject is, in this sense, a point of view. When I emphasize that the MS is not something that *means*, I do so to avoid thinking of the MS as *something* which has the capacity to mean, where this capacity is something separate to what makes it what it is. I admit that this is a rather obscure way of putting the matter. What I have in mind is something like this: in the philosophy of mind, one of the questions posed is what 'mind' is, and one of the issues is whether 'mind' is *something which has various mental states* (in other words there is the mind *and it has various mental states*) in contrast to the idea that the mind *is just* the (collection) of mental states. My point here is that when I say that the MS is a *meaning subject*, I mean it analogously to the latter idea, that the mind is just (a collection of) mental states. It is not something which has an identity of its own, and in addition to that has mental states. Schlossberger puts the matter as follows : Wittgenstein, he says, looks for the subject in language. Schlossberger then goes on to distinguish between the notions of 'empirical self' and 'metaphysical self'. The 'empirical self', he suggests, is a set of sentences - a set of signs which signify. The MS is *in* the empirical self because the MS is the intentionality of language itself. I understand him to be saying that the empirical self is the self which remembers, which praises, which feels happy, angry, etc. The MS, by contrast, is a perspective. To wit: if I say 'I feel angry' then I'm talking about the empirical self. But what makes anger and happiness possible - that is, what makes it possible *that* we recognise (such things as) anger and happiness (that we cut up the world like this) is a function of the MS. The MS is, to use the expression again, a point of view. Schlossberger says that the MS is the intentionality of language

itself. Now to talk about the *intentionality* of language is to talk about its *meaningfulness*. To say that language is meaningful is to say that it 'cuts up the world' - is a point of view. So when Schlossberger says that the MS is the intentionality of language itself, it amounts to claiming - as I too want to claim - that the MS is a point of view. And this amounts further to the claim I made earlier that the MS is identical to language. The subject, says Schlossberger, resides in language itself. That the subject and language are identical is borne out by some passages from Notebooks²⁵ entered a few days apart:

A stone, the body of a beast, my body, all stand on the same level.

And:

Is this the solution of the puzzle why men have always believed that there was one spirit common to the whole world?

'Language' does not refer to specific languages (English, Sanskrit, sign-language) but rather, as I have emphasized, to a 'conceptual scheme' or view which runs through all languages. Wittgenstein talks of a 'spirit common to the whole world.' Maybe this bears on his thoughts about the MS as a point of view common to all people.

If this is right, it amounts to saying that there is only one metaphysical subject - and this subject is identical to (the meaningfulness of) language itself.

Recall that the question we are concerned with is that of why syntax (the limits) cannot be represented. And my intention was to address this issue by looking at why, for Wittgenstein, the MS is regarded as ineffable. So far we have discussed the idea that the MS and language are identical. We have yet to examine why the MS is regarded as ineffable. Wittgenstein's account of the MS turns on the analogy between the relation between the MS and the world, on the one hand, and the relation between the eye and the visual field, on the other. One cannot, Wittgenstein argues, find the 'I' (the MS) by *introspection*, in the same way that one cannot find the physical *eye* anywhere in the visual field. Introspection only provides one with the contents of experience. Any

²⁵ Notebooks, October, 12, 1916, quoted in Schlossberger, E., p142, 1978.

attempt to find the subject *in* experience will fail - any putative account of the MS is false - precisely because the MS is the pre-condition of experience, and we saw earlier that pre-conditions cannot be the object of any examination. In the same way no examination of the visual field will yield the 'seeing' eye, precisely because the eye *generates* the visual field. What the visual field provides us with is the contents of the visual experience. However, the position from which the contents are seen is not *itself* in the visual field. The general point that is being made is that the pre-conditions of thought (or experience) are not themselves part of the content of that experience. In other words, the limits cannot in any way be experienced (cannot be the object of experience). We are 'caged' or 'walled-in', so to speak, by our limits. But these walls are of a special character:²⁶ they are not like the walls of this room. The walls of this room prevent you from seeing what lies outside them, but if I opened a window I would be able to see outside - I would be able to transcend these limits. Rather, the walls comprising the limits of my thought are like the outer limits of the visual field. Although it makes sense to talk about what lies outside the walls of my room, it makes no sense to talk about something which lies outside what I could possibly see. There is no such thing as 'unseen visual space' in the way there is unseen *physical* space. Syntax plays the same role as the outer limits of the visual field. Thus it makes no sense to talk about what lies outside syntax (or experience) because syntax is the limit of what makes sense. There can be nothing that lies outside what counts as conceivable, since what counts as conceivable is just what we can, in principle, conceive. The 'walls' of syntax, which limit what is conceivable, are therefore false walls. They are a false cage, or as Pears would have it, a false prison²⁷, since they do not really divide an inside from an outside. For these reasons it is *incoherent* to attempt to talk about the limits of my visual field. To do so requires a view from *outside* my visual field. However, nothing could ever count as seeing from *outside* my visual field, since whatever I could come to see will itself be *part* of that field. In the same way it is incoherent to talk about the limits of *thought* (logic). Any such attempt requires a point of view from outside logic. However, again, nothing could ever count as thinking from outside logic. Just as there can be no such thing as the visual field being seen from

²⁶ Stern, D.F., 1995, makes this enlightening contrast.

²⁷ Pears, D. 1988.

outside, and just as we say the MS cannot be objectified (cannot be found as an object *in* experience), so too with syntax. It cannot be objectified or represented.

In sum, there is, as Thomas Nagel²⁸ puts it, no view from nowhere. There is no perspectiveless view, no view from outside logic. Thus any attempt to make sense of our condition, any attempt to say *that* our condition is such and such, or even to criticize it (to say that something is *wrong* somewhere) is doomed to fail. There is, in a manner of speaking, no place to stand to examine that which we are in the grip of. For this reason any version of realism, anti-realism, idealism, etc., is incoherent. Such accounts attempt to talk about the relation between language and the world. They are attempts to talk about our condition - to get out of language, to transcend the limits of thought. But they do not transcend it; all they do, according to Wittgenstein, is to run up *against* the limits of language.

We can get a better grip on this idea by considering what Nagel says about the notion of objectivity in The View from Nowhere.²⁹ According to Nagel ultimate objectivity - a view of ourselves *as* observers - cannot be achieved. He presents several reasons for this claim, of which I discuss two below. My purpose in examining these arguments is to get a better focus on the point Wittgenstein is making when he claims that we (as subjects or as observers) cannot represent that which makes representation possible. According to Nagel:

A view is more objective than another if it relies less on the specifics of the individual's make-up and position in the world We may think of reality as a set of concentric spheres, progressively revealed as we detach gradually from the contingencies of the self... Thus objectivity allows us to transcend our particular viewpoint and develop an expanded consciousness that takes in the world more fully. But if what we want is to understand the whole world, we can't forget about those subjective starting points indefinitely; we and our personal perspectives belong to the world. One limit encountered by the pursuit of objectivity appears when it turns its back on the self and tries to encompass subjectivity in its conception of the real. The recalcitrance of this material to objective understanding requires

²⁸ Nagel, T., 1986.

²⁹ Nagel, T., 1986

both a modification of the form of objectivity and a recognition that it cannot by itself provide a complete picture of the world,....³⁰

The thrust of Nagel's point is that although we can opt for greater objectivity, this project is limited by the fact that certain phenomena are, in essence, subjective. An objective perspective of such phenomena will thus leave something out. To wit: when we transcend a particular viewpoint with a more objective one - one that is supposed to encompass the less objective one - we fail to capture the 'point-of-viewness' of the previous one. But this 'point-of-viewness' is also part of reality (of what there is). Any objective perspective of a subjective phenomenon thus does not tell the whole story. Subjectivity is *recalcitrant* to objective understanding.

It is important to note that this is not the point Wittgenstein is making. Wittgenstein's point is that you can't give an 'outside' perspective of your point-of-view since 'outside' your point of view you have, in a manner of speaking, no recourse to that which makes a point of view possible. Your point of view is what you're in the grip of (what makes thought *possible*), and you can't give an (explanatory) account of what you're in the grip of since this requires you to operate outside what makes thought possible. Since nothing outside these limits counts as thought, no such objective perspective is possible. Nagel's point, on the other hand, is that an objective view of the subjective cannot be had, since the objective and subjective view are two different *kinds* of view, the latter being *recalcitrant* to the former. For Wittgenstein, a putative objective view of the subjective will not work, not on account of recalcitrance, but because such a view does not amount to a view at all, since the subjective view is the very *condition* of having a point of view. There can be no view from nowhere since any view is subject to the limits of thought, and insofar as it is subject to these limits, it cannot be transcended. The point is that, for Nagel, we can't objectify the subjective because of *recalcitrance*, whereas, for Wittgenstein, we can't objectify the subjective because we're in the *grip* of such subjectivity.³¹

³⁰ Nagel, T., 1986, pp5-6.

³¹ It must be noted that it is only worthwhile drawing such a contrast between Wittgenstein and Nagel if the following is taken to be the case: when Nagel talks about subjectivity he is not merely referring to *qualia* (the 'what it is like' quality of subjective states). His use of subjectivity involves the notion of point-of-view or perspective. He thinks that one perspective can encompass another in a limited way - namely, leaving out the 'point-of-viewness'. This is something Wittgenstein may have agreed with, as

Nagel's second reason for denying the possibility of ultimate objectivity can be found in the following passage:

.... objective self-surveillance will inevitably be incomplete, since some knower must remain behind the lens if anything is to be known.....The incomplete view of ourselves in the world includes a large blind spot, behind our eyes, so to speak, that hides something we cannot take into account in acting, because it is what acts.³²

The point here is that we cannot ultimately give an objective perspective since every account takes place from *some* perspective. And since it is our perspective as observers that we want to capture in such an ultimate account, the account is impossible. This is because every time we attempt to step outside ourselves - to 'see' ourselves *as* observers - we as observers *do* the observing and so remain unobserved. The reason we can't step outside ourselves is thus a *logical* one. The Wittgensteinian position does not rule out looking at the matter in this way. However, Wittgenstein's *emphasis* is different. For Wittgenstein the point is that that which makes observation possible cannot be observed, since it is the *condition* of observing. Nagel's argument is an infinite regress argument. Wittgenstein's is an argument from incoherence. It is important to understand that what is being denied by the Wittgensteinian position is not that we cannot make sense of our condition because we are intellectually deficient. The point is not that we do not have the intellectual apparatus to examine our condition.

Wittgenstein's position can also be contrasted with that of Colin McGinn. In his book Problems in Philosophy McGinn argues for a position he calls 'Transcendental Naturalism'.³³ He argues that our representational powers are not adequate to explain our representational powers. This is our intellectual predicament. In order to give an account of our representational powers, we would require, he maintains, radically new concepts in order to provide such an explanatory framework. But, he argues, such a

long as the perspective which one is trying to transcend is not a *condition* of having a point of view in the first place. It must not be the *mode* of our representation.

³² Nagel, T., 1986, p127.

³³ McGinn, C., 1993.

conceptual innovation lies beyond our intellectual ability. It lies in a sphere of intellectual space we cannot reach. Our intellectual capacities are too *impoverished*, he says, to understand their own nature. It is important to see that this, too, is not the point Wittgenstein is making. Wittgenstein's conviction is that the very entertaining of the idea of making sense of logic is *incoherent*. There is no such thing as a 'sphere of intellectual space which we cannot reach'. Rather, 'intellectual space' is determined *by* what we can understand: what we can understand just *is* the understandable. There can be no talk of the understandable beyond what we can understand. Thus if we cannot reach 'it', it doesn't count as anything at all. What there *is* is what makes sense; if it doesn't make sense it isn't anything at all. What lies on the 'other side' of our understanding, is, as the TLP says, simply nonsense. Our intellectual powers are not, as McGinn holds, too *impoverished* to understand their own nature. The point is that making sense of our intellectual powers involves the incoherent idea of 'getting outside' our intellect. McGinn believes that if we had 'radically new concepts' we would be able to have such an 'outside understanding'. But again, the point is that we can't talk of concepts *outside* our understanding, since outside understanding is just nonsense. For these reasons the TLP claims that its aim is to set a limit to thought 'from within' (since it is only 'within' that any intellectual moves can take place) by saying only what can be said - that is, by only saying that which is *subject* to our condition, namely, descriptions of contingent states-of-affairs, and passing over in silence what cannot be said.

But although our condition cannot be stated, it can, as we have seen, be shown. Logical and factual propositions are, for Wittgenstein, examples of *how* language shows what it cannot say: *that* logical propositions are vacuous *shows* the limits of language; factual propositions embody the rules of syntax and in this way *display* what can be said. As for the metaphysical subject, the same applies. We cannot talk about it. Rather, 'grasping' the subject occurs *in* our grasping factual states-of-affairs (just as we cannot represent our visual field, but *that* there is a visual field shows itself in our seeing of states-of-affairs). Our epistemic access to the limits is thus not one of representation, but is a kind of insight. We do not grasp the rules 'just by themselves'. We can't merely isolate or represent just the rules. Rather, we *show* what the rules are

in our representation of the facts. The facts embody the rules. Furthermore, because the rules enable us to grasp the facts, every representation at once *shows* the rules. All representation is dependent on the rules, and the rules are dependent on representation (propositions), in order for them to be exhibited. If the *shape* of an object can be compared to syntax, and if the object itself is to count as the proposition, then one could say that the *shape* of the object can only be made manifest by the representation of the object - you cannot represent the shape without at the same time representing an object. The shape is dependent on the object for it to be displayed. On the other hand, *by means of* the representation of any object, the shape is at once displayed. Form, as Wittgenstein says, is the possibility of structure; (logical) form makes structure (a pitch, a colour) possible. A structure cannot lack logical form. If it's a structure at all it must have *some* logical form. But then again, structure makes it possible to 'see' form - form cannot be 'seen' or 'shown' except in structure.

As concluding remarks to this section, I want to stress a point that has been made before. Wittgenstein's concern to articulate a distinction between what can and what cannot be said is not fueled with Positivist interests. That is, it was not his goal, like it was that of the Logical Positivists, to banish metaphysics from the realm of meaningful propositions, and in so doing discredit their status. Rather, his intention was to ascribe to metaphysics its 'proper place'. Metaphysics does not belong to the realm of descriptive discourse; however, just because this is so, *contra* the Positivists, metaphysics has a higher status than that of representational discourse. To wit: there is an underlying contention in Wittgenstein's work, which we can call the 'insignificance of the sayable'. Earlier on I quoted Wittgenstein saying in a letter to von Ficker:

My work consists of two parts: the one presented here plus all that I have *not* written. And it is precisely this second part that is the important one.³⁴

And again in TLP 6.52:

³⁴ Paul Engelmann, Letter from L. Wittgenstein., pp143-144. The letter was written in 1919, quoted in Stern, D. 1995, p8.

We find that even when all *possible* scientific questions have been answered, the problems of life remain completely untouched. Of course there are then no questions left, and this itself is the answer.

I take Wittgenstein to mean that if there are no (scientific) questions left, but the problems of life remain untouched, then these ‘problems’ and perhaps their ‘solutions’ are not a factual business. The ‘understanding’ or grasping of them is not like grasping contingent states-of-affairs. They are grasped in some other way. They are inexpressible.

There is indeed the inexpressible. This *shows* itself; it is what is mystical. (T6.522)

So it seems clear, then, that Wittgenstein’s intention, far from being to discredit metaphysics, was to save it from the banal status of representational discourse. The following remarks on the propositions of ethics and religion confirm this sentiment:

My whole tendency and I believe the tendency of all men who ever tried to write or talk Ethics or Religion was to run up against the boundaries of language. This running against the walls of our cage is perfectly, absolutely hopeless. Ethics, so far as it springs from the desire to say something about the ultimate meaning of life, the absolute good, the absolute valuable, can be no science. What it says does not add to our knowledge in any sense. But it is a document of the tendency in the human mind which I personally cannot help respecting deeply and I would not for my life ridicule it.³⁵

It seems that just as the making of ethical propositions are tendencies worth respecting, so too with metaphysical propositions. Why? Ethical (and religious) propositions are, according to Wittgenstein, attempts to talk about ‘the Absolute’ in the domain of Ethics. This amounts pretty much to what goes on in an attempt to talk about the limits of thought. To wit: when we attempt to talk about the limits of thought (which we take to be the essential features of reality) we are in effect assuming an outside position - a position from outside what we are in the grip of - which is, as we’ve seen, an incoherent project. It is ‘absolutely hopeless’. In the same way, an attempt to talk about, say, the ‘Absolute Good’, is an attempt to make sense of the

³⁵ A Lecture on Ethics, pp11-12, published in *Philosophical Review* 74, No.1, 1965, pp3-16, quoted in Fann, K.T. 1969, p28.

'ethical' walls of our cage. However, just *because* we're in the grip of these ethical grids we can't make sense of them. It is an attempt to get outside our ethical limits, which is, as Wittgenstein says, an utterly hopeless one. But, says Wittgenstein, this attempt is something he would never ridicule. The following paragraph again reflects this sentiment:

Man has the urge to thrust against the limits of language. Think for instance about one's astonishment that anything exists. This astonishment cannot be expressed in the form of a question and there is no answer to it. Anything we can say must, *a priori*, be only nonsense. Nevertheless, we thrust against the limits of language. But the tendency, the thrust, *points to something*... I can only say: I don't belittle this human tendency; I take my hat off to it... For me the facts are unimportant. But what men mean when they say that "*The world exists*" lies close to my heart. ³⁶

But, one may wonder why, if metaphysical articulations are produced by a combination of (i) the tendency to talk about the essential features of reality and (ii) a misunderstanding of the logic of our language, they should be attributed such a special status? If metaphysical propositions are attempts to cross the limits, if they are attempts to do something wrong, why should such attempts not just be set straight and left at that? Why does Wittgenstein express such respect for the impulse to do metaphysics? Perhaps it is because metaphysical propositions are attempts to express *insights* or a sense of wonder, which, strictly speaking, does not yield to language (intellectual discourse). We tend to grasp outwards in a way which is, strictly speaking, not in language, but we want to express it in language. However, our language is inadequate. It is only suited to expressing the facts. And so when we use language to express the 'insights' we experience, what we say ends up as nonsense.

Anthony Holiday has suggested³⁷ another way of looking at the significance of metaphysical propositions in Wittgenstein's work. Philosophical propositions, *as* attempts to cross the bounds of intelligibility, are significant, he claims, precisely because they tell us something about ourselves, namely, that human beings have an

³⁶ *A Lecture on Ethics*, pp11-16, published in *Philosophical Review* 74, No.1, 1965, pp3-16, quoted in Fann, K.T. 1969, p28.

³⁷ In conversation.

utterly hopeless tendency to want to see from 'outside' - in effect, to see or describe *everything*. The effect of such a realization ought to be a humbling one. It lets us see ourselves for who we are. By running up against the limits (transgressing the bounds of sense and not conforming to the rules of syntax) we gain a kind of self-knowledge which ought to produce humility. It reminds us of our imperfections. The point is like the one that can be made about Socrates' dialectics. The Socratic questions have, or are intended to have, the effect of reducing our intelligence to aporia. This way we can get a sense of who we properly are. This Socratic indulgence in dialectics is meant to teach us something about ourselves, and what we learn ought to have a reducing or shrinking effect. Just like Jesus' saying to those who wanted to stone the adulteress, 'He who hath committed no sin, let him cast the first stone,' had a humbling effect (because now, by putting the matter this way, they could all see that they were not faultless), so too, with this point: seeing that we have a tendency to transgress the bounds of sense ought to produce a sense of humility within us.

It has been suggested that Wittgenstein's preoccupation with logic and the limits of thought is parallel to his moral preoccupation with sin. In both cases the dividing line between right and wrong must be recognised and not crossed. His preoccupation with only saying what can be said - that is, staying on the one side of the line while fighting off the tendency to cross the limits - is like his preoccupation with wanting to do the right thing while fighting off the tendency to sin. Remaining within the bounds of sense - of legitimate discourse - is like remaining within the limits of legitimate moral action.³⁸ A testimony to this conviction is reflected by a report of Russell's in Ray Monk's³⁹ biography of Wittgenstein. The story goes that Wittgenstein had often come to Russell's rooms in the evening to talk philosophy. He would spend hours tensely pacing up and down the room in complete silence till deep into the night. Russell never ventured to send him home for fear that if he did so Wittgenstein would commit suicide. On one such evening, while Wittgenstein was going through his pacing ritual,

³⁸ Shields, PR., in his book Logic and Sin in the Writings of Ludwig Wittgenstein , discusses this issue at length.

³⁹ Monk , Ray. ,1991.

Russell ventured a question: 'Are you thinking about logic or your sins?', to which Wittgenstein fiercely replied: 'Both!'.

LOOKING AHEAD TO THE PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATIONS

In this section I present a brief account of some of the main ways in which Wittgenstein's Tractarian account of language underwent revision during the period in which he wrote the Philosophical Investigations.

Wittgenstein's concerns in the PI is, as it was in the TLP, to draw the limits of intelligible discourse. This amounted, as we have seen, to articulating the essence of a proposition. The question to be answered thus is: what turns a string of marks into a meaningful expression? As indicated earlier on, both the task involved in, and the purpose for this project have strong similarities to Kant's project in his Critique of Pure Reason. Wittgenstein believed, like Kant, that philosophers have a tendency to cross the boundary of meaningful discourse, and in so doing produce metaphysical propositions - expressions which appear to be genuine propositions, but are in fact not so. They resemble genuine propositions only in terms of surface grammar - that is, in terms of their outward appearance. He, like Kant, therefore wanted to delineate the exact boundary between meaningful and nonsensical discourse, so as to be able to caution anyone when they wanted to cross this boundary and so, in effect, caution them against doing metaphysics.

Wittgenstein's later work is characterized by two doctrinal changes¹:

1) Abandonment of Essentialism

Wittgenstein eventually came to realise that his account of language was too narrow. It excluded much of what we ordinarily take to be intelligible discourse. In the TLP only assertoric (fact-stating, contingent) propositions qualify as *bona fide* linguistic discourse. This has to do with Wittgenstein's doctrinal preconceptions about language. To wit: he believed that, under all the seemingly diverse forms of language, all language admits of a *uniform* logical structure. This structure, although not immediately discernible from the *surface* structure of language, can be uncovered by philosophical analysis. Thus he regarded differences in propositional structure as merely superficial. What united them all was their common logical structure. His views

¹ I follow Pears, DF. (1971) in classifying these changes as 'doctrinal'.

in his later works, however, stand diametrically opposed to this earlier view: rather than regarding the diverse forms of language as superficial differences, he now came to take them as revealing the 'essence' of language. But this notion of essence was very different to the one he had in mind earlier. Language, he now believed, does not have a single uniform essence as in the TLP; it does not have a uniform structure. However, its diverse forms have features which serve to unite it - so in a sense it *has* a characteristic or common, albeit not uniform, feature, which allows us to classify or group all such forms as part of language. Because the Wittgenstein of PI believed that language is open-ended (what counts as language is not a *fixed* set of expressions), it is a bit misleading to put the matter this way. What should be said, rather, is that the characteristic feature of language in the PI serves, not to allow us to group together everything that counts as language, but rather to allow us to *disqualify as meaningful* those expressions which do not admit of certain features. The unifying feature in this case is not a *uniform* feature, but is cashed out in terms of the notion of *family resemblance*: the propositions of language do not have a uniform structure, but are part of language because they have certain features in virtue of which they resemble each other, and in virtue of which they can all be said to belong to the same family or families. Propositions admit of resemblances in the same way as the faces of people belonging to the same family resemble each other. Wittgenstein also cashed out the unifying feature of propositions in terms of *language games*. Propositions are related to each other in pretty much the same way as games are related to each other. What makes an activity count as a game is not a uniform structure (which it shares with other games) but rather *similarities* such as being goal-oriented etc.

2) Abandonment of Foundationalism

Wittgenstein came to realize that his account of language was wrong not only because it was too exclusive (a result of his essentialism) but for another reason, one that makes the TLP account wrong quite independently of its essentialism. He had first thought that the structure of the world determined the structure of language and thus that the structure of the world conferred meaningfulness on language. (The structure of the world is the *foundation* of language. It is what sustains the meaningfulness of language.) Thus one can say 'the cat is on the mat' since this is a possibility in the

world, but one cannot say 'the chair is between its own legs' since this is not a possibility in the world. In his later work he abandoned this idea. The relation, he now thought, is the other way round. Whereas in the TLP there was an independently existing world of logical possibilities, in the PI it is language which fixes what is to count as world. In the TLP the combinatory possibilities of a word are determined by the combinatory possibilities of the object for which it stands. In the PI, however, what counts as such-and-such an object is fixed by the grammar of the word which happens to stand for the object. Thus one cannot say, or rather, it is not a possibility that 'the chair is between its own legs' since the grammar of the words 'chair', 'between', and 'own' do not permit such a combination. The point here is that (i) syntax is not fixed by the (logical form of the) world, but rather, (ii) something else - we will come to see what - determines the rules of our language and (iii) the notion of 'world' is not independent of language.

So the structure of language cannot be accounted for by something which lies outside language and is independent of language. There are, as Pears² puts it, no independent points of reference or support outside language. Ultimately, and this is the realization expressed in the PI, any support for linguistic features derives from language-users themselves. It derives from their established linguistic practices. This issue comes out at its strongest in Wittgenstein's discussion of rule-following in the PI. Both in the TLP and the PI Wittgenstein maintained that speaking a language is a normative activity - that is, speaking a language is a matter of following linguistic rules.³ In the PI he makes the point that a sign does not by itself fix its meaning. Its meaningfulness requires a context or setting, which is provided by established linguistic practices or conventions. In other words, the meaning of a sign is fixed by linguistic conventions. This is in contrast to the TLP account of language. The TLP maintained that signs, just in bearing a particular form - namely, the logical form of the world - are meaningful. The realization expressed in the PI is that this is insufficient. A sign, he says, is open to a number of interpretations (proliferation of meanings). This being the case, how can a

² Pears DF, 1971, p13.

³ Wittgenstein did not speak of rules *as such* in the TLP, but he was aware of the normative issue. For example, in TLP 2.173 he says '... a picture represents its subject correctly or incorrectly.', and in TLP 6.126 he talks about 'rules that deal with signs'.

sign mean one thing rather than another, and how, more generally, is language possible? But language *is* possible. What halts proliferation of meanings is established linguistic practices or customs. The insight is that a sign must be *applied* (in some or other customary way) before it can be meaningful.⁴ Here we see a distinct shift in Wittgenstein's account of the limits: it is no longer the logical form of the world which fixes meaning, which invests a string of marks with meaningfulness. No longer is it logical form which guarantees intelligibility. Rather, meaningfulness is fixed by our various established linguistic practices. Wittgenstein thinks of our different linguistic practices as various *language games*, each game governed by its own rules. So, just as we have games like chess, draughts, etc., which can be distinguished by the different rules which govern moves in such games, so too with language. Our linguistic practices can be categorised into different games; for example, we have the game of justification, the game of reasoning inductively, the game of raising children, the game of teaching, the game of naming objects, the game of telling jokes, and so on. Each of these games can be distinguished by means of the different rules which govern what count as legitimate moves in the game. These games, collectively, form part of what Wittgenstein calls our form of life. More completely, our form of life consists not only of the different 'games' we partake in but of the spectrum of our natural history - of the fact that humans walk on two legs, that humans reproduce sexually, that humans feel pain, that humans have various sensory perceptions (visual, acoustic, tactile, olfactory and taste). These various (non-linguistic) aspects of our natural history have a bearing on the linguistic aspects. The game of ascribing sensations like pain, for instance, is only possible because we are 'wired-up' in a certain way. Thus one can say that it is our form of life which invests our words with meaning. If a word or expression has a use in our form of life then it counts as meaningful.

Wittgenstein's comparison of words in a language with tools in a tool-box aptly brings out the shift in perspective between the TLP and the PI. In Blue Books⁵, he says:

⁴ This insight comes as early as Philosophical Grammar. He says: 'if the method of projection is a bridge, then it is one that is not built, as long as the application is not made.' By 'method of projection' he means the way in which language is linked to the world. And the point made here is that language is linked to the world by means of *application*. In other words, signs are meaningful if they are applied (in a customary way). (Philosophical Grammar, p213, quoted in Malcolm, N., 1986, p100.)

⁵ Blue Books, p 67, quoted in Fann, 1969, p69.

Think of words as instruments characterized by their use.

And in PI 11 he says:

Think of the tools in a tool-box: there is a hammer, pliers, a saw, a screwdriver, a rule, a glue pot, glue, nails, screws. - The function of words are as diverse as the functions of these objects.

The idea is that a word's meaning is linked to its use, and given that words, just like tools, have a diverse number of uses (different tools are used to do different things), it is no good setting out to look for a uniform feature of words as the TLP attempted to do. There is thus not one function that all words have in common, as maintained in the TLP, where the sole function of words was to name things. However, it is not only words, but sentences as well, which, according to the PI, must be looked at as tools.

He says:

Look at the sentence as an instrument, and at its sense as its employment. (PI 421)

And what Wittgenstein says about words and sentences applies as well to what he thinks about language. Just like all instruments are usually used for some purpose, but cannot be said to be used for a single purpose, so too with language. Language has a goal, but the goal is not a uniform one: there is no single purpose that language is used for (contra the TLP where the function of language was purely descriptive). In the PI Wittgenstein lists a few of the purposes of language, hereby showing its multiplicity and heterogeneity:

Giving orders, - and obeying them-

Describing the appearance of an object, or giving its measurements-

Constructing an object from description (a drawing)-

Reporting an event-

Speculating about an event-

Forming and testing an hypotheses-

Making up a story; and reading it-

Play-acting-
Singing catches-
Guessing riddles-
Making a joke; telling it-
Solving a problem in practical mathematics-
Translating from one language into another-
Asking, thanking, cursing, greeting, praying. (PI 23)

Directly after presenting this list Wittgenstein says :

It is interesting to compare the multiplicity of the tools in language and of the ways they are used, the multiplicity of kinds of word and sentence, with what logicians have said about the structure of language. (Including the author of the TLP *Logico-Philosophicus*). (PI 23)

Wittgenstein's conviction in the TLP was that language admits of a single uniform structure (it is truth-functionally structured) and a single function (the depiction of possible states-of-affairs). In the above quotation he clearly rejects this. Language is not a *single* tool with one function and one structure, but rather, language is a *collection* of tools with heterogeneous structures and heterogeneous functions. Thus Wittgenstein's new conception of language is a pragmatic or instrumentalist one.

Language is an instrument. Its concepts are instruments. (PI 569)

Thus in the TLP the mark of meaningfulness is that an expression possesses logical form and the source of meaningfulness is the logical form of the world. In the PI the mark of meaningfulness is that a proposition has a use in some language-game, and the sources of meaningfulness are our socio-linguistic practices. Our socio-linguistic practices are the ultimate recourse of any explanation: they themselves cannot have an explanation. Whereas in the TLP our linguistic acts were accounted for by their reference to an *objective* reality, a reality which gave stability to what counts as meaningful, in the PI there is no objective support outside our linguistic practices. Nothing 'else' explains why we do such and such (nothing explains why such and such an act or expression is meaningful). To make the point in terms of linguistic rules: in the TLP it was the logical form of the world (an independent reality) that sustained

linguistic rules. In the PI the rules are sustained by the fact that we happen to engage in the various practices we do. The practices are an embodiment of the rules of language. The rules are not something which *conform to something else*; rather, the rules *are just constituted* by those practices. The point can be brought out by the following analogy: the rules do not form a ready laid out pathway (a prepared course or track), rather, they are like the mucous that the snail leaves behind: the snail may not be following a ready laid-out track, but its particular course of action *leaves* a track - the track lies *behind*, rather than having been set out ahead. The track is how it is because of the way the snail happened to have proceeded. This, in a way, is how it is with us. The ways human beings happen to go on (the practices they happen to engage in) set the standard for what is going to count as intelligible. Pears⁶ aptly calls this ‘Wittgenstein’s anthropocentrism’.

A further feature of the shift in Wittgenstein’s way of thinking is that of the nature or method of his investigation. In the TLP his attempt to isolate the essence of language proceeded according to what one can call a ‘scientific’ method, by asking what must be possible, or how things must be, in order to explain a particular phenomenon (language). This is akin to the hypothetico-deductive method in science. Scientists observe certain phenomena, and then they seek an account which explains those phenomena. Their explanation is thus an hypothesis to the best explanation. Of course Wittgenstein believed that his account of language in the TLP was not merely the *best* explanation; rather, it was *the* explanation - demanded *a priori* by the very phenomenon of fact-stating discourse, and which explains the phenomenon of language. Furthermore, whereas the scientist’s project is an empirical one, that of seeking an empirical explanation for his observations, Wittgenstein’s project was, strictly speaking, a *logical* one, that sought an *a priori* (transcendental) explanation. Nevertheless, the important point is that both methods seek to provide *explanations* which best explain a given phenomenon. Language and the world must have such-and-such features (elementary sentences, elementary states-of-affairs, objects) given that language is possible. And it is in virtue of *this* feature that the TLP’s account of language can be regarded as proceeding in a scientific manner. In his later study,

⁶ Pears, DF., 1971, p170.

however, once he located the intentional character of language in our form of life, his study became a descriptive one. No longer was he engaged in talk of hypothesising and theorising; rather his method was now one of observing and describing. Language, as Pears⁷ aptly puts it, is a feature of human life, and because it has no independent basis outside that of human life, it should be examined in the *context* of human life.

What this involved was that rather than seeking an all-inclusive and general system (or theory), Wittgenstein now came to concentrate on and appreciate the *particular* case in its own right. The consequence of this was that linguistic philosophy, for Wittgenstein, could now never be systematic - that is, he could now no longer seek to give a general and all-inclusive account of language. The particular case, as it stands, is every bit as revealing as to the 'essential' (or characteristic) features of language. The variations within language are not superficial ones, which actually have a common uniform deep structure; rather, these variations are all part of the character of language. The logical structure of language does not lie underneath its surface structure, to be revealed only by analytic excavation. Rather, its logical structure lies right there on the surface. To understand the 'essence' of language, all one has to do is look and describe - that is, observe and describe what role an expression or sign plays in human life. Thus the two accounts differ not only in what they attribute meaningfulness to, but also in methodology. The TLP attempted an *a priori* account of language; the PI presents a descriptive account. In the PI Wittgenstein realised that the question of the meaningfulness of language must be answered by looking at language *in operation*. His question, 'What must be the case for language to work?' is now treated as: 'In virtue of what, *as a matter of fact*, does language work?'. Or rather, 'What *in fact* makes language work?' The important point to note here is that although both the TLP and the PI offer accounts of meaning (and are thus both concerned with the limits of language), Wittgenstein's realization that his TLP account of meaning was wrong did not lead him to seek another *objective* account. And this is so, because he realised that what was wrong with the earlier account was not just that it pinned meaningfulness down to the wrong criterion (objective reality), but that it was wrong to pin meaningfulness down to *any* objective reality. In other words, the insight is not

⁷ Pears, DF., 1971.

that he had given a wrong account of the foundations of language, but that language *has* no foundations. He thus did not seek an alternative objective reality in order to account for language, but abandoned that kind of project altogether. Talk of our 'form of life', although it replaces appeal to the 'logical form of the world', is not a mere substitution of one criterion for another. The insight, rather, is that there is no *explanation* of language but just *descriptions* of our linguistic practices. So, although our form of life is used to justify our linguistic practices, this isn't a real justification. Consider: if asked why I watch television, I might reply (might justify my activity by saying) that I do it for relaxation, or for entertainment. This answer *explains* my action. But now suppose I were asked why I seek entertainment and I reply that that is just one of the things we humans do. This is not a reason in the same way as the reason given in answer to the question of why I watch television. It is really just a *description* of one of the practices that we engage in. Pears puts it aptly: '.....there is only one possible theory here, the theory that there is nothing but the facts about the relevant linguistic practices.'⁸

A further difference between the two works is that in the PI Wittgenstein's task and method are in harmony. In the TLP this was not the case. There he had set himself the task of drawing the bounds of sense - from the inside - but his *method* contradicted this: the method consisted precisely of giving an account of language from the *outside* - and in so doing crossing the boundary which the task was actually meant to locate and secure.⁹ In the PI the task and method are in harmony. The task is to *describe* and the method proceeds just like this: he refrains from making any sweeping generalisations or producing hypotheses or theories. No longer does he talk from the lofty heights of abstraction. Rather, his examination proceeds 'on the ground', as it were, with detailed descriptions of language-in-use presented in dialectic form. A language-user makes a linguistic mistake, and Wittgenstein responds in dialectic fashion to this mistake by pointing out that he has made a mistake. The way he points it out is by reminding the language-user of the everyday or customary use of an

⁸ Pears, D. F. 1971, p171.

⁹ He tried to remedy this internal contradiction, however, by claiming that his propositions in the TLP constitute *important* nonsense - a ladder to climb in order to see the world aright and afterwards discard. His propositions don't *say* anything, but they *show* the limits of language.

expression - in short, by reminding the user of the rules governing the use of a word - and showing him that the way he is using the word is not in accordance with the customary way - that is, not in accordance with the rules.

Another difference between the two works concerns the notion of rules. In my discussion of the TLP, logical form was referred to as *syntax*. Syntax constitutes the rules governing licit sentence construction. The syntax of our language not only included logical propositions (tautologies and contradictions) but all those expressions which, according to Wittgenstein, constitute the 'mould' or 'spectacles' through which we look at the world - for example, scientific laws such as 'every event has a cause', propositions such as 'seven is a number', 'red is colour'. These fix legitimate sentence construction. In the PI the notion of *syntax* is replaced by that of *grammar*. The grammar of a word or expression is its particular use in a language-game - and this particular use constitutes the rule for the future use of the word or expression. Thus grammar constitutes the rules governing licit sentence construction. However, whereas in the TLP the rules (syntax or logic) enjoyed an *a priori* status - they are logically prior to linguistic practices - in the PI the rules (grammar or logic) derive from human socio-linguistic practices. Thus the rules in the TLP are *a priori* whereas the rules in the PI are contingent. One could also say that the rules in the TLP exist *independently* of us, whereas in the PI the rules *depend*, in a manner of speaking, on us. Our socio-linguistic practices form the background which determines the meaning of a sign. Furthermore, in the TLP there was a *single* set of rules - the rules of truth-functional logic. In the PI we find *sets* of rules: different language-games dictate different uses of words and hence different rules of licit sentence construction. (Each language-game has its own set of rules.) It is a bit misleading, though, to talk of a *set* of rules, as if the set is *fixed*, since the conception of language in the PI is that it is open-ended.

Nevertheless the point here is that each language-game has its own rules. There is thus no longer talk of *the logic* of language - rather,logics¹⁰ - and thus no longer talk of

¹⁰ Talk of different logics is only meant to convey the idea that different language-games have different rules. I do not mean to convey the idea that philosophers like the Churchlands endorse when they talk about physicalistic language versus folk-psychological language in philosophy of mind. For the Churchlands, folk-psychological language can be reduced to, and fully replaced by, physicalistic language, hence the former can be totally eliminated. The latter is a replacement of the former, since the one is *reduced* to the other. The two are thus not different language-games in the sense in which poetry and factual language, for example, are different games. They are two ways of talking about the

the limit of language, but *limits* of language. Furthermore, whereas in the TLP the limit was a single line dividing factual from non-factual discourse (genuine propositions from illicit sentence constructions), in the PI the limits run criss-cross, taking the form of a network of boundaries. What counts as a proposition in one language-game may not in another.

The new linguistic terrain has a much more complex geography: it is not only factual discourse which features on the linguistic landscape. Other kinds of discourse now also count as legitimate. Whereas on the old account of language, religion and ethics were not players in the game, on the new account, religion and ethics have a place. They constitute linguistic practices and as such are meaningful. So the area of propositional discourse is now sub-divided. But furthermore, and importantly, the area of *factual* discourse is no longer an homogenous domain. Wittgenstein also came to recognise that factual discourse consists in subtle variations which in fact constitute various *different* language-games; for instance, talk about material objects, on the one hand, and talk about sensations, on the other, constitute different kinds of talk, different language-games.¹¹ For one thing, the individuation and ascription of sensations and material objects differ. One can ask whether person B now has the car person A formerly had - since a car's individuation criteria are not dependent on anyone *owning* it. But this is not so with sensations. It is illegitimate to ask whether person B now has the pain (sensation-*token*) person A formerly had, since the individuation criteria of a pain are tied up with an *owner*. There cannot be pains without owners and the individuation criteria of a particular pain (token) is tied up with a particular owner, so pains cannot be transferred or sold! But there can be cars without owners. The point here is that the kinds of questions one can ask about sensations differ from the ones one can ask about physical objects. Another example is where one could say: 'I have a

same phenomena where the one is regarded as correct or legitimate. Furthermore, the replaced (or reduced) language becomes obsolete and the replacer language talks about the particular phenomenon in such a way that it leaves nothing out. In other words, nothing is lost when the one language is replaced by the other. In the PI scenario however, two different language-games 'tell the story' in different ways. The one cannot be replaced by the other without something of the content of the former being lost. So, for instance, factual discourse cannot replace the ideas conveyed in a poem. (Ofcourse the relation between language-games is not always like this. The language of sensations and the language of physical objects, for example, are not linked in this way.)

¹¹ Pears, D.F. 1971 uses this example.

lot of marbles', and could be asked: 'give me some of your marbles'; but, though one could say: 'I have a lot of patience', it could not be asked: 'give me some of your patience'. Why not? The reason is that the two expressions belong to different language-games - marbles and patience are two different *categories* of things (physical substance and mental attribute). Different rules apply to the way these words are used. (Of course these rules do not derive from the natures of the objects for which the names stand; that is, it is not that the rules that apply to them are different on account of the fact that they are different categories of things. Rather, it is that it just so happens that marbles and patience belong to different language-games when it comes to individuation and ascription). The request 'give me some....' can only be made in the context of material objects. It becomes an illegitimate question in the context of mental attributes. The point here is that factual discourse is not homogenous. The picture in the TLP is one of a single line creating two columns, with representational discourse on the one side and non-representational discourse on the other. The picture in the PI, however, is one resembling a sub-divided pie - each division occupied by a different language-game.

A question that could arise here is: of what significance are all these *internal* boundaries - apart from allowing us to appreciate the richness and variation in human language - when Wittgenstein's task was really to plot the *outer* boundary of language (drawn of course, from the inside)? In other words, Wittgenstein's task was to delineate sense (this side of the boundary) from nonsense (on the far side of the boundary). Where is this crucial external boundary in the PI? In the new picture of language - that is, language as a subdivided pie - there is no external boundary which delineates meaningful from nonsensical discourse. The boundaries of this pie separate different language-games. Each language-game has a boundary, and what lies on the other side of a language-game is another language-game.

However, given this, how is nonsensical discourse produced? In answering this question one must remember that in the TLP the nonsense that is produced by crossing the limit is *factual* nonsense; crossing the limit consisted in saying something which did not conform to the rules of syntax and hence was not part of factual discourse. Because factual discourse was, for Wittgenstein, all that could intelligibly be said, any

expression which failed to be an assertoric or factual one was regarded as nonsensical. In the PI the situation is a little more complex (there is more than just factual language). But crossing the limit also consists in producing *factual* nonsense. However, crossing the limit in the PI consists in attempting to operate in two different areas of discourse at the same time - where the one area of discourse is factual and the other non-factual. For example, if one treats religious or ethical discourse as if they are factual discourse (by applying the rules of factual discourse to religious discourse) one produces factual nonsense. One treats the religious (or ethical) as if it belongs to the category of material objects - for example, by applying individuation or ascription criteria which pertain to material objects to an ethical or religious category of things. Suppose one said 'God is omnipotent', and it is then asked: 'Can God set a task for Himself which is impossible for Him to do?' If one answers 'no' to this question, the retort may be: 'Does that mean that God is *not* omnipotent?' The Wittgensteinian response would be something to this effect: we know what 'powerful' means (know how it is or can be used). And we may use the expression 'all powerful', say, for extreme despotic governments. However, the notion 'all powerful' when applied to God does not have the same application criteria as it does when applied to the factual domain. This is religious talk and one cannot ask questions about this kind of talk by applying rules which apply to factual discourse. To mix rules is to break rules and to break rules it to produce nonsense - in this case, to treat religious statements as factual statements. However, if one were to engage in religious talk *without* crossing the limits, then such talk would, on the PI account, be legitimate. What we may not do is try to make sense of discourse in one category by applying criteria of word-usage which belong to another category. To do so is to cross the limits, to *stray* from one area of discourse into another, while still keeping a foot in the one. Thus to cross the limits amounts to passing off a statement about one category of phenomenon (factual) in terms appropriate to another kind of phenomenon (ethics, religion) - that is, to make a category mistake, or to mix up language-games. To cross the limit is to apply the rules of one language-game to things which belong to another language-game, and in so doing producing an illicit sentence-construction. And, as we know, an illicit sentence construction - a sentence construction which fails to conform to syntax (TLP)

or grammar (PI) - is not a genuine part of language. The point is that to *mix up* rules is to *break* rules.

Both in the TLP and the PI, the reasons given for the *realisation* of metaphysical tendencies (that is, attempting to express ultimate claims) has to do with the deceptive character of language. This deceptive surface structure provides a vehicle for the expression of metaphysical tendencies. For example, we are inclined to make *ultimate* claims about reality. We want to say what 'the good' consists in, what the *ultimate nature* and *structure* of the world is, what makes language *possible*, and so on. Because we are blind to the underlying logical structure, we express these 'ultimate thoughts' in language and don't see that we've produced nonsense. Ideally, according to the TLP, if we had before us a perspicuous representation of our language - one that laid bare its true nature by means of analysis - we would see that certain kinds of expressions are illegitimate. In the PI the diagnosis is more or less the same. Language still misleads us. But there is not, as there is in the TLP, a gulf between *surface* and *underlying* logical structure. The PI does away with talk of an *underlying* grammatical structure; rather, the gulf (if one could call it so) is articulated as between *surface* and *deep* grammar. The true logic of our language does not lie underneath; rather, it lies on the surface, open to view. However, we often take one form of representation to be analogous to another when it is not. And (part of) the reason we do this is that we lack not a perspicuous representation of what lies hidden but an *Übersicht* or *surview* - that is, a descriptive account of the (customary) *uses* of language, of language-in-use. *Deep* grammar, then, does not lie underneath surface structure; deep grammar is what is revealed when we have an *Übersicht*. The *cure* for metaphysical expressions is, in the two works, similar. The perspicuous representation (TLP) or *Übersicht* (PI) keeps us sober; it helps us to see our transgression and make a come-back.

There are, however, differences. In the TLP the way to cure metaphysical meandering *as well as* the way to prevent a meandering in the *first* place was to have before one this perspicuous representation. (This is suggested in the preface to the TLP: the reason why philosophical problems are posed '...is that the logic of our language is misunderstood.' The corollary of this is that if we had our logic in order we wouldn't ask metaphysical questions). The situation in the PI is a little different: in order to stop

misusing language and breaking rules, the ideal thing to do is to go ahead and follow the temptation to do metaphysics - to commit the offence by theorizing and in so doing attempting to break the rules. We must allow ourselves to be tempted to theorize. Then, once we have felt that urge, and through committing the offence, we should be reminded of the genuine or everyday use of language. Only then will we be able properly to understand our language - that is, it is only in the context of first having done the wrong that what is right can be properly understood.

This method is clearly different from that suggested in the TLP. There it was simply a matter of presenting the logic of our language to someone who wanted to say something metaphysical. This would then have the appropriate deterring effect. But in the PI the idea is that we must first be led up the garden path - be allowed to make the mistake - and then be stopped. We must discover the limits for ourselves.

Why this difference? Because in the TLP Wittgenstein attempted to provide us with a general theory of the limits of factual language. The idea was that, using it, we could simply 'flash the formula' when anyone made a mismove and stop him in his tracks. In the PI no such general account is provided ahead of time (and in fact, no such general account *can* be provided), so one has actually to *discover* the limits by trial and error. We have to uncover the nonsense by having our understanding run its head up against the limits of language. It's only when we do this that we discover the limits. The limits must be plotted by first making a deliberate attempt to go beyond them. The way to find the limits is not by setting out to draw a sweeping definitive line but, in the words of Pears¹², by oscillating back and forth across the limits and so discovering them. The important difference to see here between the TLP and the PI is that in the TLP Wittgenstein saw his project to be one of *drawing* the limit (he attempted to give the logically necessary conditions for language to work), whereas in the PI the project is seen as one *discovering* the limits. The limits lie open to view. All we must do is self-consciously move about the terrain of linguistic discourse and in so doing discover the limits, and this discovery is made by first attempting to cross them and seeing that such an attempt gets you into trouble. This can be compared to attempting to sit on a wobbly chair, but not knowing ahead of time the amount of pressure to apply so that

¹²Pears, D.F. 1971, p123.

the chair does not break any further. To discover the (maximum) amount of pressure you can apply, you proceed slowly and gradually increase the pressure until you come to a point where you have in fact exceeded the maximum amount and you see that the chair 'gives' a little further. You know now that *that* amount of pressure is too much - you know now that you have exceeded the maximum, that you have exceeded the limit. The limit is discovered by first having gone beyond it. If you had known the limit ahead of time there would have been nothing to discover. You would have known when to stop applying pressure because you would have had a measurement, or a kind of formula which dictated the point at which to stop. This of course was how it was in the TLP: Wittgenstein had provided us ahead of time with a 'formula' for a proposition, derived from his account of the structure and function of language.

Suppose someone drew up an extensive *Übersicht* - an extensive, though necessarily incomplete, survey of the workings of language, of language-in-use. Why could he not present this survey to us, so that we can avoid the pitfalls of incorrect use of language and so save us the trouble of making many mistakes? His *Übersicht* would then serve as an extremely complex and rich version of the TLP's comparatively simple and straightforward 'perspicuous representation'. The reason is that Wittgenstein believed that there was *value* in making a mistake. It is in fact only when you have felt the force of linguistic temptation that an *Übersicht* (of an expression) can have significance for you. To be given an answer when you haven't asked a question - in this case, when you have not felt the confusion of a linguistic mistake - is of no use. Of such mistakes Wittgenstein says: 'These bumps make us see the *value* of the discovery.' (PI 119). This is perhaps why the PI takes us through so many 'mistakes' - to make us *feel* the problem.

So there seem to be two important reasons for Wittgenstein's different treatment of metaphysical urges in the PI. First, he now believes that the limits can only be properly understood after one had made the (unsuccessful) attempt to cross them. (In the TLP he felt that the *impasse* of the barrier would be felt from the inside). And secondly, he realises that the limit cannot be drawn ahead of time, because language does not admit of a uniform structure. The limits have to be discovered, case by case, instance by instance. Each individual case must be considered in its own right.

Pears makes the point that Wittgenstein's anthropocentrism is a version of what can be called Hume's 'psychological naturalism'. Hume, in his treatment of causality, claims that causal reasoning is not based on anything in experience. Rather, the conviction that events are causally linked derives from our psychology. All that there really is in the world are constant conjunctions of events. That these events are causally linked is a contribution from our own minds. Our minds project causal relations onto the world. Causality is a feature of our psychology. In the PI cause and effect reasoning is treated as an aspect of *grammar*. (This, incidentally, is also how it is treated in the TLP, except that the notion of 'syntax' and not 'grammar' is used there.) To say that it is an aspect of grammar, in the context of the PI, is to say that it is an aspect of how we happen to think about the world. The point Pears wants to make is that for both Wittgenstein and Hume there is no *objective* reason or explanation as to why humans reason in terms of cause and effect. For Hume the only explanation one can give is the fact that it is just an aspect of human psychology. In this sense Hume falls into the category of what Glock¹³ calls psychologistic logicians: the logical inferences humans perform derive from how they happen to think - from how their minds happen to work. The Wittgenstein of the PI holds a similar view. Causality is not a feature of the world; rather, it is a feature of how we happen to think. But, whereas Hume held that the reason we reason causally is that we happen, as a matter of our *psychology*, to do so, the Wittgenstein of the PI says that the reason for our various patterns of thought is just that that is what we happen to *do*. It is not an aspect of our psychology but of human linguistic behaviour. Thus, whereas Hume's position is a *psychologistic* naturalism, Wittgenstein's is a *linguistic* naturalism. Compare this with the view of the Wittgenstein of the TLP and that of Kant. For them the thought patterns we engage in are not just how we *happen* to think, but how we *must* think given that language is possible: they are the *preconditions* of thought, the logically prior conditions that make thought possible. However, unlike Kant, who held that the mind contributes these logically prior features, the Wittgenstein of the TLP believed that these forms or patterns of thought derive from the logical structure of the world.

¹³Glock, H.J., 1996. (See also p30 of this thesis.)

In this concluding section I have presented some of the key differences between the TLP and the PI. The area that underwent the greatest revision is, as we have seen, the account of language. Despite these changes, however, Wittgenstein's *project* remained the same - namely, to draw the limit of language, to establish that the limit is inexpressible and to delineate what can be said from what cannot be said but only shown. The theme of my thesis has been to understand why and how philosophical propositions (metaphysics) came to have the status they did in the TLP. Since the account of metaphysics is directly bound up with the account of language, my task was to examine the conclusions on metaphysics by examining the account of language. In my brief overview of the PI, I have suggested that his concern with the limit of language is very much present in the PI and that his conception of metaphysics remains, at base, pretty much the same.

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Personal Correspondence with Dr Anthony Holiday (1997-1998). Dr Holiday is a senior lecturer in Philosophy at the School of Government at the University of the Western Cape.