

# The Tractarian World

*An Analysis of Ludwig Wittgenstein's World View in Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*

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## Tiivistelmä suomeksi

Tässä esseessä olen pyrkinyt hahmottelemaan ja analysoimaan Ludwig Wittgensteinin kuvaa todellisuudesta hänen ensimmäisessä ja viimeisessä elämänsä aikana julkaisemassaan teoksessa, *Loogis-filosofisessa tutkielmassa (Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus)*. Lisäksi olen yrittänyt osoittaa, kuinka me Wittgensteinin varhaisfilosofian mukaan saamme informaatiota tuosta todellisuudesta. Syy tähän on se ainutlaatuinen tapa, jolla kirja on kirjoitettu, mikä tekee sen lukemisesta haasteen jopa filosofisesti suuntautuneelle yksilölle: niinpä myönnän täysin, että varmaankin pääsyy analyysiini oli oman ymmärrykseni *Tractatuksesta* parantaminen, tosin – jos olisin sattumoisin onnistunut yrityksessäni tyydyttävästi – ehkäpä siitä on apua jollekulle toisellekin.

Olen lähestynyt *Tractatuksessa* esitettyjä ideoita tapauskohtaisesti. Kirjan numeroidut huomautukset ovat niin vahvasti tiivistettyjä, että se on mielestäni vähiten uuvuttava tapa sekä itselleni että lukijalle. Se, mitä olen itse asiassa yrittänyt tehdä, on ollut tavallaan “avata” nuo raskaat kommentit, lähestyä niitä eri näkökulmista tehdäkseen niistä vähemmän lannistavia ja helpompia ymmärtää.

Esseen ensimmäisessä osassa annan hieman taustatietoa Wittgensteinista filosofisena hahmona sekä kirjasta kokonaisuutena lukijalle, joka ei ole perehtynyt Wittgensteinin varhaistuotantoon. Tämän jälkeen käyn läpi propositiot 1-2.063, kirjan tiukasti metafysisen osuuden, jossa tutkitaan todellisuuden luonnetta ja logiikan roolia siinä. Esseen keskivaiheilla analysoin Wittgensteinin kuuluisaa kuvateoriaa, joka liittyy vääjäämättömästi hänen maailmankuvaansa, sekä tämän merkitystä kielen kannalta. Analyysini viimeisessä vaiheessa tarkastelen Wittgensteinin *Tractatuksessa* puolustamaa solipsismin muotoa sekä kuinka se vaikuttaa muihin esittelemiini ‘traktariaanisiin’ ajatuksiin.

Vaikka olenkin yrittänyt luottaa lähinnä omiin kykyihini esseitä kirjoittaessani varmistaakseni sen itsenäisyyden suhteessa olemassaoleviin tulkintoihin kirjasta, on muutamia *Tractatus*-kommentteja, joista olen saanut paljon apua: eritoten Hans-Johann Glockin ja Erik Steniuksen kirjoittamat kristallinkirkkaat esheet.

Johtopäätökseni valaisevat toivottavasti hieman sitä, miksi Wittgenstein sanoi mitä sanoi, ja mitkä ovat hänen loogisen atomisminsa kannattamisen seuraukset: saadaan mukava ja siisti, täysin säännönmukainen paketti, jota voidaan sitten kutsua “kieleksi” – mutta joudutaan myöntämään, että on koko joukko koettavia asioita, joita ei voi niiden tälle kielelle asetettujen, tiukasti loogisten vaatimusten pohjalta esittää.

## Abstract

In this essay, I have attempted to outline and analyze the view on reality that Ludwig Wittgenstein gives in the first and last book he himself ever published, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. In addition, I have tried to show how, according to Wittgenstein's early philosophy, we acquire information from that reality. The reason for this is the unique way in which the book has been written, making reading it a challenge even to the philosophically minded individual: thus I fully admit that probably the primary reason for my analysis was to better my own understanding of the *Tractatus*, although – should I have succeeded in my attempt satisfactorily – perhaps it is of use to someone else as well.

I have approached the ideas presented in the *Tractatus* from a case-by-case basis. The numbered remarks in the book are so intensely condensed that I feel it is the least exhausting method both for the reader and myself. In fact, what I have tried to do has been in a way to "open up" those heavy remarks, approach them from various angles to make them slightly less daunting and easier to understand.

In the first part of the essay, I give some background information on Wittgenstein as a philosophical figure as well as on the book as a whole for the reader who is not well acquainted with Wittgenstein's early philosophy. Following that, I will go through propositions 1-2.063, the strictly metaphysical part of the book where the nature of reality and logic's role in it are examined. The mid-part of the essay consists of an analysis of Wittgenstein's famous picture theory, which is inexorably linked to his world view, as well as its significance regarding language. In the last stage of my analysis I take a look at the version of solipsism that Wittgenstein advocates in the *Tractatus* and how it relates to the other 'Tractarian' ideas I have presented.

While I have tried to rely as much on my own abilities as possible in doing this essay to ensure its independence in regards to the existing interpretations of the book, there are a few *Tractatus*-commentaries that have been of great assistance to me: in particular, the crystalline essays written by Hans-Johann Glock and Erik Stenius.

My conclusions hopefully shed some light on why Wittgenstein said what he said and what are the implications of espousing his logical atomism: you get a nice and neat, perfectly ordered package that you can then call "language" – but are forced to admit that there is a great deal to be experienced in reality that cannot be represented relying solely on the strictly logical conditions you set for that language.

# 1. Introduction

While the whole of Ludwig Wittgenstein's philosophy, both in *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* and in his later, posthumously published writings such as *Philosophical Investigations*, clearly contributes mostly to philosophy of language, it is remarkable that the scope of the *Tractatus* is actually quite broad. To a varying extent, it covers Wittgenstein's views on ontology<sup>1</sup>, language, logic, mathematics, epistemology<sup>2</sup>, physics and ethics. To speak the truth, the book tells a whole lot of Wittgenstein's attitude towards the world we live in, and therefore it is quite the prospect to attempt to analyze his world view as a separate theme in the book. Yet, that is what this essay aims at.

I have made my task easier by concentrating as closely as is possible, keeping in mind the length of the essay, on only two of the topics mentioned above: ontology and language, and in addition, the bridge that Wittgenstein builds between them – his picture theory of representation. I felt these sections were the most critical in understanding the whole of the book, but the purpose of my essay is actually related not so much to the specific themes in the *Tractatus* that I have explored as the method by which I have done it: I have analyzed separately each passage, or rather each group of passages that express similar thoughts, so that the connection between my interpretation of the book and what is actually said *in* the book is as clear as possible. It is not much use to read the book with the help of a traditional commentary if it is still difficult to decipher the sense behind some propositions, and I dare say that most readers will find such passages in the *Tractatus*.

Because of the method I have chosen to analyze the book with, it is somewhat obvious that existing *Tractatus*-commentaries – which discuss the book more theme-by-theme rather than case-by-case – are of limited assistance to an attempt like mine, but the ones I have listed as my sources have provided certain general guidelines to which I owe much. I have referred to them in my text wherever possible.

And as always, there are no philosophical problems that would not be of current interest; else it has to be concluded that philosophy has become synonymous with dogmatics.

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<sup>1</sup> The branch of metaphysics in philosophy that studies being or existence, and what types of entities exist.

<sup>2</sup> The theory of knowledge: epistemology explores the origin, nature, scope of and grounds for knowledge.

## 2. A Brief Biography of Wittgenstein

Ludwig Wittgenstein was born in 1889 in Vienna, Austria, to one of the wealthiest families in the country. He studied in Manchester to become a flight engineer but became interested in the foundations of mathematics after reading Bertrand Russell's *Principles of Mathematics*: following a correspondence with the German philosopher and mathematician Frege, whose works also greatly fascinated him, he decided to switch to philosophy in Cambridge under the tutelage of Russell himself.

World War I broke out in 1914, however, and Wittgenstein volunteered to serve in the Austrian army. He had already written an important part of the *Tractatus* at this stage, a book called *Logik*, and it was in the Austrian military that he completed his work. Although Russell considered the *Tractatus* a brilliant work of great philosophical importance [7], even writing an introduction to it, Wittgenstein had trouble finding a publisher for the book. It was not until 1921 that the book was published, in *Annalen der Naturphilosophie*, and a year later the English translation came out. Wittgenstein, who felt he had now said all there was to say about philosophy, withdrew from the academic life for almost a decade. [For more on this period: 3, 7]

In 1929, however, Wittgenstein returned to Cambridge to teach. Inspired by conversations with friends about the *Tractatus*, he felt increasingly that there was yet something to be said about philosophy and language. The work he now began would consume the rest of his life: Wittgenstein died of cancer in 1951, leaving behind the fruits of over two decades of renewed philosophical vigor. The part of his notes that Wittgenstein himself intended to publish became the *Philosophical Investigations*, published posthumously in 1953, a work of at least equal significance to the *Tractatus*. Here he consciously renounced many of the significant ideas of his early philosophy [6; see eg section 23.]: just how much of it, is a subject of hot debate even today.

Wittgenstein was the archetypal genius: an intense, controversial figure whose peculiar habits and quirks drew attention but whose clarity of mind was beyond question. On the other hand, he certainly was not a typical philosopher: Wittgenstein despised the academic life, in fact, and frequently tried to persuade his own students not to pursue a career in philosophy. [3] Quite on the contrary, he valued manual labor and saw practical professions as far more dignified than the dry discourse of Cambridge. He was also an ardently moral individual and a relentless perfectionist who was continuously plagued by self-criticism. [7]

Wittgenstein is also said to have possessed a powerful intellectual charisma that prompted many of his students to go as far as imitate his dressing style. [3] Some of that charisma can perhaps be found in his texts, works of art in their own right, that continue to fascinate scholars and non-scholars alike to this day. He is widely regarded as one of the most influential philosophers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### 3. Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus: A Summary

*Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* was the title G.E. Moore suggested for the English translation of Wittgenstein's *Logisch-Philosophische Abhandlung*. It is a relatively short book, just short of 90 pages counting the preface, but this figure can easily be multiplied tenfold if a more accurate picture of the book's laboriousness is wanted. The book is written in short, cryptic paragraphs that are numbered with a decimal system to denote the logical importance of each proposition, although Wittgenstein does not use this system consistently. Both the name and the decimal system pay homage to Baruch Spinoza's *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* [2].

The *Tractatus*, as it has come to be called, explores the relationship between language and reality. The central idea in the book is that reality and language are isomorphic [1, 4]: they share a structural identity, and according to Wittgenstein, this structural identity is logic. Language is actually a way of picturing reality; it is our way of "reaching out to it". What Wittgenstein understands as "reality" is approximately the logical space, the totality of all possible situations, in which our world is merely the small special case of true situations (situations that exist). Our capability to think and express are therefore limited by reality, for the limits of reality also define the limits of language, which shapes our thought. What is beyond reality is plain nonsense, and only meaningless noise comes out of our mouth when we try to cross this border in language – although there are even some parts of reality that are inexpressible, as we will see.

The book progresses in more or less clear themes. They are difficult to deduce from the usage of the decimal system, however. The first, second and third parts of the book – ontology, the picture theory, and language – are what I have concentrated in this essay on: and from thereon Wittgenstein moves on to logic, mathematics, epistemology and some physics. The very last part of the book is the most confusing: here Wittgenstein deviates entirely from the rest of the book, adding several apocryphal remarks about what he calls "the mystical". At least ethics, aesthetics and religion belong to the mystical, which to Wittgenstein seems to be something that is an undeniable part of reality, yet cannot be put into words. It is far from the kind of "nonsense" that is to be found *beyond* reality, however; in fact, it is this part of reality that is the most important to Wittgenstein, although his admirers have tended to appreciate the book's logical merits more.

This last section is a tough one to swallow for the reader who finds the logical part of the book interesting, and similarly the rigidly numbered utterances about ethics, death and God offer something romantic to more artistically oriented minds. It is this curious blend of the analytic and the artistic that is behind the fascination that many readers have had in the *Tractatus*, and it is also probably the main reason as to why there is still no clear consensus on the exact message Wittgenstein wanted to convey with the book.

## 4. Analysis

### 4.1 Ontology (1 – 2.063)

I have now introduced briefly both Wittgenstein as a philosopher and the work of his that I am concerned with – *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. Without further ado, I will present an analysis of the first few pages of the book where Wittgenstein sets out his view on the structure of reality.

- 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 them 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.
- 1.2 The world divides into facts.
- 1.21 Each item can be the case or not the case while everything else remains the same.
- 2 What is the case - a fact - is the existence of states of affairs.
- 2.01 A state of affairs (a state of things) is a combination of objects (things).

2 and 2.01 are essential to understanding 1 and all its subsections. Wittgenstein presents on the first page of the *Tractatus* an interesting way to view the world and logic's role in it. What he says is essentially the following:

All possible situations, or states of affairs, are located in the logical space. There are both existing and nonexisting states of affairs, and we call the existing ones "facts". For example, the situation that the statement "Earth is the fourth planet from the Sun" refers to is a logically possible one, but it is not an existing one. It is therefore the totality of all facts that we call the world - as opposed to the totality of things, as Hans-Johann Glock comments [1], since *every* possible world is composed of the totality of things, not just the existing one. (Things, or objects, are the constituents of states of affairs. Exactly what they are is irrelevant here: they can be thought of as the basic elements of reality.) The only thing that distinguishes existing states of affairs from nonexisting ones is that the former exist, the latter do not: there are no properties to either that would determine their existence or nonexistence.

Clarification to the latter part is offered much later in the book in 5.136 and the subsequent remarks when Wittgenstein states that "There is no causal nexus to justify such an inference" and "We cannot infer the events of the future from those of the present. Superstition is nothing but belief in the causal nexus." [5; proposition 5.136] Essentially, Wittgenstein is defending here a Humean

position: causality<sup>1</sup> is not a logical necessity, and thus there is no necessary relation between any two events. He does not give a clear solution to the uncomfortable implications that this conception bears with it. [2]

2.011 It is essential to things that they should be possible constituents of states of affairs.

2.012 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 unto the thing itself.

2.0121 It would seem to be a sort of accident, if it turned out that a situation would fit a thing that could already exist entirely on its own.

If things can occur in states of affairs, this possibility must be in them from the beginning.

(Nothing in the province of logic can be merely possible. Logic deals with every possibility and all possibilities are its facts.)

Just as we are quite unable to imagine spatial objects outside space or temporal objects outside time, so too there is *no* object that we can imagine excluded from the possibility of combining with others.

If I can imagine objects combined in states of affairs, I cannot imagine them excluded from the *possibility* of such combinations.

Pinpointing the importance of realizing that it is an internal property of objects to be able to form combinations, states of affairs. They do not "happen" to be part of certain combinations; what things can combine with is an inherent property of theirs. If we imagine things to be atoms, it is clear that an oxygen atom and two hydrogen atoms can combine into a water molecule *precisely* because of what they are: similarly, neither can combine with xenon (because of what they are). If this weren't so, we would not be talking of oxygen, hydrogen and xenon atoms, but of something else.

Therefore, because the world is the totality of facts (existing combinations of objects), it is impossible to think of an object that could not combine with anything. Trying to do so would be to look at a finished building, so to say, and then try to imagine any of the individual building blocks that the building consists of without the possibility of combining into a building: it is attempting the logically impossible. The starting point is that complexes exist, not that simples exist. (I am using here terms that Wittgenstein later introduces to better describe objects and states of affairs.)

It might be helpful to think of objects as lego blocks. There are various kinds: just by looking at one we can easily tell whether it could combine with another given block or not, and while they are individually always the same, the different structures that can be produced by combining them with each other are nigh-unlimited.

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<sup>1</sup> The existence of cause-effect relations. *David Hume* (1711-1776) argued that it is impossible to prove causal relations are more than mere constant conjunctions of events from an empirical (experience-based) standpoint: we see events happening in a certain sequence, but there is no logical justification to believe that one event is "caused" by another. This led to his incredible conclusion that we have no justified beliefs about the future.

- 2.0122 Things are independent in so far as they can occur in all *possible* situations, but this form of independence is a form of connexion with states of affairs, a form of dependence. (It is impossible for words to appear in two different rôles: by themselves, and in propositions.)
- 2.0123 If I know an object I also know all its possible occurrences in states of affairs.  
(Every one of these possibilities must be part of the nature of the object.)  
A new possibility cannot be discovered later.
- 2.01231 If I am to know an object, though I need not know its external properties, I must know all its internal properties.
- 2.0124 If all objects are given, then at the same time all *possible* states of affairs are also given.

An exposition of the conclusions of the previous passages: "Independence", with regards to objects, can only mean being able to combine with *anything*, thus being somewhat misleading. Additionally, because what an object can combine with is part of what it is, knowing an object is knowing all other objects it can possibly combine with to produce states of affairs. Wittgenstein uses the term "internal property" to describe the possible properties of an object, and "external property" to describe the actualization of these possible properties, depending on what it combines with. Finally, a noteworthy logical conclusion of this all is that knowing all objects is knowing everything that is possible.

- 2.013 Each thing is, as it were, in a space of possible states of affairs. This space I can imagine empty, but I cannot imagine the thing without the space.
- 2.0131 A spatial object must be situated in infinite space. (A spatial point is an argument-place.)  
A speck in the visual field, though it need not be red, must have some colour: it is, so to speak, surrounded by colour-space. Notes must have *some* pitch, objects of the sense of touch *some* degree of hardness, and so on.
- 2.014 Objects contain the possibility of all situations.
- 2.0141 The possibility of its occurring in states of affairs is the form of an object.

Here Wittgenstein mostly clarifies what has already been said, but he also defines an object's possible combinations as its "form". The logical space is likened to "a space of possible states of affairs": what follows in the same section can only mean that while it is possible to imagine an object on its own, it is not possible to imagine an object without its form. We cannot imagine a spatial object that is colorless, for instance, for being colored is an internal property of spatial objects. (Essentially: external properties arise from the combinations of objects, whereas an object's internal properties are an essential part of it so they cannot be "stripped" from it when imagining it.) To use the example Wittgenstein himself provided, "A speck in the visual field, though it need not be red, must have some colour: it is, so to speak, surrounded by colour-space." The color need not be determined, but it is

clear there is *some* color. (An object's external properties need not be determined, but they *are* there regardless.)

2.014 seems to be just another way of expressing 2.0124, showing that Wittgenstein does not always use his decimal system accurately.

2.02 Objects are simple.

2.0201 Every statement about complexes can be resolved into a statement about their constituents and into the propositions that describe the complexes completely.

2.021 Objects make up the substance of the world. That is why they cannot be composite.

2.0211 If the world had no substance, then whether a proposition had sense would depend on whether another proposition was true.

2.0212 In that case we could not sketch any picture of the world (true or false).

An important part that not only clarifies the fundamental nature of objects, but also why such fundamental objects must exist and how they are combined. If there were no noncomposite objects that made up the substance of the world, we would have an infinitely regressing chain of components, which is actually what Zeno's paradoxes [8] are all about. Thus Wittgenstein draws here a clear line between mathematics and reality: unlike in mathematics, reality does have "the smallest number". Among physicists today, however, the amount of correlation between mathematics and reality is still a subject of intense debate.

How we describe combinations of objects is taken to be propositions. This makes sense, for propositions *claim* something: names do not, by definition, they only represent the objects corresponding to them. (A name is the linguistic version of an object: a noncomposite unit of language, like a "tag" on its corresponding object.) Anything that can be *claimed* must be something that is possible, yet not necessary: objects are necessary, their combinations are possibilities.

2.022 It is obvious that an imagined world, however different it may be from the real one, must have something - a form - in common with it.

2.023 Objects are just what constitute this unalterable form.

2.0231 The substance of the world *can* only determine a form, and not any material properties. For it is only by means of propositions that material properties are represented - only by the configuration of objects that they are produced.

2.0232 In a manner of speaking, objects are colourless.

Expanding from 2.0124. Anything that we can understand must, clearly, be something that is logically possible. Logic governs our thinking. (Even if centaurs do not exist, they are logically

possible because we can imagine them: however, we cannot imagine what would a note with a color look like, for instance.)

2.0231 and 2.0232 lay stress on the fact that objects do not have any external properties *on their own*. These are a matter of actualization – the obtaining of such properties through combining with other objects – and can be described by propositions, which describe *how* things are as opposed to *what* they are.

2.0233 If two objects have the same logical form, the only distinction between them, apart from their external properties, is that they are different.

2.02331 Either a thing has properties that nothing else has, in which case we can immediately use a description to distinguish it from the others and refer to it; or, on the other hand, there are several things that have the whole set of their properties in common, in which case it is quite impossible to indicate one of them.

For if there is nothing to distinguish a thing, I cannot distinguish it, since otherwise it would be distinguished after all.

It seems Wittgenstein rejects the idea that the properties of an object define it. He rejects the conception of identity, in short, as Russell points out in his introduction to the book: there is no natural necessity that compels two items to be the same even if they have precisely the same (internal) properties. "If this does not in fact happen that is an accidental characteristic of the world, not a logically necessary characteristic, and accidental characteristics of the world must, of course, not be admitted into the structure of logic", in Russell's own words. [5; p. xviii] We are to keep in mind that the world is only a number of existing states of affairs among numerous possible ones: even if it so happens that the conception of identity applies to all facts, we cannot infer from this that it must be so with the larger totality, the logical space.

It is important to note that external properties, such as spatial or temporal properties, are not included here. It is of course impossible to imagine two objects in the same place at the same time. It is not impossible, however, to imagine two objects with the same *possibilities* for spatial, temporal and other external properties. This is certainly a noteworthy insight.

2.024 Substance is what subsists independently of what is the case.

2.025 It is form and content.

2.0251 Space, time, and colour (being coloured) are forms of objects.

2.026 There must be objects, if the world is to have an unalterable form.

2.027 Objects, the unalterable, and the subsistent are one and the same.

2.0271 Objects are what is unalterable and subsistent; their configuration is what is changing and unstable.

With respect to 2.0251, it is important not to confuse space, time and color with spatial, temporal and color-related *external* properties, which were discussed above. It is an internal property of a thing to be situated in space and time, while it is an external property of a thing to be situated in Vienna in 1918, for instance.

2.0271 gives additional credibility to the example of objects as lego blocks of sorts: build, take to pieces, build again. Same components, different configurations.

- 2.03 In a state of affairs objects fit into one another like the links of a chain.
- 2.031 In a state of affairs objects stand in a determinate relation to one another.
- 2.032 The determinate way in which objects are connected in a state of affairs is the structure of the state of affairs.
- 2.033 Form is the possibility of structure.
- 2.034 The structure of a fact consists of the structures of states of affairs.

Defining a new term: structure. The specific way in which objects are connected in a given state of affairs is the structure of this state of affairs, which sets it apart from other possible combinations of the objects in question.

Logically, the structure of a fact consists of the structures of the states of affairs that are part of it. Wittgenstein seems to consider the number of states of affairs "in" a fact irrelevant, giving flexibility to its use.

- 2.04 The totality of existing states of affairs is the world.
- 2.05 The totality of existing states of affairs also determines which states of affairs do not exist.
- 2.06 The existence and non-existence of states of affairs is reality.  
(We also call the existence of states of affairs a positive fact, and their non-existence a negative fact.)
- 2.061 States of affairs are independent of one another.
- 2.062 From the existence or non-existence of states of affairs it is impossible to infer the existence or non-existence of another.
- 2.063 The sum-total of reality is the world.

2.04 and 2.05 are repetition of 1.1 and 1.12. In 2.06 and 2.063 we are presented with the definition of a new word, reality. Wittgenstein seems to use the term as nearly synonymous with logical space, in which all states of affairs are situated regardless of their existential status: what is beyond the limits of logical space is incomprehensible. Everything that is *subject to law* can be found inside these limits. [5; propositions 3.02-3.03, 6.361] However, there are parts of reality that do not conform to the logical form, and thus it is reasonable to assume that reality is a more or less larger totality to Wittgenstein than merely the logical space.

## 4.2 The Picture Theory

Wittgenstein's so-called picture theory of representation is one of the key concepts presented in the *Tractatus*. Here he describes the way in which human beings acquire information about reality, and this section is, in fact, the very core of the book: it handles the relationship between reality (section 4.1 in my essay) and language (section 4.3), for the picture theory is a bridge between these two. For the sake of brevity, I have left out some parts that I felt were unnecessary for understanding the whole.

- 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.

A picture is our connection to reality, our way of "reaching out to it" as Wittgenstein puts it: according to him, it is not possible to picture anything outside the logical space, or reality. The picture can, therefore, be divided into elements that correspond to the constituents of the state of affairs, that is, actualized objects. (It is logically impossible to represent a non-actualized object.)

The most consistent interpretation for 2.1 is that each picture, by nature, *attempts* to picture a fact. What it pictures is always logical (due to depicting a situation in the logical space) but it is not necessarily an existing state of affairs. Each picture, as it were, has a sign over it that claims: "This is an existing state of affairs." 2.1 should, therefore, not be interpreted as: "We picture *only* facts to ourselves", but rather: "We *attempt* to picture only facts to ourselves." Alternatively, it needs to be assumed that Wittgenstein concerns himself strictly with "scientific" thinking here, not taking into account pictures that deliberately depict something unreal. [4]

As for 2.141, it could be assumed that Wittgenstein wants to point out that pictures are a part of the world because they are always created by someone. While a picture need not depict an existing state of affairs, it is *in itself* an existing state of affairs.

- 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.

Let us call this connexion of its elements the structure of the picture, and let us call the possibility of this structure the pictorial form of the picture.

- 2.151 Pictorial form is the possibility that things are related to one another in the same way as the elements of the picture.
- 2.1511 *That* is how a picture is attached to reality; it reaches right out to it.
- 2.1512 It is laid against reality like a measure.
- 2.15121 Only the end-points of the graduating lines actually *touch* the object that is to be measured.

2.15 and 2.151 clarify 2.11-2.14 and apply the concepts of structure and form to pictures. "Pictorial form" might seem a somewhat useless concept until you realize Wittgenstein implies that not all of reality can actually be pictured. It is the possibility of pictorial structure, which is not a universal quality of complexes. Wittgenstein calls such parts of reality that do not have a pictorial form "the mystical", which will come up much later in the book. [5; from proposition 6.4 onwards]

2.1511-2.15121 lay stress on the unavoidable connection between reality and pictures. As hard as Wittgenstein tries with his metaphors, however, it is later to be concluded that this connection, this relationship cannot be described, although it exists.

- 2.16 If a fact is to be a picture, it must have something in common with what it depicts.
- 2.161 There must be something identical in a picture and what it depicts, to enable the one to be a picture of the other at all.
- 2.17 What a picture must have in common with reality, in order to be able to depict it - correctly or incorrectly - in the way it does, is its pictorial form.
- 2.171 A picture can depict any reality whose form it has.  
A spatial picture can depict anything spatial, a coloured one anything coloured, etc.

Therefore the parts of reality that do not have a pictorial form cannot be pictured either. 2.16 and 2.161 must clearly be true, although *why* they are true belongs to the realm of the mystical. Each picture must share a pictorial form with what it depicts, the possibility of common structure: yet why this is so, we cannot explain without crossing the border of meaningful expression.

2.17 would be difficult to interpret if we did not assume that Wittgenstein implies every picture attempts to depict a fact, as noted above. Therefore, it is correct if a matching state of affairs is found in the world; incorrect if not. In either case, a picture is always a model of reality: it represents either an existing or a non-existing state of affairs. A picture always represents *something*.

Wittgenstein uses the term "reality" in an odd way in 2.171, but the message should be rather clear: a picture must have the necessary structural properties in common with the part of reality that it depicts in order to be able to depict it. A picture of varying shades of green is able to communicate something important to us about an ancient forest looming ahead of us, even if it lacks any spatial forms, while a pencil sketch of the same forest reveals to us its spatial reality. Yet, the only thing these two pictures would have in common with each other was the object of their depiction.

- 2.172 A picture cannot, however, depict its pictorial form: it displays it.
- 2.173 A picture represents its subject from a position outside it. (Its standpoint is its representational form.)  
That is why a picture represents its subject correctly or incorrectly.
- 2.174 A picture cannot, however, place itself outside its representational form.
- 2.18 What any picture, or whatever form, must have in common with reality, in order to be able to depict it - correctly or incorrectly - in any way at all, is logical form, i.e. the form of reality.
- 2.181 A picture whose pictorial form is logical form is called a logical picture.
- 2.182 Every picture is *at the same time* a logical one. (On the other hand, not every picture is, for example, a spatial one.)
- 2.19 Logical pictures can depict the world.

2.172-2.174 need clarifying. Because *each picture* has a representational form by nature - each picture depicts something *from a certain standpoint* - there is no picture that can depict a representational form. You cannot *represent the way something is represented* if you use the same medium to represent as has been used in your object – and since in this case we are talking about *all* representation, the conclusion is clear. This, at least, is how Wittgenstein’s own thinking goes: admittedly, there are many philosophers who would rather think of language as a kind of “calculus” whose representation can be discussed within the language itself. The question of whether the semantic relations of language to reality are actually possible to picture is therefore a valid one.

The difference between representational form and pictorial form is that the former deals with a certain perspective of representation while the latter deals with the possibility of the subject being represented at all. Exactly why the representational form enables a picture to represent its subject correctly or incorrectly seems obscure, however: if a picture could represent its subject from the *inside*, would it have no truth-value? – But in such a case, nothing would be represented! Perhaps this is what Wittgenstein had in mind.

(A picture always has a certain standpoint. This enables the subject to be represented, but a representation must, by nature, be a correct or an incorrect representation: a picture should have to be the subject itself in order to eliminate any doubt of its existence. A picture must also have only one representational form by nature, for otherwise it would not be the same picture.)

(Note that Wittgenstein does not concern himself with epistemological skepticism here.)

2.181-2.19 contain a message that is very crucial to Wittgenstein’s early philosophy: what every picture must have in common by virtue of being a picture is the *logical form*. It is this that pictures and what they depict – that is, reality – have in common with each other, and it is this that enables pictures to depict reality. The structural similarity, the isomorphism between pictures and reality, is logic.

- 2.221 What a picture represents is its sense.
- 2.222 The agreement or disagreement of its sense with reality constitutes its truth or falsity.
- 2.223 In order to tell whether a picture is true or false we must compare it with reality.
- 2.224 It is impossible to tell from the picture alone whether it is true or false.
- 2.225 There are no pictures that are true a priori.

A picture's subject is defined as its sense, something that every picture has by nature. When in 2.222 and 2.223 Wittgenstein speaks of pictures either "agreeing" or "disagreeing" with reality, as he seems to be fond of doing, it can be imagined as follows: whereas every picture claims: "This is an existing state of affairs", reality asserts: "These are the existing and non-existing states of affairs." (Followed by a "list" of them.) Hence agreeing or disagreeing, 2.224 and 2.225, the last two passages of section 2, conclude that a picture's sense is not a fact by virtue of it being what it is, for a representation never represents itself: all knowledge about a picture's truth-value must be *a posteriori* knowledge.

### 4.3 Language

In this section, my attempt is to show how Wittgenstein makes the leap from representation of a general kind to language. I have again left out parts of the *Tractatus* that seem either repetition or irrelevant. Note that while Wittgenstein's discussion about logic in the next part of the book is clearly tied to language, I will not take part in that discussion here: his more general remarks about language are enough to understand what he is getting at.

- 3 A logical picture of facts is a thought.
- 3.001 'A state of affairs is thinkable': what this means is that we can picture it to ourselves.
- 3.01 The totality of true thoughts is a picture of the world.

Wittgenstein starts the third chapter of the *Tractatus* by stating that thinking is a form of representation, consisting of pictures. Thinking is nothing more than 'picturing' reality to ourselves, and thus the totality of the thoughts that depict existing states of affairs is a picture of the world.

- 3.1 In a proposition a thought finds an expression that can be perceived by the senses.
- 3.11 We use the perceptible sign of a proposition (spoken or written, etc.) as a projection of a possible situation.  
The method of projection is to think of the sense of the proposition.
- 3.12 I call the sign with which we express a thought a propositional sign. --And a proposition is a propositional sign in its projective relation to the world.

Here Wittgenstein crosses over from thought to language. *Propositions* are defined as perceivable expressions of thoughts. A *propositional sign* is the proposition's projection: the same proposition can have different propositional signs depending on the nature of this projection. What is common to all of them is that they are expressions, they can be perceived, unlike thoughts. Thus the difference between a 'proposition' and a 'propositional sign' is essentially the same as between 'language' as a phenomenon and a specific 'language', such as English, for instance: the latter is a specific kind of manifestation of the former.

This comparison makes understanding the latter part of 3.12 easier: what Wittgenstein tries to say, apparently, is that if a propositional sign is a particular way of expressing a proposition, then propositions overall are a particular way of expressing the world. Propositions are a tool we use to describe the world.

- 3.2 In a proposition a thought can be expressed in such a way that elements of the propositional sign correspond to the objects of the thought.
- 3.201 I call such elements 'simple signs', and such a proposition 'completely analysed'.
- 3.202 The simple signs employed in propositions are called names.
- 3.203 A name means an object. The object is its meaning. ('A' is the same sign as 'A'.)
- 3.21 The configuration of objects in a situation corresponds to the configuration of simple signs in the propositional sign.
- 3.22 In a proposition a name is the representative of an object.
- 3.221 Objects can only be *named*. Signs are their representatives. I can only speak *about* them: I cannot *put them into words*. Propositions can only say *how* things are, not *what* they are.
- 3.23 The requirement that simple signs be possible is the requirement that sense be determinate.

Wittgenstein approaches the same subject from various angles, laying stress on the idea expressed: An object can only be *called something*; it cannot be *described*. This is because they are utterly simple by nature, and thus only combinations of objects have something to be described - namely, the sense brought about by the specific structure (configuration) of the constituent objects. - Then what about the varying *forms* of objects, the specific *sets* of potential situations that objects have? (Referring to 2.012 and subsequent clarifications) But remember that to know an object is to know its form: no description, no explanation is ever needed. There is not even theoretically the possibility that something would be left unclear about a name if its meaning (the object it denotes) is known. (Take a lego piece: if you do not know what other pieces it can combine with just by looking at it, you are not seeing it clearly. There is nothing to be described.)

Correspondingly, it is situations (states of affairs) that need description, but they cannot be named - although they can, of course, be represented by signs that *appear* simple. In such a case, the sign used requires a *definition* to explain the compression of a complex into a simple.

The rest is basically explaining how the picture theory is applied to language using the new terms given. There is a one-on-one correlation between objects, and the way they are related to each other, and simple signs in a propositional sign (and the way these are related to each other). A proposition that correctly describes a fact is like a film that can be put over the fact with perfect matching. (If incorrectly, it still describes *some* situation in the same manner - just not the fact it attempted to represent.) 3.23 presents a similar requirement to language as propositions 2.021 and 2.0211 do to reality in regards to objects: if there were no simple signs, then the sense of a proposition would depend on the veracity of another proposition, and this Wittgenstein cannot accept. According to him, *all* propositions have a sense: whether they are true or false is quite another matter.

The above is apparent from proposition 4.024: "To understand a proposition means to know what is the case if it is true. (One can understand it, therefore, without knowing whether it is true.) It is understood by anyone who understands its constituents."

- 3.4 A proposition determines a place in logical space. The existence of this logical place is guaranteed by the mere existence of the constituents – by the existence of the proposition with a sense.
- 3.41 The propositional sign with logical co-ordinates – that is the logical place.
- 3.411 In geometry and logic alike a place is a possibility: something can exist in it.
- 3.42 A proposition can determine only one place in logical space: nevertheless the whole of logical space must already be given by it.  
(Otherwise negation, logical sum, logical product, etc.; would introduce more and more new elements – in co-ordination.)  
(The logical scaffolding surrounding a picture determines logical space. The force of a proposition reaches through the whole of logical space.)

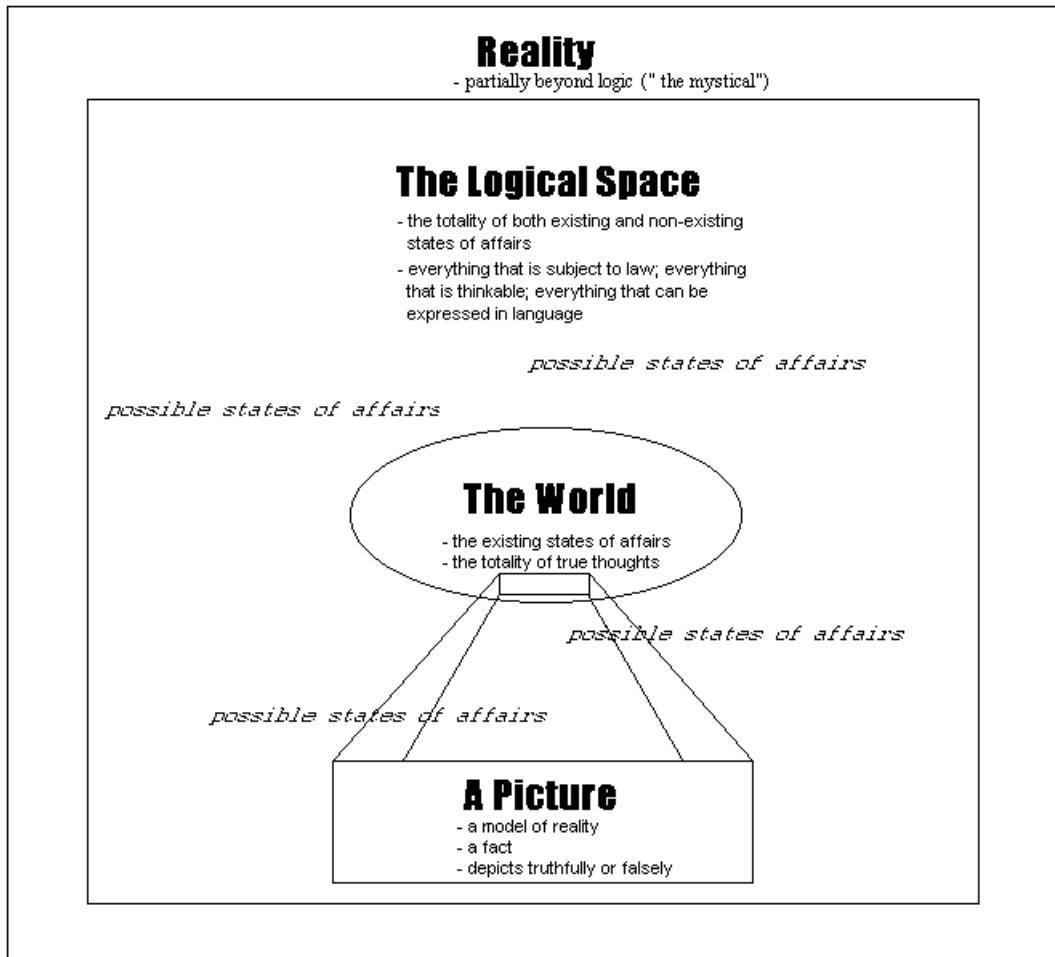
An excellent example of how, to Wittgenstein, language and the logical space are closely intertwined with each other. As the latter consists of all possible states of affairs, and a proposition with a sense always describes one situation or another, every proposition has its place in the logical space – its "logical co-ordinates". In 3.42, Wittgenstein notes that the whole of logic is necessary for the understanding of even a single proposition: this is because logic actually comprises solely of tautologies. [5; proposition 6.1 and subsequent clarifications] One cannot understand just one logical picture and not another, for understanding all of logic is the prerequisite.

- 4.1 Propositions represent the existence and non-existence of states of affairs.
- 4.11 The totality of true propositions is the whole of natural science (or the whole corpus of the natural sciences).
- 4.111 Philosophy is not one of the natural sciences.  
(The word 'philosophy' must mean something whose place is above or below the natural sciences, not beside them.)
- 4.112 Philosophy aims at the logical clarification of thoughts.  
Philosophy is not a body of doctrine but an activity.  
A philosophical work consists essentially of elucidations.  
Philosophy does not result in 'philosophical propositions', but rather in the clarification of propositions.  
Without philosophy thoughts are, as it were, cloudy and indistinct: its task is to make them clear and to give them sharp boundaries.

Finally, we are given the relationship between language and the sciences: since propositions depict reality, their totality is what we call the 'natural sciences'. It is the *aim* of the natural sciences to represent reality fully, and to represent reality fully is to know all true propositions. (Or, as fully as possible – again, we must remember the existence of the mystical.)

Philosophy, however, does *not* aim at depicting states of affairs, according to Wittgenstein. Philosophy is a 'linguistic police' that steps in when people would attempt to misuse language – that is, when language would be used in such a way that it attempted to transcend the boundaries of logic. This is a notion that is, understandably, probably rejected at least by most philosophers, for what Wittgenstein is essentially saying is that the *current* way of practising philosophy is thoroughly nonsensical: he claims that philosophical problems arise out of the attempt to describe what lies beyond the logical space. Unfortunately, Wittgenstein provides no examples to support this claim, but admittedly he may have a point when it comes to certain kinds of philosophical discourses – namely, the kinds that give philosophy the reputation of being much talk and of little sense. Still, it is doubtful that the generalization Wittgenstein makes is sound.

An interesting thing to note, of course, is that Wittgenstein himself seems to be practising philosophy in the *Tractatus*. Does this not run contradictory to what he is claiming here? Indeed it does, for in a well-known passage at the end of the book (6.54) he writes: "My propositions serve as elucidations in the following way: anyone who understands me eventually recognizes them as nonsensical, when he has used them – as steps – to climb beyond them. (He must, so to speak, throw away the ladder after he has climbed it.) He must transcend these propositions, and then he will see the world aright." After this, one might naturally ask – how much sense is in the *rest* of the book?



Picture 1. A simplified, categorical scheme of the structure of the Tractarian reality.

A summary of the analysis thus far:

- The logical space consists of states of affairs.
- States of affairs consist of objects, which are simple, noncomposite, and thus the basic constituents of all that is (and all that is not).
- The totality of existing states of affairs is the world; however, the only thing that separates the world from the rest of reality is the matter of existence or non-existence, nothing more.
- We acquire and organize information from the world by picturing it to ourselves: pictures are models of reality that are able to depict it due to sharing a structural identity, an isomorphism, with reality, and that isomorphism is logic.
- Language is a form of picturing and thus conforms to logical syntax: the limits of the logical space define the limits of language, so what is beyond logic is also beyond description.

## 4.4 Solipsism<sup>1</sup>

Before drawing the conclusions from my analysis, it is time to take a look at a very different and perhaps confusing perspective to the world that Wittgenstein offers us towards the end of the book. In many commentaries, the so-called linguistic solipsism that he advocates is often pushed aside as a less important part of the *Tractatus*, and yet, if we are to assume that Wittgenstein does not intentionally contradict himself, it is extremely worthwhile paying attention also to this section.

5.6     *The limits of my language* mean the limits of my world.

5.61    Logic pervades the world: the limits of the world are also its limits.

So we cannot say in logic, 'The world is this in it, and this, but not that.'

For that would appear to presuppose that we were excluding certain possibilities, and this cannot be the case, since it would require that logic should go beyond the limits of the world; for only in that way could it view those limits from the other side as well.

We cannot think what we cannot think; so what we cannot think we cannot *say* either.

5.62    This remark provides the key to the problem, how much truth there is in solipsism.

For what the solipsist *means* is quite correct; only it cannot be *said*, but makes itself manifest.

The world is *my* world: this is manifest in the fact that the limits of *language* (of that language which alone I understand) mean the limits of *my* world.

5.621   The world and life are one.

So far, we have discussed reality and the world from an objective standpoint, as if they were universally the same for everyone. We have already concluded that the limits of the logical space define the limits of language, and now Wittgenstein takes a step further: because all the information I ever receive from the world is in the form of pictures, and propositions – the totality of which is language – are a form of picturing, then what I can know of the world is unavoidably limited by language. More precisely, it is limited by *my* language, for Wittgenstein seems to assume that each individual understands and uses language in a unique fashion. Therefore what I call 'the world' is actually nothing more than my subjective, linguistic realm. Language not only shapes thought: language *is* thought. My life is my world, the only world I will ever know.

This is, without doubt, an uncomfortable notion, but at the same time it is not at all apparent how the conclusion could be avoided if Wittgenstein's premises are accepted. Perhaps the most questionable of Wittgenstein's assumptions is that thinking is impossible without language: is language not *learned*, after all? And is learning not *thinking*?

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<sup>1</sup> The belief that one's self is the only thing that can be known or that only one's self exists.

5.632 The subject does not belong to the world: rather, it is a limit of the world.

5.633 Where *in* the world is a metaphysical subject to be found?

You will say that this is exactly like the case of the eye and the visual field. But really you do *not* see the eye.

And nothing *in the visual field* allows you to infer that it is seen by an eye.

5.6331 For the form of the visual field is surely not like this



Wittgenstein's special version of solipsism is taking shape here. The metaphysical subject *itself* limits the world it knows: I am the *boundary* of my world, my understanding being what defines it, and my understanding is, in turn, defined by language.

How, then, is Wittgenstein able to stand by the kind of general statements that he has said about the nature of reality? The answer lies probably in the fact that Wittgenstein has only touched the *logical* structure of reality and language, and as logic is what is common to all languages (to both yours *and* mine), such general statements are possible. It would seem, therefore, that his solipsism is not as unreasonable as the term, when it is used, is often understood.

5.64 Here it can be seen that solipsism, when its implications are followed out strictly, coincides with pure realism. The self of solipsism shrinks to a point without extension, and there remains the reality co-ordinated with it.

5.641 Thus there really is a sense in which philosophy can talk about the self in a non-psychological way.

What brings the self into philosophy is the fact that 'the world is my world'.

The philosophical self is not the human being, not the human body, or the human soul, with which psychology deals, but rather the metaphysical subject, the limit of the world – not a part of it.

The core idea in Wittgenstein's solipsism seems to be that the self is not a part of the world. There is a curious resemblance between his thinking here and certain Eastern philosophies that teach how the self is really only an illusion and, to the enlightened, is indistinguishable from the world. Wittgenstein may have picked up this idea from Schopenhauer, who likened an individual's Will to that of the Will of the universe, claiming that the individuality of the subject is an illusion; and Schopenhauer was, in fact, an admirer of the Eastern religions. [2]

## 5. Conclusions

In *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Wittgenstein presents his own variation of logical atomism<sup>1</sup>, a doctrine that was typical for philosophers of his time. One of the most important respects in which his view of the structure of reality differs from that of other logical atomists, such as Russell, is his distinguishing between the internal and external properties of objects: the internal properties of an object define what it *can* be, the external what it *is*. Also, unlike Russell, Wittgenstein holds that the content of a state of affairs is the same irrespective of its truth-value: its truth-value merely tells us whether the place it occupies in the logical space lies within the world or not. The same goes for propositions in language, whose basic components mirror those of the states of affairs they represent. This makes the difference between the world (what is) and the rest of reality (what could be) somewhat more trivial than is commonly thought: in a certain sense, language is actually prior to the world, for clearly the totality of *all* propositions with a sense that can be constructed using language transcends the totality of the propositions that are true pictures of the world. Thus the complexity of language mirrors the complexity of reality itself – of all that can be understood at all.

More important, however, is the way in which Wittgenstein concentrates on the relationship *between* language and reality. It is most notably in this respect that his philosophy is unique, for no one before him had bothered to think about what makes the expression of ideas possible. This perspective gave birth to the picture theory of representation: what is new in it is not that language would be a logical entity, nor that reality would also be structured in this way, but that considering these two *together* is to understand the possibility of language – as well as what kind of language is mere nonsensical noise.

Yet there is so much that we cannot represent by means of the general logical form of language, so much that is "mystical" – for as stated, Wittgenstein's exposition handles only the logical part of reality. It doesn't include the perspective on reality that a poem by Goethe, a piece of music by Mozart or a painting by Dalí is able to communicate to us. These parts of reality are a matter of subjective interpretation, an insight that led Wittgenstein to contemplate solipsism; they reflect the facets of life that logic does not solve, and it is very likely that precisely the mystical was a starting point for Wittgenstein's later philosophy. Therefore, it is only prudent that I finish my essay with the last paragraph, whose sense is now clear, of Wittgenstein's preface to the *Tractatus*:

"On the other hand, the *truth* of the thoughts that are here communicated seems to me unassailable and definitive. I therefore believe myself to have found, on all essential points, the final solution of the problems. And if I am not mistaken in this belief, then the second thing in which the value of this work consists is that it shows how little is achieved when these problems are solved."

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<sup>1</sup> The theory that language, like the rest of the world, can be analyzed into basic, logical components that are indivisible.

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