

WITTGENSTEIN'S TRACTATUS

WITTGENSTEIN'S TRACTATUS:
SIMPLE OBJECTS
AND THE PROBLEM OF LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT

This thesis introduces a problem with language (i.e. how language is connected to the world) and explores a solution to this problem offered by Ludwig Wittgenstein in his Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus. It investigates two interpretations of simple objects in the Tractatus. It is argued that the 'combinatory' account of simple objects is superior.

This metaphysical base is then applied to Wittgenstein's 'picture theory' of meaning in order to reveal some common misunderstandings of the theory especially as it applies to Russell's notion of a 'logically perfect language'.

Finally, the thesis turns to 'logical form', the structural device used in the Tractatus to connect language and the world. It is argued that Wittgenstein's solution 'fits' the problem but that it may be superfluous in light of his own suggestion that if one understands the world aright then the original problem simply does not arise.

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Finally, I would like to thank all those with whom I have wrestled with the ideas presented here. I am certain that if anything of value resides in these pages it is due to those colleagues and friends who have patiently listened to my thoughts.

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Chapter One

I begin this study of the Tractatus position on language and meaning by initially avoiding the text altogether. Before the solution to a problem can be understood one must first have a good grasp of the exact nature of the problem. And the 'problem' in language is not always obvious. After all, we seem to function within language, employing it for a variety of communicative purposes, without much hint of difficulty. My task then is to reveal the 'problem' of language; a problem to which Wittgenstein's Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus offers a solution. I will not evaluate the absolute effectiveness of this solution. I suspect that it will continue to go in and out of favour as philosophers continue to rediscover this particular 'problem' in language. Rather, my goal is to provide a sense that the 'solution' fits the 'problem'.

Not everyone sees the 'problem' of language the same way. Even Wittgenstein himself came to repudiate much of his solution of the Tractatus in his later work, Philosophical Investigations. But this may as likely have been a result of simply seeing a different problem. Near the end of the Tractatus Wittgenstein writes:

6.5 When the answer cannot be put into

words, neither can the question be put into words.

The *riddle* does not exist.

If a question can be framed at all, it is also *possible* to answer.

Here, then, I attempt to frame the question.

What follows is a series of illustrations through which I hope to display a difficulty in language which goes unnoticed. The examples themselves are stock and indeed are often used to argue very different points from those which I intend¹. However, my use of these examples draws upon something they all share in common and, I think, indicates the source of the problem with which Wittgenstein is concerned.

I

One day an ant is crawling on the sand, dragging a bit of something back to its lair. The object it is dragging happens to be leaving a trail in the sand. This trail, due to the ant's meandering ends up having a striking *resemblance* to Winston Churchill, though in caricature.

A resemblance happens to be a very complicated thing. It is so complicated in fact that it must be left as a commonly understood phenomenon. I won't specify what it

¹The wave-poem has been used variously to support both sides of the intentionality issue. See Against Theory, ed. by Steven Knapp and Walter Benn Michaels, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1985).

is or how it is recognized. Indeed there is a strong sense in which that is a question to be asked of the psychology of perception and not of philosophers. At any rate, there is a resemblance (or similarity, to use Putnam's term²) between the trail left in the sand by the ant and Winston Churchill.

A caricature of Winston Churchill is a particular type of picture. It can be classified as a Churchill-picture. A picture type is initially classified by what it resembles. There are horse-pictures, house-pictures, portrait-pictures, abstract-pictures and, of course, Churchill-pictures. Under any specific picture type fall a wide variety of pictures. There are pictures of Churchill as a boy; pictures of Churchill the politician; pictures of Churchill the British Bull-dog defeating the Nazis worm (a caricature). Each of these pictures has something in common. They all resemble Churchill to some degree and so they are all Churchill-pictures. Resemblance, then, will count as a sufficient condition for picture type.

Perhaps that is too strong. There are certainly psychological and perceptual conditions necessary for the recognition of a resemblance. These will obviously be equally necessary in the determination of a picture type as well. But for the moment it is enough to say that the accidental ant has generated a picture which meets the

²Hilary Putnam, Reason, Truth and History, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 1.

requirements of resemblance (whatever these may be) and thus the sand-etching may truthfully be called a Churchill-picture.

A distinction needs to be drawn between a picture type and its representational content. The representational content of a picture is often called its meaning. It may also be used to describe that which the picture denotes, depicts, or represents. Initially it may be best to conflate the terms 'meaning, denotation and representation' under the broad title of representational content. So, what is the representational content of the ant's Churchill-picture?

In order to determine the content of the ant's picture it might help to survey some of the possible contents of Churchill-pictures. There are a wide range of representational contents which fall under the rubric of the Churchill-picture type. There are pictures which represent Churchill the politician; Churchill the man; Churchill the boy.

There are no doubt some which do not represent Churchill at all. Although they resemble Churchill, these pictures might be portraying the need for an eternal vigil against evil; or perhaps one represents the virtue of stubborn tenacity. The point to be made is that although a picture may qualify as a Churchill-picture type, it may, in

terms of its representational content, have little or nothing to do with Churchill (the man).

It is a significant problem when the type of a picture gets confused with its representational content. This can happen in a variety of ways. Sometimes the sign³ is unfamiliar. Although it may resemble something, it is impossible to say precisely what. This usually ends with the generation of a new type heading to cover this case and future cases like it. Sometimes the picture is so clearly a certain type, say a very realistic horse-picture (there is a high degree of resemblance), that it seems that the picture must be representing a horse. But this can be a mistake. Whereas resemblance is sufficient for the determination of the type, it is neither necessary nor sufficient for a clarification of the representational content. Even the most realistic horse-picture possible may not represent a horse at all. While it is often true that realistic horse-pictures do represent horses, this cannot be due to the resemblance of the sign or picture to a horse. It is in fact merely part of the customary usage of signs that this be so.

What else might be a possible indicator of the representational content other than the sign itself? One answer to this question has been that the use to which signs

³'Sign' is used generically here to indicate anything which we discriminate from the ground of our perception.

are put can demonstrate how to understand them. The octagonal red sign found at some street corners means to come to a complete stop before proceeding. If someone doesn't know this already they will soon enough, either through accident or ticket. The proposition 'It is raining' has specific applications of use and misuse which can be gauged by observing the responses of others on the occasion of its use.

Another avenue to the representational content of a picture or sign might be to ask the authors themselves what they intended by their sign. Often this avenue is blocked. The originator of the sign may be uncooperative or dead. Nonetheless information can still be gathered about the author, his/her society and the general nature of the world. The vastness of the information which may serve to help clarify the representational content of any one picture or sign may be daunting. Nevertheless these contents may be determined. It should be clear however that the physical structure of the picture or sign and its resemblance to something else is not an avenue to the representational content.

The independence of the representational content of a picture from its type suggests a way of explaining the ant's accidental sketch. Resemblance alone is sufficient to group it with the Churchill-pictures. However, there is not enough information available to determine its

representational content. Furthermore, such information (what the ant intended to express; how it feels about Churchill or whatever it was representing; the innovative and derivative elements of this artwork etc.) is in principle not only non-discoverable but non-existent. I suggest, then, that this particular Churchill-picture has no determinable representational content. It, so to speak, means nothing.

By clearly distinguishing between picture type and representational content, the ant picture becomes unproblematic. Analysis shows that the physical structure of the sign is sufficient to characterize its type but is independent of its representational content. Signs of the same type may vary widely in their representational content. Some signs, although recognizable in terms of type, may lack meaning in any ordinary sense of the word. This is the case with the ant picture.

The above formulation of the distinction between picture type and content would seem to imply the impossibility of physically indiscernible signs that are different types. The following two signs,

(1) man

and

(2) man ,

are physically indiscernible. But if (1) is a common noun of English and (2) is an indefinite person pronoun of

German, then clearly the physical structure of the sign is not sufficient to characterize its type.

To meet this objection the distinction might be rephrased as follows. The physical structure of the sign is sufficient to characterize its type relative to the subject's typal-lexicon, but is independent of its representational content. This amounts to no more than making the psychological and perceptual conditions necessary for the recognition of a resemblance explicit in the notion of a typal lexicon. Obviously if a sign does not accord with a type in the lexicon it will fail to resemble and thus not count initially as a picture-type. If, on the other hand, a sign does accord with a type in the lexicon, then it will count as a type. How does this affect the counter-example posed by (1) and (2)? (1) and (2) are ambiguous if I have both English and German 'types' in my typal-lexicon. In that case some other piece of information would have to inform my judgment as to its type. If I do not have both English and German 'types' in my lexicon then this ambiguity does not arise. I simply run the risk of being wrong. But note, I would not be wrong about the sign's resemblance to a type in my typal lexicon. I would only be wrong about its use in this instance (effectively an error with respect to representational content).

II

While pictures may allow such a distinction between type and representational content, it is not at all clear that other mediums of meaning do. Therefore it is necessary to demonstrate that a similar distinction can be made in language. Speech, be it written, verbal or otherwise, does not at first sight seem to have the same elements as pictorial representation. There seems little difficulty in moving from "The sky is blue" to its representational content. There is no desperate searching for a representational content here. The signs are seen and recognized and with this recognition comes the meaning or representational content of the proposition. It would seem that linguistic meaning at least is *perspicuous*.

Perspicuity refers to the ease and means with which one can glean pertinent information from physical sign structures. There is a sense in which the representational content of some pictures may be perspicuous. If the representational content of a realistic horse-picture is a horse then the easy and familiar move from its high degree of resemblance to its representational content might be taken as an example of perspicuity. The meaning of the picture is somehow on the surface for all to see. Yet if the representational content has no necessary connection to

the picture-type, then in what does this perspicuity persist?

The accidental ant could not be said to have created a meaningful picture but it could quite legitimately be said to have constructed a Churchill-picture. Resemblance was sufficient for its placement in its respective type. The type, then, of a picture is perspicuous. One moves from the perception of the drawing to a recognition of its type with great ease.

Again the conditions for resemblance are brought to the fore. Perspicuity, here, might be best explained by the psychological and perceptual conditions of resemblance. Thus one condition placed on resemblance is the physical limitations that human sensory organs have in distinguishing signs from the ground of experience. To some extent this would have to be dependent upon the particular typal lexicon at hand (see above). Thus a visitor from Pluto might not only see different signs with different types of sensory organs but would almost certainly have a markedly different typal lexicon. Thus perspicuity is seen to have numerous physical and conventional conditions, all of which only underscore the lack of a necessary connection between resemblance and representational content. Nevertheless, there is always a danger of confusing this kind of perspicuity with a necessary connection between signs and

their representational contents, especially when it comes to language.

The perspicuity of propositional meaning is at least as troublesome as the conflation of picture type with representational content and in some respects is the very same problem. To illustrate how familiarity and ease with propositional English disguises the elemental distinctions to be made in language, take a case that runs parallel to the story of the accidental ant. Let's suppose you are walking one fine day along the shoreline of a sandy beach. Your hands are in your pockets, your head is down, eyes searching the wet sand before your feet. Suddenly you come upon some makings in the sand: "I wandered lonely as a cloud".

You recognize the letters, the words, perhaps even the fact that this is the first line of a Wordsworth poem. In the midst of all this a wave approaches and in one sweep removes the line of poetry. However, to your surprise, when the wave recedes, there in the sand is the neatly etched second line of Wordsworth's poem: "That floats on high o'er vales and hills".

The point in this example is the same as that of the accidental ant story. The sand etchings resemble letters and words. This is comparable to the determination of picture type. But such a recognition of resemblance cannot, of itself, warrant a leap to the representational content of

these lines. That is, the wedge between resemblance and representational content remains.

On the familiar setting of a neatly typed sheet of paper, the Wordsworth line seems perspicuously meaningful. But the question being asked is whether the letters or rather the physical signs themselves are inherently meaningful in this way. I doubt that, if pressed, anyone would seriously maintain that English letters when joined in certain combinations just naturally create a meaning. That is, although I may easily move from the signs to a particular meaning, it is unclear at present what warrants this move.

The fact that a wave can remove the first set of letters and replace them with another underscores the mistake that would have been made if the first set of marks had been judged to mean that I wandered lonely as a cloud. In this instance, these particular markings in the sand, although perfectly recognizable, in fact mean nothing. They are the equivalent of the ant's Churchill-picture.

The import of the possibility of meaningless though recognizable linguistic signs is to draw out the distinction between the physical structure of the sign and the representational content. The conflation of physical structure with meaning is just as easy with linguistic signs as it is with pictures. The natural inclination is to assume that the two lines on the beach mean precisely what

they do in Wordsworth's poem. But this inclination is equivalent to the move from a realistic horse-picture to its representational content. If resemblance is neither a necessary nor a sufficient pre-condition of representational content, then the link between signs and their meanings is at best conventional and context dependent.

III

The notion of representational content seems to exclude such cases as the ant's Churchill-picture and the wave-poem. Perhaps the term can be clarified by taking one more approach to it. The example which comes to mind is that of the Rorschach test. The Rorschach test consists of a number of inkblots created by placing ink on a card and folding the card over on the ink to generate a random pattern⁴. Just as with the ant's Churchill-picture and with the wave-poem, the ink-blot should have no representational content. In fact an inkblot is used so that nothing specific is represented at all. Nevertheless a subject is

⁴ While as many as forty different inkblots have been used at various time, the standard ten which Rorschach selected in 1921 have been the focus of most of the research.

John E. Exner, Jr., The Rorschach: A Comprehensive System. Volume I: Basic Foundations, (2nd edition), (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1986), p. 6.

shown an inkblot and then asked "What might this be?"⁵. Often the subjects will reply that they see a horse or a spider or perhaps their mother. How is this possible?

Some of what the subject sees in the inkblot comes from the same place as the recognition of the Churchill-picture. A resemblance is seen in the ink pattern to something else. However, with the inkblot, if the pattern is random or unfamiliar enough, then there may be a great deal of variety in the responses of the subjects.

The variety of replies from subjects reveals that there is more at work here than simple perception. Some subjects can even describe incredibly complex pictures which they 'see' in the ink-blot. This 'content' is clearly not due solely to the shapes which the subject distinguishes. But if the inkblot is randomly produced then where could this information be coming from? The fact that different subjects provide different answers is a clue. There must be a highly subjective component at work here.

Indeed the subjective component in perception is precisely what testers are looking for in a Rorschach test⁶.

⁵ The question is usually restricted to just this to leave as much room for the subject to direct the response as possible. (Exner, p. 66).

⁶ There are at least five distinct approaches to the Rorschach test. The 'projective' method arose first with Murray (1938) and was crystallized by Frank (1939). However, it is trivially true that the test is subjective, if only in the sense that it is used to reveal something about the subject. (Exner, pp. 14-15).

Often the answers which the subjects give are interpreted as clues to their unconscious states of mind. They can act as such only if the subject's unconscious is also the source of the content of the inkblot. One description then of the process might be as follows. An inkblot which has no representational content is presented to a subject. The subject is asked for an opinion as to what it might be. This task is impossible. The search for meaning however in something meaningless creates an opening for the unconscious to express its feelings and desires. What the subject then 'sees' is not so much something in the inkblot but rather a projection of his or her own unconscious thoughts.

The interpretation can be left to psychological experts. What is of concern is only the source of the content. If a subject can see a horse in an inkblot, then why can't someone also see a horse in the very same ant sketch which we have boldly called a Churchill-picture? The only difference between the two situations is the degree of similarity present. The inkblot is purposefully designed not to resemble anything too closely. The ant's Churchill-picture shows a striking resemblance. The explanation of the difference must be in terms of the conventions of perception. Perhaps this is one reason that the Churchill-Picture was taken to be an example of perspicuity; when the subjective component is reduced to a minimum, all steps seem necessary.

There is one last point to mention about the Rorschach test. The picture type has, of course, been conflated with the representational content. The tester knowingly exploits this conflation. The picture type is determined by our perceptual apparatus which in the case of the inkblot is highly influenced by unconscious desires. But in this case the source of any representational content in the inkblot must also be the unconscious of the subject. Therefore since both the picture type and the representational content have their source in the subject, they cannot be significantly separated. When projection becomes the rule then we can no longer meaningfully speak of the representational content of a sign. Representational content, to be a useful notion, must be objective as opposed to projective.

IV

Now that I have introduced three illustrations, I can attempt to draw them together. On the surface there is a clear similarity between the cases of the ant and the wave-poem. There are also differences, of course, in that the ant-picture is employing our skills of visual discernment whereas the wave-poem relies upon a contrived conventionality, namely English letters. By contrast the Rorschach inkblots involve an examination of the meanings

which a subject may unconsciously project into a rather formless structure. I might then describe the difference between the two types of illustrations by claiming that the ant-picture and the wave-poem display form without content whereas the Rorschach examples display content without form.

There is a further problem which the Rorschach examples bring to the fore. Although in the tests the inkblots have plenty of content, this is all projected by the subject. It can be readily seen that this kind of meaning would not be effective within a language. Take a simple English sentence,

It is raining.

Now suppose that the representational content of this sentence were entirely projective. In that case, the letters that make up this 'sentence' might have the content for me that there are birds in trees. It may mean, to you, that dogs bark loudly. And if it meant to someone else that it is raining, this would hardly be more or less significant than any of our contents. The muddle that would arise would be irresolvable. Thus it appears that representational content must not be entirely projective if there is to be communicative language in any significant sense.

What is needed is a notion of representational content which is not merely projective. I claimed at the conclusion to the preceding section that we need 'objective'

contents. Perhaps I could accomplish all that is necessary merely by employing inter-subjective contents. If the representational content of the English sentence 'It is raining' were inter-subjective, then you and I and at least a large majority of our compatriots would agree upon the content of the sentence. Anyone who disagreed could be shown, by weight of majority, that he or she is mistaken and that it would be best for all concerned if the dissenter conformed to the norm.

I might call this characterization of meaning in language the conventionalist account. It seems to turn upon the establishment of certain conventions to allow for a more orderly and efficient transference of information. Remember, however, that I am speaking here of the representational content and not the signs used to convey this content. But perhaps there is a parallel that it would be well to draw out.

Originally I suggested that we divide pictures into types and that these types are distinct from their representational contents. These types may be organized into a typal lexicon. A form of this lexicography would be the English alphabet. It is not difficult to imagine an ordered and rigorous system of rules being conventionally developed for the employment of these signs. Thus in English, d o g , together will constitute a legitimate syntactic arrangement, whereas, t k t , will not. Such a

conventional arrangement might certainly systematize the signs available for communicative purposes. Therefore there seems to be a clear parallel between the inter-subjective conventional content and the systematic and conventional organization of signs. If these two systems could somehow be linked, perhaps the explanation of meaning in language would be forthcoming.

Of course there are some obstacles to the linking of these two systems. The ant-picture and the wave-poem themselves have been used to illustrate that there is no necessary connection between signs and representational contents. But then suppose I didn't require a necessary connection. Following in the tenor of what has already been espoused, perhaps I should seek a conventionalist account of the linking of meaning and signs.

All of the above might seem plausible but for one problem. There seems little doubt that signs can be organized conventionally. But what is the value of meanings which are merely conventional. For example, suppose we all agreed and thus established a convention that there are Martians living on Mars. I know that sounds implausible, even outright mistaken, but how would that affect the formulation of the convention? If meanings are simply agreed upon inter-subjectively, then nothing can be ruled out. That is, if meaning is not attached to something more secure than itself, then it is subject only to its own

internal constraints which may be few. Now if such a conventionally constructed system of meaning were conventionally joined with a sign system, the result may be a perfectly functioning language. But it must be seen that such a language could only accidentally represent the world since nothing in it roots it necessarily to the world. A language whose representational content may or may not correspond to the world may be useful for some purposes but for representing the world it would be useless.

So, the problem of language can be seen as the following: When sign systems and the connection between signs and representational contents are conventionally established, what must be the case for representational contents to represent the world? In other words, what is the connection between language and the world?

V

The problem of language indicated above suggests that an elaborate solution may be necessary. If the connection between language and the world is not allowed to be merely conventional and if arbitrary connections (stipulations) are ruled out, then what is left? Obviously what is required is a necessary connection. Any solution to the problem of language which I have brought forth will

involve a necessary connection between language and the world.

There are further difficulties. These reside in the precise nature of the world which is connected to language. The world of experience is insufficient. If it weren't, the answer to the problem would be perspicuous. Therefore the level at which the world connects to language must be more elemental than the perceptual world. A similar difficulty arises with language connectors. Since, as I have argued, there is on the surface no necessary connection between linguistic signs and their representational contents, it is difficult at present to imagine what shape language must take to meet the requirements of connectedness.

To answer these difficulties and others Wittgenstein provides in his Tractatus a metaphysical reordering of the world and language along atomistic lines. He is led to this solution because of his analytic commitments which he attributes to Russell, 4.0031. He offers a world divisible into facts, 1.2, which are in turn composed entirely of simple objects in determinate combinations, 2.01. Language itself, in Wittgenstein's presentation, is similarly atomistic. The elementary propositions which mirror states of affairs, or facts, are composed entirely of an ordered arrangement of names, 3.21. The names in these propositions stand for simple objects, 3.203. Thus,

3.21 The configuration of objects in a

situation corresponds to the configuration of simple signs in the propositional sign.

The correspondence of configurations is supposed to provide the connectedness between the world and language.

Clearly this brief taste of such an intricate solution demands further explication. What, for example, are these simple objects and how are they to be understood. In the following chapter I examine two radically different proposals for understanding simple objects in the Tractatus and find one to be superior. This understanding of simple objects will be crucial to any complete understanding of how the Tractatus solves the problem of language.

The question may arise as to whether or not there is any language which is not subject to the difficulties I have elaborated here. In chapter three I examine this issue in light of Anthony Kenny's description of 'picturing' and his use of the Russellian notion of the ideal language⁷.

Finally I return directly to the issue of how the world and language are connected. The glue which binds the two, according to the Tractatus, is logical form. I examine this troublesome notion and find its true characterization necessarily inexpressible. The consequence of this in light of the other Tractatus arguments is controversial. I find two possible routes available, both of which are accessible depending on the inclination of the traveller. As a guide,

⁷Kenny, Anthony. Wittgenstein. New York: Penguin Books, 1973.

however, it is best to remember Wittgenstein's warning mentioned at the outset. Where there is a question there will be an answer, but also, "When the answer cannot be put into words, neither can the question be put into words", 6.5.

Chapter Two

Raymond Bradley has recently maintained that the Tractatus displays a kind of 'atomistic essentialism'¹. He contrasts his version of essentialism with that of Len Goddard's and Brenda Judge's² reading of the Tractatus. Bradley says that "the essentialism which they acknowledge...is a parsimonious one"³. His version of essentialism is, on the other hand, quite thoroughgoing.

The difference between Bradley's and the Goddard-Judge position pertains to simple objects and their properties. Goddard and Judge maintain what Fogelin calls a purely combinatorial theory of simple objects. Fogelin provides us with a nice summary of the combinatorial position:

Wittgenstein might have developed a *purely combinatorial* theory, i.e. he might have held that all objects are alike in being fit to enter into combination with any other objects. The *logical space* of this world

¹Raymond Bradley, "Wittgenstein's Tractarian Essentialism", Australasian Journal of Philosophy, Vol. 65, No. 1, March 1987, pp. 43-55.

²Leonard Goddard and Brenda Judge, 'The Metaphysics of Wittgenstein's Tractatus', Australasian Journal of Philosophy, Monograph No. 1, June 1982.

³Bradley, p. 43.

would be all the possible ways in which its objects can combine.⁴

Fogelin says 'might' in the above because, like Bradley, he rejects the purely combinatory theory. Instead, both men favour a category theory of simple objects in which the simple objects are divisible into their various logical kinds and it is these logical categories which determine their combinatorial abilities.

Fogelin dismisses the purely combinatory theory without argument because he does not believe Wittgenstein's language in,

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

(Every one of those possibilities must be part of the nature of the object.)

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.

suggests such a theory, "but rather one where objects are sorted into different *categories* and combine accordingly"⁵.

It is doubtful, however, that such a dismissal will hold up. Once the significant difficulties of *knowing* an object are pointed out, the above passages, which naively read support Fogelin's case, must be read in a different light. Exactly how one 'knows' a simple object is

⁴Robert Fogelin, Wittgenstein, (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1976), p. 6.

⁵Fogelin, p. 6.

debatable. Wittgenstein uses the verb *kennen* in these passages, which has the sense 'to be acquainted with'. But how does one come to be acquainted with simple objects? 2.01231 suggests that I can be acquainted with objects without being acquainted with their external properties. Therefore this must be an acquaintance of a highly abstract nature. It is in fact a matter of understanding the logical nature of the simple object. When this is known then 2.0123 and 2.01231 are seen to indicate that an object is constrained to its internal properties. And these, as will be shown, may be either the combinatory properties of simple objects or something else which allows them to be divisible into the categories which Bradley and Fogelin recommend.

Fogelin explains a dependence that space (i.e. logical space) has upon simple objects. Indeed this is what he sees as the distinguishing feature between Wittgenstein's atomism and classical atomism. In Wittgenstein's system, "without objects there would be no space"⁶. The dependence of space upon simple objects is of primary importance. Although, 1.2, "The world divides into facts", it is simple objects which rest at the bottom of the metaphysical totem.

While space may depend upon simple objects it is not alone. According to Fogelin, reality itself is intimately connected to these metaphysical ultimates. He writes: "Reality has a determinate form because the objects that

⁶Fogelin, p. 9.

determine its form are unalterable"⁷. Here Fogelin takes reality to be the states of affairs or 'facts' into which the world divides. Interestingly it is the *unalterable* nature of simple objects which facilitates the contingent and variable states of affairs of reality. Indeed the contingency of states of affairs demands some non-contingent element to provide the substantial base in a mutable world. Thus Wittgenstein explains:

2.0272 The configuration of objects produces states of affairs,

and

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

Contingency and non-contingency thus go hand in glove.

Nor can simple objects exist on their own. Fogelin, referring to simple objects, says that "There are no eligible bachelors in the Tractarian world"⁸. To be made sense of at all, simple objects must be in combination. Indeed, "the material or contingent properties of things are *constituted by* the configuration of simple objects"⁹. While simple objects have no material properties on their own, they do, in combination somehow facilitate the emergence of material properties in complex things.

⁷Fogelin, p. 9.

⁸Fogelin, p. 6.

⁹Fogelin, p. 9.

Individually, 2.0232, these simple objects are colorless, "in a manner of speaking" (*beiläufig gesprochen*). Black provides three variants of the German expression: 'roughly speaking', 'incidentally' and 'in passing'. He then goes on to render his own version of 2.0232:

But objects themselves have neither colour nor any other contingent (= "material, external") properties. Objects are propertyless.¹⁰

Wittgenstein must say "in a manner of speaking" because strictly speaking it makes no more sense to speak of the properties of simple objects than it does to speak of the non-properties of simple objects. We can't really predicate anything of them one way or the other (for we would not be describing a state of affairs of the world).

Simple objects are unalterable and subsistent. They can neither be created nor destroyed. They do not exist contingently.

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

It is clear that Wittgenstein identifies the substance of the world with simple objects. In fact he says explicitly:

2.021 "Objects make up the substance of the world".

The standard position which Fogelin and Bradley maintain is that Wittgenstein's simple objects are separable into various categories (A_1, \dots, A_n) and that there are

¹⁰Max Black, A Companion to Wittgenstein's Tractatus, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1964), p. 64.

certain logical restrictions on the combinatory possibilities between certain categories, say A1 and A5. These categories, or logical kinds or types, are usually associated with the various physical categories, colours, extension, pitch etc.

Raymond Bradley argues for an essentialism "which credits [Wittgenstein's] simple objects with having internal properties which determine but are not identical with the combinations into which they can enter"¹¹. These internal properties also determine "the *logical kind* to which the object belongs"¹². Bradley defends this position by first citing an apparent confusion in regard to the notion of *simplicity* in the Notebooks 1914-1916¹³. He sees four distinct senses of simplicity: semantic, metaphysical, unanalysable and epistemological. From this he concludes that it would be a mistake to assume in reading

2.02 Objects are simple,

that what is intended here is metaphysical simplicity. At least, he thinks, further textual support is necessary; support which he believes cannot be found¹⁴. Indeed, Bradley reads 4.123 as clear evidence supporting his belief

¹¹Bradley, pp. 43-44.

¹²Bradley, p. 44.

¹³Ludwig Wittgenstein, Notebooks 1914-1916, ed. G.H. von Wright and G.E.M. Anscombe, translated by Anscombe, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979)

¹⁴Bradley, pp. 45-46.

that there is no 'special' notion of object in the Tractatus, rather there are only shifting uses¹⁵.

Bradley is prepared to read almost any use of the word 'object' by Wittgenstein as standing both for the ordinary objects of the world (i.e. tables, chairs) and the simple objects which function importantly in the metaphysics of the Tractatus. I believe that this easy conflation affords Bradley an argument for the division of simple objects into logical kinds which simply can't be constructed without this assumption. Thus in his reading of NB70(7-9), where Wittgenstein employs rods and balls in various relations to a wall as examples of differences in logical kinds, Bradley moves easily from the logical difference being drawn between the complex (ordinary) objects, rods and balls, to an unwarranted division of simple objects into logical kinds characterized by the properties of the various sensory organs¹⁶.

But why should Bradley be given such an easy argument? The difference in kind between complex objects is not really in question. That is, someone who disagreed with Bradley over the divisibility of simple objects into logical kinds might be perfectly willing to accept Wittgenstein's example of complex objects that function differently logically. Bradley's argument is further undermined when it

¹⁵Bradley, p. 47.

¹⁶Bradley, p. 50.

is seen that the complex objects, ball and rod, must, on his version be composed of the same logical kind of simple objects (because they have similar sensory properties). But if that were the case, then the logical differences between the rod and the ball must be generated by the combinatory properties of the simple objects of which they consist. So here, a difference in logical kind is created by simple objects of the same logical kind.

Indeed there is nothing in the notion of logical kinds which demands that differences must show up at the level of simple objects. If, as in the example given by Wittgenstein, it is complex objects which display differences in logical kinds, might it not be reasoned that the 'property' of logical kind is not dissimilar to other properties? That is, if the logical kind of a state of affairs were a product of the particular combination of simple objects of which it consists (just as colour, texture, and such are a result of this combination) then there would be no reason to argue that simple objects must be divisible into logical kinds.

This would seem to leave Bradley with only his assumption of the conflation of ordinary and simple objects as support for his argument. And indeed, the division of simple objects into logical kinds is revealed for what it actually is: simply an unwarranted transference from

differences in sensory properties to an ontological distinction between simple objects.

II

Perhaps the strongest proponents of the purely combinatory theory of simple objects are Len Goddard and Brenda Judge. In juxtaposition to Fogelin's and Bradley's accounts it may seem as though Goddard and Judge are not even reading the same text. However, the problems already indicated in the category account show that previous readings of the Tractatus may not have been adequate. Goddard and Judge see the major problem with such readings as resulting "from thinking of Wittgenstein as a constructive atomist inviting us to build complexes from simples or to construct an ideal language based on observation statements"¹⁷. No doubt this constructivist reading stems in large measure from Russell's introduction to the Tractatus¹⁸. There, Russell states that "the whole function of language is to have meaning, and it only fulfills this function in proportion as it approaches to the ideal language which we postulate" (intro. x). A notational system approaches the ideal as the theoretical limits of analysis (simples and their names) become perspic-

¹⁷Goddard and Judge, p. 5.

¹⁸Wittgenstein was firmly opposed to Russell's introduction, saying that it was full of "superficiality and misunderstanding". Letter of 6.5.20, p. 132 in Notebooks 1914-1916.

uous. In his "Philosophy of Logical Atomism" Russell correlates these simple objects, which combine to form elementary facts, with the sense data of particular perceivers.

A logically perfect language, if it could be constructed, would not only be intolerably prolix, but, as regards its vocabulary, would be very largely private to one speaker.¹⁹

For Wittgenstein, such difficulties in speaking 'objectively' of simple objects lead him to silence. Russell, on the other hand, suggests that this silence may be circumvented by "some loophole through a hierarchy of languages" (intro. xxi). It should become clear, however, in the combinatorial theory why such a reading of the Tractatus (i.e. Russell's) is inadequate and hence his 'solutions' to the Tractatus problem of silence are in fact inappropriate.

Goddard and Judge are, of course, opposed to the constructivist reading. They write:

Objects, names, atomic facts and elementary propositions play no role in the discovery or development of knowledge. They are limits of analysis beyond the reach of analysis, not psychological or epistemological simples from which we start.²⁰

Such a position with respect to simple objects leads them to reject any talk of approaches to an ideal language. How should we know whether we were getting closer or not unless

¹⁹Bertrand Russell, "The Philosophy of Logical Atomism", in Logic and Knowledge, ed. Robert C. Marsh, (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1984), p. 198.

²⁰Goddard and Judge, p. 4.

we had some direct access (by Russellian acquaintance) with these simples? If one rules out such access then the notion of the ideal language must fall with it.

The very same passages which Fogelin suggests do not have the correct 'sound' for the combinatory theory, 2.01231 and 2.0123, are cited by Goddard and Judge in support of their position. This indicates that the text at this point will not itself decide the issue. We must look elsewhere. Here, Goddard and Judge turn to

2.0141 The possibility of its occurring in states of affairs is the form of an object;

and

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

Although these passages as well do not provide conclusive textual support for the combinatory theory they do provide Goddard and Judge with the point of departure they need to test their theory's coherence in the remainder of the text.

Goddard and Judge maintain that "if internal properties are all the possible relations that an Object may have with other Objects, then the external properties are those relations which any Object actually has, at any given moment"²¹. Remember that Fogelin recognizes that material properties are emergent and due to the combination of

²¹Goddard and Judge, p. 10.

objects²². It would seem then that the combinatory theory is able to explain much of what the category theory was invoked specifically to explain. It happens to have other advantages as well.

The category theory neatly divides the world into our different sensory vehicles, whereas the combinatory theory does not have this luxury. It must maintain that all simple objects are equivalent. But if they are, then everything we see about us is essentially composed of the same substance; we merely perceive it differently due to its differing combinatory patterns. Goddard and Judge write:

Objects and the relations between them account for the very possibility of perception. But since to perceive is never to perceive simples as such, so perception and conception and language can never reveal the way the world really is. They can only point in the direction of what must be the case.²³

Now without going into detail on Goddard's and Judge's notion of a perceiver independent neutral world, we can see why the above claim is sustained in a close reading of the text.

Goddard and Judge are suggesting that we cannot speak of 'the world'. Wittgenstein writes, 6.44, "It is not how things are in the world that is mystical, but that it

²²Fogelin, p. 9; see also Goddard and Judge, p. 18.

²³Goddard and Judge, p. 14.

exists." But he also says, 6.522, that "There are things which cannot be put into words...They are what is mystical." The inexpressible nature of certain aspects of the Tractatus metaphysics presents difficulties for any expositor of that system. Goddard and Judge are attempting to accommodate this difficulty by, so to speak, building the silence into their explication. Russell himself notes, perhaps somewhat ironically, that Wittgenstein, in the Tractatus "manages to say a good deal about what cannot be said"(intro., xxi). However, although Wittgenstein does explore many of the consequences of his use of simple objects, he nevertheless leaves a direct example of a simple object unstated. This in itself lends some credence to the Goddard-Judge reading. Later, I will discuss why there is this ambiguity regarding what can and cannot be said about the constituents of Wittgenstein's system.

Language is limited. This comes out in an often misinterpreted passage from the Tractatus. In 4.002 Wittgenstein writes that "Language disguises thought". This is usually read, as Russell might read it, as a denigration of the deceptive nature of ordinary language²⁴. Russell, of course, would see this as supporting his talk of the ideal language which will replace ordinary language.

²⁴There is a long tradition in British empiricism and analytic philosophy in general of an abusiveness towards ordinary language. For a good example one need only turn to Berkeley's introduction to his Principles.

Let's consider the entire passage.

4.002 Language disguises thought. So much so, that from the outward form of the clothing it is impossible to infer the form of the thought beneath it, because the outward form of the clothing is not designed to reveal the form of the body, but for entirely different purposes.

According to the Goddard and Judge interpretation of Wittgenstein's conception of language, we understand why it is not language's function to 'reveal the form of the body'. Language is simply not capable of revealing the conceptually and perceptually neutral atomic facts, simple objects or Names. This is in principle impossible.

Therefore language must have some other purpose. It is a form of clothing for the world. It matters not whether our cloth is nylon, cotton or silk; nor whether it be cut as a suit, a dress or a skin-tight body-suit. Since it is not the function of the clothing to reveal the body (even the body-suit smooths out the wrinkles) our study of language (clothing) must look elsewhere. What mutual purpose could these various languages have? The answer is that each language's purpose is peculiar to its particular material and cut. But language in general serves to 'disguise thought'. "*Die Sprache verkleidet den Gedanken*". 'Verkleidet', however, on at least one rendering of the German, is translated as "disguise (by a change of dress)" - hence the clothing metaphor. Contrary to some interpretations, Wittgenstein is not here denigrating the sinister aspects of

ordinary language. He is simply noting that it is with language that we clothe our world.

The function of language is indeed to be meaningful (intro. x). But it does not fulfil this function by approaching some ideal. Rather, language is meaningful if it conforms to the world. In the clothing metaphor from above this might be put as follows: clothing serves its function by being worn. Clothing which is not being worn serves no function and this is why its function can also not be described. Language fulfills its function when it hangs well on the world and the world on which language hangs is, I believe, best characterized by the combinatory account of simple objects in the Tractatus.

III

Before proceeding further I must explain the importance of the combinatory account of simple objects to a clear understanding of how language works. One of Wittgenstein's tasks in the Tractatus is to get clear the often misunderstood logic of our language. This task is made much easier through the combinatory account, as opposed to the category account of simple objects.

Let's take the category account first. On this theory simple objects of particular logical kind combine to generate a state of affairs. This state of affairs has

certain external or material properties which emerge out of the particular organization of simple objects. An elementary proposition which would 'mirror' this state of affairs would consist solely of Names, standing for objects, in a determinate structure. Suppose ABCD were such a structure, where each letter stands independently for a single simple object. Now take a different state of affairs of a different logical kind. On the category account the simple objects which make up this state of affairs are quite different, logically speaking from those of our first state of affairs. But how can I capture this difference in my elementary proposition? Since the Names of the elementary proposition merely 'stand for' simple objects (i.e. they do not predicate) there is no way to differentiate the two different logical kinds of simple objects. Even if I used smaller case letters, efgh, or perhaps numbers, 1234, the difference in the elementary propositions would be simply arbitrary. There would be no way to express a difference in logical kind of states of affairs under this arrangement.

Now take the same situation but this time with simple objects which are all equivalent except as they are used differently in different combinations. Here, logical kind is simply one more emergent property due to the particular organization of simple objects. The first state of affairs is mirrored by the elementary proposition ABCD. The second is mirrored by the elementary proposition EFGH. I

need not worry about different kinds of Names standing for different logical kinds of simple objects. Just as all simple objects are of the same kind, so are all Names. In both cases it is the determinate structure of the state of affairs which is 'mirrored' by the determinate structure of the elementary proposition. The structure alone carries all of the logical weight.

It should be clear at this point how the combinatory theory succeeds where the category theory fails. A combinatory account simplifies the metaphysics of the Tractatus but it is also more powerful with respect to the explanation of how language 'mirrors' the world. And this is why the exact nature of simple objects in the Tractatus is so important in the understanding of how Wittgenstein solves the problem introduced in chapter one: how does language connect to the world?.

Chapter Three

Sometimes the shared structure of representational content and the world presents difficulties in explication. How, for example, does one describe the process of representation in language? Wittgenstein has chosen the image of the 'picture', 2.1. But this has misled some of his commentators. Here I will use Anthony Kenny's explication of the 'picture theory'¹ as an example of some of the things which can go wrong in our understanding of representational content.

Wittgenstein's picture theory of the proposition is, as Kenny notes, "perhaps best regarded as a theory of representation in general"². Russell saw it as an attempt to get clear the "principles of Symbolism" (intro. ix). In terms of language this came out as a common element between the sentence and fact it represented:

In order that a certain sentence should assert a certain fact there must, however the language may be constructed, be something in common between the structure of the sentence and the structure of the fact.
intro. x.

¹Kenny, Anthony. Wittgenstein. New York: Penguin Books, 1973.

²Kenny, p. 54.

Exactly what this commonality of structure should be understood as is perhaps debatable. At the very least, Kenny, Russell and Wittgenstein agree that representation requires that what is represented and what represents share some common feature.

Kenny's treatment of representing is the focal point of his interpretation. It is here that he makes slight errors which evidence themselves in conflicting statements. More than once he states explicitly that it is logical form alone which any proposition has in common with what it depicts and allows for representation³. Yet in his two most vivid examples it is a *spatial* relationship which is the source of representation⁴. What does the apparent conflict in Kenny's own statements reveal about his understanding of the Tractatus' central doctrine? The admittedly troublesome notion of logical form makes any interpretation precarious.

As an introduction to Wittgenstein's picture theory of meaning Kenny provides what he sees as a straightforward case of a sentence 'picturing' a fact. He uses the following sentence:

(1) My knife is to the left of my fork.

Of this Kenny writes:

So here we have a spatial relationship
between words symbolizing a spatial

³Kenny, pp. 5, 57. Here I am in complete agreement with Kenny.

⁴Kenny, pp. 4-5, 55-56.

relationship between things. Such spatial representation of spatial relationships is pictorial in a quite straightforward way.⁵

In the sentence, the word "knife" is *left of* the word "fork". Apparently this mirrors the actual state of affairs in the world. The real knife is also *left of* the real fork. Hence Kenny concludes that the sentence and the state of affairs share the common feature of a specific spatial relationship between *knife* and *fork*. This relation is that of being *left of*.

But Kenny is not restricted to merely written signs. He tells us that the spoken sentence would also share something with the real situation. If spoken, then the *temporal* relationship between the words knife and fork would represent the spatial relationship of the actual knife and fork, apparently also in a 'quite straightforward way'. Thus in Kenny's first two straightforward cases of picturing he has a spatial relationship between written words and then a temporal relationship between spoken words, each of which apparently represents the actual state of affairs in a way he feels can be seen without argument.

A closer examination of the case, however, reveals that this is no straightforward case of representation at all. Call the written form of (1), 1w, and the spoken form 1s. Whereas 1w does truly have a spatial relationship (whether or not it shares it with the actual state of

⁵Kenny, p. 5.

affairs), 1s clearly has no such relationship. Instead, a temporal relationship has been substituted. Can a temporal relationship represent a spatial relationship as well as a spatial relationship can? If it was indeed the *spatial* relationship between the knife and fork which made 1w a 'straightforward' case of picturing then it would seem plausible to suggest that it represents the case better or perhaps more accurately than 1s. In any case, there is a difference here which Kenny is ignoring.

Take a sentence Wittgenstein himself uses, 3.323, though for different purposes:

(2) Green is green.

Aside from the potential ambiguity which Wittgenstein clarifies, this sentence says quite plainly that a person (or something) named Green happens also to be green (the colour). There may be little doubt that this sentence does in fact represent but few would say that it does so in the 'straightforward' way in which Kenny's example does. To accommodate these concerns, we can rewrite (2) in a manner which reflects Kenny's straightforward notion of picturing:

(2a) *Green* is green.

It should be clear that the word "Green" shares a colour relationship with the object or person Green. They are, in fact, both green. Ignoring problems with regard to exact shading, (2a) is now pictorial in Kenny's straightforward sense.

There are two problems which examples like these point to. The first involves the identification of physical properties (spatial form, colour, temporal form) of the representing medium with the physical properties of the actual state of affairs. If it were a *physical* property which the representing medium must share with the state of affairs then it seems unlikely that a sentence like

(3) Randy is shorter than Mark,
could represent at all. (3) shares no physical feature with the actual state of affairs described⁶.

The second problem which these examples point to is the matter of 'degrees' of representation. Kenny indicates that 1w is 'pictorial in a quite straightforward way'. But this must mean that 1s is *less* straightforward. Hence (3), which shares no features and cannot even claim a translatability relationship (as 1s is the temporal form of 1w), is the least pictorial of all. The matter of degree here demonstrates a significant failure in Kenny's analysis, something which, when corrected can lead to a new understanding of the variety of languages (or as I shall call them, notational systems) in the Tractatus conception of language.

In a further example Kenny repeats his errors. The

⁶This relates directly to my arguments in chapter one concerning the arbitrary nature of the sign.

irony here is that Kenny's second major example⁷ is precisely the case which sparked Wittgenstein to put forward the 'picture' theory in the first place. This famous example involves a court case in which toy prams and toy lorries are used to re-create or model the actual events of an accident. Kenny seizes upon a false lead. He writes:

The three-dimensional character is something which the model in court and the actual accident have in common: it is because of this common element that the model in court is able to represent the accident in the road.⁸

Just as with the spatial relationship of the words in 1w, Kenny treats a physical property of the representing medium as the feature which it shares with the actual state of affairs.

While there may not be much in Kenny's characterization that links his understanding to the category account of simple objects, I would nonetheless like to draw a parallel here. Kenny indicates through his examples that in order to represent, a picture must share a particular form in common with the state of affairs to be represented. In his examples this form is spatial. Assuming we accepted the Bradley-Fogelin division of objects into categories, this would count as a particular category. Thus spatial states of affairs would have to be represented

⁷Kenny, pp. 55-56.

⁸Kenny, p. 55.

by spatial pictures. If not, these alternate pictures must be easily translatable into spatial ones (although it is unclear what would be the cue to translate; i.e. what in 1s indicates that I should translate into 1w; or rather, why doesn't 1s represent an auditory state of affairs 'in a quite straight-forward way').

The need to fix upon a particular mode of representation should signal that something is amiss. These modes of representation are clearly accidental and without further cause there seems no reason to choose one over another. Does this indicate, again, a reliance upon our peculiar perceptual abilities to determine legitimate representational modes? If so, then this account of representation suffers from the same faults pointed out in Bradley's conflation of the various uses of 'object'. Take away this crutch and the explanation of representation disappears.

II

Wittgenstein draws a sharp distinction between signs and symbols even as I have drawn one between physical signs and representational contents. A sign is what can be perceived of a symbol, 3.32. Kenny does not fail to note this important point. He writes:

If we consider a word or a proposition-spoken or written - from the point of view

of its perceptible qualities, such as its shape or sound, then we are considering the sign; when we try to grasp the meaningful use of the expression, its rules for application, we are dealing with the symbol.⁹

Symbols are, so to speak, signs in use. Sometimes one and the same sign can be common to two different symbols - in which case they will signify in different ways, 3.321. Wittgenstein calls these different ways *modes of signification*, 3.322.

Signs are arbitrary, 3.322. There is nothing about the sign which makes it a symbol of something else. Nor is there anything in a sign which prevents it from being used to symbolize. Sometimes, however, this flexibility can mislead. Returning to an example already used,

(2) Green is green,

it can be seen that a single sign 'green' when doubly employed but for different uses, can possibly mislead us into thinking that it symbolizes or means the same thing in both cases. But so long as it is clear that the first use of the sign 'green' symbolizes a man and the second a colour, there is no difficulty, 3.323. Because signs are so clearly distinct from symbols, (2) is not a terribly difficult sentence to make sense of.

Nevertheless, the arbitrary nature of signs does lead to some fundamental confusions. Wittgenstein believes

⁹Kenny, p. 47.

that philosophy is full of just such confusion, 3.324. It might be wise to do something to prevent such a problem.

Kenny suggests an answer:

What the philosopher of logic can do is to construct a symbolism which does not use the same sign in different symbols, a symbolism which would obey the rules of logical grammar.¹⁰

Wittgenstein agrees:

3.325 In order to avoid such errors we must make use of a sign-language that excludes them by not using the same sign for different symbols and by not using in a superficially similar way signs that have different modes of signification: that is to say, a sign-language that is governed by *logical* grammar - by logical syntax.

Wittgenstein is explicit and consistent. He wants a 'sign-language', a *Zeichensprache*, to help prevent the confusions which similarity of signs creates.

Given that Wittgenstein does explicitly call for a new notational system, it might be argued that, other criticisms aside, Kenny is essentially on the right track. Kenny does note, at least ten times, that Wittgenstein was actively engaged in the development of an *ideal* language. In fact, talk of the ideal language is simply a ruse. Not even once does Wittgenstein suggest that his goal is the creation of an ideal language, or as Russell terms it, a logically perfect language (intro. ix). The entire concept is highly misleading, although it does perhaps follow from

¹⁰Kenny, pp. 48-49.

Kenny's earlier errors with regard to how one thing may represent or picture another.

To demonstrate this point I return to Kenny's treatment of the toy pram and lorry example. As noted earlier, there were two problems with Kenny's analysis. Here, I'll focus upon the second problem: the matter of degrees of representation. This may be the source of Kenny's notion of an ideal language, for such a notion involves the treating of various notational systems as more or less representationally ideal. The extent to which one approaches the ideal determines the value of that notational system. Hence an analysis of Kenny's treatment of the toy pram example may suggest a solution to the discrepancy between Wittgenstein and Russell with respect to the notion of an ideal language.

The toy pram and lorry were said to represent the real accident because of their shared three-dimensional character¹¹. For sake of argument I'll assume Kenny is correct. Surely this model would be improved if the colours of the toys matched those of their real counterparts. For that matter the surrounding buildings and the road should be correctly colour-matched as well. Now the model shares not only three dimensional character but also colour with the actual accident. This must be a better representation. Now let's add the sounds of the pram, the lorry, their drivers

¹¹Kenny, p. 55.

and any passers-by. The model shares three features with the actual event. Still, these are small toys. Perhaps full-size prams and lorries of the right colour, on the right streets, making the correct noises would be better still. This seems to be the limit of mimetic representation. This full-scale model approaches the ideal better than any other model. It shares more features in common and thus, on Kenny's analysis, must be pictorial in a very straightforward way.

Lewis Carroll reveals some of the problems involved in degrees of representation through the following passage from Sylvie and Bruno Concluded, 1893:

'That's another thing we've learned from *your* Nation,' said Mein Herr, 'map-making. But we've carried it much further than *you*. What do you consider the *largest* map that would be really useful?'

'About six inches to the mile.'

'Only *six inches!*' exclaimed Mein Herr. 'We very soon got to six *yards* to the mile. Then we tried a *hundred yards* to the mile. And then came the grandest idea of all! We actually made a map of the country, on the scale of *a mile to the mile!*'

'Have you used it much?' I enquired.

'It has never been spread out, yet.' said Mein Herr: 'the farmers objected: they said it would cover the whole country, and shut out the sunlight! So we now use the country itself, as its own map, and I assure you it does nearly as well.'¹²

Carroll recognizes what Kenny seems to have misunderstood: a one to one mapping is useless if a map with a scale of six

¹²Quoted by Patrick Hughes and George Brecht in Viscous Circles and Infinity, (New York: Penguin Books, 1978), p. 66.

inches to the mile is able to provide all the relevant representational information one requires. This doesn't rule out the possibility of a one to one mapping, only the use to which such a map could be put.

What exactly is wrong here? Can the super-model do more than the starting model? Does it do what the starting model does, better than the starting model? It is the second question which is important. If the starting model performs a task which the super-model can equal but not surpass (although it admittedly can do many other things not germane to the task at hand) then in what significant way is one a better model than the other? Wittgenstein tells us that "Any correct sign-language must be translatable into any other...it is *this* that they all have in common", 3.343. Again, at 5.156, he notes in parentheses:

A proposition may well be an incomplete picture of a certain situation, but it is always a complete picture of *something*.

The starting model may not have had a lot in common with the actual state of affairs it represented, but what it was able to represent, it did as well as any other medium of representation could manage. For Wittgenstein, if one notational system can represent or picture a state of affairs in the world then other notational systems, whatever other attributes they may have, cannot represent that particular state of affairs any better.

For a more vivid example, take the three following statements, each in their own distinct notational system or sign-language. The first system is ordinary English. It provides us with

(4a) The sovereign of England is female.

Assuming that this sentence represents an actual state of affairs I turn to the second notational system. In this system, known as propositional calculus I can represent precisely the same situation which (4a) represents by

(4b) P .

Finally I present a third system, the predicate calculus. Here the state of affairs which (4a) and (4b) represent finds expression as

(4c) $(\exists x) (Ex \cdot Fx)$.

Wittgenstein tells us, 3.341, that "what is essential in a proposition is what all propositions that can express the same sense have in common". Thus 4a, 4b and 4c all share something in common; they all symbolize or represent the same state of affairs. Each does this, if it does it at all, completely (hence equally). What then is the significance of the various notational systems? If each represents the same state of affairs equally well, then why are there more than one?

The differences in the three notational representations of the same state of affairs lies in the logical grammar of the notational systems. In this matter,

4c is clearly a better system. This can be illustrated by means of deductive power. From 4c I can validly deduce

$$(5) \quad (\exists x)(Fx) .$$

This inference cannot be validly derived from 4b, although it may be intuitively obvious from 4a. Thus the notation of 4c captures more of the logical form of the original state of affairs than 4b. To the extent that talk of an ideal language refers to the creation of a notation which makes the logical form of a proposition as perspicuous as possible, it is certainly something that Wittgenstein was engaged in pursuing. But to the degree that the notion of the ideal language corresponds to that put forward by Russell (i.e. in opposition to ordinary language) it diverges from the tenor of the Tractatus.

I can briefly illustrate the difference. For Russell the difference between 4a and 4c is that 4a does not approach the ideal language in anything close to the degree that 4c does, and to this extent it deceives us or rather fails to fulfil its function which is to have meaning (or at least a clear meaning)¹³. But for Wittgenstein 4a is a sentence of everyday language and must, 5.5563, just as it stands be "in perfect logical order". The only real difference between 4a and 4c is the ease with which one may make such inferences as 5. Yet the intuitive reader sees that 5 is a valid inference, or rather

¹³Tractatus intro., p. x.

(6) Someone is female ,
 is a valid inference from 4a, and sees this as obvious, or
 in the present terminology, with perspicuity. So, for the
 perspicacious reader, 4a is equivalent, even inferentially,
 to 4c. Wittgenstein, however, recognizes that he cannot
 depend upon individual perspicaciousness. He knows that it
 is not language which deceives us. Rather we deceive
 ourselves. And it is to prevent this, and not to save
 language, that Wittgenstein works to improve the perspicuity
 of the notational system.

III

The objective of making the logical grammar of
 language perspicuous re-introduces the notion of perspicuity
 from chapter one. Perhaps I can now clarify this notion.
 The logical features of representation are not the same as
 the physical qualities of the representing medium. This is
 the consequence of maintaining that signs are arbitrary. Yet
 take the following example. You are presented with two
 signs:

- | | | | |
|----|---|----|-------|
| 1. |  | 2. | woman |
|----|---|----|-------|

You are asked to decide what these signs stand for and you
 readily answer "woman". Then a third sign is presented

- | | |
|----|---|
| 3. |  |
|----|---|

This gives you some difficulty but you suggest that it stands for a square. Actually its representational content is identical to that of 1. and 2. Only its physical form threw you off. Just as, due to your familiarity with Churchill-pictures, you were able to note the resemblance of the ant-sketch to Churchill even though it had no representational content, so here with figures 1. and 2. Although signs may be arbitrary, notational systems may be learned. Thus even though the representational abilities of any notational system can be no more ideal than any other, I can advance systems which may serve differing functions to greater or lesser degrees. The perspicuous display of logical grammar may not be better for representation. It also won't mean that someone who hasn't learned this notational system will be able to have its function dawn upon him somehow magically simply by looking at it. Instead, as with all notational systems, it will become a tool which will serve its purpose when one has mastered its application.

When Fogelin discusses perspicuity near the end of his book on Wittgenstein¹⁴ he reveals an essential error. In examining a 'non-perspicuous representation' he states that he does not see that "it will make much difference whether we say that [the example] does not constitute a representation or that it is a representation, only a non-

¹⁴Fogelin, pp. 196-199.

perspicuous one"¹⁵ Of course it makes all of the difference in the world. Wittgenstein must separate the two notions. He does so because they apply to two logically distinct things. Representation refers to the content of our propositions apart from any considerations of the arbitrary signs. Perspicuity relates only to the ease with which these arbitrary signs may be employed in their communicative function.

Kenny's characterization of representation and the ideal language in the Tractatus is more misleading than blatantly wrong. It can be seen to display much of what is actually contained in the Tractatus position. But on the essential point of precisely why Wittgenstein saw the need to reform our notational system, Kenny follows Russell. Also, with regard to the matter of the characterization of the logical form (i.e. what does the representing) Kenny conflates spatial form with logical form. While it is certainly true that nothing prevents the spatially similar model from representing the actual state of affairs, it is also true that such a similarity has no special access to successful representation.

¹⁵Fogelin, p. 197.

IV

I can now offer an alternate characterization of the picturing relationship which, I believe, avoids the problems of Kenny's rendering. The source of this version of picturing rests in the nature of simple objects. I have argued that only a combinatory theory of simple objects can effectively accommodate the requirements of the Tractatus. Here, some of the usefulness of this understanding of simple objects begins to have practical effect.

An important point to remember when construing Wittgenstein's notion of picturing is that, 1.21, "Each item," or state of affairs, "can be the case or not the case while every thing else remains the same." That is, each state of affairs is independent of the rest, 2.061. It is also true that,

2.031 In a state of affairs objects stand in a determinate relation to one another,

and that

2.032 The determinate way in which objects are connected in a state of affairs is the structure of the state of affairs.

From all of which I conclude that each state of affairs is unique. That is, any particular state of affairs consists of a unique arrangement of simple objects. Two identical structures must therefore indicate only one state of affairs. Thus:

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.

If all of the members of a set are identical, then there is only one member in the set.

Similar things can be said of elementary propositions. Thus,

4.21 The simplest kind of proposition, an elementary proposition, asserts the existence of a state of affairs.

The elementary proposition consists of a concatenation of names. However, 3.142, "Only facts can have a sense, a set of names cannot." Luckily, 3.203, "A name means an object. The object is its meaning." This allows for the correspondence of states of affairs and elementary propositions.

3.21 The configuration of objects in a situation corresponds to the configuration of simple signs in the propositional sign.

If the state of affairs is made unique by its determinate structure, then if the configuration of simple signs (or names) in the elementary proposition has a corresponding determinate structure, then only one structure or state of affairs has been presented. The elementary proposition, then, cannot fail to represent the state of affairs whose structure it shares.

The importance of the combinatory account of simple objects to this characterization of 'picturing' lies in the emergent properties, especially that of logical form. I have previously argued that the notion of logical kinds must be an emergent property. A combinatory account shows also that logical form is an emergent property. Logical form just is the structure of the state of affairs. It must be the case then that each state of affairs has its own logical form. This explains why,

2.18 What any picture, of 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.

If simple objects were divisible into logical kinds then logical form alone (an emergent property related to the determinate structure of the state of affairs) could not guarantee 'picturing' success.

Furthermore, it should be noted that the combinatory theory of simple objects supports the idea that all notational systems, in terms of their representational aspects, must be equal. If the propositions of everyday language are "in perfect logical order", 5.5563, this says little more than that they share the logical form of the states of affairs they represent. But then this could be said of any proposition in whichever notational system we happen to be employing. Thus, 3.343, "Any correct sign-language must be translatable into any other." This would

seem to undermine any useful notion of an ideal language in the Russellian sense.

Chapter Four

The unifying element between the world and language is their shared logical form. Wittgenstein writes:

2.18 What any picture, of 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.

Logical form is the form of reality. Because of this, 2.19, "Logical pictures can depict the world." In order to understand how language represents the world for Wittgenstein, we must reconcile ourselves to this notion of shared logical form.

"The world is all that is the case." This statement, the first in the Tractatus, sets the stage for what is to follow. Wittgenstein's world is a world of facts, 1.2. He calls these 'facts' states of affairs, 2, and states that, 2.01, "A state of affairs - a fact - is a combination of objects (things)." So, although the world divides into facts, the constituents of these facts are simple objects. The form of reality is in effect generated by subsistent and unalterable simples which in determinate combinations are states of affairs.

2.032 The determinate way in which objects are connected in a state of affairs is the structure of the state of affairs.

It is this structure, this rigid and, I have suggested, unique organization of objects which is the logical form of the state of affairs.

Wittgenstein uses the word 'form' in at least two different ways but, on certain readings these become one. For example, in 2.0141 he writes:

The possibility of its occurring in states of affairs is the form of the object.

and later,

2.033 Form is the possibility of structure.

Here, Wittgenstein is referring to the form of simple objects. Since their entire role is that of 'occurring in states of affairs', then their 'form' simply is the possibility of all these occurrences which must be built into them from the start. This is not surprising because the unalterable nature of simple objects demands that they be self-contained. Thus Wittgenstein writes:

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.

There can be no genuine surprises in the Tractatus world. But is the form of simple objects, which Wittgenstein says is simply the possibility of structure the same as the logical form which alone allows a picture to depict reality? I have already suggested that logical form is nothing more

than the particular unique structure generated by the object in combination as the state of affairs.

The other use of form is of course in logical form. It is logical form which any picture must have in order to depict the world, 2.18. For Wittgenstein, if something is a picture at all, then it is a logical one.

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.)

Thus all pictures of whatever kind share something in common and this is that they are all logical pictures. The difference between the form of an object and the logical form of a picture lies in the fact that the former has to do with the entire range of possible combinations objects can enter into whereas the latter is a fixed or determinate form. Also note that while it may be useful to think of logical form in terms of a spatial arrangement of objects, 2.182 clearly indicates that spatiality is merely an accidental feature of some pictures and logical form is not.

What then is logical form? There is an uneasy silence in the Tractatus regarding this notion. Just as there are no examples given of simple objects since they are, so to speak, colourless, 2.0232, so too the standard pictures which are provided, spatial, temporal etc., merely clothe the logical form which seems to lie propertyless within them. Later Wittgenstein attempts to explain why logical form remains mysterious.

The often misunderstood reference in the Tractatus to that which cannot be said provides the source of the mystery surrounding logical form. Wittgenstein writes:

4.12 Propositions can represent the whole of reality, but they cannot represent what they must have in common with reality in order to be able to represent it - logical form.

In order to be able to represent logical form, we should have to be able to station ourselves with propositions somewhere outside logic, that is to say outside the world.

This makes sense of the ineffable nature of logical form. If every proposition must have logical form in order to be a proposition then no proposition could describe that form.

Perhaps an illustration will help make this point. Imagine a world in which everything is the same hue of red. In such a world it would be impossible for the inhabitants to describe the colour of things. They would have no point of comparison. And a description which simply said that everything was the same colour would be about as useful as our attempting to describe logical form by presenting examples of spatial form. All of which should lead to the question of how Wittgenstein comes to the conclusion that there is such a thing as logical form.

Here we turn to the next passage in the Tractatus.

4.121 Propositions cannot represent logical form: it is mirrored in them.

What finds its reflection in language, language cannot represent.

What expresses itself in language, we cannot express by means of language.

Propositions show the logical form of reality.

They display it.

Wittgenstein is saying that logical form is revealed by our use of propositions. Perhaps it might be put best this way. When I use a spatial picture to represent a temporal state of affairs, I, without saying so explicitly, am expressing a commonality of form between spatial and temporal states of affairs. The same can be done for all other types of states of affairs. If what is common is nothing perceptible then it must be something else: logical form.

Or perhaps it might be best to apply this reasoning directly to the problem of language. On the surface there seems to be no good reason for there to be a connection between language and the world. They are, after all, quite different things in many respects. Yet I unquestionably do represent the world in a variety of ways including through language. There must then be some common feature which is not accidentally a property of either language or the world. This non-accidental necessary feature of both language and the world is logical form.

II

In order for my characterization of 'picturing' to be effective, two points must be the case. The first is that there is sufficient cause to warrant acceptance of

simple objects - up until now I have merely acquiesced to Wittgenstein's usage. The second is that language (of whatever form) must really be capable of creating similar structures. Once these two points are argued securely then very little seems to stand in the way of Wittgenstein's proposal.

The difficulty here is that the world (states of affairs) and language (pictures and elementary propositions) appear to be quite independent of one another. Yet Wittgenstein's whole solution to the problem of meaning requires that they share a commonality of form. They in fact must be dependent upon each other. I believe Wittgenstein argues for this connection at 2.0211 - 2.0212. Here he directly links the notion of simple objects as the substance of the world with our ability to picture a world.

Two other arguments provide support for this connection and I will examine these first. At one point, 3.23, Wittgenstein says that "The requirement that simple signs be possible is the requirement that sense be determinate." Although here he is speaking of the language side of the equation, I think that something quite similar could be said of simple objects. I have argued throughout that objects must be simple in every way. I have further argued that this treatment of objects in conjunction with the combinatorial account of emergent properties is precisely

what allows states of affairs to be independent and unique.

Wittgenstein writes:

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.

and

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

I take Wittgenstein to be suggesting that only a substance which is absolutely simple could provide enough possibilities for the variety of complexes that are found in the world. Substance must be simple. If it were composite, if it had material properties, if it were categorizable, then it would be resolvable into something more fundamental and this leads inevitably back to completely simple objects.

The second argument that supports the connection of the world and language falls on the picturing side of the plane. Wittgenstein writes:

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.

An imagined world is a world generated in thought. But "A logical picture of facts is a thought", 3. And, 3.1, "In a proposition a thought finds an expression that can be perceived by the senses." So the sense of a proposition is an 'imagined world'. But worlds, both imagined and real

share something in common. The very fact that one can imagine another world indicates that there is something linking them together. And this shared feature of all imagined worlds is form.

I turn now to the passages which I believe demand this commonality of form:

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).

Why couldn't I sketch a picture of the world? If the possibility of a proposition's sense were dependent upon the truth of another proposition, I could never say anything true or false at all. Any proposition offered would depend upon another proposition being true. But the truth of this proposition would require that it have sense. And its sense would depend on whether another proposition were true. It is easy to see that such a dependence for sense is quickly leading nowhere. The infinite series of true propositions necessary for any proposition to have sense serves as a *reductio* against the consequent of 2.0211. The only other alternative would be 2.0212 in which 'we could not sketch any picture of the world (true or false)'. Of course, if the world had no substance our inability to picture it would not be problematic since there would effectively be no world to picture, nor any propositions to picture it with.

III

The importance of the above two passages cannot be overstated. Wittgenstein has directly linked the substance of his world (simple objects) to the possibility of any picture whatsoever of that world. He has made the world a necessary constituent of a proposition having a sense. He tied the necessity of simple objects to the need for propositions to have a determinate sense. This makes his connection between language and the world immensely secure. For language to meaningfully represent the world, the metaphysics of simple objects must be accepted.

Wittgenstein's solution to the problem indicated in chapter one certainly fits. If his metaphysical arrangements are accepted, then the difficulty of how the world and language relate is resolved through their common logical form. Each independent state of affairs has a unique logical structure. When this structure is duplicated in the elementary proposition, it cannot fail to represent. Wittgenstein writes:

2.1511 That is how a picture is attached to reality; it reaches right out to it.

The picture reproduces or re-presents the logical structure of the state of affairs. This is not accidental or arbitrary. It is not a matter of convention. A picture of a state of affairs necessarily represents that state of

affairs because of their shared logical form. Thus the Tractatus solution fits the problem.

However there are residual difficulties. These difficulties fall into two categories: the first is internal to the theory itself and the second a matter of the practical consequence of this solution. The internal problems with Wittgenstein's solution rest almost entirely on his notion of logical form. It is still unclear what it is and at this stage platitudes regarding its ineffability will not suffice. If language and the world are to be linked by this shared logical form then it must become clear how it functions.

The difficulty of logical form might be expressed this way. Simple objects are imperceptible. And while I may be able to identify some facts, it is doubtful that I can identify individual states of affairs. Indeed Goddard and Judge argue that atomic facts "play no role in the discovery and development of knowledge"¹. The same can be said of elementary propositions consisting entirely of names standing for simple objects. But if I have no direct access to these primary connections between the world and language then why should I be convinced that logical form does facilitate this connection? Why indeed?

This brings me to the project of the Tractatus as a whole. I have made the Tractatus solution to the problem of

¹Goddard and Judge, p. 4.

language the focal point of my interpretation. Within the confines of that problem, the Tractatus solution admirably meets the requirements. But what are the further consequences of this solution?

IV

Wittgenstein tells us, 5.6, that "The limits of my language mean the limits of my world." He follows this with 5.61, "Logic pervades the world: the limits of the world are also its limits." The notion of the limit is immensely important in the Tractatus. In his preface, Wittgenstein notes the aim of his book as drawing "a limit to thought, or rather - not to thought, but to the expression of thoughts" (pre. p. 3). By fixing the limit of thought, language and the world, at, so to speak, the same place, Wittgenstein unifies his characterization of the proposition with his characterization of the world. But a consequence of this is that what lies beyond the world (i.e. any searched for 'fact' whose possibility is not already contained in the combinatory possibilities of simple objects) is also necessarily unstatable. Thus:

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

I cannot think a non-logical fact. Recall that a thought is an imagined world and again, via the argument of 2.0211-

2.0212, must conform to the logical form of all possible worlds. A limit on thought is a limit on language is a limit on the world.

Philosophy, Wittgenstein tells us, 4.114, "must set limits to what cannot be thought by working outwards through what can be thought". It "aims at the logical clarification of thoughts", 4.112. But "Philosophy is not one of the natural sciences", 4.111. The logical form of a thought is not an accidental occurrence in the world. Thus the philosophy of logic cannot 'discover' new phenomena. Its subject matter is, like simple objects, unalterable and subsistent. But in saying this, Wittgenstein is running directly in the face of the Russellian approach.

Since language and the world are made one through their shared logical form, the propositions of ordinary language must already be of this form (even if this form is not perspicuous in the sign-language used). Thus:

5.5563 In fact, all the propositions of our everyday language, just as they stand, are in perfect logical order.

Although "the tacit conventions on which the understanding of everyday language depends are enormously complicated", 4.002, the logical features of language, i.e. its logical form, must inhere in these propositions if these propositions are to have sense at all (or indeed for them to be propositions). The 'critique of language' which characterizes philosophy for Wittgenstein, 4.0031, is part

of an activity whose goal is the elucidation of the logical form which is already of necessity present. At least this much Wittgenstein shares with Russell.

4.0031 It was Russell who performed the service of showing that the apparent logical form of a proposition need not be its real one.

Of course, it is Wittgenstein, not Russell, who draws out the consequence of this activity: logical form must already be present for the proposition to have sense at all.

Russell's philosophy of logic is not grounded in the connection between language and the world the way Wittgenstein's is. Because of this, logic is, for Russell, something which must be imposed upon language. Thus Russell is prepared to see the goal of philosophical logic as the determination of "the conditions which would have to be fulfilled by a logically perfect language" (Intro. ix). Indeed, for Russell,

the whole function of language is to have meaning, and it only fulfils this function in proportion as it approaches to the ideal language which we postulate. (Intro. x)

By not understanding the connection between language and the world through logical form, Russell's logic and thence his postulated logically perfect language must be accidental. Or, at least it will be a matter of contingent possibility whether language or the world should accord with this logical form. Wittgenstein's contribution to this

difficulty is to take the necessary features of the world and language out of the circle of contingent possibility.

V

Towards the end of the Tractatus there are some passages which shed new light upon the entire project. On some readings such as Cora Diamond's², this reorders the whole of the Tractatus. The passage I have in mind in particular is 6.54.

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

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

This is a difficult passage to accept. Presumably the ladder which Wittgenstein wants us to throw away is the Tractatus itself and its metaphysical explanation of how language and the world are linked. But why should I discard an understanding of language which I have worked so hard to capture? Cora Diamond has recently discussed this in her paper "Throwing Away the Ladder".

Diamond explains the above passages by returning to Wittgenstein's earlier remarks regarding what can and cannot

²Cora Diamond, "Throwing Away the Ladder", in Philosophy, vol. 64, no. 243, Jan. 1988, pp. 5-27.

be said. Following Geach's explication of Frege, Diamond finds that there is a common thread between Frege's account of names and some interpretations of the Tractatus such that "various features of reality come out in language but it cannot be said in language that reality has those features."³ In the Tractatus, two important features of reality which remain beyond the reach of representational language are the exact nature of simple objects and logical form, the common feature shared by the world and language. These two notions seem fundamental to Wittgenstein's 'solution' to the problem of language and yet they lie beyond the scope of language. Diamond then sees 6.54 as introducing a particular problem.

The problem is how seriously we can take that remark, and in particular whether it can be applied to the point (in whatever way it is put) that some features of reality cannot be put into words.⁴

She goes on to formulate a question on the basis of this passage.

Are we going to keep the idea that there is something or other in reality that we gesture at, however badly, when we speak of 'the logical form of reality', so that it, what we were gesturing at, is there but cannot be expressed in word?⁵

³Diamond, p. 6.

⁴Diamond, p. 7.

⁵Diamond, p. 7.

Diamond's answer is that we should not. To do so, she claims, would be "chickening out" on the challenge that Wittgenstein has set us⁶. Thus, however useful talk of simple objects and logical form may be at times, it must, in the end, be dispensed with.

Diamond's solution to the problem of 6.54 is at once both radical and simple. She is recommending that the mysterious talk of the Tractatus be eliminated. This leads me to ask two questions. Why isn't this a case of throwing the basin out with the bath water? That is, if I reject Wittgenstein's talk of simple objects and logical form as nonsensical, then haven't I lost my solution to the problem of language which motivated this metaphysical speculation? Secondly, assuming that Diamond's (and apparently Wittgenstein's) recommendation is followed, how will the world and specifically language look when the world is seen aright? What is the effect of such a step on my understanding of meaning in language?

I do not challenge Diamond's characterization of the problem. I find it hard to believe that Wittgenstein would have left 6.54 in the Tractatus if he were not just as serious about throwing away the ladder. However there are two clear alternatives here and it may not be necessary to choose between them at this time. For example, ignoring for the moment 6.54, the Tractatus has provided an elaborate and

⁶Diamond, p. 7.

relatively satisfying solution to the problem raised in chapter one. To this extent it certainly fits. If I am lead, as Wittgenstein suggests, through understanding his propositions, to think of them as nonsensical, then where does that leave me? It leaves me without a viable solution to the problem I thought I had presented in chapter one. Isn't this a difficulty for Diamond and Wittgenstein?

In fact it is not a difficulty, for once the world is seen aright the problematic disappears. I can best explain this by exploring some of the consequences to everyday language before addressing 6.54. Wittgenstein's atomistic account of the world and of language was quite intricate but in coming to understand the nature of simple objects, certain difficulties arose. These, I believe, are masked by the category account and as a result 6.54 becomes extremely troublesome for such theorists⁷. The combinatory account of Goddard and Judge by contrast begins to lead us to the world of 6.54 when they write:

Objects, names, atomic facts and elementary propositions play no role in the discovery or development of knowledge. They are limits of analysis beyond the reach of analysis, not psychological or epistemological simples from which we start.⁸

⁷Diamond especially singles out P.M.S. Hacker for 'chickening out' in Insight and Illusion, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), pp. 20-24; p. 20.

⁸Goddard and Judge, p. 4.

They have observed that the fundamental players in Wittgenstein's Tractatus are non-players in the world of actual propositions. I am never in contact with simples except as projections of analysis.

Now this may not be problematic, especially for Wittgenstein. After all, he does state quite clearly that,

5.5563 In fact, all the proposition of our everyday language, just as they stand, are in perfect logical order.

Indeed they must be since the metaphysics of the Tractatus lies beyond reach if they should need assistance. Diamond put this point as follows:

The ordinary sentence, together with all its little wires, is the same sentence as the fully analyzed one.⁹

Ordinary language will remain just as meaningful or non-meaningful after the metaphysics of the Tractatus as it was before. Hopefully, however, by seeing the world aright I will be able to distinguish the meaningful from the non-meaningful.

The consequence to language of all of this rests in how I am to treat 'philosophical' propositions. Suppose I present you with the following

Socrates is identical,

and ask you what it means, is it true or false, etc. Prior to the Tractatus you might have replied that it was a sentence attempting to state some inexpressible truth about

⁹Diamond, p. 19.

identity and personhood and because of this it is left saying nothing, although what it wants to say is something about the feature of reality. After the Tractatus you should be inclined to say that 'Socrates is identical' means nothing because "we have not given any adjectival meaning to the word 'identical'."¹⁰ It is nonsense in precisely the same way 'Socrates is frabble' is nonsense. Give 'identical' or 'frabble' adjectival meanings (stipulate them if you must) and then these sentences become meaningful in a perfectly ordinary way.

I find this to be both reassuring and to some extent disappointing. It is reassuring to again feel that language is on the same sure footing it has always been on (aside from the confusion engendered by misunderstanding 'the logic of our language'). Once again language has not deceived us, we have only deceived ourselves. It is also disappointing because of the loss of the thrill of the chase. But this is only to be expected. For when the question cannot be put into words, neither can an answer be found.

¹⁰Diamond, p. 23.

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