

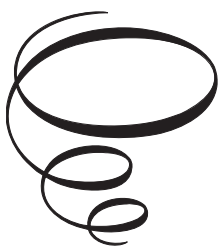
Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*
Logico-Philosophicus

Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* *Logico-Philosophicus*

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Abbreviations	vii
Introduction	viii
Chapter 1	1
Meaning and Use in the <i>Tractatus</i>	
James Cargile	
Chapter 2	16
The <i>Tractatus</i> and Intercultural Understanding	
Leo K. C. Cheung	
Chapter 3	32
From the Form of the Empirical Model to the Tractarian Form	
of the Elementary Proposition	
Andreas Georgallides	
Chapter 4	47
Internal Relations	
Christian Kanzian	
Chapter 5	61
Wittgenstein's Distinction between Saying and Showing	
Oskari Kuusela	
Chapter 6	78
Logic and Analysis in the <i>Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus</i>	
Montgomery Link	
Chapter 7	93
Wittgenstein's <i>Tractatus</i> and Functional Completeness	
Odysseus Makridis	

Chapter 8	108
<i>Tractatus</i> 5.1362 (reloaded)	
Diego Marconi	
Chapter 9	124
The Leading Edge of Sense: Coming to Understand in Wittgenstein's <i>Tractatus</i>	
Ian O'Loughlin	
Chapter 10	139
The Ontological Sufficiency of Language in Wittgenstein's <i>Tractatus</i>	
Nicholas Rescher	
Chapter 11	153
Early Wittgenstein on Scepticism and Nonsense	
Antonio Segatto	
Chapter 12	167
Wittgenstein's Approach to the World in the <i>Tractatus</i>	
Ilse Somavilla	
Index.....	188

CHAPTER 5

WITTGENSTEIN'S DISTINCTION BETWEEN SAYING AND SHOWING

OSKARI KUUSELA

Wittgenstein's distinction between saying and showing has caused significant headache to his readers and resisted attempts to explain it. The goal of this essay is to articulate a new perspective on the saying-showing distinction, and by so doing help to solve the interpretational and philosophical problems relating to Wittgenstein's distinction.

1. A troubled history: interpretations of Wittgenstein's saying-showing distinction

A year after the completion of the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein wrote a letter to Russell where, in response to Russell's queries about the book, he described the distinction between saying and showing, that is, between "what can be expressed (gesagt) by prop[ositions] – i.e. by language – (and what comes to the same, what can be *thought*)" and "what cannot be expressed by propositions but only shown (gezeigt)", as the "main contention" of the book, and the "cardinal problem of philosophy" (*CL* 124, 19.08.1919). By contrast, Wittgenstein regarded what Russell had taken to be the main point of the book, i.e. its account of the propositions of logic as contentless, non-substantial tautologies rather than substantial truths, contrary to what Russell himself had thought, to be "only a corollary" (*CL* 121 and 124).

Wittgenstein's comments on the saying-showing distinction are significant in two ways. First, making sense of them can be seen as a condition of adequacy for the interpretation of Wittgenstein's distinction. An adequate interpretation should explain how the distinction can be understood as the main contention of Wittgenstein's book, as well as explaining how

Wittgenstein could reasonably regard the distinction as constituting the cardinal problem of philosophy. Second, the letter can be taken to mark the start of the troubled history of the interpretation of Wittgenstein's distinction which, if possible, should be finally brought to an end. For it looks that ultimately Russell couldn't get his head around the distinction, writing in his introduction to the *Tractatus* almost three years later that "What causes hesitation [in accepting Wittgenstein's position] is the fact that, after all, Mr. Wittgenstein manages to say a good deal about what cannot be said" (*TLP*, 22; cf. p. 11; my square brackets).¹ If Wittgenstein fails to respect the distinction that constitutes the main contention of the book, as Russell believes, that's a serious problem. Correspondingly, however, if an interpretation can be articulated that shows this impression to be a misunderstanding, and can explain how Wittgenstein isn't contradicting himself after all, this counts as a step towards bringing to end the troubled history of the interpretation of the saying-showing distinction.²

It doesn't seem accidental that the distinction was a stumbling block for Russell. Similarly other readers of the *Tractatus* have found it difficult to come to grips with how Wittgenstein draws limits to what can be said. Whether or not intentionally echoing Russell, G.E.M. Anscombe reflects uneasily in her commentary on the *Tractatus*, on "the comical frequency with which, in expounding the *Tractatus*, one is tempted to say things and then say that they cannot be said" (Anscombe, 1971, 86). Later other prominent commentators, such as Max Black and Peter Hacker, disagreed about whether and how the sentences of the *Tractatus* could be understood as conveying something about what is shown, thus continuing to debate the distinction. Whilst Black had argued, in an attempt to 'salvage' "great many of Wittgenstein's remarks", that the nonsensical sentences of the *Tractatus* could be understood as showing something about logic, Hacker responded by reminding him that on the *Tractatus*' account only true/false propositions (and tautologies and contradictions as their limiting cases) show anything, whilst nonsense does not (Black, 1964, 381ff.; Hacker, 1986, 25-26). This reveals the unworkability of Black's suggestion.

¹ Translations from the *Tractatus* have been modified whenever I have seen the need for it.

² On such an interpretation the *Tractatus* might still fail to achieve some of its goals. Indeed it does so by its author's own admission (see Preface to the *Philosophical Investigations*).

Nevertheless, Hacker's own solution to the problem, according to which we can regard Wittgenstein's nonsensical sentences as expressing ineffable truths about what other propositions show, doesn't seem to fare much better as an explanation of the purpose or function of the *Tractatus*' sentences (Hacker, 1986, 18 and 51; 2000, 356 and 368). For not only does this interpretation attribute to Wittgenstein a commitment to a notion of ineffable truth that Wittgenstein never acknowledges, thus being exegetically dubious, the notion of ineffable truths that can't be articulated or entertained but nevertheless somehow grasped seems highly problematic philosophically too. Beyond the problem of how to make sense of such a notion of truth, the idea that illuminating nonsense conveys ineffable truths about what well-formed propositions show risks undoing the saying-showing distinction itself. This is so insofar as the distinction's purpose in the first place is to address the logical confusion "very widespread among philosophers" that Wittgenstein takes to underlie philosophical theses regarding exceptionless, non-empirical necessities, or the possibility of clarifying such necessities in terms of true/false propositions (*TLP* 4.122; cf. 4.003 and 4.112). For however Hacker's notion of ineffable truth is to be made sense of, ineffable truths presumably are a species of truth. Moreover, insofar as ineffable truths concern what well-formed propositions show, what propositions show constitutes, on this interpretation, a possible object of true theses after all (even if the truths expressed by such theses are ineffable, whatever this is means). Hence, Hacker seems to have in effect re-introduced the notion of metaphysical necessary truth which the sentences of the *Tractatus* are – somehow – meant to convey to the reader (cf. Hacker, 1986, 26 and 51). His strategy in response to Black therefore merely constitutes a different way of salvaging the idea that the sentences of the *Tractatus* express truths about non-empirical logical or metaphysical necessities, the very idea whose possibility Wittgenstein questions with his distinction.

Characterizing the issue in these terms, I hope, helps to see that it's indeed reasonable for Wittgenstein to describe the saying-showing as the cardinal problem of philosophy. What the cardinal problem concerns is the possibility of assertions or theses about exceptionless non-empirical necessities or theses about the essential as opposed to contingent features of philosophy's objects of investigation. To the extent that the goal of philosophy has traditionally been to establish such non-empirical truths, whose possibility Wittgenstein in his turn questions, it seems fair to describe the question of what can be expressed in/by language as the cardinal (main or key) problem of philosophy. Can philosophy establish necessary truths about its objects of study and express such truths in terms

of philosophical theses understood as true propositions? Even if philosophers have mostly taken the answer to this question for granted (with notable exceptions, such as Hume and Kant), this is essentially a question about the possibility of metaphysical truths or theses. It would seem rather unreasonable to deny that this could be seen as the cardinal problem of philosophy.

Accordingly, one may suspect that the difficulty that Wittgenstein's readers have encountered with Wittgenstein's distinction has to do with their inability to think beyond philosophical theses. This is illustrated by positions in a recent debate about the *Tractatus* between Hackerian metaphysical readings and the so-called therapeutic readings, whereby the latter take the goal of the *Tractatus* to be simply to reveal the impossibility of philosophical theorising by bringing the reader to see how the presumed Tractarian theses expressed by its sentences collapse into nonsense (Goldfarb 1997; Read and Deans 2003; Read and Hutchinson 2010).³ Crucially, these two supposedly opposed interpretations share the assumption that in order for Wittgenstein to express any positive insights about the issues that the *Tractatus* seems to talk about, i.e. logic and philosophy thereof, it must contain theses in some sense. Thus, the therapeutic reading holds that, if the book doesn't contain such theses, it can't contain any positive philosophical insights, including the distinction between saying and showing (Read and Deans 2003). With this Hacker agrees, criticizing the therapeutic reading for throwing the baby of logic and philosophy thereof out with the bathwater of theses (Hacker 2000, 369). Problematically, however, with this shared assumption, both approaches beg crucial questions against Wittgenstein's attempt to abandon philosophical theses. Evidently we can't simply assume with Hacker that in order for the book to contain positive philosophical insights it must contain theses in terms of which those insights are expressed or hold with the therapists that insofar as there are no theses in the book it can't provide any positive philosophical insights.

Given this background, let's turn to Wittgenstein's distinction.⁴

³ Contrary to a widespread (mis)conception therapeutic readings are to be distinguished from the so-called resolute readings. I come back to this in the final section.

⁴ See Kuusela 2019a for further discussion of the relation between the metaphysical and therapeutic readings, and a criticism of both. Other discussions of the cardinal problem and the notion of showing are Stern 1995 and Kremer 2007 who likewise reject the connection between showing and ineffable truths.

2. Saying, showing and what understanding language logically involves

What Wittgenstein means by 'saying' seems clear enough. Saying is what propositions, that is, sentential signs employed in specific ways, do (cf. *TLP* 3.326-3.327). More specifically, by saying Wittgenstein means representing or picturing a contingent states of affairs, that is, a possible fact, so to speak, that might or might not obtain, and stating of the state of affairs that it obtains. Here the state of affairs is the sense or content of the proposition of which the proposition asserts or denies that it's the case. By so doing the propositions then represents the world truly or falsely, depending on how the world happens to be, i.e. whether the state of affairs actually obtains (*TLP* 4.01, 4.021-4.024, 4.1 and 4.25). What is said can thus be true or false; saying means representing or picturing a contingent reality truly or falsely. As Wittgenstein explains:

[...] The proposition only states something [sagt... etwas aus], in so far as it is a picture. (*TLP* 4.03)

In a proposition a state of affairs is put together, so to speak, experimentally.

Instead of saying: this proposition has such and such a sense, one can say: this proposition represents such and such a state of affairs. (*TLP* 4.031)

Reality is compared with propositions. (*TLP* 4.05)

A proposition can be true or false only in virtue of being a picture of reality. (*TLP* 4.06)

By contrast and as already noted, it's less straightforward to explain what Wittgenstein means by 'showing'. Here it's again clear enough that he identifies that which is shown with the formal or logical characteristics of language and the world as an object of linguistic representation, thus connecting showing with the notions of logical form, logical possibility and necessity, and that which is essential and necessary as opposed to merely contingent or accidental (*TLP* 4.121 and 4.122).

Propositions can represent the whole reality, but they cannot represent what they must have in common with reality in order to be able to represent it—the logical form. [...] (*TLP* 4.12)

Propositions cannot represent the logical form: this mirrors itself in the propositions.

That which mirrors itself in language, language cannot represent.

That which expresses *itself* in language, *we* cannot express by language.

Propositions *show* the logical form of reality. (*TLP* 4.121)

A property is internal if it is unthinkable that its object does not possess it.
[...] (*TLP* 4.123)

The existence of an internal property of a possible state of affairs is not expressed by a proposition, but it expresses itself in the proposition which presents that state of affairs, by an internal property of this proposition.
[...] (*TLP* 4.124)

As these remarks indicate, showing is connected with what makes it possible for a proposition to represent a state of affairs. However, according to Wittgenstein, what makes it possible for a proposition to represent isn't itself a possible object of representation. Before addressing the disputed question of how what propositions show can be clarified, and how what is thus clarified can be communicated since it can't be said, let's look more closely into the relation between saying and showing, and how the possibility of each mutually depends on the other. This helps to clarify the difference between saying and showing, which in turn will help to explain what goes wrong when Wittgenstein's interpreters speak about what can only be shown, as if this were an alternative way to express truths about what is necessary or essential or an alternative vehicle for expressing necessary metaphysical truths.

The *Tractatus* introduces the distinction or contrast between saying and showing as follows: "The proposition *shows* its sense. The proposition *shows* how things stand, *if* it is true. And it *says* that they do so stand" (*TLP* 4.022) (Showing comes up earlier too, for example, in *TLP* 2.172, although Wittgenstein uses here the verb *aufweisen* rather than *zeigen*. Another earlier remark which is significant for the proposed interpretation is *TLP* 3.262). As already noted, a sentence says that things are as it represents them as being. In order to say this, however, the sentence must show its sense, the state of affairs that the sentence asserts to be the case. Further, one must, of course, grasp what a sentence says or represents, i.e. its sense, before being able to assess whether it's true. But how does a sentence show its sense?

This can be explained with the help of an ambiguous sentence "Green is green", "where the first word is a proper name and the last an adjective", which Wittgenstein uses as an example when introducing the related

Tractarian notion of mode of signification (*TLP* 3.323). In order for a language user to grasp this string of signs as saying about an individual named Green that he has the property of being green, she must understand that the two occurrences of 'green' play different logical roles in the sentence and what those roles are, i.e. that the latter occurrence of the word functions as an adjective that refers to the property of green predicated of the person by the name of Green, who is the subject of the proposition expressed by the sentence. She must understand, in other words, that the logico-syntactical uses and logical forms of the two words are different, and what they are or, as Wittgenstein also explains, that the two signs signify in different ways or have different modes of signification, thus being different symbols or expressions (*TLP* 3.322-3.323; cf. 3.262). However, that the two words play such different logical roles is evidently not anything that the proposition says. This is not part of its sense in that the proposition speaks of the colour of a person, not of logical roles of words or logical forms. Rather, what logical roles the different occurrences of 'green' play, and what the words refer to, is shown by the proposition, and it is in this way that it shows its sense, i.e. the state of affairs it represents. Simply put, in order to understand what a proposition says, one must grasp the mode of signification of its constituents and what they refer to, for example, universals, such as colours, or particular objects. This is then what the constituent expressions show as part of this proposition. (They might be used differently as part of another proposition.) Wittgenstein explains this point as follows with reference to a logical language or symbolism, where relevant differences of use are marked explicitly by means of different signs: "[...] a proposition '*fa*' shows that in its sense the object *a* occurs, two propositions '*fa*' and '*ga*' that they are both about the same object [...]" (*TLP* 4.1211; cf. *TLP* 3.325).

By contrast to logical languages designed with the aim of logical clarity, such differences in logico-syntactical use are often not marked by different signs in colloquial language. This makes it harder to keep track of the use of its signs and their use, and constitutes a source of logical confusions, as illustrated by the ambiguous sentence "Green is green", which could also be read as a tautology or a statement of identity (*TLP* 3.323-3.325 and 4.002). Indeed, Wittgenstein is commenting on the possibility of just such logical confusions in the context where he brings up "Green is green". (To render "Green is green" logically more perspicuous we could write it as 'Gg', where 'G' stands for the function "is green" and 'g' for the object Mr Green to which the function is applied.) Nevertheless, the same principle applies to colloquial language too: in order to understand what a

proposition says, one must understand a) the logical function or mode of signification, and b) the meaning of its constituent expressions. To see how this works more precisely, it's important to observe the mutual logical dependence of saying and showing.

As "Green is green" illustrates, the logical form or function of a sign is not independent from what it's used to refer to, and it would be a mistake to think that the possibility of saying simply depends on showing, even though it might be tempting to read *TLP* 4.022 in this way. Importantly, however, a sign has a certain mode of signification or logical form only insofar as it has a use. For example, a name isn't a name independently of its referring use, and generally, without a use there is no mode of signification or logical form that a sign could show (cf. *TLP* 3.326). Saying and showing thus are intertwined in the sense of mutually presupposing one another in the case of colloquial language. A proposition with sense can't say anything without showing the modes of signification and referents of its constituent expressions. But it can't show anything without saying something or expressing a sense either, because names only have a determinate use and meaning in the context of propositions, as Wittgenstein holds, adopting Frege's context principle (*TLP* 3.3). It's worth noting that this isn't quite the same in the case of logical language, because there we can cancel references or meanings by turning names into variables with a view to clarifying the modes of signification, logical forms or the rules of logical-syntax that govern the use of expressions (*TLP* 3.3ff.) Variables thus enable us generalize over modes of signification, and to clarify the uses of classes of expressions, not just token expressions. Accordingly, in the case of a logical language we can have showing without saying.⁵

These considerations also help to see that, despite their mutual dependence, saying and showing are distinct and, consequently, that a proposition could never say what it shows. If we try to imagine the

⁵ Other instances of showing without saying are facts and their constituents showing their logical form and, as Wittgenstein apparently holds, poetry, at least in some cases (cf. his comment to Engelmann on a poem by Uhland; Engelmann, 1967, 83-84). Apparently showing is therefore a broader notion than saying, with the latter applying only to assertive language use. For discussion of such further cases of showing, see Stern, 1995, 70ff. It's worth noting that Wittgenstein's notion of syntax differs importantly from the contemporary one, whereby syntax is an abstract structure of uninterpreted signs. For Wittgenstein, by contrast, only signs with meaningful use (*sinnvollen Gebrauch*) have logical syntax (*TLP* 3.326-3.328).

possibility of propositions saying what they show, it's not very clear what this would amount to. However, if a proposition were to say what it shows this would change its sense and truth conditions, with the proposition now saying something about the function of signs in it, besides representing the state of affairs it originally represented. The original proposition would thus necessarily change if it were used to say what it shows. Moreover, given that "[t]he sign determines a logical form only together with its logical syntactic use" (*TLP* 3.327), it's not clear what it would be to represent logical form to begin with. Presumably the use of a sign employed to represent the logical form of another sign would have to mirror the use of the sign whose logical form we try to represent. But a sign whose use mirrors the use of another is just another token of the same symbol or a variable, in case we are abstracting away from reference. We would therefore not have succeeded in representing the logical form of the first sign, but merely reproduced the sign or turned it into a variable. I take it that this is what Wittgenstein is trying to explain with his somewhat awkward metaphor that, "To be able to represent the logical form, we should have to be able to put ourselves with the propositions outside logic, that is outside the world" (*TLP* 4.12; cf. 4.041). To represent logical form, in other words, we would have to come up with some other way for representation to function, different from the *Tractatus*' account of representation. But if this were possible, it would mean that the *Tractatus*' account of the logical principles governing representation, i.e. that, besides reference, signs must share the logical form with whatever they stand for so as to have the right logical multiplicity to represent what they represent, doesn't uniquely capture the logical basis of representation after all. Perhaps we should then be interested in this further logic that enables us to represent logic in the first sense that Wittgenstein is concerned with, or perhaps there is a yet further logic that we can use to represent this further logic, and so on. Thus, this attempt to think about what it would be to represent logical form seems to come to nothing.

To conclude this section, with his saying-showing distinction Wittgenstein can be understood as aiming to clarify the nature of the tacit logical knowledge that thinkers and language users must possess in order to be able to think or understand a language, and to use it to speak of the world. This, of course, is not a psychological theory about how people actually manage to use language, but an account of what understanding language (or representation) must in principle involve, according to the *Tractatus*.⁶

⁶ I still owe an explanation of how Wittgenstein can have such accounts consistently with his rejection of philosophical theories and theses. I come to this in section 4.

But as explained, what one must understand in order to be able to understand a proposition can't be anything that this sentence itself would say. What speakers must know in order to understand a proposition thus differs from what the proposition says. Hence, we seem able to conclude that, the logical knowledge that makes it possible to understand language in the first place isn't itself propositional. Rather, it underlies the possibility of understanding propositions. As the point might be put, it's not possible to express in terms of propositions the knowledge required for understanding propositions, because this knowledge is what makes it possible to understand propositions in the first place. Knowledge of showing thus seems better characterized as knowledge how – in particular, knowledge of how signs symbolise – than as knowledge that.

3. How can logical form be clarified?

Having tried to clarify the notions of saying and showing we now face the following problem. If the comprehension of what language shows logically precedes knowledge of what is said, so that what is shown can't be clarified through saying because saying already presupposes what is to be clarified, how is it possible to clarify what is shown? Here we come to the disputes mentioned earlier between the different interpretational approaches. I'll try to next outline a way out of this impasse, and in the next section return to the issue of the function of the sentences of the *Tractatus*. Consider how Wittgenstein explains the saying-showing distinction later in the 1930s:

The difference between saying and showing is the difference between what language expresses and what is recorded in grammar [was in der Grammatik steht]. The reason for choosing the expression "it is shown" was that one sees a connection in the notation. What one learns from the notation is indeed something different from what the language expresses, [...]. In other words: grammar can be established before the use of language. Only later is something said with language. I learn internal relations only from the grammar, even before I have made use of language, i.e., even before I have said something. It is surely correct that the inspection of two functions shows me something: for one really does experience grammar by the inspection of a written grammar. (*VW* 131; my square brackets)

My account of showing in this essay remains incomplete and focused on logic in that it doesn't explain, for example, what it means for the truth of solipsism or the mystical to show itself (*TLP* 5.62 and 6.652).

That which language shows, “what is recorded in grammar”, is the grammatical or logico-syntactical rules that govern its possible uses, and this is something that can be understood, according to the early Wittgenstein, independently of actually using language to say whatever it might be used to say. This is to be understood in the sense that, having determined the logico-syntactical rules for the use of signs, what is logically necessary and possible is herewith fixed, and one doesn't have to, so to speak, try out relevant propositions to discover what it's possible to say. Likewise we don't find out experimentally what follows from a proposition. Once the rules of logical-syntax are in place, all logical relations are determined. Although Wittgenstein's terminology in the quoted remark differs from the *Tractatus*, his explanation is clearly consistent with the saying-showing distinction, as explained in the preceding. It's important, however, that in this remark Wittgenstein is talking about a logical notation, as indicated by his reference to truth-functions. (This is obvious in the context of the remark, where Wittgenstein discusses the *Tractatus*' T-F notation for truth-functions.) This is important because of how the remark contrasts with how Wittgenstein speaks about the possibility of gathering logic immediately from a natural language. “From [colloquial language] it is humanly impossible to gather immediately the logic of language. Language disguises the thought [...]” (*TLP* 4.002). The important point is that, by contrast to colloquial language, what is shown can indeed be readily gathered from a logical notation, because this is what such a notation is designed for, and this is just how it is meant to help to avoid logical confusions. As Wittgenstein writes:

In order to avoid [the kind of logical confusions of which philosophy is full; *TLP* 3.324] we must exclude them by employing a symbolism which excludes them by not using the same sign for different symbols, and by not using signs, which signify in different ways, in the same way externally. A symbolism, that is to say, that obeys the rules of *logical* grammar—of logical syntax. (*TLP* 3.325; my square brackets)

Such a notation can then also be used to clarify the logic of the propositions of colloquial language by translating them into the logical notation, thus analysing them in terms of the logically perspicuous notation. What can't be directly gathered from the logically opaque expressions of natural language can thus be clarified indirectly by means of a logically perspicuous notation. This explains how that which is shown can be clarified and communicated. Although what is shown can't be clarified by saying anything about it, it can be clarified by translating sentences whose logic is unclear into a notation in which the logical

function of relevant expression can be readily seen. As Wittgenstein explains in the *Tractatus*:

We can speak in a certain sense of formal properties of objects and states of affairs, or of properties of the structure of facts, and in the same sense of formal relations and relations of structures. [...]

The obtaining of such internal properties and relations cannot, however, be asserted by propositions, but it shows itself in the propositions, which present the states of affairs and treat of the objects in question. (*TLP* 4.122)

[...] That anything falls under a formal concept as an object belonging to it, cannot be expressed by a proposition. But it shows itself in the sign of this object itself. (The name shows that it signifies an object, the numerical sign that it signifies a number, etc.) [...] (*TLP* 4.126)

In order to avoid a contradiction with *TLP* 4.002, Wittgenstein must here be read as talking about logic showing itself in a logically perspicuous notation, corresponding to the quote from the 1930s and *TLP* 3.325. As this demonstrates, there is indeed a way to express what is shown, despite the impossibility of representing it or saying anything about it in terms of propositions. Of course translating expressions into a logical language, or transforming expressions into logically more perspicuous expressions with the purpose of logical clarification, is still a mode of language use or speaking in a broad sense. But it's not a matter of asserting true propositions and of saying in this specific Tractarian sense.

4. Keeping showing and saying apart: the function of the *Tractatus*' sentences

We are now in a position to see that there is no need to resort to explanations such as those by Hacker and Black, with the latter arguing that the nonsensical sentences of the *Tractatus* show something about logic, and the latter maintaining that the nonsensical sentences of the *Tractatus* somehow manage to express ineffable metaphysical truths about what propositions with a sense show. Neither is there any need to hold with the therapeutic reading that all Wittgenstein wants to achieve or can achieve with his sentences is getting the reader to recognize their nonsensicality and consequently the nonsensicality of philosophical theorizing (see section 1). To explain this, I will briefly outline an alternative

to Black's, Hacker's and the therapeutic accounts of the function of the sentences of the *Tractatus*.⁷

The purpose of the sentences of the *Tractatus* isn't to achieve what Wittgenstein regards as unachievable, to speak about what can't be spoken of. His sentences, in other words, aren't a vehicle for expressing ineffable metaphysical truths or for saying what propositions with a sense show. Rather, the purpose of the Tractarian sentences is to introduce the concepts and logical principles governing a logical notation that Wittgenstein outlines in the book in order to rectify the logical confusions which Frege's and Russell's notations suffer from (*TLP* 3.325). This notation then constitutes the proper expression for Wittgenstein's insights regarding logic, including his account of the logical basis of representation. In short, necessities, such as that all propositions share the general form of being a true/false representations of contingent states of affairs, which according to Wittgenstein constitutes their essence and that of language as a totality of propositions, or that all names are referring expressions, and propositions are concatenations of names expressed as functions of names, are codified into the structure of his notation (*TLP* 3.203, 3.22, 4.001, 4.22, 4.24, 4.5 and 5.471). Thus, in this notation it's not possible to express a proposition except in way that makes clear that it indeed has the just mentioned characteristics. Similarly, the referring character of names and that they can't be true or false, but only propositions can, is evident in the design of this language. With regard to Wittgenstein's account of linguistic representation, laying out perspicuously the logical mechanics of language and thought will then also make clear the pictorial character of propositions of thoughts, i.e. how they picture states of affairs through the arrangements of names in them, and that in a fully analysed proposition of the logical language the elements of a proposition correspond to the elements of the state of affairs pictured (*TLP* 3.14-3.1432). Wittgenstein's notation, rather than the Tractarian sentences is therefore the correct expression for the so-called picture theory too. Crucially, however, a language doesn't constitute a true proposition or thesis, and thus this method of expressing logical necessity respects the saying-showing distinction.

Whilst I do maintain that all the evidence needed to justify this interpretation can be found in the *Tractatus* itself, Wittgenstein helpfully

⁷ As I have discussed these issues and justified this interpretation elsewhere in detail I allow myself to be brief. See Kuusela 2019a and 2019b.

summarizes this general point in a remark written down ten years after the letter to Russell quoted at the start of this essay:

R[amsey] does not comprehend the value I place on a particular notation any more than the value I place on a particular word because he does not see that in it an entire way of looking at the object is expressed; the angle from which I now regard the matter. The notation is the last expression of a philosophical view. (MS 105, 10–12; my square brackets)

This, I believe, summarizes Wittgenstein's strategy for moving beyond philosophical theses and avoiding the confusion "very widespread among philosophers" between internal and external properties, relating to philosophers' attempts to articulate true/false theses about what is necessary and essential or what can only be shown. Instead trying to speak about such necessities and what can only be shown, relevant necessities are to be rendered perspicuous by presenting them as structural features of a logical notation, by designing a notation into whose structure they are encoded. This way of presenting logically necessities then also reflects their logical status as distinct from and more fundamental than what can be said in terms of true/false propositions. Or as Wittgenstein explains the point in the quote in section 3, logical necessity is something that is recorded in grammar rather than said in language.

As regards the cardinal problem of philosophy, Wittgenstein view therefore is that, whilst essential necessities can't be the object of true/false propositions or theses, there is nevertheless a way to express such necessities that doesn't involve trying to say what can't be said. Accordingly, the *Tractatus* isn't a swansong of metaphysics, the last, self-consciously failed attempt to put forward metaphysical theses about essential necessities, contrary to how Hacker describes it (Hacker, 1986, 27). Rather, the *Tractatus* marks the beginning of a new way of philosophizing whose basis is Wittgenstein's solution to the cardinal problem of philosophy and to the very widespread confusion among philosophers about internal and external properties. Russell's impression that Wittgenstein fails to respect his saying-showing distinction, saying many things about what can't be said, therefore, is a misunderstanding of Wittgenstein's key insight regarding the proper expression of essential necessities.

More specifically, on Wittgenstein's view, the criterion for our having correctly captured relevant kinds of necessities then isn't the correspondence of our logical or metaphysical theses with non-empirical necessities in reality or with what is shown, none of which, according to Wittgenstein,

could be spoken of. Rather, it's the absence of anomalies in our logical language, such as Frege's and Russell's notations give rise to, for example, due to their failure to render clear the difference between names and propositions. We can thus achieve logical and philosophical clarity by thinking in terms of the correct notation and by analysing expressions of colloquial language in its terms, just as Wittgenstein says in *TLP* 3.325. Or as he also writes, "Now we understand our feeling that we are in possession of the right logical conception, when everything adds up in our notation [einmal alles in unserer Zeichenspace stimmt]" (*TLP* 4.1213; my square brackets). Indeed, Wittgenstein seems to think that having arrived at such a point of view we can directly grasp the nature of language and thought as well as of reality as the object of thought, instead of indirectly representing it to ourselves by means of our theories. "That most simple thing which we ought to bring out [angeben] here is not a simile of truth but the complete truth itself" (*TLP* 5.5563). And: "[...] in logic it is not *we* who express by means of the signs what we want, but in logic the nature of the essentially necessary signs asserts itself" (*TLP* 6.124). This then also explains the sense in which a reader who has understood the *Tractatus* is expected to be able to "see the world aright" after having thrown away Wittgenstein's introductory sentences (*TLP* 6.54). What makes it possible for the reader to see the world aright is the viewpoint of Wittgenstein's logical language which could not be correctly expressed by means of propositions.

This non-therapeutic version of the so-called resolute readings then also dissolves the alleged paradox that metaphysical readers have found in the *Tractatus*, and of which the therapeutic reading gets rid of by sacrificing the positive philosophical insights of the *Tractatus*.⁸ Rather than constituting paradoxically nonsensical theses that purport to speak about what can't be spoken about but only shown, the purpose of *Tractatus*' sentences, as explained, is merely to introduce the concepts and principles of Wittgenstein's notation, and to thus express the correct logical conception. Notably, no theses are required for this introductory task,

⁸ The basis for classifying the proposed interpretation as an instance of resolute reading is two shared commitments: 1) the rejection of ineffable truths and 2) the idea that Wittgenstein's aim is only to clarify what language users and thinkers already know, not inform them about logic and lay down logical norms, as if a comprehension of the distinction between sense and nonsense and tacit grasp of logic were not already part of their linguistic capacity (see Conant and Bronzo 2017). A resolute reading in this sense involves no commitment to any ideas about philosophical therapy. For a criticism of therapeutic readings, see Kuusela 2019a.

because language users already tacitly possess relevant logical knowledge. Hence, they only need to be reminded, but not informed about logic. Accordingly, the readers are expected, in their capacity as language users and thinkers, to be in a position to assess whether Wittgenstein's notation does correctly reflect the logic of language and thought, and whether it really constitutes the correct logical conception. As Wittgenstein was to discover later, however, he hadn't got it quite right. Instead of giving direct expression to the logical principles governing language use and thought, he had produced a model that only succeeded in clarifying certain aspects of the grammar of language (see Kuusela 2008 and 2019b).⁹

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