THE AMBIGUOUS PICTURES
IN THE THEORY OF LANGUAGE
IN WITTGENSTEIN'S *TRACTATUS*

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Summary: *1. Introduction. 2. The Ambiguous Pictures in the Theory of Language in Wittgenstein's* Tractatus. *3. Picturing the World. 4. Reality, the Picture and the Measuring Rod. 5. Picturing Language. 6. Picture Analogies. 7. Picturing the Cat on the Mat. 8. The Aesthetic Side of the Picture. 9. Conclusion.*

1. Introduction

The article starts with explaining its motivation for its close reading of the passages related to the conceptualization of the picture in the *Tractatus*: it is intended as a critique that may pave the way for the development of the picture theory. In the section titled 'Picturing the World,' it begins its analysis with an attempt to understand how the picture functions in the translations between the world and language. In the next section titled 'Reality, the Picture and the Measuring Rod', it questions Wittgenstein's assumption that facts can be readily decomposable into atomic facts, and claims that this automatism in the decomposition results in the inability to have any measure of reality by which the truth of the picture, and consequently, that of any linguistic statements may indeed be judged. In the following section titled 'Picturing Language', it investigates the statements that are related to the transitions from language to the world. It exposes the problems of one-to-one correspondences, and questions the assumption of unambiguousness in such correspondences. The section 'Picture Analogies' addresses further ambiguities that result from the analogical aspect of the use of the concept of the picture, which may problematize the assumption of unambiguous correspondences. 'Picturing the Cat on the Mat' studies an example by Kripke showing the many ambiguities that must be negotiated by the picturing mind even in a most obvious of example, which merely requires that a simple proposition be made answerable to the simple affirmation or negation of a simple fact. Finally, 'The Aesthetic Side of the Picture' argues against Bogen's dismissal of the literal

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aspects of Wittgenstein's use of the picture analogy, suggesting that these aspects might indeed be quintessential for an understanding of the picture. The conclusion summarizes the main claims and anticipates the development of future picture theories of language.

2. The Ambiguous Pictures in the Theory of Language in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*

At a time when the critical analysis of the ideas of 'great dead philosophers' is considered a futile exercise in irrelevance, it might strike one as an anomaly to retrieve an odd relic of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, i.e. the 'picture,' a semi-archaic term for mental representation and a baffling analogy that has been long repudiated by non-representationalists, among whom later Wittgenstein is sometimes counted. The criticism of the picture, which also means, of mental representation, in later Wittgenstein has indeed often been understood as the final verdict on the picture, and particularly on the *Tractatus* picture: the picture was deemed to be hopelessly subjectivistic, therefore both useless and superfluous in our dealings with language and the world, where publicly observable language-games, as opposed to private pictures, become more relevant. But the picture is a central concept in Wittgenstein's theory of language in the *Tractatus*, and deserves an analysis on its own right, and not just as a counterexample to the understanding of the picture in later Wittgenstein. Wittgenstein's theory in the *Tractatus*, often referred to as the 'picture theory of language', is a representational one: the picture is the name Wittgenstein gives to the mental phenomenon, which emerges as a consequence of our interactions with both language and the world.[1] The inclusion of the picture, however, results in a fundamental ambivalence regarding the particular role that must be given to the representing mind in a treatise on logic, which claims to do away with any kind of subjectivism; the *Tractatus* is indeed an effort to formulate a scientifically objective theory of language as if this were possible without the consideration of the mind. The picture is therefore countered by Wittgenstein's desire to exclude the phenomenal mind, along with its concomitant ambiguities and irrelevancies, from any account of the analytic truth. This might be the reason why the *Tractatus* includes the picture nominally but excludes it functionally by way of the almost automatic translations that are supposed to take place between the world and language. The desire to minimize, if not to eliminate, the mind's cognitive abilities, however, results in an insufficiently developed, undertheorized notion of the picture. In its turn, this insufficiency results in the inability of addressing the question of

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[1] I use the colloquial 'we' to denote the subject that does the picturing, being exposed to language and the world.

the truth in analytical thought: it becomes questionable whether a theory of language can at all be formulated in a highly-abstracted logical space, as Wittgenstein does in his *Tractatus*, without developing an adequate philosophical understanding of mental representation concerning the actual encounters of the picturing mind with the facts of the world and the signs of language.

In this essay, I examine in some detail the particular statements in the *Tractatus* in which the picture is used as a concept, and show how the picture introduces a fundamental sense of ambiguity in Wittgenstein's theory that cannot be resolved analytically without surrendering it to the automatism of one-to-one correspondences. The problem with the theory of language in the *Tractatus* is not that the picture exists in it, as non-representationalists would make us believe; rather, it is that the picture is not allowed to exist in a way that is sufficiently independent from the facts of language and the world. In fact, the picture still constitutes a compelling basis for further theories of language, provided that such theories make an attempt to deal with the ambiguity (and complexity) of the picture. A careful examination of the *Tractatus* picture might therefore prove to be instructive in suggesting what to do and what not to do with the picture if the picture is to be used a fundamental concept in a philosophical understanding of language.

Before I start with my reading of the picture in the *Tractatus*, I would like to stress that the picture and the picture analogy is decidedly not a popular topic in the recent surge in discussions of Early Wittgenstein occasioned by the 'resolutionist' readings of Cora Diamond and others, which have led to a new wave of philosophical interest in the *Tractatus* among Anglo-American analytic circles. This revived academic interest is said to produce new interpretations of Wittgenstein's work and, hence, a 'New Wittgenstein.'[2] The picture in 'the picture theory of language' seems to have been forgotten in an extended debate concerning Wittgenstein's commitment to a nonsensical interpretation of the *Tractatus in* the *Tractatus* that has led to prolific and lively contentions

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[2] For an overview and a critical discussion of 'New Wittgenstein,' see P. HUTCHINSON, R. READ, *An Elucidatory Interpretation of Wittgenstein's* Tractatus: *A Critique of Daniel D. Hutto's and Marie McGinn's Reading of Tractatus*, «International Journal of Philosophical Studies», 6/54 (2006), pp. 1-29; and D. MCMANUS, *The Enchantment of Words: Wittgenstein's Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus,* Oxford University Press, Oxford 2006. See also A. PICHLER, *Reflections on a Prominent Argument in the Wittgenstein Debate*, «Philosophy and Literature», 37/2 (2013), pp. 435-450 on the discussion of 'New Wittgentein' and a critical evaluation of the arguments of its dissidents; B. WARE, *Ethics and the Literary in Wittgenstein's* Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, «Journal of the History of Ideas» , 72/ 4 (2011), pp. 595-611 on the ethical implications of the nonsensicalist readings. For criticisms of 'New Wittgenstein', see P.M.S. HACKER, *Was He Trying to Whistle It?* in A. CRARY, R. READ (Ed.), The *New Wittgenstein,* Routledge, London (2000), pp. 353-388 and A.J. PEACH, *Possibility in the Tractatus: A Defense of the Old Wittgenstein*, «Journal of the History of Philosophy», 45/ 4 (2007), pp. 635-658.

between 'resolutionist,' 'ineffabilist' and 'elucidatory' readings.[3] Not only do I not engage this debate, which, for my purposes, is irrelevant, but I also do not engage the extensive literature written on the *Tractatus*. Rather, I launch a critique of the *Tractatus* by going back to the picture in this work and reinterpreting the statements that concern the picture, in order to show how the formulation of the picture creates problems related to the 'truth' and 'reality' that cannot be resolved within the *Tractatus* ontology, and results in an automatism that cannot deal with any sense of ambiguity in the facts of language and the world. I would like to state upfront that my approach to the picture in the *Tractatus* does not pretend to be guided by the particular exegetical concerns of Anglo-American analytic philosophy, and I readily admit that my reading must ultimately be seen as a 'foreign' reading, foreign, but also marginal and peripheral, to the dominant critical tradition.[4]

3. Picturing the World

The picture, in the *Tractatus* ontology, performs as an intermediary term that mediates between language and the world. The world and language, it is assumed, share the same underlying structure or logic: they are *analogous* with

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[3] A different but consistent line of more recent interpretations historicize the logicism in Wittgentein's statements by bringing it in line with physicalism (See G. Grasshoff, *Hertzian objects in Wittgenstein's Tractatus*, «British Journal for the History of Philosophy», 5/1 (1997), pp. 87-120; A. Nordmann, *Another New Wittgenstein: The Scientific and Engineering Background of the Tractatus*, «Perspectives on Science», 10/3 (2002), pp. 356-384; T. Lampert, *Psychophysical and Tractarian Analysis*, «Perspectives on Science», 11/3 (2003), pp. 285-317; A. Blank, *Material Points and Formal Concepts in the Early Wittgenstein*, «Canadian Journal of Philosophy», 37/2 (2007), pp. 245-261). Opposing the nonsensical implications of the 'New Wittgenstein' studies, such interpretations seem to act upon a need to identify and stress the more scientific and possibly practical aspects of the *Tractatus* in order to discuss, for instance, whether Wittgenstein's work could be construed as an attempt to theorize the construction of scientific models regarding the physical world. For my purposes, I take Wittgenstein's statements on language in the *Tractatus* as statements that directly concern the relationship between actual languages and the world, without identifying them exclusively with the abstracted 'languages' or modes of representation in physics or any other science, and hence I perpetuate what Graßhoff calls a «thematic misunderstanding» (G. Grasshoff, *o. c.*, p. 88) by foregrounding the *linguistic* aspect of language in the *Tractatus*.

[4] A fairly recent analytical effort to formulate a critique of the *Tractatus* from within analytic philosophy, which addresses the picture theory of language in the *Tractatus* may be found in María Cerezo's *The Possibility of Language: Internal Tensions in Wittgenstein's Tractatus*, csli Publications, Stanford 2005. The critique addresses the tension that arises from the requirement in the *Tractatus* that propositions depict (or picture) facts, which, according to Cerezo, creates a problem in the picturing of compound propositions whose constituents, i.e. elementary propositions, already depict facts and do not name them. (See M. Cerezo, *o. c.*, p. 184).

each other[5] and therefore are translatable into one another. But there is a problem concerning how such a translation might at all be possible: the words on the page do not assume a life on their own and immediately become a part of the world; the world is not an inscription-producing machine. For translations to be possible, the picture is needed as the token of the mental activity involved in the inscription of the world in language and in the drawing of the world from language. In other words, pictures will be drawn of the world, and pictures will be drawn from language, making translations between the world and language possible:

World → Picture → Language (1st translation)
Language → Picture → World (2nd translation)

Wittgenstein first introduces the picture while describing the translation from the world into language at the beginning of the *Tractatus*. The correspondence relation is first mentioned as holding between the world of things and mental pictures. Pictures, so to speak, reflect the things in the world, but they do this in a correct or incorrect form. To explain the first translation from the world to language, Wittgenstein proceeds analytically: he makes the assumption that the world is decomposable into smaller units, and these units are unproblematically reflected in the units of language, through *the mediation of the picture*. Wittgenstein's world is immediately decomposed into its constituent parts so that these parts could be taken, both in isolation and totality, and translated into language. The world, here, is like a work of language breakable into smaller units, i.e., sentences and words.

In the opening statements of the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein sees and declares the world to be 'the totality of facts, not of things.' (§1.1).[6] The analysis proceeds rapidly: the world could be broken into facts, facts into states of affairs (object-states), and finally, state of affairs into simple objects. The simple objects are the coordinates of the world; they combine in configurations that

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[5] «According to the *Tractatus* presents in the most purified form the ancient thesis that language, both in its form and content, mirrors the world in *its* form and content» (P.M.S. HACKER, *Laying the Ghost of the Tractatus*, «Review of Metaphysics», 29/1 (1975), pp. 96-116, p. 97). Hacker reminds us that Wittgenstein's theory is in the same tradition as the ontologico-linguistic *isomorphism* and correspondence theories of truth, which means that both the world and the language will be dissected into their constituents and (isomorphic) correspondences between these constituents will be established.

[6] «Die Welt ist die Gesamtheit der Tatsachen, nicht der Dinge» (§ 1.1). The translations belong to C.K. Ogden unless otherwise stated. See L. WITTGENSTEIN, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Bilingual Edition, tr. C.K. Ogden, Routledge, London 1990. While Wittgenstein emphasizes that facts are not to be confused with objects, there is little to suggest in his account that an object can not be a fact in isolation. Witgenstein probably wants to say that facts are configurations of several objects; that in a fact, an object is configured in a certain way with other objects.

Wittgenstein calls states of affairs or 'object-states,' which, in turn, combine to form the facts of the world.[7] The following scheme may help illustrate Wittgenstein's ontology as it concerns the decomposition of the world into simpler ones:

World → Facts → States of Affairs (Object-states) → Objects[8] [decomposition]

While moving from the world to language, Wittgenstein states that pictures are the facts of the world as they are drawn in the imagination:[9] «We make to ourselves pictures of facts (§ 2.1)».[10] Wittgenstein abandons the impersonal tone of his previous propositions: he brings 'us' into the picture. Unlike the world out there, pictures belong to us: they become our work and our own making, and are therefore vulnerable to error.

4. Reality, the Picture and the Measuring Rod

The relationship between the picture and the world, however, becomes further complicated by the introduction of another term: reality (*Wirklichkeit*). The picture is not simply a model of the world, but a model of reality (*ein Modell der Wirklichkeit*). In the world of the *Tractatus*, the facts of the world are to be broken into states of affairs (*Sachverhalten*), which might also be seen as atomic facts. On the side of the world, there are the facts, and on the side of the imagination, there are pictures made of these facts, with a view to resolving such facts into atomic facts. Reality, Wittgenstein tells us, refers to a fact structured as a configuration of atomic facts.[11]

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[7] See C. Tejedor, *Sense and Simplicity: Wittgenstein's Argument for Simple Objects*, «Ratio», 16 (2003), pp. 272-289 for a critical account of simple objects in the *Tractatus*.

[8] Several statements of the opening statements display the relationships between facts, objects-states and objects: «2. Was der Fall ist, die Tatsache, ist das Bestehen von Sachverhalten. 2.01 Der Sachverhalt ist eine Verbindung von Gegenständen (Sachen, Dingen.) 2.011 Es ist dem Ding wesentlich, der Bestandteil eines Sachverhaltes sein zu können. 2.012 In der Logik ist nichts zufällig: Wenn das Ding im Sachverhalt vorkommen kann, so muss die Möglichkeit des Sachverhaltes im Ding bereits präjudiziert sein».

In these passages, Wittgenstein tells us that an object, while recognizable as the simple building block of the world, is always in a combination or configuration, in order to constitute an object-state with other objects. If the object does not occur in a combination in the present, it always occurs within the possibility of forming a combination. The objects combine, like the links in a chain («wie die Glieder einer Kette» [§2.03]) to form object-states, and consequently facts.

[9] I use the word 'imagination' to refer to the work of the cognitive mind dealing with the facts of the world and language. My use of the imagination directly relates to Wittgenstein's idea of the picture (*Bild*), the act of thinking (*Denken*) and the thought (*der Gedanke*).

[10] «Wir machen uns Bilder der Tatsachen» (§ 2.1).

[11] In Wittgenstein's definition, reality is «the existence and non-existence of atomic facts (*Das Bestehen und Nichtbestehen von Sachverhalten ist die Wirklichkeit*)».

The transition from the *facts* of the world to the *atomic facts* of reality is a very delicate one, and not at all obvious. We, the picture-makers, must somehow know that a fact of the world could be resolved into these atomic facts and not those others, unless of course, the course of such resolution is predetermined or dictated from outside. Wittgenstein does not discuss how such resolution can take place 'correctly' or 'truthfully,' without referring back to the fact from which the picture is made. In order to know whether the atomic fact (re)presented (*vorstellen* in § 2.11) in the picture exists (or is real), one must go to the fact, so to speak, and compare the picture with the fact. A picture would then be the model of a fact, and hence, would become a reality. Interestingly, however, in Wittgenstein's conception, the picture is not a model of a fact – and hence, not a model of the world – but a model of the one and the same reality. It is impossible to understand where this reality would come from, unless it is imposed from outside the realm of the picture in a way that is entirely unaccountable. While positing a difference between reality and the model of reality, Wittgenstein notes:

«2.201. The picture depicts [abbilden] reality by representing ['darstellen'] a possibility of the existence and non-existence of states of affairs
(atomic facts).
2.21. The picture agrees with reality or not; it is right or wrong, true or false.
2.223. In order to discover whether the picture is true or false, we must compare it with reality».

It is not clear, however, how this agreement (*stimm*[*en*]) or comparison (*vergleich*[*en*]) can at all take place, unless another picture (reality), as a stable point of reference, is posited outside the picture (*Bild*), which is then made to 'represent' the first picture (reality). Reality is either given from the world, without the intervention of any interpreting subject, and a subjective picture corresponds or does not correspond to it; or, a particular subject sketches reality as a picture, decomposing the facts of the world into atomic facts, in which case it becomes impossible to determine how the subject who determines reality could ever err. If there is a difference between a fact and reality, then such reality cannot be given before the making of the picture: one must be able to picture the fact as reality. This, however, would have meant that reality is itself a picture, or, conversely, that the picture is *a* reality. In one of the most suggestive statements in the *Tractatus*, however, Wittgenstein places the picture in a different register than reality: «[The picture] is like a measuring rod laid against reality (§ 2.1512)».[12] But given that reality is already the picture, this must be a curious measuring act, a kind of self-measurement with no measure. Wittgenstein's theory would have difficulty at applying the measuring

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[12] «[Das Bild] ist wie ein Masstab an die Wirklichkeit angelegt».

rod and saying something about the truth about the world, in so far as it involves the comparison between a picture and reality, unless *the* reality is given, from outside the subject, as a stable reference. But how reality can be given at all as a stable reference from outside the picturing mind is unanswered and, perhaps, unanswerable. Wittgenstein suggests that we make pictures of facts, or, we fictionalize the world, but does not explain how and why we do it. Whether reality can at all be known remains undecided.

5. Picturing Language

The picture is the first step in making sense of the world by way of representation; the second step will be the propositions of language. But before this second step is taken, Wittgenstein will make space for another concept that is analogous to the picture, but is closer to language: the *thought* (*der Gedanke*). Wittgenstein does not tell us what differentiates the thought from the picture; in fact, he equates the thought with the picture straight away: thinking the world is the same as picturing the world.[13]

We are still following Wittgenstein's translation from the world to language; first, a fact of the world is made into a picture, and then into a thought, and now it will be turned into a linguistic proposition.[14] For the linguistic proposition to represent the world, the thought should *act through* the signs of the proposition, or in Wittgenstein's language, the thought should express itself in the proposition.[15] The thought, as it were, enlivens the *propositional sign* or *Satzzeichen* so that it takes effect and becomes a proposition. If Wittgenstein's thought is equivalent to the picture, 'the thought's expressing itself' becomes equivalent to 'letting a picture take the place of the propositional sign':

«The essence of the propositional sign becomes very clear when we imagine it made up of spatial objects (such as tables, chairs, books) instead of written signs. The mutual spatial proposition of these objects then expresses the sense of the proposition (§ 3.1431)».[16]

The implication is that thinking is essentially pictorial. To come closer to the sense of the proposition, one needs to conjure up a picture composed of objects, which will take the place of the propositional sign. The imagination

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[13] «Das logische Bild der Tatsachen ist der Gedanke» (§ 3). Translation: The logical picture of the facts is the thought.

[14] The word used for proposition (*Satz*), also corresponds to the sentence in German.

[15] «Im Satz drückt sich der Gedanke sinnlich wahrnehmbar aus» (§ 3.1). Translation: In the proposition the thought is expressed perceptibly through the senses.

[16] «Sehr klar wird das Wesen des Satzzeichens, wenn wir es uns, statt aus Schriftzeichen, aus räumlichen Gegenständen (etwa Tischen, Stühlen, Büchern) zusammengesetzt denken. Die gegenseitige räumliche Lage dieser Dinge drückt dann den Sinn des Satzes aus» (§ 3.1431).

will substitute words with objects, as if the sign were a template on which the forms of the objects have been laid out (the outline of a chair), forms that would have to be filled up with the objects themselves. The picture will not only depict the names of the propositional sign as objects; it will also show the relations among these objects as indicated in the grammar of the propositional sign. To put this succinctly, the conjured picture will stage the proposition.

But where are these objects? Obviously, Wittgenstein is not talking about real objects, but the objects of the thought or imagined objects. Referring back to Wittgenstein's previous remarks on the picture, one may conceive these imagined objects as pictorial elements, that is, elements that correspond to the objects or objects in the world:

Imagined Objects/ pictorial Elements → Objects

Wittgenstein then finds a correspondence between the imagined objects and the simple elements of the propositional sign, i.e., names. Names of the proposition correspond to imagined objects (pictorial elements) of the imagination, and through them, to the objects of the world:[17]

Names → Imagined Objects/ pictorial Elements → Objects

With this final correspondence between names and imagined objects, Wittgenstein has now sketched all the existing correspondences between the world and language that make possible the translation of the world into language, which could be displayed as in the following scheme:

World   → Reality (Facts)   → Objects
Imagination → pictures   → pictorial Elements
Thoughts   → Imagined Objects
Language   → Propositions   → Names

Now that Wittgenstein has shown us how the world can be translated into the language, he may now show us how the second translation may be performed, i.e. how language may be translated into the world. The steps that enable this second translation are simple; one just needs to climb up the ladder, so to speak, or move vertically in the above scheme:

Language   → Imagination   → World
Proposition → Thought/ picture   → Reality (Fact)
Names   → Imagined Objects/ → Objects
               pictorial Elements

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[17] «Im Satze kann der Gedanke so ausgedrückt sein, dass den Gegenständen des Gedankes Elemente des Satzzeichens entsprechen […]. Diese Elemente nenne ich einfache Zeichen […]. Die im Satze angewandten einfachen Zeichen heissen Namen» (§ 3.2).

While the picture measures the world (represents it in a way) and reaches out to it (corresponds to it), the thought/picture enlivens language; it pulls language into the world. We make pictures of the world, and the implication is that we must also be able to make pictures of language.

But something curious, in the way of words, happens in Wittgenstein's account of the second translation that concerns the translation from language to the world. When we read a proposition, Wittgenstein suggests, we see a picture of reality. «The proposition is a picture of reality. The proposition is a model of the reality as we think it is» (§ 4.01).[18] While we make pictures of the world in the first translation, we do not make pictures of language in the second. There is no 'we' here, which did mark the beginning of the translation from the world to the picture. It is as if one received a picture of reality immediately from the proposition. If the thought, as the picture, at all mediates between language and the world in the first translation, there is no such mediation in the second.

Just as Wittgenstein needs 'reality' as a concept that may account for the incorrect, untrue, unfitting translations from the world into language, he also needs it in the translation from language into the world. A proposition can be true or false, as opposed to reality, which is always true. What separates the reality of the world from the picture of the proposition is a simple affirmation or denial:

«4.023. The proposition determines reality to this extent that one only needs to say 'Yes' or 'No' to it to make it agree with reality.
4.05. Reality is compared with the proposition.
4.06. Propositions can be true or false only by being pictures of reality».

There could not be any ambiguity concerning the proposition, since it is tightly connected with reality, i.e., the structured fact expressed as a configuration of atomic facts. The correspondences are enforced at the level of atomic facts: to each atomic fact of the reality corresponds an atomic proposition (*Elementärsatz*) of the proposition.[19] The truth-conditions (*Wahrheitsbedingun-*

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[18] «Der Satz ist ein Bild der Wirklichkeit. Der Satz ist ein Modell der Wirklichkeit, so wie wir uns denken» (§ 4.01).

[19] Several statements indicate the relation between the proposition and atomic (elementary) propositions.
«[4.41] A proposition is the expression of agreement and disagreement with the truth possibilities of the elementary propositions. (Original: Der Satz ist der Ausdruck der Übereinstimmung und Nichtübereinstimmung mit den Wahrheitsmöglichkeiten der Elementarsätze).
[4.431] The expression of the agreement and disagreement with the truth-possibilities of the elementary propositions expresses the truth conditions of the proposition […]. The proposition is the expression of its truth-conditions. (Original: Der Ausdruck der

gen) of the proposition are contingent on the truth-possibilities of the atomic propositions. One can break down the proposition into atomic propositions in the same unambiguous manner as one breaks the fact into atomic facts.

But what if there is ambiguity (and in a positive sense, creativity) in the decomposition of the proposition, such that several atomic propositions in one instance of decomposition are lacking in another instance? This would then mean that the proposition could correspond to two realities as opposed to one. But how does one know that a proposition is a picture of this reality, and not that one? Shouldn't the picture be constructed on its own right from the proposition, as the possibility of different realities, before becoming the picture of one and the same reality? In other words, what if a proposition suggested not one picture, but several pictures of different realities? There is always the possibility that different users of language make different pictures of reality, which, unless there is a given reality, would imply the making of different realities from the same proposition.[20] Insofar as the decomposition of the proposition is not assumed to be an automatic, self-evident, immediate affair, one would have to accept the possibility of the proliferation of realities to which the proposition might correspond. Therefore, if the possibility of multiple realities exists in the translation from language to imagination, the picturing of language must take place on its own right without any consideration of questions of truth and reality. The implication is that a theory of language must be conceived independently from the question of whether a statement corresponds to a reality or not.

6. Picture Analogies

By forcing one and the same reality out of the proposition, however, Wittgenstein frames the translation from the language to the world as a very simple, immediate and automatic translation. To explain this second translation, Wittgenstein refers to several analogies:

Übereinstimmung und Nichtübereinstimmung mit den Wahrheitsmöglichkeiten der Elementarsätze drückt die Wahrheitsbedingungen des Satzes aus […]. Der Satz ist der Ausdruck seiner Wahrheit)».

[20] My use of the word 'user' is intentional since I implicitly argue that the theory of language in the *Tractatus* cannot be understood with any reference to the use or the user of language. I am therefore sympathetic with Livingston's insightful 'pragmatic' reading of the theory of meaning in the *Tractatus*, which claims that 'the meaning of a sign [in the *Tractatus*] is its use in significant propositions' (41). (See P. Livingston, *'Meaning is Use' in the* Tractatus, «Philosophical Investigations», 27/1 (2004), pp. 34-67); I wonder however whether Wittgenstein's understanding of the 'logical form' of propositions and their semi-automatic correspondences with realities allow for any indeterminacy that must underlie any concrete instance of language use in the world.

«At the first glance the proposition – for instance, as it stands printed on the paper – does not seem to be a picture of the reality of which it treats. But nor does the musical score appear at first sight to be a picture of a musical piece; nor does our phonetic letters seem to be a picture of our spoken language. And yet these sign languages prove to be pictures – even in the ordinary sense of the word – of what they represent (§ 4.011)».[21]

The musical score and the phonetic letters, as analogues of the proposition, are pictures of what they represent 'even in the ordinary sense of the word,' despite the fact that they don't seem to be pictures at all at the first sight. Between the first sight and the second one, the musical score is already played, the letters spoken, the proposition made into a picture of the reality it 'represents'. Imagining or thinking or picturing the proposition, in this analogy, is merely a simple and straightforward activity of executing an order, of following a rule, of being able to understand a code. There is nothing more to 'imagining a proposition' than the immediate gesture of voiding itself, in order to make room for 'whatever it represents' to immediately fill in.

Between the sign and its execution, between language and the world, Wittgenstein does not allow for imprecision, variance, vagueness, hesitation or flight of imagination. A whirlpool of translations may indeed take place between language and the world that it represents, but nothing is lost in so many translations. The perfection of the translation from the proposition to reality is guaranteed by universal rules. There may be so many translations: a musician may perform a piece of music from a score, the gramophone record may play the same music off of the etchings on a record, the musician may then write down the score based on the music he hears on the gramophone. What is important is that there is always one score and one instance of music corresponding to it (§ 4.0141). In other words, the linguistic signs (the score) are analogue representations or pictures of the world (the music). If language and the world are in need of the medium of imagination (or the picture), this is only because this is a technically competent imagination that understands the infallible *logic* of representation, or the code of picturing, capable of converting the language into the world and visa versa:

«The gramophone record, the musical thought, the score, the waves of sound, all stand to one another in that pictorial internal relation, which holds between language and the world. To all of them the logical structure is common. (Like the two

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[21] «Auf der ersten Blick scheint der Satz-wie er etwa auf dem Papier gedruckt steht-kein Bild der Wirklichkeit zu sein, von der er handelt. Aber auch die Notenschrift scheint auf den ersten Blick kein Bild der Musik zu sein, und unsere Lautzeichen- (Buchstaben-) Schrift kein Bild unserer Lautsprache…Und doch erweisen sich diese Zeichensprachen auch im gewöhnlichen Sinne als Bilder dessen, was sie darstellen» (§ 4.011).

youths, their two horses and their lilies in the story. They are all in a certain sense one). (§ 4.014)».[22]

The proposition/picture and 'whatever it represents' is one and the same. Such oneness can only happen if all ambiguity is removed from the understanding of the proposition and if the proposition, and hence language, serves no other purpose than corresponding (or not corresponding) to a reality of the world. Wittgenstein's delineation of perfect translations might be the logical outcome of his understanding of the proposition as the picture of reality. In the first translation, the facts of the world are structured as realities, in a somewhat automatic decomposition into atomic facts. In this sense, realities constitute an already translated world. What could have been an imaginative act – the decomposition of the facts of the world into the atomic facts of reality – has already taken place, by way of which any ambiguity of the fact is removed. But insofar as the proposition, as a picture of reality, is to be compared with the reality, it cannot be ambiguous. It is unnecessary to conjure up a fact, or an event, or a situation, in view of which a proposition might have been written or uttered. The one fact, and hence the one world, is given immediately and unambiguously in reality, and hence in the proposition. Therefore, the translation between the world and language is a routine, automatic affair: it concerns the translation between two unambiguous, nearly identical structures, the difference of which is to be determined with a 'yes' or 'no.' The use of language is logical to the extent that the linguistic artifact, or sentences, can be tested against 'actual' reality, which must be somewhat self-evident. Consequently, the role of the thought/ picture, which, in the first translation, mediates between the world and language is rendered useless.[23]

[22] «Die Grammaphonplatte, der musikalische Gedanke, die Notenschrift, die Schallwellen, stehen alle in jener abbildenden internen Beziehung zu einander, die zwischen Sprache und Welt besteht Ihnen allen ist der logische Bau gemeinsam. (Wie in Märchen die zwei Jünglinge, ihre zwei Pferde und ihre Lilien. Sie sind alle in gewissen Sinne Eins)» (§ 4.014).

[23] The near-omission of thought/ picture in the second translation might have led to the impression that the correspondences between language and the world in *Tractatus* have a purely logical structure that is beyond the ambiguity of the psychological realm. Miller briefly remarks the reluctance of some analytical philosophers to deal with the psychological, which also means, the pictorial aspect of thoughts: 'many readers of the *Tractatus* have a working assumption, often held without reflection, that sentences and names, not thoughts and thought-elements, are Wittgenstein's basic units of analysis.'(65) Among such readers, he mentions Russell, who 'was drawn, like subsequent commentators, to supposing [thoughts] could be analyzed away in favor of sentences and names.' (67) See R.W. MILLER, *Solipsism in the Tractatus*, «Journal of the History of Philosophy», 18/1 (1980), pp. 57-74.

7. Picturing the Cat on the Mat

It turns out that the picture has a short life span, given the short distance between the world and language that are readily translatable into each other. With such emphasis on the 'truth' of the proposition, not only the picture, as the projection of language onto the imagination, but also language itself is rendered useless: one approaches language only to the extent that one intends to determine the 'truth' of the proposition, to respond to it with a simple 'yes' or 'no.' In summarizing and exemplifying the argument of the *Tractatus*, Kripke notes:

«The simplest, most basic idea of the <u>Tractatus</u> can hardly be dismissed: a declarative sentence gets its meaning by virtue of its truth conditions, by virtue of its correspondence to facts that must obtain if it is true. For example, 'the cat is on the mat' is understood by those speakers who realize that it is true if and only if a certain cat is on a certain mat; it is false otherwise. The presence of the cat on the mat is a fact or condition-in-the-world that would make the sentence true (express a truth) if it obtained […]. So stated, the *Tractatus* picture of meaning of declarative sentences may seem not only natural but even tautological».[24]

Like Russell's example in the preface 'Socrates was a wise Athenian,' Kripke's example is a straightforward one: 'the cat is on the mat.' Interestingly, however, Kripke does not explain the tautological aspect of his own example. In Kripke's words, the declarative sentence, or the proposition, 'gets its meaning' or 'understood… by virtue of its correspondence to facts that must obtain if it is true.' The proposition corresponds to the possibility of a 'fact,' which is equivalent to saying that the proposition corresponds to a thought, or a picture. But this is a relation that must always occur: it means that one makes a picture out of the proposition, or more exactly, out of the propositional signs that make up the proposition. Following Kripke's example, the 'virtue' to understand the proposition would then become the ability to imagine it, which would then imply that understanding a proposition does not need any measure of 'truth;' it only needs imagination. No correspondence to any fact would be required for one to understand the statement 'the cat is flying on the mat': the correspondence or the reference to an imaginary picture would suffice, as it does in the reading of fantastic literature. It is only after the making of the picture, that the question of the 'truth' may at all be relevant. The relevance of this question cannot be taken for granted, and would probably be a conditional affair. The search for the 'truth' would probably have to respond to an interest: one cannot immediately see the cat, and wants to know

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[24] See S.A. Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachussetts 1982, p. 73.

where it is, and someone else remarks that it is on the mat. Even then, the correspondence of the picture (the proposition) to a fact cannot be a simple affirmation or denial. One must be reminded that in the *Tractatus*, the picture-proposition is compared with reality, which is not just a fact, but a structured fact. But if reality is not taken to be automatically given, then some structuring, or some work of imagination must take place in between the fact and its reality. The fact must be structured in view of a perspective, in view of what one is searching for, resulting in a relevant declaration by an interested participant, and possibly participants, or, as Kripke notes, 'speakers.' But this means that some intelligence, if not imagination, must be involved in the drawing of a reality from the fact, even in the dullest act of stating that 'a cat is on the mat,' even when the cat is right there, on the mat, insofar as one brings out this reality, and not that other one ('the cat is asleep') in view of a question of 'truth' that has become relevant. The imagination involved in locating the cat would be much more conspicuous, for instance, if the cat is hidden or missing, like in a detective novel, or if it is a phantom, like Carroll's Cheshire cat, necessitating the drawing of reality from fleeting, elusive, difficult facts. The detour through the imagination, and through the picture, would then complicate the idea of immediate correspondence, which is supposed to enable unproblematic translations between language and the world.

In fact, the inherently imprecise nature of translation in some of the analogies that Wittgenstein uses to illustrate the relation between language and the world, complicates, and even negates, the ideas of perfect translation, correspondence and oneness. There is not, for instance, *one* correct execution of the same musical score, but numerous correct ones that may vary from each other considerably. In other words, several different pictures correspond to the same linguistic statement, before becoming the picture of 'what the proposition represents.' Certain correct performances of a musical score could in fact be thought to correspond to the score better than the others and hence, to be 'more correct.' But the correctness of a performance is not immediately given; rather it is decided upon by the preferences of the users of the performances (by, for instance, the audience, the musicians themselves, or a group of professional critics.) There is, therefore, not *one* immediate reference, or one ideal performance that corresponds to the score. There are in fact multiple, divergent performance*s* that are perfectly applicable or attributable to the same score, before they may be labeled as 'ideal,' or 'correct.' It turns out that the acknowledgement of the existence of multiple performances (pictures), as well as the conventions that rise out of a particular setting, will be needed in determining the standards for 'correctness' even in a seemingly mechanical, rule-based procedure such as the performance of a musical score. In other words, the notions of oneness, correspondence, sameness, correctness, etc. are not immediate, and if they

are relevant *at all*, they are mediated by the particular attributes of the representing medium and by its users.

Considering the problems with the musical score analogy, it is another analogy, the gramophone, which seems to better suit Wittgenstein's demand for exact correspondences between the sign and the world. Here, the imagination simply acts like the needle, unfolding the picture-sounds–assuming, of course, that the gramophone never breaks down or gets stuck, the record is never scratched, the equipment is always well taken care of, etc. This analogy demands an utmost automatism from the imagination: it will become a sort of picturing-machine that translates language into the world without any imprecision, any delay, any misrepresentation, any hesitation.

Another important analogy, while depicting the translation of the language into the world, also reveals the deeply ingrained visual thinking in Wittgenstein's discussions: the *hieroglyph*. «In order to understand the essence of a proposition,» Wittgenstein claims, «we should think of the hieroglyphic script, which depicts the facts that it describes» (§ 4.016).[25] We should, in other words, imagine the signs of the proposition as if they were figures that showed or depicted the facts of the world. The essence of language is depiction (*die Abbildung*), and not description (*die Beschreibung*). In another proposition, Wittgenstein claims that nothing is lost in the pictoriality of language when the alphabetic script replaced the older hieroglyphic one.[26] Wittgenstein's analogy of the hieroglyph is suggestive in the way it illustrates the implicit claim that imagination converts the written sign into pictures, or to be more literal, something analogous to actual visual pictures that are hung on the wall.[27] In another visual moment, language is enlivened and made of this

[25] «Um das Wesen des Satzes zu verstehen, denken wir an die Hieroglyphenschrift, welche die Tatsachen die sie beschreibt abbildet» (§ 4.016).

[26] «Und aus ihr wurde die Buchstabenschrift, ohne das Wesentliche der Abbildung zu verlieren» (§ 4.016) Translation: «And from [the hieroglyph] came the alphabet without the essence of the depiction being lost».

[27] The analogy of the hieroglyph introduces interesting ambiguities in terms of the one-to-one correspondences that Wittgenstein seeks between language, the picture and the world . Wittgenstein discussions started out as analytical reflections on the decomposition of the world and language; a result of such decomposition was to establish correspondences between the world and language: realities corresponded to propositions; names to objects. While Wittgenstein previously states that a picture corresponds to a reality, and not to an object, it is unclear whether the picture only corresponds to a proposition, and not to a name. Coming back to the hieroglyph analogy, it is therefore unclear whether a picture will be made to correspond to each name (word) or to the whole proposition. This is a problem that concerns the levels of picturing of works of language that Wittgenstein does not address.

Picture →Pictorial Elements (pictures?)
Proposition → Names

world by way of an imagining that is much like the drawing of a picture that comes to life (a living picture / *ein lebendes Bild*) or like the drawing of a *tableau vivant*:

«One name stands for one thing, another for another thing, and they are combined with one another. In this way, the whole–like a living picture [tableau vivant[28]] – presents a state of affairs (*Ein Name steht für ein Ding, ein anderer für ein anderes Ding und untereinander sind sie verbunden, so stellt das Ganze- wie ein lebendes Bild-den Sachverhalt vor*). (§4.0311)».

Here, we see Wittgenstein making a picture, a tableau vivant out of a proposition. In this significant moment in the *Tractatus* ontology, analytical thought comes closest to an aesthetic artifact; the phenomenal aspect of the picture analogy becomes most strongly felt. The analogy between the picture and the proposition is only implied in the transition from language to the world, in which the proposition figures as the picture of reality. The position of the picture is much more pronounced in the transition from the world to language, where it becomes the analogy of the mediating thought. But the picture is a curious analogy, occupying an indeterminate position between the fact and reality: we make pictures of facts (§ 2.1), but the picture is compared with reality, as a structured fact expressed in atomic facts (§ 2.223). To complicate matters even more, the picture, itself, is a fact: (*Das Bild ist eine Tatsache*). (§ 2.141) The difference between the fact and reality in this ontology is not explicit, and, in fact, one may as well claim that reality is a given attribute of the fact, and therefore the correspondence obtains between a fact and a picture, and not between a reality and a picture. Then, the fact would strictly become a structured fact, and not at all ambiguous or complex, which would further trivialize the *Tractatus* ontology. By insisting on the difference between facts and realit(ies), I have tried to locate the point in which some work of imagination must have taken place, enabling the passage from an unstructured fact of a complex world into a structured reality.

Does Wittgenstein decompose the picture in the same way he decomposes the world and language? Does one picture the names first, or the whole proposition? In his statements that follow the hieroglyph analogy, Wittgenstein implies that one first has to picture names as objects before picturing the whole proposition. It is therefore possible to picture the name in isolation, as a small name-picture, without necessarily seeing it within the context of other words, or within the context of the whole proposition. Here, one can find the beginnings of a conviction that gets played out in more detail in *Philosophical Investigations*: a name (word) corresponds to one picture, just like a name corresponds to one object.

[28] The very suggestive translation of 'lebendes Bild' as *tableau vivant* is given by translators, D.F. Pears and B.F. McGuinness in *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Routledge, London 2001.

8. The Aesthetic Side of the Picture

Can the picture then become the analogy of both an unstructured fact (*Tatsache*), and a structured fact (*Wirklichkeit*)? One would then conceptualize the picture as a living picture or as a visual tableau vivant: the picture, drawn by the thought, would be structured in a certain sense, and not structured in another sense, making itself available to other possible structuring acts. But this would lead to the admission of (degrees of) ambiguity and indeterminacy even in the most obvious fact, in the most ordinary proposition. However, the possibility of such an admission, which would also signal the admission of aesthetics in philosophical thought, must be immediately ruled out according to Bogen:

«The aesthetic side of Wittgenstein's assimilation of propositions to pictures is not nearly as attractive as its linguistic side. Pictures are not the kind of thing Wittgenstein held propositions to be, and the analogy between what a representational picture shows and the sense of a proposition goes lame if pressed…Even if propositions were facts, representational pictures like road maps and portraits are not. A representational picture can be moved from place to place; a fact cannot. A picture can be constructed and taken apart; a fact cannot. A picture can change; a fact cannot. 'Picture' belongs to an entirely different grammatical category from the gerundive and 'that…' phrases which express facts. [In] analyzing or criticizing a painting we may note, for example, what the obtaining of a certain relation between certain elements does to the picture and how the picture or its composition would be different if the fact were otherwise. But this is not to say that a picture consisting of certain painted figures arranged in a straight line from left to right *is* the fact that the painted figures stand in a straight line. Mundane, representational pictures are not facts; we state facts about them».[29]

One must not be thinking of representational pictures, i.e. roadmaps and portraits, because they most certainly are not tantamount to the unambiguous, well-structured, unchangeable facts that one is always secure about. Several confusions result from this immediate trust in the facts, which goes together with a quick, uncritical dismissal of the picture. Representational pictures are not facts, because they 'can be moved from place to place,' but 'we state facts about them', and since, such a statement cannot be a matter of constructing a fact – we are cautioned that a fact cannot be constructed – one must assume that the facts of the picture are already in the picture, which would mean that such facts would have to be moved around with the picture. That we 'state' facts does not turn our facts into constructs or into pictures, because our statement, or our proposition must be an immediate translation of the

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[29] J. Bogen, *Wittgenstein's Philosophy of Language*, Humanities Press, New York 1972, p. 18.

fact, which speaks of its own, with fitting gerundives and relative clauses: it is already a proposition. But a fact thus stated would be in the proposition and not independent from it. «Even if propositions were facts,» Bogen says, without completing his thought, and it is this ellipsis that hides the fact that whatever he says of the picture could have been said of the proposition: that it can be moved around, that it is constructed, that it can change – if his unclear reference to change implies the interpretive possibilities in the understanding of the proposition. But if 'we state [a] fact,' if the fact is a proposition, and if the proposition is a picture, then Bogen's understanding of the fact, founded on the dichotomy between stable, unambiguous facts and unstable, ambiguous pictures, can no longer be tenable: it folds onto the picture. For a better understanding of the fact and the picture, one would have to dispense with the prejudice that considers the 'aesthetic sides' of the picture-analogy to be 'lame,' 'unsuitable' and 'unsatisfactory,' i.e., unworthy of theoretical consideration, obliterated by self-spoken facts or truths.

9. Conclusion

In Wittgenstein's earlier work, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, the picture figures as an intermediary between the world and language, without which the world cannot be translated into language or language cannot reflect the world. But the conceptualization of the picture in the *Tractatus* creates the very philosophical tensions that result in his dismissal of the picture in his later work where he questions the immediate correspondences that he previously held to exist between language and the world, and shifts his focus to what language does, as opposed to what it is. But these problems can not warrant a complete repudiation of the picture; rather it points to the weaknesses of specific assumptions made in relation to the picture: the notion of correspondence, in general, and one-to-one correspondence, in particular. None of these weaknesses, in Wittgenstein's theory, can be assumed to arise from the assumption of the existence of the picture; in fact, the ontologically-independent positing of the world, with its concomitant facts and realities, outside the realm of the picture (or the mind or the imagination) constitutes a very significant problem in determining the correspondence between linguistic statements and reality. Wittgenstein's own dismissal of the picture in his later work, therefore, should not constitute a final verdict, nor should it lead to philosophical inattention concerning the picture. Perhaps, what is objectionable in the *Tractatus* is not that the picture is given a central role in a theory of language, but that it is not conceived thoroughly enough.

ABSTRACT: *This paper explores the ambiguities in Wittgenstein's* Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus *that result from the conceptualization of the picture as a middle term in between the translations between language and the world. The picture is an odd inclusion that can-*

not help suggesting the work of the cognitive mind, odd because the analytic tendency in the Tractatus *is to foreground the logical structure of the correspondences between language and the world that should not necessitate the mediation of the picturing mind. In my close reading of the statements in the* Tractatus *that refer to the picture, I show how 'the picture theory of language' cannot produce a plausible account of the truth or reality mainly because the concept of the picture in the* Tractatus *is not developed adequately and therefore cannot explain how linguistic propositions can ever correspond to any reality. In following Wittgenstein's thinking on the Tractatus picture, I show that this inability results from the theory itself since it does not allow the picture and hence the picturing mind to deal with any sense of ambiguity and to exist in a sufficiently independent way from the facts of language and the world.*