Wittgenstein's Enchanting Analogy: Or, Navigating the *Tractatus* Wars by Looking Again at Pictures

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> The means whereby to identify dead forms is Mathematical Law. The means whereby to understand living forms is Analogy.
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> —Spengler, *The Decline of the West*, p. 4.

> The mistake lies not in believing something false, but in looking in the direction of a misleading analogy.
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> —Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Grammar*, p. 311.

§ 1. Introduction

NO *TRACTATUS* READER COULD FAIL TO NOTICE the apparent centrality of the connection between *Satz* ("sentence" or "proposition") and *Bild* ("picture" or "image") that Wittgenstein seemingly endorses in the text[1]. However, over the last century readers have differed as to how exactly to understand the nature of this connection. Specifically, there is no widespread agreement as to whether it should be understood as a central *theory* about the nature of *Sätze* (whether logical, metaphysical, aesthetic, or otherwise), a passing *metaphor*, an *ironic gesture*, or something more tenuous and incidental. In recent years, this debate has somewhat receded into the background as scholars have focused instead on the overarching issue of how to read anything in the text in light of remarks —in particular, §6.54[2]— in which Wittgenstein appears to condemn the whole text to the status of "nonsense." This has led to the emergence of a stand–off between, broadly, those who

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[1] In this essay, I will mostly employ the original German for these key terms given that, in both cases, they have an equivocity that the English translations sometimes lack.

[2] Unless otherwise indicated, remark number will refer to the *Tractatus* (Wittgenstein 2001).

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nevertheless try to extract doctrines from the *Tractatus* in spite of the nonsense claim (sometimes called "ineffabilists") and those who argue that the key lesson Wittgenstein was trying to teach us is that no such doctrines can be meaningfully articulated and hence we should abandon them (sometimes called "resolute readers"). Viewed through the lens of this debate, articulating a position on the *Satz–Bild* connection comes to involve siding with one camp over the other: either Wittgenstein meant us to understand the connection seriously and substantively as a doctrine or instead we are supposed to come to see it, along with everything else in the text, as pure nonsense.

In this paper, I reassess the *Satz–Bild* connection. Instead of defending it as a doctrine or theory, I develop a reading of it as an enchanting, though ultimately perspective–narrowing, analogy. I seek to go as far possible with the idea that the *Tractatus* is a work of analogy rather than a work of theory or a work of irony. I set the stage for this by reviewing what has been called the "natural first reading" of the *Tractatus* as revolving on a "picture theory" (§2). Then, I turn to elicit exegetical evidence for my reading in §3. Various scholars have framed the *Satz–Bild* connection precisely as an analogy (see esp. Ishiguro 2001; McManus 2010). However, these scholars haven't paused to clarify the nature of analogies, as contrasted with arguments, theses, metaphors, and similes —which is what I do in §3. The point of analogies, I argue, is to highlight or reveal likenesses between disparate things so as to elucidate an abstruse, unclear, or difficult phenomenon by comparison with something supposedly more readily understandable. Importantly, analogies can't be straightforwardly true or false but instead derive their valence from what they bring into view, how they guide what we see —or, rather, prime our sensitivity (§3.1). Moreover, analogies have "morals" rather than strict entailments. In §3.2, I argue that Wittgenstein's central analogy elucidates 3 main "morals" —one semantic, one syntactical, one pragmatic— each of which helps us to avoid particular problems or paradoxes. In §§4–7, I turn to show how this reading of what Wittgenstein is doing in the *Tractatus* can help us to avoid some pitfalls that have been encountered by so–called ineffabilists and resolute readers. Having introduced the problem posed by remark 6.54 in §4, in §§5–6 I aim to show how these readings —at least in their classical formulations— function as successful *reductios* of one another. The way forward, I argue, is to recognize an alternative: the analogy, as the core of the *Tractatus*, is not argumentatively innocuous but neither is it substantive nonsense "whistled" to reveal important truths about logic. Rather, like all good analogies, it reveals only by also

obscuring. Finally, in §8, I briefly explore how the conclusion *Tractatus*–Wittgenstein appears to endorse in the light of this (namely, walking away from philosophy) transformed in the 1930s with his development of new, liberatory analogies from which perspective the *Tractatus'* central analogy came to be seen as restrictive.

§ 2. The "Natural First Reading"

Prima facie, Wittgenstein was unequivocal about the centrality of the *Satz–Bild* connection, writing as early as 1914 that "Logic is interested only in reality. And thus in sentences [*Sätze*] only insofar as they are *pictures* [*Bilder*] of reality" (1961, p. 9e; see also pp. 23e, 41e). Biographically, we are told that Wittgenstein took this to be "an important breakthrough" (Monk 1991, p. 118). In the *Notebooks*, we can trace the genesis of the connection back to a series of fabulous figurative comparisons: "Analogy between proposition and description: The complex which is congruent with this sign. (Exactly as in representation in a map)" (1961, p. 23e). Wittgenstein's thought is that as a map represents a terrain by descriptively picturing that terrain, a *Satz* analogically does so to a state of affairs. Several other related examples struck Wittgenstein as apposite at this time, including, famously, how dolls and toy cars can be used in a court of law to model a real–world car accident (1961, p. 7e; 4.031)[3], and how a sketch portraying fencers ostensibly mid–joust can represent a fight (1961, p. 7e). Of the latter, Wittgenstein seems explicit and non–ironic: "It must be possible to demonstrate everything essential by considering this case" (ibid.). Indeed, as we'll see throughout, the *Tractatus* appears to take this thought as essential: "The *Satz* is a picture of reality. The *Satz* is a model of the reality as we think it is," he writes (4.01; set up by 2.1–3). Our key question, of course, is exactly how to make sense of this connection and the the work that articulates it.

The idea that the *Tractatus* contains a "picture theory" has long had currency. G.E.M. Anscombe (1959) provided one of the earliest and arguably one of the most elegant articulations of this view. "It is clear enough," Anscombe writes,

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[3] Von Wright recalls that Wittgenstein later traced the genesis of his "picture theory" to a magazine article he had read in 1914 about the use of such a model in a law–court in Paris (1982, 20).

that the principal theme of the book is the connection between language, or thought, and reality. The main thesis about this is that sentences, or their mental counterparts, are pictures of facts. Only we must not suppose that what is pictured by a proposition has to exist: … a fact is what corresponds to a proposition *if* it is true. The proposition is the same picture whether it is true or false (2001, p. 19).

Anscombe sets out to critically distinguish this central "thesis" by bringing out its logical, as opposed to empirical, status: it aims to capture how truth functions might possibly work, i.e., how it is that a proposition could be bivalently true or false (see 2001, chap. 4). In a recent commentary, Cora Diamond helpfully explains Anscombe's organizing thought thus:

An ordinary picture can be used to say that things are as the picture shows them to be, or that they are *not* as the picture shows them to be; both possibilities belong to such pictures. Wittgenstein's great insight in the picture theory is, then, an insight into the logical character of pictures, and is expressed in his "fundamental idea" that the logical constants don't represent anything. The difference between a proposition and its negation does not lie in anything represented by any sign…the difference is exactly in the "reversal" of what the picture is used to say, not in anything represented through an element in the picture (2019, p. 47).

This central thought is sometimes articulated as the "context principle": Names only have meaning (*Bedeutung*) within the context of a proposition (3.3). This, Anscombe argues, is "the central point of the picture theory" (2001, p. 93) — which she frames a direct inheritance from Frege (pp. 98 f.; see also Diamond 2019, p. 17). Wittgenstein's picture theory supposedly sets out to explain how names obtain reference in the context of propositions that correspond to facts or states of affairs only in virtue of their shared logical form: "Logical form is that through which a structure can have T[rue] and F[alse] poles, and for something to be true or false is the very same thing as for reality to be thus or otherwise, Wittgenstein calls 'logical form' also 'the form of reality'" (Anscombe 2001, p. 75). The shared logical form of proposition and fact is posited to obtain by the very coherence of truth–conditions for propositions (i.e., it is transcendental) (see ibid., pp. 154, 166). Thus, Anscombe proposes that, for Wittgenstein, this shared logical form is not only what secures truth–functionality but in the process secures the sense of the proposition as something that "says" such–and–such true or false about the world. Pictures purport that such–and–such is the case *and* how it is the case.

So, for Anscombe, the picture theory has an elegant parsimony as both a theory of truth and a theory of (propositional) meaning. She enthuses about this theory as follows:

> So far as I can see, these are the real grounds for being struck even to the point of conviction by this account. It adds to its persuasiveness that it was capable of being further, and beautifully, thought out, and that it seemed to offer a solution to many problems, and finally even give a "way of seeing the world rightly" (2001, pp. 71–72).

Nevertheless, Anscombe emphasizes, it is extremely restrictive —purporting to exclude as (literally) "nonsensical" not only the propositions of logic, but also of mathematics, probability statements, propositions stating laws of nature, and propositions about God and the meaning of life, among others (2001, chap. 5). Wittgenstein's big task, she argues, was to show how rather than disconfirming the picture theory such cases in fact provide only "extra confirmation" of it by gelling with Wittgenstein's views about the non–fact–descriptive nature of these purportedly excluded propositions (2001, p. 80). And yet Anscombe remains unconvinced. Her primary reason, she explains, is that there are sentences that appear to necessarily express truths that nevertheless are not tautologies or logical propositions that Wittgenstein can dismiss as senseless. Anscombe provides the following example: "'Someone' is not the name of someone" (ibid., pp. 85–86). By this, she doesn't mean to assert that nobody in the world has been given the name "Someone" but rather that when we talk in logic about someone, X, we don't mean a *specific* someone; "Someone" is not a name, in the sense that Wittgenstein uses the concept. This, she claims, expresses something true —or at least an important "insight" (ibid., p. 85). Yet its negation "peters into nothingness": It is not a *contradiction* to insist that "Someone" *is* the name of someone; rather, it is "confusion and muddle" (ibid.). "We may infer from this," Anscombe concludes, "that Wittgenstein's account of propositions is inadequate, correct only within a restricted area" (ibid.). (In passing, Anscombe also mentions that Wittgenstein's picture theory "would be death to natural theology" [ibid., p. 78] —which was another big reason for her to reject it, though I won't explore that here).

Anscombe's framing of the "picture theory" as unavoidably central to the *Tractatus* (both its accomplishments *and* its problems) strikes me as, in a significant sense, right. Everything successful and contentious in the *Tractatus* seems to me to stem from the account of the *Satz–Bild* connection. Moreover, I

share with Anscombe the sense of a *near*–conviction in this account. But what I am especially interested in here is her framing of the *Bild–Satz* relation as a "theory" or "thesis." For this is how many *Tractatus* scholars came to understand the text —either as propounding such a thesis (see §5) or, conversely, as rejecting it (see §6). Even after noticing on several occasions that the relation seems, for Wittgenstein, more figurative than literal and more stipulative than empirical or "evidence–based", and even after explicitly using the term "analogous" to highlight aspects of the relation (see esp. 2001, p. 71; also p. 76), Anscombe takes it that we are dealing with a "picture theory." Let me now begin to make my case for why we should read the connection as an analogy rather than a theory.

§ 3. Reappraising Wittgenstein's Picture Analogy

Already, two things should be striking about Wittgenstein's earliest articulations of the *Satz–Bild* connection: first, the broadness of what he appears to mean by a *Bild*. A *Bild*, for Wittgenstein, as we'll see, includes not just visual pictures (like the fencers) but everything from maps and models through to musical scores, stories, and plays. Second, Wittgenstein connects "demonstrating" or "showing" the nature of the *Satz* through the comparison itself. Consider his first articulation of the connection in the *Tractatus*—"The *Satz* is a picture [*Bild*] of reality" (4.01). Rather than backing this up with argument or outlining necessary and sufficient conditions, he instead immediately concedes that "At first glance the *Satz* —say as it stands printed on paper— does not seem to be a picture of the reality of which it treats" (4.011). Then he proceeds to simply give examples: for example, how a musical score is *like* a *Bild* of a piece of music or how letters making up a printed sentence are *like* a *Bild* of spoken words (4.011), or how a gramophone record is *like* a *Bild* of the music or how, in the Brothers Grimm fairytale "The Gold Children," the two youths are *like* a *Bild* of the story's horses and lilies (4.014). In an arresting remark that is rarely commented on, Wittgenstein claims that what he is trying to show is most obvious in the case of hieroglyphs, the earliest recorded script:

> In order to understand the essential nature of a *Satz*, we should consider hieroglyphic script, which depicts the facts that it describes.
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> And alphabetic script developed out of it without losing what was essential to depiction (4.016).

Wittgenstein seems to take it that these examples speak for themselves. Instead of expounding a thesis, he talks about how the examples "strike us" (4.012), about what "we see" (4.013) or "can see" through thinking about them, about what comes into view through considering them—without an explanation being necessary (see 4.02). Moreover, the emphasis is on the "likeness" or "similarity" between *Satz* and *Bild* (4.012–4.014, 4.0141). "The whole [*Satz*]," he exclaims, "like a living picture [*tableau vivant*], presents the atomic fact" (4.0311; see also 4.463). The idea is that by *looking* at such *Bilder* we come to see likenesses with *Sätze*.

It is not clear why we should or must think that this constitutes a theory of the meaning of the *Satz* any more than we should think Wittgenstein is propounding a theory of *Bilder*. Rejecting this view is not, however, tantamount to claiming that it is argumentatively innocuous or —worse— literally meaningless. To see as much, we have to think about what analogies are and how they work. For, that Wittgenstein was developing a picture *analogy* rather than a picture *theory* has been recognized by some scholars (see esp. Ishiguro 2001 and McManus 2010)[4]. McManus is perhaps the most forceful in his rejection of the idea that the *Tractatus* contains a "picture theory," arguing instead we should read it as an analogy. Having cast doubt on the idea that any such theory would, after all, help to explain how language represents the world, not least given that it's not immediately clear exactly how pictorial representation works in the first place, McManus writes:

> Ascribing a "picture theory" of representation to the *Tractatus* is, I believe, a mistake anyway. My view is that Wittgenstein uses the analogy between pictures and propositions not as part of an explanation of how meaning or thought is possible, but rather in questioning whether we have assigned sense to that very "possibility," whether we really

[4] Some scholars, meanwhile, have used the terms "picture analogy" and "picture theory" more or less interchangeably (see, for example, Soames 2005, esp. pp. 215–216; Süner 2016, esp. p. 136; and Schroeder esp. 2006, p. 139). That Wittgenstein thought of the *Satz–Bild* connection as an analogy rather than a theory or as some other kind of literary device is most clearly seen in remarks he wrote looking back at the *Tractatus* (see §8). But there are remarks in the *Notebooks* that also substantiate this reading. Perhaps the clearest articulation is given in the second appendix ("Notes Dictated to G.E. Moore In Norway, April 1914"): "In giving the general form of a proposition you are explaining what kind of ways of putting together the symbols of things and relations will correspond to (*be analogous to*) the things having those relations in reality" (1961, p. 107; see also pp. 23, 38).

understand what it is that we think needs to be "accounted for" here, the supposed philosophical problem that needs to be "solved" (2010, p. 65).

I agree with McManus on this fundamental point. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that, as far as I can see, none of the Wittgenstein scholars who have attributed to the *Tractatus* a "picture analogy" have provided a full interrogation of what an analogy actually *is* and thus ultimately why it matters that Wittgenstein used an analogy rather than another device. McManus provides a compelling account of why it matters that it is a picture analogy rather than a picture theory (2010, chap. 5), but he doesn't bring into view what is distinctive about an analogy as compared with other figurative devices. So, at the risk of sounding jejune, allow me to start by bringing into view what I take to be the distinctive aspects of analogies.

3.1. Features of an analogy

First, and most basically, an analogy highlights structured likenesses between disparate things. Analogies are distinct from both metaphors, which involve figurative transferals of a quality that belongs to one thing to the disparate thing, and similes, which simply highlight a likeness —both of which trade in a comparison primarily for the purpose of evocation. Analogy —from the Greek *ana–logos*, meaning "from, throughout" (*ana*) "according to proportion or ratio" (a specialized use of *logos*)—aims to reveal systemic or structured likenesses between two or more phenomena. By systemic or structured likenesses I mean non–incidental likenesses: for example, that the sweater I am wearing is red is not a sufficient basis on which to draw an analogy between it and the red car parked outside my window. As per the etymology, the likeness has to, in some sense, non–incidentally pervade the *analogons* in a proportional way. These likenesses will ultimately break down, of course, given that an analogy compares disparate things. The picture analogy, I will argue (in §3.2), tries to bring into view three structures of likeness between picture and *Satz*. In any case, it strikes me as crucial that the *Satz–Bild* connection ought not be understood as a metaphor, as some *Tractatus* scholars have suggested (see Harré and Tissaw 2018; Binkley 1973, pp. 32–33). If Wittgenstein were employing a picture *metaphor*, this would mean that we are to understand that the quality of representation that (some) pictures have is being figuratively transferred to *Sätze*. Whereas what Wittgenstein is trying to do is highlight or

reveal structured likenesses between both *qua* representations.

Second, the principal aim of analogies is to *elucidate* a poorly understood, abstruse, equivocal, or contentious phenomenon (e.g., "life") ideally in the light of a better understood, less complicated, or less contentious phenomenon (e.g., "a box of chocolates"). As such, to understand an analogy you have to grasp the point or lesson of the comparison. Using the example from *Forest Gump*: to understand why or in what sense the comparison between life and a box of chocolates matters, something more is needed: namely, the clarification that "you never know what you're going to get," which is to be understood as excitingly unpredictable rather than dread–inducing, and not, for example, that too much of either will make you sick. The *morals* of an analogy have to be made clear, whether explicitly or tacitly, unlike with metaphors (e.g., "Juliet is the sun") which can remain productively equivocal, and similes which typically wear their point on their sleeves ("He is as busy as a bee"). If Einstein had said only that "wire telegraph is like a very, very long cat" and left it at that (a mysterious simile), one would likely have no idea what he was talking about. But he immediately clarified: "You pull his tail in New York and his head meows in Los Angeles"—*voila!,* an analogy. This point or moral distinguishes analogies from theories, whose valence consists primarily in their truth or extensional adequacy. Rather than tell us that *Sätze are* (literally) pictures, or that pictures are symbolic of *Sätze*, that the two share some properties, or that a property from one can be figuratively transferred to another, Wittgenstein is proposing that certain lessons emerge from thinking of *Sätze* through an analogy with *Bilder*.

Third, and last, analogies are formally distinct from arguments and proofs. There are, of course, "false analogies": e.g., "Procrastinating on doing your taxes is stupid. It's like waiting until the last minute to get cancer treatment." But false analogies are not like a logical slip ("If P then Q; Q; therefore P"), an empirically groundless claim ("Trump won the 2020 election"), or a specious argument ("The only way to stop the epidemic of gun violence is for everyone to have guns"). A false analogy is an informal fallacy: it is not false *qua* procedure; rather, it is adjudged false when the analogons, despite sharing some similarities, are shown to be disparate in some vital way that undermines the force of the comparison (e.g., waiting on your taxes is not likely to result in the need for extremely painful medical treatment and typically doesn't come

with a risk of death)[5]. But showing that such disparities exist and undermine the analogy is complex: it is not the sort of thing one can accomplish through eliciting empirical evidence or providing logical proofs; it will, rather, depend on rhetorical skills and practical judgment (to speak very generally). And showing that an analogy is false may well not be enough to loosen the grip it has on one's imagination, in any case.

Moreover, analogies derive their valence and power not primarily in virtue of what they *exclude* but in virtue of what they *bring into view*: that life is like a box of chocolates doesn't rule out that life could also be like climbing a mountain or playing a boardgame; and that a proposition is like a picture is not to say that it cannot also be like a hammer or a move in a game of chess. Given that all analogies ultimately break down, revealing any old dissimilarity between analogons is not enough to undermine the power of an analogy. Analogies can be better or worse at elucidating a prereflectively understood phenomenon (i.e., insightful or empty, compelling or naïve, original or hackneyed, etc.), and they can be opaque or unproductive ("Love is like a fence: It is built with different pieces"), but they can't be straightforwardly wrong. The picture analogy, it seems to me, is not like a thesis that can be disproven, an empirical claim that can be falsified, or exactly an argument whose steps one can contest. Wittgenstein's picture analogy is a moving image that either takes hold of one's imagination enabling one to see —or, rather, be sensitive to— certain things about *Sätze* or it doesn't. We can certainly contest it —by showing that there are vital dissimilarities between *Sätze* and *Bilder*. But the best way to defeat an analogy (to loosen its grip) might well be to propose an alternative.

Now, you might ask: What is the payoff of thinking of the *Satz–Bild* comparison as an analogy, rather than a metaphor, simile, or thesis? Why does any of this matter?

Even when scholars recognize that we are dealing with a picture *analogy*,

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[5] An anonymous reviewer pointed out that an analogy might be false because it rests on false equivalences. This seems true enough. Here is an example of what I take to be a false equivalence: "Water is like beer: they are both liquids that you drink, too much of both can kill you, and college students consume lots of both." False equivalences, I take it, become problematic only insofar as they are taken to provide support for some sort of conclusion: in this case, it would become problematic if the conclusion were something like, "So, if my two–year–old is allowed to drink water, he should be allowed to drink beer." By itself, a false equivalence is like an analogy that doesn't *do* anything, doesn't reveal anything. But then the question is how do we show that? And how are we persuaded of that?

they frequently elide or collapse its significance into one essential, theoretical point, the logical merits of which must then be debated. However, I will now argue that the analogy proffers 3 logically distinct morals, each of which help us to avoid paradoxes or dilemmas. These morals derive from a way of *looking* at *Sätze* not from any kind of refutable or confirmable theory about their connection to reality.

§ 3.2. The Analogy's Morals

First, the analogy drives at what we might call a contextualist moral. A *Satz*, Wittgenstein wants us to see, is like a *Bild* insofar as both (can) provide a context for logical simples (objects and expressions or symbols, respectively) so as to re–present some state of affairs. The thought is that just as we don't need to try to make sense of a simple object independently of its —possible— connections in a given context with other objects (2.0121) we don't need to try to make sense of a simple expression (a meaningful sign) independently of its possible combinations with other expressions in the form of a *Satz* (3.3–3.314). Insofar as a *Satz* is like a living picture and not like an object or state of affairs, then, Wittgenstein's point is that we can and should abandon efforts at explaining the meaning of logical simples or constants (a, R, b, etc.) and *then*, on that basis, explain how we build *Sätze* out of them; instead, we can and should *start* with "complete" *Sätze* and *Bilder*. Wittgenstein expresses the contextualist moral like this: "My fundamental thought is that the 'logical constants' do not represent" (4.0312). The picture analogy invites us to see that we don't *need* to search for the *Bedeutung* of logical constants just as we don't need to search for the referents of depicted objects outside of the context of a whole *Bild*; we can understand them as having meaning in the first place already within the context of a *Satz qua Bild*.

Rather than issue an argumentative claim that he supports by considering counterarguments, it is as if Wittgenstein is telling us that it would be prudent to avoid thinking of logical constants as having referents independent of contexts. The reason it would be prudent, I take it, is because it helps us to avoid what we might call the "hermeneutic paradox"[6]. The paradox runs like this: In

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[6] To be clear, Wittgenstein didn't use this term. I am using it (with an oblique reference to Gadamer) because it's a paradox that seems to apply to all interpretation: in order to understand some whole (e.g., a sentence or a book), one needs to understand the parts that make it up (e.g., the words of a sentence or the sentences of a book); but without the context provided by the whole, the parts cease to mean anything determinate.

order to understand the meaning of a *Satz* ("here is a red rose") we have to understand the meaning of the signs that compose it ("here," "red," etc.); and yet those signs seem to only have meaning within the context of a *Satz*. So, which comes first —the meaning of the sign or the meaning of the *Satz*? We somehow need the one to get to the other, and yet also *vice versa*. Wittgenstein explains the situation like this: "The meanings of primitive signs can be explained by elucidations. Elucidations are *Sätze* which contain the primitive signs. They can, therefore, only be understood when the meanings of these signs are already known" (3.263). In other words: to understand the meanings of primitive signs, one needs elucidations; but to understand elucidations one needs to understand the meaning of the primitive signs. With the *Satz–Bild* analogy, however, Wittgenstein invites us to sidestep the morass. Insofar as we see *Sätze* as *Bilder*, he suggests that there is neither need for, nor coherence in, attempts to stipulate the meaning of a picture's component parts ("expressions" or "objects") independently of the context of the picture/*Satz*; and hence no stymying paradox: "Only the *Satz* has sense; only in the context of a *Satz* has a name meaning" (3.3). This is presented as a stipulative or argumentative claim, but it strikes me that what Wittgenstein is actually suggesting is that a way of *looking* at the *Satz* makes the problem "disappear" (1961, pp. 32e, 74e; 4.1251, 5.535).

Second is a moral about *form* (grammar, syntax). A *Satz* depicts a state of affairs like a *Bild* does not simply by providing any old context for logical simples, i.e., not by "mixing" them together *regardless of order* (3.141), but insofar as it is constructed with a discernible, unambiguous, non–vague —in a word, logical— structure. Wittgenstein inherited from Russell the concern that "ordinary language conceals the structure of the *Satz*", insofar as relations get conflated with predicates, and predicates with names (1961,107e; see 4.0031), and insofar as the same sign ("bank") can symbolize different things (e.g., a financial institution, the earth beside a river) and different signs can symbolize the same thing ("Jane Doe" and "her"). This results in "the most fundamental confusions (of which the whole of philosophy is full)", Wittgenstein exclaims (3.324). "In order to avoid these errors, we must employ a symbolism which excludes them, one that obeys the rules of logical grammar —of logical syntax" (3.325). A logical syntax would enable us to avoid ambiguous cases like "Blue is blue" where, on one parsing, it is tautologous, and yet on another —where the first word is a proper name (for, e.g., Beyoncé's daughter) and the last word is an adjective (meaning sad)— it is bivalently true/false. A logical syntax would only have one symbol per sign and vice versa (3.323). Wittgenstein pre–empts

the introduction of his *Bild–Satz* analogy by telling us that *Bilder*, to be *Bilder*, must share a *form* with what they picture (2.15–2.16). More specifically, to portray anything *real*, a picture must have "the logical form —the form of reality" (2.18). Famously, he says that *Bilder* do not *depict* or *re–present* this form; instead, every picture (*qua* picture) *shows* this form (2.172). Analogically, *Sätze* "show the logical form of reality" without stating it (4.121–4.1212).

As with the contextualist moral, it is striking that this moral is not argued for. Rather, we are supposed to understand it by understanding what Wittgenstein is doing with the analogy. And, again, it is supposed to elucidate by helping us avoid logical quandary —specifically, what Wittgenstein refers to as "Russell's paradox" (3.333). Wittgenstein frames this as the attempt to state the rules of logic at the same time as telling us the meaning of logical signs: This, Wittgenstein suggests, will involve bootstrapping —using the latter as part of the former (3.33–3.34). By inviting us to think of *Sätze* as *Bilder*, Wittgenstein encourages us to bypass the quandary: The logical form of *Sätze/Bilder* can be seen to be *shown* by them; given that we cannot say (*qua* picture) what an illogical world would look like, we are released from the demand to somehow first state the rules of logic without the use of any logical signs; light can dawn gradually over the whole. Again, this moral emerges not from an argument or a series of logical stipulations that we *have* to accept on pain of logical contradiction; it emerges from a kind of looking.

Third, and last, the picture analogy drives at a moral about "use" or pragmatics. Put simply, the point is this: *We* (can) *use Bilder*, like *Sätze*, to *describe* states of affairs —to say either that some state of affairs is the case or is not the case, truly or falsely. Wittgenstein pre–empts the picture analogy by telling us that "we make pictures [*Bilder*] to ourselves" (2.1) —specifically, *Bilder* that can be "right or wrong, true or false" (2.21). Similarly, we compose *Sätze* that we can use to say things that are true or false. But it is hard to see how *Bilder* or *Sätze* might contain truth like a property; and it looks as if all possible *Bilder/Sätze* have the same logical form regardless of whether they're true or false. The most logically simple *Bild/Satz*, Wittgenstein suggests, would be one whose truth does not hinge on something else —another picture or *Satz*; indeed, for the truth of *Sätze/Bilder* to be possible in the first place (better put: for us to avoid nihilism or indeterminism about truth), Wittgenstein invites us to imagine elementary *Sätze/Bilder* that are determinately true/false independently of any other *Sätze/Bilder*. Crucially, however, even such *Sätze/Bilder* could not guarantee their own truth; *we* would have to *compare* them with putatively

depicted states of affairs in order to establish whether they're true (see 2.221–2.225; 4.442).

The third moral of the analogy is that we (can) *use Sätze* as we can pictures: to descriptively re–present states of affairs. In order to do so, we should come to see that they have a "sense" independent of their truth/falsity, which we can understand in terms of how we *project* them on to states of affairs (2.221, 4.022) in virtue of making determinations as to what signs or expressions we use to symbolize specific objects or properties. The sense of a *Bild* is analogous to the sense of a *Satz* insofar as understanding either, Wittgenstein invites us to see, involves grasping their truth–conditions, grasping what we would *use* them to say —*qua* describe— truly. What I am calling the "pragmatics" of the *Bild–Satz* analogy unfolds from the thought that "the picture can replace a description" (1961, p. 41e), i.e., that we can use pictures as stand–ins for descriptions[7]. Wittgenstein recognized that we can *use* both pictures and *Sätze qua* sentences to *do* other, non–descriptive things, though he makes the point somewhat obliquely by referring to the "enormously complicated" "tacit conventions" involved in colloquial language (1961, p. 70; 4.002) and telling us simply that "we have to attend to the use" (1961, p. 18e; see also 5.4732–5.4733). Nevertheless, both *Satz* and *Bild can* be used to "restrict reality to two alternatives: yes or no," and they can both do so insofar as we use them as *descriptions* of states of affairs (4.023; see also esp. 5.4711)[8].

This third moral is not a consequence of morals 1 or 2: It is perfectly coherent for *Sätze* and *Bilder* to provide a context for simples and a logical structure and yet to be *used* to do something other than describing reality truly/falsely or even for nothing at all. It is possible, moreover, to maintain an understanding of at least some *Sätze* as entities that do, in fact, contain their own truth independent of our use of them (otherwise put: to maintain that there are some *a priori* true *Sätze/Bilder* [cf. 2.225]). But like points 1–2, this third moral is not developed in the form of a thesis or argument: Seeing *Sätze* as analogous to descriptive *Bilder* that we make and use allows us to avoid a difficulty we might call the "use paradox"[9]. The paradox runs like this: In order

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[7] I am calling this a "pragmatic" rather than "descriptive" moral because it pertains to how we *use Sätze* and *Bilder* rather than what they do independently of us.

[8] In this sense, the analogy is specifically between pictures and *propositions*, rather than sentences: propositions are entities with truth–conditions, formulated as descriptive statements.

[9] To be clear, Wittgenstein doesn't use this term. I am extrapolating here in order to show how the analogy

to use a *Satz* meaningfully, it must consist of symbols that have established uses (the reason "that is a rcragc" is nonsensical is simply because "rcragc" has no established usage in English [see 5.473]); and yet, in order for the use of a symbol to become established, it must first of all be taken to be meaningful (e.g., "rcragc" taken as a shorthand way of saying "really cool red and green car") (see 5.4732–5.4733). So, which comes first —the meaning or the use? It would seem that we need the one to get to the other, and yet also *vice versa*. The *Satz–Bild* analogy allows us to bypass the difficulty: Insofar as we think of *Sätze* as *Bilder* that we use to descriptively represent states of affairs, whether or not a *Satz* is meaningful will come into view in virtue of its use or lack thereof: "if [a *Satz*] has no sense, it can't be used" (1961, p. 107); "the propositions which are the only ones that humanity uses will have a sense just as they are and do not wait upon a future analysis in order to acquire a sense" (1961, p. 62e; see also pp. 129–130e). The *Bild–Satz* analogy, Wittgenstein suggests, allows us to avoid the infinite regress that would result from trying to justify the use of a *Satz* by appeal to "the meaning" of a symbol independent of its use or its use independent of its meaning; that a *Bild* or *Satz* descriptively represents a state of affairs truly or falsely can be seen to be shown by its use.

The *Satz–Bild* connection strikes me, as it has many before me, as deep and elegant. But this is not (yet) to say that we *must* think of *Sätze* as analogical to *Bilder*, that the only way to avoid the paradoxes and difficulties that Wittgenstein feared is by subscribing to such an analogy, or indeed that Wittgenstein's analogy is uncontestable in its detail or drive. What I've tried to do thus far is outline a way of reading what it is Wittgenstein is doing in comparing *Sätze* and *Bilder*. To suggest that this is an analogy rather than an argument is not to cast doubt on its philosophical import: some of history's most important works of philosophy revolve around analogies (think of Plato's allegory of the cave or the divided line analogy, or Ockham's razor, or Neurath's boat, or Locke's *tabula rasa*). As Wittgenstein notes, many of both Freud's and Goethe's "explanations" work by giving us an analogy, which serves to make it so that "the phenomenon no longer stands alone; it is connected with others, and we feel reassured" (1982, p. 86). By highlighting structured likenesses between an abstruse phenomenon like the *Satz* and a more mundane and seemingly more easily understood phenomenon like a *Bild*, Wittgenstein

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allows us to see that a problem that could easily get off the ground if we were to subscribe to a particular theory about the nature of language is really no problem at all (see 4.003–4.0031).

generates a distinctive and putatively paradox–avoiding way of looking at the phenomena[10].

Nevertheless, you might reasonably ask: Even assuming that I am right to frame the *Bild–Satz* relation as an analogy that aims to elucidate such morals, what specifically follows for how we understand the *Tractatus* and its accomplishments? At this stage, it is time to enter the fray of the *Tractatus* wars, specifically by attending to the Gordian knot raised by §6.54 and its implications for how we understand Wittgenstein's text.

§ 4. The Paradox of §6.54

The penultimate remark of the *Tractatus* is famously cryptic and has been used to support radically different readings of the work. It reads thus:

> My propositions [*Meine Sätze*] serve as elucidations [*Erläuterung*] in the following way: anyone who understands me eventually recognizes them as nonsensical [*unsinnig*], when he has used them —as steps— to climb up beyond them. (He must, so to speak, throw away the ladder after he has climbed up it.)
>
> He must transcend these propositions [*Sätze*], and then he will see the world aright.

The immediate question is: How can the *Sätze* of the work (his *Sätze*) be used as *Erläuterung* (elucidations, explanations) if they lack sense? Wittgenstein presents this as a quandary facing every work of philosophy, since he claims simultaneously that "A philosophical work essentially consists of elucidations" (4.112), and yet that "most of the *Sätze* and questions to be found in philosophical works are not false but nonsensical" (4.003). So, how can there be *Sätze* that are simultaneously nonsensical *and* elucidatory?

Generations of readers of the *Tractatus* have felt the tension here. 6.54 seems to raise a fundamental paradox: if the nonsense claim is to have serious implications, it must presumably be justified in virtue of an account of what

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[10] I hasten to add that this central claim of mine —that the *Satz–Bild* connection should be understood as analogical and that understanding it as such helps us to better understand the text— does not commit me to the claim that the *only* literary or logical device Wittgenstein employs is this analogy. The *Tractatus*, like Wittgenstein's other works, is also replete with metaphors, similes, snippets of imagined dialogue, and other literary devices, just as it is replete with argumentative moves and demonstrations through logical notation.

makes a *Sätz* meaningful or nonsensical. Yet, at the same time, the nonsense claim purports to denounce this very account of meaning as *itself* nonsensical. Hence, the account of meaning needs to be meaningful if the claim of nonsense is not to be nonsensical; and yet the account of meaning cannot be meaningful if it is nonsensical. So, what's the way out of this paradox?

Tractatus scholars have offered two main ways of reading 6.54. First, there is the "ineffabilist reading", initially proposed by McGuinness (2005) and Russell (2001), but most robustly defended by Hacker (2002), according to which 6.54 raises a genuine inconsistency but one that Wittgenstein sought to evade primarily by drawing on a distinction between "saying" and "showing." This reading is premised on the idea that the connection between *Satz* and *Bild* is theoretical and that Wittgenstein was seriously committed to it. Second, there is the "resolute reading"—first articulated by Diamond (1988, 2002), and Conant (1991, 1997, 2002), and associated with a wide range of scholars including Read (2006, 2012)[11] —according to which there is no genuine paradox[12]. Although the *Sätze* of the *Tractatus* are nonsensical, they claim, we

[11] While Read has repeatedly identified his own approach as a "resolute reading" and continues to do so to this day, it is fair to say that his latest work merits a different term —"liberatory" (though Read has sought to show that the resolute reading is ultimately best understood as what he calls a liberatory reading [2021, p. 1]). Here, I focus only on his earlier work and associate it with the resolute reading specifically because he has helpfully articulated what I take to be key aspects of this approach as they pertain to 6.54 and whether or not it generates a paradox. It is worth noting that, in his latest work, Read himself has critiqued his earlier, "overly rigid" reading (2021, p. xiii). Nevertheless, given that, in this latest work, Read explicitly and deliberately avoids what he helped to coin the "*Tractatus* wars" (see 2021, p. 9), I will not comment further on Read's latest work.

[12] It would be oversimplistic to suggest that there are only two main *readings* of the *Tractatus*. Indeed, as Conant and Bronzo (2017) show, the term "resolute reading," in particular, has come to cover a fairly wide range of interpretations with important internal differences. Nevertheless, Conant and Bronzo also show that central to what unites this panoply in a way that allows us to still meaningfully talk of "resolute readings" (in what they call a "logically posterior" sense) is an agreement that we must take 6.54 seriously ("It is a hallmark of this approach that it seeks to take the penultimate remark of the book [TLP 6.54] as seriously as possible") and that doing so generates no paradox (see ibid., p. 179). Moreover, Conant and Bronzo helpfully identify 4 "core commitments" (specifically, core *negative* commitments or rejections) that make a reading "resolute": (1) a rejection of the idea that the *Tractatus* contains a "particular sort of philosophical theory or doctrine" (ibid., p. 178); (2) a rejection of the idea that the work "seeks to convey an *ineffable* theory or doctrine" (ibid., p. 179); (3) a rejection of the idea of a "substantial" conception of nonsense (where such a conception would rest upon a specific theory of meaning); and (4) the point of the logical apparatus of the text is *not* supposed to serve as a test or a series of proscriptions for assessing the meaningfulness of ordinary language (see ibid., pp. 178–181). As I am focusing here specifically on

can nevertheless understand what *Wittgenstein* means by entering into the activity of the work and coming to see that the *Sätze* that make up the work are nonsensical. Central to this approach, I am proposing, is the idea that the *Tractatus* establishes no positive connection between *Satz* and *Bild*.

These two approaches, I will now seek to show, contain important insights, and yet seem to function as *reductios* of one another. The way forward —the way to salvage insights from both— I will propose is to (a) reject, with the resolute readers, the coherence of the idea that the *Tractatus* contains ineffable doctrines pertaining to the *Satz–Bild* connection, while at the same time (b) rejecting, with the ineffabilist, the view that the *Tractatus* and the apparent *Satz–Bild* connection it proposes is —or was intended to be recognized as— pure nonsense.

§ 5. The "Ineffabilist" Reading: Whistling the Paradox Away

Hacker starts, like Anscombe, with the view that Wittgenstein was committed to the idea that the *Tractatus* contains certain putative "truths"—specifically about the harmony between language and world. And, like Anscombe, Hacker takes the concept of the picture to be central: this harmony "consists in the agreement of form between any proposition whatever and the reality it depicts either truly or falsely. This shared form, however, cannot itself be depicted. A picture can depict any reality whose form it has, but it cannot depict its pictorial form—it displays it" (2002, p. 353). From this perspective, Hacker (unlike Anscombe) confronts 6.54: if is not raising a stark contradiction, Wittgenstein must have thought that there was a "loophole," as Russell put it (2001, xxiii) —some way in which the *Sätze* of the work might *communicate* truths without *asserting* or *stating* them. Hacker identifies ten kinds of "truths that seemingly cannot be stated, but which are nevertheless apparently asserted in the course of the *Tractatus*" pertaining to perspicuous logical language and its relation to reality (2002, p. 353). It is central to ineffabilism that Wittgenstein was propounding a picture *theory*, one that elaborates a "clear logical grammar" that would exclude

how to read 6.54 and whether it generates an interpretive paradox, as well as more generally on reappraising the *Satz–Bild* connection (about which Conant and Bronzo [2017] do not comment), I will not attempt to discuss differences between the multifarious resolute readings —except and unless they bear on these issues— and I will use "resolute reading" as a shorthand for Conant and Bronzo's "logically posterior" sense of such a reading. Thank you to an anonymous reviewer for pushing me to clarify this.

philosophical quandaries by providing an account of what can and cannot legitimately be stated or asserted. 6.54 appears as the "inevitable corollary of [these] arguments," Hacker explains, since the *Tractatus* clearly contains *Sätze* that

> fail to comply with the rules of logical grammar —logical syntax (3.325). For they either employ formal concept–words as proper concept–words, and nonsensical pseudo– propositions are the result (4.1272) or they ascribe internal properties and relations to something, which cannot be done by a well–formed proposition with sense (2002, p. 355).

Like Anscombe, Hacker reads the text as genuinely propounding a thesis stipulating what it is for a *Satz* to have meaning: to restrict represented reality to two alternatives —yes or no— in virtue of being constructed in accordance with logical rules. 6.54 is thus seen as an inconsistent attempt to acknowledge that Wittgenstein's own *Sätze* flout the very rules that they adumbrate.

Hacker thus argues that *Tractarian Sätze* are nonsensical in the way propositions that attempt to state the categorical features of objects and their type classifications are (e.g., 4.122–4.125); we can no more meaningfully assert them than we can *assert* what the meaning of a symbol is (6.2322). Attempts to *say* or *assert* what has to be the case for *Sätze* to meaningfully say anything contradict their own constitutive rules for meaning. Failure to follow these rules doesn't result in logical impossibilities (contradictions), Hacker's Wittgenstein argues, but simply nonsense. The *Tractatus* "self–consciously tries, by flouting the rules of logical syntax, to state deep, ineffable truths, which actually cannot be said but are shown by well–formed sentences of a language" (Hacker 2002, p. 357). Accordingly, Hacker places much emphasis on the say/show distinction incipiently raised at 3.262, properly introduced at 4.12, and then used throughout (see esp. 4.122, 5.515, 5.62, 6.36), which he connects to elucidation. In supposedly seeking to establish how, thanks to logical form, *Sätze* refer to the world, Wittgenstein claims that "what *can* be shown, *cannot* be said" (4.1212). On this reading, Wittgenstein's "loophole" was this: By repeatedly asserting *Sätze* that flout the rules, he thought he could *show* the fundamental features of this language–world connection as pictorial.

So, instead of 6.54, Hacker places more emphasis on 6.522: "There are, indeed, things that cannot be put into words. They *make themselves manifest. They are what is mystical.*" *Tractarian Sätze* are purportedly elucidatory insofar as Wittgenstein tries, through formulating them, to gesture to what would have

to be the case for *Sätze* to be able to do this. They constitute, "rungs on the ladder up which we must climb to attain a correct logical point of view from which we shall see that what they try to say cannot be said but is shown by features of our means of representation" (Hacker 2002, p. 364). In Ramsey's words, Wittgenstein was "trying to whistle" what could not be meaningfully articulated but only shown (ibid., p. 355). Hacker is cautious to distance himself from any claims to the text's consistency or truth: "It is a mistake…to suppose that the *Tractatus* is a self–consistent work," he avers (ibid., p. 370). Although he's dismissive of the idea that the text contains a paradox (see ibid., p. 360), Hacker judges the work inconsistent. But he also attributes to Wittgenstein the view that the text sought to avoid this inconsistency. The silence of proposition 7 is heard as a pregnant silence; the strictly speaking nonsensical *Sätze* of the text are taken to obliquely indicate that which cannot be asserted —"important nonsense" (Ramsey 1931, p. 263) or what resolute readers dub "substantial nonsense."

By attributing inconsistency to the *Tractatus*, Hacker can point to the various remarks in the text that ostensibly outline an account of meaning and agnostically read them as attempts to show something that by its own lights they cannot consistently say. While Hacker would clearly prefer to ignore the nonsense claim and focus on salvaging Wittgenstein's logical apparatus (see esp. 2002, p. 356), there is nothing boot–strappy about this. Nevertheless, resolute readers invite us to see that this reading only works by ultimately ignoring the lesson of 6.54 and by smuggling into the text, against Wittgenstein's warnings, at least two different conceptions of "nonsense"—one empty, the other substantive.

§ 5.1 Problems with the Ineffabilist Reading

Arguably, the reason that Hacker places so little emphasis on 6.54 is because he recognizes not just the inconsistency it generates for the *Tractatus* but the tension it creates for his own reading. For the remark asks us to not only recognize that the *Sätze* that make up the text are nonsensical but then precisely to not try to hold on to some quasi–meaning contained therein —to throw the metaphorical ladder away. As Conant puts it, "To genuinely throw away the whole of the ladder requires completely relinquishing the idea of an 'it' that cannot be put into words but can still show itself" (1991, p. 341). Famously, Diamond refers to doing anything else as "chickening out" (1988, p. 181).

Having climbed the ladder of the text, Wittgenstein invites us to give up as illusory the vantage it appeared to generate and thus not to continue to operate with oblique notions like non–assertive showing as substantively meaningful. Seemingly, Wittgenstein cannot be consistently taken to be throwing away the entire figurative ladder —hence, any positive philosophical theses or claims established in the work— while retaining the say/show distinction, and neither can Hacker. Taking 6.54 seriously is not consistent with a doctrine of hidden, ineffable truths that can only be shown or whistled.

To be clear: The problem is not that Hacker himself is committed to this doctrine but that Wittgenstein cannot be consistently committed to it; 6.54 pulls the ladder from under his feet. Moreover, any claim that Hacker makes about the work revealing a logically perspicuous sign language (including the say/show distinction) can only be made atop the ladder. In Conant's words, "If the doctrine of the work cannot be stated and we cannot hope to seek enlightenment by attending to what the words of the book 'say' (since they are self–avowedly nonsensical), how then does [the ineffabilist] happen to know what the hidden teaching is?" (1991, p. 332–333). If *Wittgenstein* thought he could avoid the paradox by a notion of non–constative *showing* then he was wrong since this entire notion has supposedly been revealed as meaningless.

Of course, it is open to Hacker to insist that we should just disregard 6.54. Yet, there is strong evidence that Wittgenstein took the remark seriously. Famously, he admonished Carnap and the positivists for having "so completely and utterly misunderstood the last sentences of the book —and therefore the fundamental conception of the whole book" (cited in Conant 2002, p. 198 n. 3). Moreover, taking 6.54 seriously will not allow for a saying/showing distinction to emerge unscathed —unless showing is taken to involve some substantive meaning. Diamond puts the dilemma thus:

> either we read the *Tractatus* as containing numerous doctrines which cannot be put into words, so they don't (really) count as doctrines…or in contrast, you say that the notion of something true of reality but not sayably true is to be used only with the awareness that it itself belongs to what has to be thrown away (1988, p. 182).

The only way for Hacker's reading to work is to take the first horn of this dilemma. Wittgenstein is then lumbered with philosophical doctrines that cannot be expressed, don't really count as doctrines, but yet which Hacker has identified and communicated. "What lies on the other side of the limit [of

sense]," Wittgenstein has said, "will simply be nonsense" (2001, p. 4). Of nonsense that cannot be said or thought it hardly seems plausible to say that it might be shown[13].

At this stage, let's turn to the so–called resolute reading to see if it fares any better at navigating the paradox seemingly generated by 6.54.

§ 6. Resolute Readings: Deflating the Paradox

Interestingly, the classic articulations of the resolute reading of the *Tractatus* don't tend to engage with the so–called picture theory at all —it going completely unmentioned in Diamond's key works (1988, 2002), and in most of Conant's (1991, 2002). Both Conant (1997, p. 224 n. 87) and Read and Hutchinson (2006, p. 18) mention the "picture theory" in passing at certain moments, and as we saw in §2, Diamond recently conceded that this way of approaching the text is the "natural first reading" (2019, p. 46 n. 1). But insofar as resolute readers recognize that the *Tractatus* says something about the *Satz–Bild* connection, it is typically presented precisely as a thesis —one that Wittgenstein had been tempted to develop yet came to see as empty and self–defeating. This is why, resolute readers tend to emphasize that Wittgenstein qualifies 6.54 thus: "anyone who understands *me* [*welcher mich versteht*]…" will eventually recognize the *Sätze* —specifically, those *Sätze* that are elucidatory—as nonsensical, not that anyone who understands the *Sätze* themselves will have this recognition. On the classic articulation of the resolute reading, Wittgenstein held an "austere" conception of nonsense as resulting from a speaker failing to give meaning (understood as *Bedeutung*—reference) to signs that make up sentences they constitute. Nonsense is not the result of a *Satz* trying to say something that it cannot; insofar as a *Satz* is nonsensical, "it" is about nothing—there is simply no thing the string of words says or fails to say. As such, the *Tractatus' Sätze* are nonsensical in virtue of containing signs such as "object" (see, esp. 2001, 2.01ff; 3.2ff, 4.023) or "fact" (see, esp. 1.1–2, 2.0272ff, 4.2f.) that ostensibly function as predicate nouns (e.g., "A is an object") but to which *we* have given no *Bedeutung*. Although we are free to try to fix the meaning of the

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[13]   There is at least one case in the text of something that cannot be said, but which Wittgenstein claims can be ineffably grasped: solipsism (5.62). The problem is that this cannot be said of *Tractarian Sätze in toto* since they are supposedly to be transcended and discarded, not pondered and cherished.

predicate noun in certain ways, we will understand *Wittgenstein* when we come to see that "no assignment of meaning to it will satisfy [us]" (Diamond 1988, p. 198). We are tempted to think we understand the text only to the extent that we uncritically suppose that we occupy a kind of metaphysical position from which we might see how our words refer to the ultimate logical reality of which they purport to speak. We imagine ourselves "surveying" the world —to use Russell's phrase (2001, p. xx)— thereby seeing how our words attach to referential bearers (e.g., logical objects and facts). However, if we follow Wittgenstein on the journey of the *Tractatus*, we are supposed to come to see that its purportedly elucidatory *Sätze* only *appear* to set up a metaphysical/logical apparatus when we're under the illusion that such a survey is possible.

In support of this account of meaning, resolute readers tend to emphasize 5.473–5.4733: "We cannot give a sign the wrong sense" (5.4732); "any possible proposition is legitimately constructed, and, if it has no sense, that can only be because we have failed to give a *meaning* [*Bedeutung*] to some of its constituents. (Even if we think we have done so)" (5.4733). The point is: A nonsensical *Satz* doesn't refer *simpliciter*, and thus is "pure nonsense," even if it consists of recognizable words in syntactically acceptable strings of words. No logical distinctions between kinds of nonsense are allowed: the nonsensicality of *Tractarian Sätze* must be on a par with the same *Sätze* spelled backwards; Lewis Carroll's eloquent irruptions of nonsense are logically equivalent to unintelligible strings of jumbled letters. However, the lack of a logical distinction does not rule out *psycho*logical differences between such cases: some logically nonsensical sentences might *seem* sensical to readers with particular dispositions.

So, how are we to understand Wittgenstein as he invites us to in 6.54? How can utterly nonsensical *Sätze* elucidate anything?

Hand in hand with the austere conception of nonsense goes an austere conception of elucidation. If nonsensical *Sätze* say nothing, elucidating them must consist in revealing that we say nothing in producing them. If those *Sätze* could be substantially nonsensical —if they could indirectly hint or obliquely gesture to a reality they cannot represent— then elucidation might involve substantial demonstration. But insofar as they are austerely nonsensical, involving signs in which no symbols can be perceived (since lacking *Bedeutung*), they can't possibly hint at anything; they simply misfire.

How, then, could austere elucidation work if there is nothing to explain and

no substantive way of explaining that nothing?

Diamond offers what I think remains the most plausible and well thought out response to this question on behalf of the resolute reading. To understand Wittgenstein, she argues, is to see him as inviting us to imaginatively take nonsense for sense: The activity of the text (*pace* 4.112) involves lulling the reader into this imaginative exercise. Diamond writes: "[the text] supposes a kind of imaginative activity, an exercise of the capacity to enter into the taking of nonsense for sense, of the capacity to share imaginatively the inclination to think that one is thinking something in it" (2002, p. 157). One is supposed to "go as far as one can with the idea" that the work's *Sätze* are meaningful (ibid.). So, we read the opening line of the text: "The world is all that is the case" (1). Instead of immediately acknowledging its nonsensicality —since it involves a "sign" ("the world") to which we supposedly can give no *Bedeutung*—, we are invited to play along, suspend disbelief as we would with the opening line of a work of fiction ("It was a bright cold day in April, and the clocks were striking thirteen"). On the resolute reading as Diamond articulates it, the *Tractatus* lures us into an "illusion of sense," into which Wittgenstein imagined himself "in an attempt to lead one to see that there was only false imagination in the attractiveness of the words that one had been inclined to come out with" (2002, p. 159). Understanding Wittgenstein involves joining him in the activity, indulging the illusion, but then *recognizing* it as an illusion and resolving to transcend the text.

For the classical resolute readers, *Wittgenstein*'s *Sätze* are elucidatory insofar as they perform this "therapeutic" function, taking the reader from "disguised to patent nonsense" (2009, §464) (see Conant 1997; 2000, p. 194). This is (should be) the activity of philosophy, for their Wittgenstein: not producing speculative or even demonstrably true propositions but clarifying the confusions we generate when trying to sanction (universally?) true claims about the world, or logic, or ethics, or God. As such, 6.54 doesn't generate any kind of paradox. Taking the nonsense claim seriously is precisely what should lead us to see that there is no substantive account of sense on offer in the text; the text merely contains disguised nonsense that *might* serve a therapeutic function if only we understand the author correctly. Understanding Wittgenstein *means* acknowledging our lack of understanding; the *Tractatus* is akin to a work of Kierkegaardian irony (Conant 1997)[14].

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[14]   I should hasten to add here that not all resolute readers agree with the framing of the *Tractatus* as akin to

§ 6.1. Problems with the Resolute Reading

The resolute reading is wonderfully appealing —both its vision of the *Tractatus* as an activity rather than a set of arcane propositions, and as an attempt to render consistent a brilliant and enigmatic text. For our purposes, it also offers a seamless way of accommodating 6.54 and not lumbering us or Wittgenstein with unappealing ineffable doctrines. Nevertheless, there are some problems for this approach.

One *prima facie* problem that I won't explore here is the lack of substantial exegetical evidence to support the idea that Wittgenstein *intended* the *Tractatus* to work as resolute readers propose that it does. Hacker (2002) makes this argument in more detail and with more finesse than I can rehash here. For my purposes, I will focus simply on how successful the resolute reading is in resolving the paradox of 6.54. On this score, I have two main concerns.

First, there is a question of interpretive consistency. Some resolute readings can seem inconsistent in reading the injunction of 6.54 to license a condemnation to pure nonsense of everything in the text *apart* from what they read as somehow meaningfully telling the reader how to read the text (sometimes, though not always, called the "frame" of the text) —thus, *apart* from key claims that supposedly make that condemnation legitimate. Hacker complains that Diamond and Conant have to insulate the frame of the text from nonsense, while downplaying other seemingly key claims from the "frame" such as Wittgenstein's apparently non–ironic assertion that "the truths of the

a Kierkegaardian irony or, indeed, as performing such a therapeutic function. Most notably and relevantly, Kuusela (2019) defends what he calls a "a nontherapeutic resolute reading of the *Tractatus* that explains how Wittgenstein thought to be able to make a positive contribution to logic and the philosophy thereof [i.e., a non–ironic contribution —JdL] without putting forward any (ineffable) theses" (2019, p. 1). Moreover, Conant seems to have backed away from such a reading, at least insofar as he doesn't think that irony is essential to what makes a reading of the *Tractatus resolute* (see Conant and Bronzo 2017). And, to be fair, Conant never explicitly claimed that the *Tractatus is* a work of irony; he merely implied as much through the extended comparison with Kierkegaard. I have nevertheless made references throughout this paper to the resolute reading as suggesting that we take the *Tractatus* as a work of irony. I am using "irony" as a convenient shorthand to flag something I take to be essential to this reading —that we are not supposed to take the *Satz–Bild* connection seriously or substantively, despite the fact that Wittgenstein seems serious in proposing it. In any case, it might turn out, as Henriques (2021) has argued, that the resolute reading is, after all, committed to reading the *Tractatus* as ironical —depending on exactly how we understand that term. I leave this for another debate.

thoughts that are here communicated seems to me unassailable" and that he has found "on all essential points, the final solutions of the problems [of philosophy]" (p. 4). Such remarks are seemingly rendered unintelligible by resolute readings, since no thoughts can be communicated by purely nonsensical *Sätze* and hence no truths or solutions either.

The problem for resolute readers is not just one of emphasis or one pertaining to the question of a frame. The nonsense–insulation of certain claims from the text seems to be bootstrapping. Specifically, aren't Diamond et al. tacitly salvaging an account of the sense of *Sätze* from the text (as is evidenced by their approving references to 5.473–5.4733)? And if so, how might this be justified?[15]

The austere conception of nonsense is often presented as theoretically innocuous, requiring no substantiation. Read and Hutchinson nicely put it like this: "We do not commit ourselves to nonsense being of a kind at all; only that nonsense is such to the extent that we can *make no sense of it*" (2006, p. 19). Diamond further explains: "As long as we think of the *Tractatus* as doing something or other with *the concept of a proposition*, we set ourselves up to miss what Wittgenstein is doing" (2019, p. 133). For, she emphasizes, the notion of "proposition" that Wittgenstein employs is "a *formal concept*—that is to say, *not* a concept" (ibid; see 4.126–4.1274). Wittgenstein's notion of a *Satz qua* proposition is of what Diamond calls a "logical shareable" rather than a "property" inscribed in some stretches of language and not in others; it itself has no *Bedeutung* (2019, p. 133). As such, the very idea of lining up propositions —here logical propositions, there mathematical ones, ethical ones, the ones of the *Tractatus*, etc.— and adjudicating which of them are legitimately constructed and meaningful and which are not, is incoherent. It was Wittgenstein's aim to get us to see this, Diamond avers. The "picture theory of meaning" should not be understood as a substantive account or a theory at all. For Diamond, this is why Wittgenstein conjures for us the image of an ordinary

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[15] A judicious and helpful anonymous reviewer has pointed out to me that not all so–called resolute readers are committed to the idea that the *Tractatus* has a "frame," and moreover that some such readers have argued that *everything* in the text (including any such frame) is supposed to be transcended. The problem, as I see it, does not pertain simply to the frame, however. The problem is how to coherently and simultaneously justify the idea that the *Tractatus* contains no theory or positive account of meaning with the idea that the text is committed to a —supposedly innocuous— account of meaning outlined by 5.473–5.4733.

picture:

> It will be easy to see that the possibility of such a connection of the things is there in the picture itself, in the connection of its picture–elements. By being led to note these features of the ordinary picture, we can be led to *take it in as a logical picture*, to take it in as having logico–pictorial form. I want to suggest that this transformation to *logical taking–in* is central in the way the ordinary picture is used in philosophical activity. This transformation is not a matter of taking in the picture as having a property of which we had been unaware (2019, p. 128).

In other words, rather than providing a substantial and substantially restrictive theory of how and why some *Sätze* have meaning and others don't, Diamond invites us to play along with Wittgenstein's activity in getting us to recognize what it is to think/speak logically by creating for ourselves pictures that correspond to the world. We have no clear idea of what a picture that couldn't (possibly) correspond to the world would (possibly) look like. To understand Wittgenstein *means* to recognize that there was nothing but an illusion of sense in the text —one that, apparently, plagues many (if not all) works of philosophy (insofar as they're elucidatory).

To the ineffabilist, though, this will appear unsatisfactory —not just because Diamond et al. have no grounds for attributing such a view of meaning to the text, but because the text itself appears to offer as a "competitor" account of nonsense, as Hacker emphasizes: nonsense as the violation of logical syntax. Diamond and Conant insist that this is itself nonsense: there can be no such thing as violating the principles of logical syntax (Diamond 1988, p. 195), since if a string of words has no perceivable symbol, it "hence has no discernible logical syntax" (Conant 2000, p. 194). But isn't this an exegetical dodge? What is the justification for reading 4.1272 as articulating an account to be transcended and condemned to pure nonsense whereas 5.473–5.4733 nevertheless genuinely tells us Wittgenstein's understanding of nonsense? Doesn't the austere conception of sense require a substantiation that cannot consistently be attributed to the text?

My second major worry concerns the central idea of an illusion of sense. Diamond writes, "Nonsense sentences are as it were internally all the same; all are *einfach Unsinn*, simply nonsense. Externally, however, they may differ…" (2002, p. 159). Any value that the text has, then, cannot hinge on its self–proclaimed improvements on the logic of Frege and Russell, on its supposedly

drawing the limits of sense: "The only 'insight' that a Tractarian elucidation imparts, in the end, is one about the reader himself: that he is prone to such illusions of thought" (2002, p. 197). But consider what that means for any given sentence of the work. Compare §1 to the following: "The quorld is all that is the case," "Case is that all world the is," or "kdrkjfsd." To say that the differences between these sentences are merely psychological or external is both to say too much and not enough. It says too much because it implausibly rules out at least syntax; it says not enough because it doesn't explain the precise psychological processes at work. The latter is pressing because, insofar as a sentence affects a reader in a specific way, it thus has what we might call, following J.L. Austin, a "perlocutionary effect" —an impact on their thoughts, feelings, or actions (e.g., the hurt caused by an insult, the elation caused by praise, etc.) (1962, pp. 101– 108). And surely that should, and indeed resolute readers must take it that it does, count as at least part of the meaning of (the use of) sentences? We understand Wittgenstein, after all, not telepathically but in virtue of being affected by *sentences* he produced in a certain order with a certain force. What could be the justification for excluding psychological —perlocutionary— effect from the meaning of (the production of) *Tractarian* sentences? Moreover, the so–called illusion of sense could only possibly arise for a very specific kind of philosophical reader liable to be so affected. Nobody before or after Wittgenstein was tempted to produce the particular strings of words that make up the *Tractatus*; its iconoclasm was one of the reasons he feared that nobody would understand it. Considerable work has to be done to show why, as a *purely external matter of fact*, those *Sätze* produce an illusion. And Wittgenstein never claimed that they do.

So, we have a stand–off. Resolute readings do justice to the *Tractarian* idea of philosophy as an activity and take 6.54 as seriously as possible. Yet, at least some versions of such readings seem to inconsistently smuggle in an account of meaning from a text they claim to be pure nonsense. By contrast, ineffabilists can acknowledge the tension of 6.54, and do justice to the text's claims to contain truths and thus solve philosophy's problems. However, their reading cannot make sense of why Wittgenstein would have emphasized 6.54, and it ends up attributing to Wittgenstein the unappealing notion of ineffable doctrines. By now the positions have become entrenched: Each side is prone to accusing the other of cherry–picking, misconstruing Wittgenstein's intentions, or undermining continuity with his later work. Both readings appear plausible and yet plausibly function as *reductios* of one another. So, what's the way

forward?

With stalemate reached, allow me finally to try to show how it helps to read the *Tractatus* as a work of analogy rather than a work of theory or irony.

§ 7. Applying the Analogy

In §3, I argued that Wittgenstein's analogy has 3 main *morals* that are rarely distinguished. It seems to me, first, that both classical resolute and ineffabilist readers eclipse one of these morals, and second, that both sets of readers misframe these morals.

First, both sets of readers accommodate the first contextualist moral about semantics. Ineffabilist readers, however, focus most of their attention on the second moral, framing the text's key task as the outlining of a perspicuous logical syntax (*Sätze* as nonsensical for contravening the rules of syntax), ignoring or downplaying the pragmatic moral. Resolute readers, by contrast, argue that Wittgenstein had nothing to say about logical form *per se* that wasn't ultimately accommodated by the pragmatic moral (i.e., that *Sätze* are only meaningless when *we* fail to give a sign *Bedeutung*, or use a string of words in a way that *does* something meaningful). But, as such, both sets of readers operate with, and impose, an eclipsed view of the analogy and hence of what Wittgenstein is doing in the text. This is why both can —legitimately— claim that the other is cherry–picking or placing undue emphasis.

Second, and more importantly, as a result of a fundamental agreement — that the only way of understanding the *Satz–Bild* connection and schematics apparently outlined in the text is as a theoretical account— both sets of readers end up with ultimately implausible accounts. Let me now show as much, starting with the ineffabilist account.

Diamond et al. are right, I think, to insist contra Hacker et al. that there is no "picture theory" of meaning in the *Tractatus*. Not only does its stipulative and elucidatory, as opposed to justificatory, style belie any claim to its containing a set of theses, Wittgenstein repeatedly and explicitly claimed that it contained no such thing. "It is not a textbook," he avers (p. 3). Philosophy, he is clear, "is not a body of doctrine but an activity" (4.112; see also 6.13). He tells us, then, that his text is mis–rendered when it is taken to be presenting a set of philosophical *Sätze* whose truth or plausibility it is incumbent upon us to adjudicate (4.112). Of course, Wittgenstein could simply be wrong about his own work. However, it seems to me, as it does most resolute readers, that a significant

impetus driving the text is the idea that we don't (he didn't) *need* to provide a theory that explains and justifies the nature of meaning and truth —one that would "answer" or "solve" all relevant questions or problems.

Instead, Wittgenstein emphasizes especially in the latter parts of the *Tractatus*, the activity of philosophy is bound up with coming to *see* that "the deepest problems are really *no* problems" (4.003). Instead of truth emerging through theorizing or arguing, for Wittgenstein it is something we come to "see" or "recognize" (see esp. 4.023, 6.113, 6.122, 6.231, 6.521). Philosophy serves to guide our recognitions not through theory but through an activity of clarifying and elucidating that removes opacity and blurriness (4.111–4.112). In efforts to do this, the *Tractatus* is equal parts deconstructive (philosophy as "critique of language" [4.0031]) and dissolving —a series of disappearing acts, in which a certain way of looking at problems ostensibly leads to their dissolution (see 3.333, 4.1251, 4.466, 5.441, 5.535, 6.4312, 6.52–6.521) or reveals what is already "manifest" (5.62, 6.36, 6.522)[16]. As early as 1931, Wittgenstein leaned into the philosopher–as–magician analogy: "Compare the solution of philosophical problems with the fairy tale gift that seems magical in the enchanted castle and if it is looked at in daylight is nothing but an ordinary bit of iron (or something of the sort)" (MS 153a, 1931). The idea, specifically, is that *seeing Sätze* as analogical to pictures —with parts contextually related, structured logically, with which we *do* certain things— enables us to sidestep or avoid paradoxes (whether or not they are *all* "the problems of philosophy"). In a quasi–precursor to the duck/rabbit, Wittgenstein uses the example of a cube schematic in 5.5423, which can be seen in two different ways —just as "Blue is blue" can be seen in (at least) two different ways— in a way that gestures toward the idea of a *Gestalt* shift that we might take to be at play throughout the text. In light of all of this, reading the *Tractatus* as offering —or wanting to offer— a theory of the connection of language and world seems fundamentally problematic.

I am in agreement with resolute readers, then, both that we shouldn't try to extract from the *Tractatus* a theory about the connection of language and world —and that taking §6.54 seriously pulls the rug out from under the feet of any such theory in any case. "Transcending" the *Sätze* of the text to "see the world aright" (6.54) is fundamentally inconsistent with the idea of there being

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[16] Jerry Gill has noted —appositely, it strikes me— that the "final *solution* [*gelöst*] of the problems" might equally well be translated as the "final *resolution* of the problems" (see Jerry H. Gill 2019, p. 10).

ineffable truths that might somehow be shown by the text or vicariously whistled by Wittgenstein. And neither do we need to subscribe Wittgenstein to the idea of ineffable truths that might be shown but not said: we can accommodate Wittgenstein's remarks about the text containing true thoughts that resolve the problems of philosophy without inferring that Wittgenstein thought the text contains a true theory about the system of language and its mapping onto the world —for at least two reasons. First, because problems can be (and often are) resolved not by learning some truth of which one was previously ignorant but rather by adopting a different perspective, reconceptualizing the problem. And second, because the "truth of the thoughts that are here communicated" (p. 4) is essentially ambiguous: it could equally well refer to the truth of the thoughts about the paradoxes that get generated by looking at language and the world in a certain way —specifically, *not* in the way that Wittgenstein invites us to look; by no means does it have to refer to the putative truth of theoretical claims about the structure of language or reality.

However, what the ineffabilist gets right *contra* at least the classical resolute reader, is that we are supposed to understand what Wittgenstein is doing in the text as serious and not ironic[17]. We don't need to read the *Tractatus* as outlining or purporting to outline a set of truths about logic or language or the world in order to take the text seriously. Some of the greatest works of philosophy instead invite us to look differently at some phenomenon and, in the process, bring into view new aspects of it. Nevertheless, the resolute reader will now reasonably ask how the *Tractatus* is supposed to be able to do that when it is self–avowedly

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[17] It has been brought to my attention by a careful anonymous reviewer that Kuusela (2019) provides a version of the resolute reading that is not committed to reading the text as ironic (see also footnote 14 above). Indeed, Kuusela argues, convincingly to my mind, that the sense of "dissolution" at play in the *Tractatus* should not be understood in negative or destructive terms, which is closer to how Carnap employed the idea: "for Wittgenstein unlike for Carnap, dissolving a philosophical problem or a view as logically confused involves as an essential element spelling out a better alternative way of thinking about the issue. For Wittgenstein, dissolving a problem is therefore not a merely negative achievement of demonstrating that it involves confusions" (2019, p. 1). If Kuusela is right, then his version of the resolute reading of the *Tractatus* can show exactly what I am trying to show: that the problem–dissolving exercise that the *Tractatus* engages in is not purely negative and not ironical. Kuusela's version of the resolute reading, then, would appear to dodge my critique here. Now, a proper engagement with Kuusela's work would take me beyond the scope of this paper. Yet, I will say that, *prima facie*, and at the very least, my reading of the *Tractatus* as a work of analogy would stand to provide a necessary complement to Kuusela's distinctive version of the resolute reading, given that, from what I can see, Kuusela follows classical resolute readers in saying nothing at all about how to read the *Bild–Satz* connection.

nonsensical? What, on my reading, does Wittgenstein mean when he tells us that to understand him involves recognizing that his *Sätze* are nonsensical? Let me now try to clarify how my reading ultimately differs from the classical version of the resolute reading.

In a non–theoretical sense, the *Sätze* of Wittgenstein's text are perfectly meaningful: they are, after all, syntactically well–formed; they contain legitimate German/English words; and the technical jargon is used consistently and in ways that a patient reader can track, at least. That the text employs formal concepts is not a sound basis on which to call it nonsensical. I take it to be key, moreover, that we are to recognize that those *Sätze* are nonsensical only after we have "used them —as steps— to climb up beyond them," that seeing the world "aright" involves "transcending" these *Sätze* —using them such that we get to a point where we don't need them. We can parse what Wittgenstein is saying like this: the *Tractatus* is like a catechism insofar as the point of *using* it is to get to a stage where you don't need it to use it; the goal is to live one's life in line with the guiding principles and morals of a catechism, to see what one should do such that one can thereby transcend the text[18]. In the case of the *Tractatus*, the goal is to help us avoid the temptations that he thinks generate paradoxes: to avoid searching for the referents for logical constants, to stop trying to state the rules of logic without using any logical signs, and to cease looking for the use of a sentence independently of its meaning or vice versa. Once we've used the text to learn these morals and accordingly conduct ourselves in accordance with them, the job of the text is done and so in that sense we transcend it. Wittgenstein's *Sätze* become nonsensical, then, only when and to the extent that they are no longer needed. However, in emphasizing that his *Sätze* become nonsensical in virtue of losing their instructive impact on a reader, Wittgenstein is at the same time gesturing toward where and how his central analogy breaks down: throughout, he has used *Sätze* not to "picture facts" descriptively —i.e., not in the way he invites us to think of how *Sätze* work by analogy with *Bilder*. The analogy elucidates to the point where it collapses.

Of course, this will sound like chickening out to Diamond and Conant because it involves holding on to the idea that the text articulates an analogy between *Sätze* and *Bild* that is meaningful insofar as it elucidates, and this, they

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[18]   As an aside, it's worth underscoring how Wittgenstein's text is saturated throughout with normative language: his remarks are routinely characterized by the modal verbs "ought" (*sollen*), "should" (*sollte*), "have to" and, in particular, "must" (*muss*). The latter alone appears over 100 times in the text.

will say, is precisely what we to slough off if we are to follow Wittgenstein. My view, by contrast, is this: Wittgenstein wanted us to see and register both what his central analogy and its schematics could do —put simply: avoid problems and paradoxes that he took to be plaguing logic— and what it couldn't do —put simply: provide an account of linguistic meaning that makes sense of any possible meaningful use of language. To understand Wittgenstein, recall, we are to eventually realize that the resolution of these problems involves, as he puts it in the preface, doing "so little" (p. 4). Resolving paradoxes in the way that Wittgenstein invites us to do involves changing the way we look at them by changing the way we look at language. But at the same time, and this is the pathos–fueled beauty of the final pages of the text, this way of looking at language leads us into silence about what Wittgenstein took to be the most important things in life —matters of ethics, aesthetics, religion, the existential stakes of solipsism and happiness— precisely because attempts to articulate such issues involve using *Sätze* that don't (straightforwardly) descriptively picture states of affairs and yet can still be meaningful. I take it that it is not accidental that Wittgenstein uses another analogy at the end of the text to express the position we are left in. What he is inviting us to do is neither to endorse the truth of the supposedly literally meaningless sentences that it contains (standing atop the figurative ladder to survey the depths of ineffable logical space) or to see that those sentences are pure gibberish (throwing the figurative ladder away). Instead, he is suggesting that to "see the world aright" we should cast our gaze away from the problems that led to the felt need for what the *Tractatus* offers in the first place. For, as soon as we cast our eye back to those problems we will find ourselves in need of something like what the *Tractatus* offers. But, Wittgenstein is telling us (and himself): we can instead choose to look differently, otherwise, elsewhere, and we can choose not to look at all. We are the source of the philosophical problems that we confront in the *Tractatus*: they are generated by looking at language in a certain limited and limiting way. But we are also the source of their resolution. We "use" his *Sätze* —whether by "climbing" "on," "through," or "over" them— to guide us away from trying to navigate the problems that the text confronts in the first place.

This is a paradox only if we assume that the *Tractatus* is articulating a theory of propositional meaning the rules for which the text is flouting. What I am proposing instead is that, as resolute readers argue, Wittgenstein had no theory of sense and nonsense. But as a result (and by contrast with the resolute reading), when Wittgenstein dubs the *Sätze* of the *Tractatus* nonsensical in 6.54,

he is not making any kind of theoretical claim that might possibly contradict other theoretical claims in the text. Instead, we eventually recognize those *Sätze* as "nonsensical" only insofar as we realize that we no longer need to use them to describe for us; and hence, per the analogy's third moral, that such uses no longer affect us in the way that is doing anything. There is no need for this kind of nonsensicality to be "the same" as the kind of nonsense he invites us to see happens when we fail to give reference to symbols in a sentence we use. There are, after all, numerous different ordinary ways in which something we say is deemed nonsensical (see de Lara 2022). Reading the *Tractatus* as a work of analogy does not force us into the unenviable position of explaining how a book full of meaningless sentences could somehow produce an illusion of sense that we could then come to see as an illusion—or then how and why despite doing this the sentences that make up the text are still meaningless. Ultimately, the key problem with at least the classical version of the resolute reading is that it asks us to accept as non–controversial the idea that linguistic meaning is essentially referential —that a sentence is meaningful or not only if we assign *Bedeutung* to the "names" that make it up. This is neither unavoidable nor theoretically innocuous. Because I can't assign a reference to "the world" or "life" that will satisfy me doesn't mean that "the world is a dangerous and wonderful place to live" or that "life is like riding a bicycle" are literally meaningless, not least because they can be used in the production of speech acts that meaningfully *do* things. My point is: reading the *Tractatus* as a work of analogy doesn't commit us or Wittgenstein to any *account* of linguistic meaning or nonsense (whether austere or substantive) and it doesn't commit us to *rejecting* any such account either.

So, by breaking out of the false dichotomy that has been imposed by the ineffabilist–resolute stand–off with regards to the *Satz–Bild* connection, according to which it is meant literally as a series of true theoretical claims about the nature of language and reality or it is meant non–theoretically or ironically as a series of tempting though ultimately nonsensical illusions, we can view this connection instead as a simultaneously enchanting though perspective–narrowing analogy. For, that it was a perspective–narrowing analogy is precisely what Wittgenstein came to see, as I will now briefly show in conclusion.

§ 8. Concluding Thoughts

Famously, Wittgenstein warned of the existence of "grave mistakes" in the

Tractatus, which he seemed to suggest would come to light when read alongside the *Investigations* (2009, p. 4e). Without seeking to broach the ever–vexed continuity question, there are some major themes that crystallize in his later work that support my case for reading the *Tractatus* as a work of analogy —one that Wittgenstein came to see as, in certain ways, obfuscating. Here, allow me to just dangle some threads.

Most importantly, Wittgenstein came to see the pragmatic moral of the *Tractatus*'s *Satz–Bild* analogy as misleading insofar as it leads us to think that *Sätze* and *Bilder* must necessarily or primordially describe states of affairs. Famously, the later Wittgenstein highlights ordinary language's unfixed variety of uses and practices, including assertions, questions, commands, speculations, hypotheses, jokes, requests, thanks, etc., etc. These extend far beyond what "logicians have said about the structure of language", including, he says pointedly, "the author of the *Tractatus–Logico–Philosophicus*" (2009, §23). It is telling that in an associated box remark Wittgenstein puts the point in terms of the uses of a picture: "Imagine a picture representing a boxer in a particular fighting stance. Well, this picture can be used to tell someone how he should stand, should hold himself; or how he should not hold himself; or how a particular man did stand in such–and–such a place; and so on" (ibid.). Wittgenstein seems to be deliberately conjuring a retort to his image of the fencers from 1914. *Investigations*–Wittgenstein's point is that a *Bild itself* does not descriptively depict reality in a normatively inert way, and hence we cannot deduce what is essential from it alone; we have to always look at the use (see also 1978, pp. 212–214). Pragmatically, we can give various projections to both *Sätze* and *Bilder*; and descriptions, too, are "instruments for particular purposes" (2009, §291). "Thinking of a description as a word–picture of the facts has something misleading about it", Wittgenstein says in one of his clearest articulations of his self–rebuke, since "one tends to think only of such pictures as hang on our walls, which seem simply to depict how a thing looks, what it is like. (These pictures are, as it were, idle)" (ibid.)[19]. Wittgenstein's expansion of linguistic meaning (and hence nonsense) beyond descriptivism was frequently articulated concurrently with pointed remarks about the unnecessary impoverishment of his *Tractatarian* account; he was, as he put it, "looking in the direction of a misleading analogy" (1978, p. 311).

[19] It is seldom noted that "picture" is also one of the *Investigations*' central concepts; exploring the overlaps and contrasts between his early and later use will, unfortunately, have to wait for another occasion.

The picture analogy famously gives way in Wittgenstein's post–*Tractatus* work to several other organizing analogies —in particular, the language–tool analogy and the language–game analogy (both of which can be traced back to notes written between 1931 and 1934). By contrast with the *Satz–Bild* analogy, what is distinctive about the tool and game analogies is not just that they take into consideration context, speaker application beyond description, and the perlocutionary effects our words have, but also that they reorient us to the always already normative contexts into which we've been trained and encultured to use language. Wittgenstein would thus pointedly come to argue that the construction or form of pictures —whether signposts, sketches of cubes, the famous image of the duck/rabbit— do not *show* us anything absent that background, non–neutral, normative context. This is not to say that everything requires interpretation, or to give license to the skeptical idea that we might all be trapped in private monads being shown mutually incompatible things, but to disrupt the idea that there is an account to be given of the foundations of language in terms of normatively inert marks or sounds (see Crary 2016, pp. 46–58). The *Tractarian* idea of logical analysis gives way in favor of what he would come to call a "grammatical analysis," revealing the overlapping variety of uses of sentences and their normative enmeshment in our form of life.

Looking back at the *Tractatus*, with regards to both the *Satz* and the *Bild*, Wittgenstein came to see that he was operating with idealized versions (and visions) of both. And he came to see *this* as itself the source of certain philosophical paradoxes. He makes this point repeatedly (see esp. 2009, §§ 182, 412, 421). "Philosophical problems arise when language goes on holiday" (2009, §38), he says: i.e., when we ignore or otherwise invent uses for words that fly in the face of established uses, histories, and the *work* to which we normally put those words. To avoid irresolvable philosophical paradoxes, we need to be reoriented to language use in action and traction (see 2009, §§109, 133). Philosophical paradoxes, later Wittgenstein proposes, arise because the "role of [our] words in our language is other than we are tempted to think" (2009, §§182; 412, 421). §§304–305 illustrates the thought perfectly: In trying to account for the sense in which nobody else can directly feel another's pain, we are tempted to invoke an (idealized) *Bild* of pain as an entirely private sensation, shearing its expressive, normatively saturated manifestations. In response to the imagined objection that he cannot distinguish between pain behavior without the sensation of pain and the behavior with the sensation, Wittgenstein retorts that he's precisely not denying the importance of such a distinction but rather

trying to isolate the philosophical assumption that leads to skepticism about pain. Here he makes the important remark: "The paradox disappears only if we make a radical break with the idea that language always functions in one way, always serves the same purpose: to convey thoughts" (2009, §304). Concomitant with the view that the primordial function of language is descriptivist is the view that the world essentially consists of inert states of affairs floating around waiting to be neutrally depicted. It is *this* that Wittgenstein came to see as a picture —a picture that "stands in the way of our seeing the use of the word as it is" (ibid.); a picture that "held us captive" (2009, §§114–115). His older self's point is not that we remember the ordinary plurivocity of language and —*hey presto!*— all problems dissolve. His point is that we can loosen the grip of otherwise irresolvable paradoxes by remembering how and why *we* generate them by thinking that our words could mean something without *our* meaning anything by them in a given context.

Developing these thoughts properly would take me beyond the scope of this paper. What I have tried to do here is go as far as possible with the idea that the *Tractatus* is a work of analogy. It is, I have tried to show, a powerful analogy — one that is insightful and incisive, helping us to see aspects of how language works. But it is also capable of misleading and obscuring. To avoid it "irresistibly drag[ging] us on" into puzzlement (1958, p. 108), we first have to see it for what it is.

Acknowledgement:

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Wittgenstein's Enchanting Analogy: Or, Navigating the *Tractatus* Wars by Looking Again at Pictures

No *Tractatus* reader could fail to notice the apparent centrality of the connection between sentence/proposition (Satz) and picture (Bild) that it seemingly endorses. However, it is often assumed that Wittgenstein must have either been trying to propound a "theory" of the Satz-Bild connection (per "ineffabilists") or leading us to see that no such theory can be established (per "resolute readers"). In this paper, I develop a different reading of the Satz-Bild connection as an enchanting, though ultimately perspective-narrowing, analogy. I start by exploring the nature of analogies (contrasted with arguments, theses, metaphors, and similes) and eliciting exegetical evidence for my reading. The analogy elucidates 3 distinct "morals" (semantic; syntactical; and pragmatic, respectively) that aim to avoid distinct logical paradoxes by guiding how we see language. As such, the analogy is not argumentatively innocuous or "literally meaningless" but neither is it substantive nonsense "whistled" to reveal important truths about logic. Rather, like all good analogies, it reveals only by also obscuring; it helps us avoid paradoxes only by generating another one (§ 6.54). Finally, I explore how the conclusion *Tractatus*-Wittgenstein appears to endorse in light of this —walking away— transformed in the 1930s with his development of new, liberatory (language-game, language-tools) analogies.

Keywords: Picture Analogy · Paradox · Tractatus Wars.

La analogía encantadora: o, navigando las guerras Tractarianas mirando de nuevos a los retratos

Ningún lector del *Tractatus* podría dejar de notar la aparente centralidad de la conexión entre oración/proposición (Satz) y retrato (Bild) que parece respaldar. Sin embargo, se supone a menudo que Wittgenstein seguramente intentó proponer una "teoría" de la conexión Satz–Bild (siendo "inefabilistas") o llevarnos a ver que no se puede establecer ninguna teoría así (siendo "lectores resolutos"). En este trabajo desarrollo una lectura diferente de la conexión Satz–Bild como analogía encantadora que, a final de cuentas, deriva en una perspectiva más estrecha. Empiezo explorando la naturaleza de las analogías (contrastándolas con argumentos, teoremas, metáforas y símiles) y aduciendo evidencia exegética respaldando mi lectura. La analogía aclara 3 distintas "morales" (respectivamente, semántica, sintáctica y pragmática) que tienen el objetivo de evitar determinadas paradojas al direccionar nuestra visión del lenguaje. Como tal, la analogía no es argumentativamente inocua o "literalmente carente de significado", pero tampoco es ningún sinsentido sustancioso "silbado" revelando verdades importantes acerca de la lógica. Más bien, como todas las buenas analogías, revela algo oscureciéndolo al mismo tiempo; nos ayuda evitar paradojas sólo porque genera otro (§ 6.54). Finalmente, exploro cómo la conclusión que el Wittgenstein del *Tractatus* parece respaldar según estas consideraciones —abandonándolo— transformado en los 1930 con su desarrollo de nuevas analogías libertadoras (juegos de lenguaje, lenguaje como herramienta).

Palabras claves: Analogía de retratos · Paradoja · Guerras tractarianas.

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