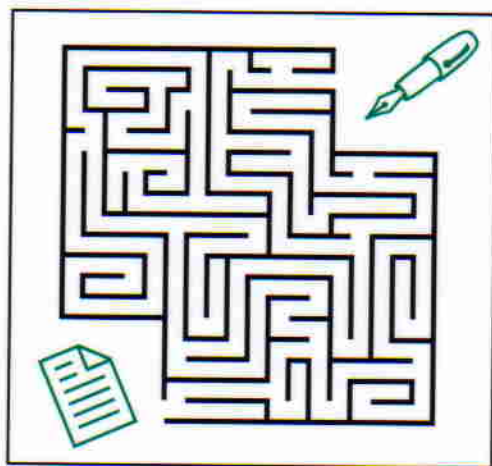


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COLECCIÓN HUMANIDADES ▼

HYPertextUAL INTERPRETATION OF THE DECIMALS AND ARCHITECTONIC HERMENEUTICS OF WITTGENSTEIN'S *TRACTATUS*

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1. TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS AND AESTHETIC-FORMAL OUTCOMES

When in 1919 von Ficker, with regard to the eventual publication of the *Abhandlung* in «*Der Brenner*», proposed to remove the propositions numeration, Wittgenstein objected: «By the way the decimal numbers of my propositions would have to be unconditionally printed, since they alone give the book lucidity and clarity, and it would be an incomprehensible jumble without them».¹ From then on, generations of readers have instead perceived the propositions numeration as a misunderstood jumble. Today one sees that the decimals can be interpreted as detailed specifications for the definition of a hypertext, so as to untangle the propositional cascade in a precise net of virtual pages. Once established one determined semantic of sights and connections, the translation in hypertext takes place in a non arbitrary way, faithfully reconstructing, on the new support, the structure designed by Wittgenstein himself. As it can be experimented in (Wittgenstein 2005), surfing throughout the hypertext offers

1 «ein unverständlicher Wust» (Wittgenstein 1969, 39). Letter of 5.12.1919.

original perspectives, which a reader of the sequential text with detached ability to formal representation could picture himself only at the cost of a remarkable abstraction effort.

The new instrument provides for the structural relations and releases the mental resources before destined to memorise the architectonic nexuses. This favours a reading more consonant to Wittgenstein's invite: «don't think: look at!». The hypertextual page collects the sentences following the natural level relationship and offers them to the reader by unitary «sights», logically and aesthetically concluded. The translation of logical shapes into aesthetic shapes, and vice versa, not only enriches the communication, but just becomes part of the message.

Secondly, the idea of proposition as image finds here its effective representation. «*Auf den ersten Blick scheint der Satz — wie er etwa auf dem Papier gedruckt steht — kein Bild der Wirklichkeit zu sein, von der er handelt*», safeguarded himself Wittgenstein. But a proposition visualised on the hypertextual page, and not simply printed, assumes therefore a nature of image; its morphology develop in a ductile and articulated way; the text assumes its destined place in a plastic manner, into a morphological frame which is modelled according to substantially iconic representations. Also in the pure nakedness of the propositional approach, the potentiality of the hypertext suggests that wealth of expressive modalities that Wittgenstein keeps in his mind when he examines the relation between propositional outline and positional outline, or interrogates on the interchangeability between phrase and picture, verbal representation and by-model representation. Consequently, the attention to the visual registry finds in the hypertextual picture its natural answer.

2. VIRTUAL PAGES

The home page appears at once something different from a directory of seven *Cardinalsätze*.² Travelled over by the mouse, it reveals itself an alive object; it reacts showing the thickness of the first six asserts, which open

2 In the typescript TS204 (so-called «Gmunden») the note to the first proposition specified: «*So sind die Sätze 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 die Cardinalsätze, die Sätze n.1, n. 2, etc. Bemerkungen zum Satz N° n, die Sätze n. m1, n. m2, etc. Bemerkungen zum Satze N° n. m, und so weiter*».

to the world of what can be said. On the opposite, the seventh seal remains pure admonition, an immaterial wrapper that covers the variety of the events. The dance of full and empty, to which every time one is led back, animates the whole travel; it accompanies along the reduction towards particular and in the return to general. «All the sense of the book» – i. e. «*Was sich überhaupt sagen läßt, läßt sich klar sagen; und wovon man nicht reden kann, darüber muß man schweigen*» – expresses itself plastically through the dialectic opposition of density and rarefaction, matter and shape.

Gradually the main pages, which more often one travels through,³ dig their print in the mind of the reader. If we follow page 2 trace and choose route 2.1, we can find one of the most paradigmatic *Tractatus*' sights. Dedicated to the lapidary phrase «*Wir machen uns Bilder der Tatsachen*»,⁴ the frame embraces a fast sequence of nine steps, on which two distinguished formal ganglia seek attention. The first, of acoustics rather more than of grammatical nature, originates from an unusual assonance between propositions 2.17 («*Was das Bild mit der Wirklichkeit gemein haben muß, um sie auf seine Art und Weise — richtig oder falsch — abbilden zu können, ist seine Form der Abbildung*») and 2.18 («*Was jedes Bild, welcher Form immer, mit der Wirklichkeit gemein haben muß, um sie überhaupt — richtig oder falsch — abbilden zu können, ist die logische Form, das ist, die Form der Wirklichkeit*»). Why therefore are they so similar, these two phrases that deal about similarity? What do they have in common between them, meanwhile they explain what image and reality have in common?

As the visible adjustments on the manuscript confirm, here Wittgenstein meant to construct one charade. The two propositions have in common a

3 «In teaching you philosophy I'm like a guide showing you how to find your way round London. I have to take you through the city from north to south, from east to west, from Euston to the embankment and from Piccadilly to the Marble Arch. After I have taken you many journeys through the city, in all sorts of directions, we shall have passed through any given street a number of times - each time traversing the street as part of different journey. At end of this you will know London; you will be able to find your way about like a born Londoner. Of course, a good guide will take you through the more important streets more often than he takes you down side streets; a bad guide will do the opposite.» (Gasking-Jackson, 1967, 51).

4 Between the first ones to be composed (fourth in absolute on the first page of the *Prototractatus*), this proposition is also one of the last ones to be modified: the original version («*Die Tatsachen begreifen wir in Bildern*») is corrected by hand on the typescript, as (Engelmann 1967, 100) explains.

sensed phrase, which asserts that a picture has in common with reality the form («Was [] Bild mit der Wirklichkeit gemein haben muß, um sie— richtig oder falsch — abbilden zu können, ist Form»). On such background the differences stand out («I'll teach you differences», Wittgenstein loved to cite from *King Lear*). The 2.17 represents the side of singularity: a single picture, in the way it does, has in common with reality its pictorial form. The 2.18 picks the aspect of generalisation: any picture, of whatever form, at all, has in common with reality The logical form, i. e. the structure of reality. The formal game between the two propositions, which are translated into similar icons, shines on the page and invites to pursue their reflections and depictions.

The other anomaly is rougher: in the middle of the virtual page, proposition 2.15 is the only one that in effects is composed by two propositions. This creates a succulent accumulation in the centre that ends by attracting the mouse. Otherwise this history of *Tractatus*' «propositions», that simple propositions often are not, disturbed formations of commentators will be useful to notice that the fully original part of the *Abhandlung*, that comprises its main skeleton and runs until the dividing line traced in October 1915 on page 28 of the *Prototractatus* note-book, contained 286 rigorously simple propositions: not one of them was composed by different periods. To start from page 28, several «propositions», drawn from other manuscripts, are often formed by several phrases. When finally the decimal numeration, beyond the function of «writing between the lines», assumed also that one in order to design complex architectures, it was necessary to assemble sometimes two (or more) periods, when the consequent illustrative branch regarded both. Therefore, in the 1918 «*korrektur*» the two paragraphs of proposition 2.15,⁵ before independent, are reunited at the middle of the page. They so illustrate as the possibility of a representation – indeed, of every possible structure – needs complexity.

A mouse that wishes to inquire such a structure will suddenly find itself in a thin passage, formed by only one tortuous concept (2.151: «Die Form der Abbildung ist die Möglichkeit, daß sich die Dinge so zu einander verhalten, wie die Elemente des Bildes»). It leads to a pentagram of further comments;

5 «Daß sich die Elemente des Bildes in bestimmter Art und Weise zu einander verhalten, stellt vor, daß sich die Sachen so zu einander verhalten. Dieser Zusammenhang der Elemente des Bildes heiße seine Struktur und ihre Möglichkeit seine Form der Abbildung».

it is on the tip of these sensitive fingers that «*das Bild ist so mit der Wirklichkeit verknüpft, es reicht bis zu ihr*»(2.1511). Thanks to «*den Zuordnungen der Elemente des Bildes und der Sachen*» (2.1514), reality perhaps can even be touched: «*Diese Zuordnungen sind gleichsam die Fühler der Bildelemente, mit denen das Bild die Wirklichkeit berührt*» (2.1515).

It is difficult to give back the clear impression that in that moment the hypertextual navigation gives, the impression i.e. to find ourselves exactly on the thin veins of the feeler that the 2.1 branch tends towards the real world. «Here by 'fühler' - specifies Wittgenstein to the editor Odgen - I meant the things which a butterfly has» (Wittgenstein 1973, 24). The delicate extremity of the feeler still has a last extroversion: if the image wishes to become meter and intends to measure scientifically,⁶ in order to touch it must go further beyond: «*Nur die äußersten Punkte der Teilstriche berühren den zu messenden Gegenstand*» (2.15121).

3. HORNS OF A DILEMMA

Therefore as the *Tractatus* is rich in metaphors, equally the hypertext is crossed by plastic shapes, that variously model the course of the exposure. Let's take an example of more technical argument, drawn from branch 4.4. The screen culminates in the 4.46, assembled from a nucleus from page 13 of the *Prototractatus*: «*Unter den möglichen Gruppen von Wahrheitsbedingungen gibt es zwei extreme Fälle*»: tautology and contradiction. Also the relative page collects material of ancient sedimentation, drawn from *Notes on Logic* and the 1914-15 Notebooks. But the architecture is completely redesigned in the final *korrektur*, until tracing a panorama that has at its center the topic of the margin of the possibilities: «*Die Wahrheitsbedingungen bestimmen den Spielraum, der den Tatsachen durch den Satz gelassen wird. [...] Die Tautologie läßt der Wirklichkeit den ganzen — unendlichen — logischen Raum; die Kontradiktion erfüllt den ganzen logischen Raum und läßt der Wirklichkeit keinen Punkt. Keine von beiden kann daher die Wirklichkeit irgend wie bestimmen*» (4.463). The proposition reproduces the most plastic

6. «*Es ist wie ein Maßstab an die Wirklichkeit angelegt*» (2.1512).

corporeal similitude of the entire work, that one of the solid which delimits the space around, and *vice versa*, of a solid space that delimits an empty zone. In dealing contextually as of tautology than of contradiction, the page assumes therefore a bipolar course, around to the heavy centre of the possible space: asserting the not-sense of tautology and contradiction «*(Wie der Punkt von dem zwei Pfeile in entgegengesetzter Richtung auseinandergehen)*» (4.461), through the relationship with the margin left to the facts, in order to confirm finally in them the dissolution of sign nexus (4.466). From the architectonic point of view, the virtual page still turned out unbalanced: it had in fact only one deepening at point 4.461, with the essential specification: «*Tautologie und Kontradiktion sind aber nicht unsinnig; sie gehören zum Symbolismus und zwar ähnlich wie die 0*» zum Symbolismus der Arithmetik» (4.4611). With one of the few additions to the typescript during the imprisonment at Monte Cassino, Wittgenstein then tries to counterbalance the annotation with a second symmetrical note, inserted at the other side of the page (4.4661): «*Freilich sind auch in der Tautologie und Kontradiktion die Zeichen noch mit einander verbunden, d.h. sie stehen in Beziehungen zu einander, aber diese Beziehungen sind bedeutungslos, dem Symbol unwesentlich*». It counters the *bedeutungslos* of sign relations with the *nicht unsinnig* of the symbol, and it studies itself to lead back the paradoxical conclusion of the 4.466 (dissolution of the sign nexus) to its effective understanding (the connection exists, but it does not have propositional content); exactly like 4.4611, recalling the use of the 0 in Arithmetic, moderated the appearing extremism of: they do not mean anything (*sind sinnlos, aber nicht unsinnig*).

Finding again its equilibrium, the page alludes in its sensitive shape to the duplicity that crosses it, that dichotomy between tautology and contradiction which also joins both in an unique interchanging use.

4. WHERE THAT LADDER LEADS

In a sequential reading, section 6 of the *Tractatus* is sometimes perceived as a march of approach to proposition 7. Nevertheless, proposition 7 is the first one recalled by Wittgenstein, who cites it in the preface as essential to the general sense of the work. In the contrast between what can and what cannot

be said, it constantly accompanies us and at every passage on the homepage it confirms its alert presence. Hypertextual page 6 isn't therefore nearer or farther from proposition 7 than any other. It's true that, as (Engelmann 1967, 98) remembers, when Wittgenstein grazed the land of ethics hurried to add: but this cannot be spoken about. The same conditioned glare must have been released when, on page 71 of the note-book *Prototractatus*, Wittgenstein annotates: «*Alle Sätze sind gleichwertig*», and immediately after: «*7. Wovon man nicht sprechen kann, darüber muß man schweigen*». But this, in virtue of the numeration, went to complete the first page, concurring at the first typescript realized, according to (McGuinness 2002), in autumn 1916. Such overall view, so much as Wittgenstein discussions with his friends in Olmütz, allowed a less contracted structuring of *Abhandlung* last part. Hypertextual page 6 remains in fact one of the most measured. It characterizes the proper land of logic (6.1: *Die Sätze der Logik sind Tautologien*), of mathematics (equations, therefore *Scheinsätze*, 6.2), and of empirical sciences (reign of accident, since «*außerhalb der Logik ist alles Zufall*», 6.3). In this context, «*Alle Sätze sind gleichwertig*» (6.4) is a philosophically unexceptionable assertion, that fully describes the terms of the problem. Equally positive, in its double negativity, it's assert 6.5, which concludes: «*Das Rätsel gibt es nicht*». Therefore, «*wenn sich eine Frage überhaupt stellen läßt, so kann sie auch beantwortet werden*».

In hypertextual navigation, this page can by full right be considered a first level conclusion, because it's the last one of the reachable sights from the homepage. With the insertion of 6.3 and 6.5 propositions, such virtual page was already present in the second typescript version, correspondent –as McGuinness assumes– to the state of advance of the *Prototractatus* in 1916 winter (until page 78, presumably). The first level conclusion is therefore that to every sensible question can be found, on line of principle, an answer.

In the 1916 *Abhandlung* it is possible to characterize also a second order conclusive page, reachable from the last link of the first level conclusion. It comprised 6.51, against the skeptical doubt that there are answers, and 6.52, that guarantees some outcome also regarding vital problems not touched by all possible scientific questions: «*Freilich bleibt dann eben keine Frage mehr: und eben dies ist die Antwort*». The conclusion of second level corroborates

the previous one resuming the underlining of the possibility (the *possible* scientific questions) and the final accentuation on the «Antwort».

The other parts of branch 6.5 had already appeared in the notebooks (except for 6.54), but they were recovered in the *Abhandlung* only some months later. But they do not change the sense of the frame. In a gasping sequential rise, it can happen that, when reaching the last pages of the book, the eagerness leads the reader to imagine an end with run-up: «my propositions elucidate...»: «to recognize them as nonsensical...», «to climb up beyond...», «to throw away the ladder...» «to see straight...» «... one must be silent». The accident by which proposition seven in the sequential version immediately follows proposition 6.54 draws to deceit: to go beyond [the 6.54?] seems to say to arrive until assert seven, to exceed it of overlong, and to reach therefore, without further words, the reign of the mystical. To cross the proposition seven would be like a bath of inner transfiguration: one would abandon the language and the world of the signs, in order to conquer a different power of intellectual intuition.

Nothing farther away from what suggests the reading by hypertextual levels. The ladder we glimpse is the one we have already covered, are the doors we have crossed, are the supports and the steps —«my propositions»: proposition seven comprised, of course— that we have used during the travel. Being propositions the means, and not the aim, we do not have to stop at them, but we must watch under new light the world that they explain. To see the world straight is the scope and the conclusion of the *Tractatus*: that same world from which proposition 1 starts: «Die Welt ist alles, was der Fall ist». The world to see straight is not the one of a mystical silence, and even less something beyond proposition seven, but it's always and only what the language can represent.

A corroboration is gained from the original text of the conclusive phrase, as it was annotated (with distinct number) at page 86 of the *Prototractatus* notebook: «6.55 Er muß diese Sätze überwinden dann kommt er auf der richtigen Stufe zu dem was sich sagen läßt». Later on, the detail «zu dem was sich sagen läßt» (to what can be said) has seemed obvious, and better expressed replacing with the equivalent «zur Welt». *Die Welt* becomes therefore the arrival point of the *Abhandlung* as the start one. In the passage to the typescript, it is finally absorbed also the reference to proceeding by levels, so typical of the

hypertextual sights; this also was pure instrumental and can be resolved into a more essential «to see straight»: «dann sieht er die Welt richtig».

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