

How Showing Takes Care of Itself

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ABSTRACT. In this essay, I take up James Conant and Cora Diamond's suggestion that "to take the difference between saying and showing deeply enough is not to give up on showing but to give up on picturing it as a 'what'" (Conant and Diamond 2004, 63). I try to establish that the *Tractatus's* talk of "showing" (*zeigen*) is more coherent than is usually appreciated, that it is indeed a key to the internal unity of the book (as its author claimed), and that it *positively* helps us to work our way into the practice of philosophy (which its author understood as a practice of logical clarification). Thus, it is not a stretch of latent nonsense whose sole function is to conjure up an illusion of sense in order to feature its disintegration. While Wittgenstein's concept of showing is not meant to "make up for" the impossibility of saying certain things, neither does it stand in need of being "redeemed." Whether or not it is to prove ultimately (or even wholly) coherent, the *Tractatus's* talk of "showing," I shall argue, is certainly not to be "thrown away" in the name of the Tractarian conception of logic (we cannot make mistakes in [on behalf of] logic), for the simple reason that it essentially belongs with it. Central to the reading articulated here is the contention that to find our way through the ramifications of the *Tractatus's* talk of "showing," we must advert to the verbal diathesis that is its hallmark: namely, a certain form of the "middle voice" (what is called "*Medium*" in German), explicit in the intransitive verbal form "*sich zeigen*" (showing itself). What the verbal diathesis assumed by "showing" in the

Tractatus reflects is that what shows itself is neither agent nor patient of but immanent to its showing. What shows is hardly inexpressible. If only as an antidote, we might say that it is, if anything, not impossible so much as *superfluous* for *us* to express what shows, given that it expresses itself (*ausdrückt sich*) anyway—that it shows itself irrespective of what we do (or intend to do). For logic to take care of itself (5.473) just is for showing to take the medial form of showing-itself. It is for showing to take care of itself: for showing to *be* how logic takes care of itself.

One sample does not refute or disconfirm another.
—Stanley Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*¹

While the topic of showing (*zeigen*) is notoriously central to Wittgenstein's early work, if not to his work as a whole, it seems fair to say that it has somewhat receded into the background of recent discussions of it, despite (if not due to)² their focus on the question whether the *Tractatus* takes nonsensical sentences of a certain kind to "show what cannot be said." The two topics are of course hardly disjoint. However, the former deserves attention in its own right.

In this essay, I take up James Conant and Cora Diamond's suggestion that "to take the difference between saying and showing deeply enough is not to give up on showing but to give up on picturing it as a 'what'" (Conant and Diamond 2004, 63). I try to establish that the *Tractatus*'s talk of "showing" (*zeigen*) is more coherent than is usually appreciated, that it is indeed a key to the internal unity of the book (as its author claimed), and that it *positively* helps us to work our way into the practice of philosophy (which its author understood as a practice of logical clarification). Thus, it is not a stretch of latent nonsense whose sole function is to conjure up an illusion of sense in order to feature its disintegration. While Wittgenstein's concept of showing is not meant to "make up for" the impossibility of saying certain things, neither does it stand in need of being "redeemed."

Whether or not it is to prove ultimately (or even wholly) coherent, the *Tractatus*'s talk of "showing," I shall argue, is certainly not to be "thrown away" in the name of the Tractarian conception of logic (we cannot make mistakes in [on behalf of] logic), for the simple reason that it essentially belongs with it. Central to the reading articulated here is the contention that to find our way through the ramifications of the *Tractatus*'s talk of "showing," we must advert to the verbal diathesis that is its hallmark: namely, a certain form of the "middle voice" (what is called "*Medium*" in German), explicit in the intransitive verbal form "*sich zeigen*" (showing itself). What the verbal diathesis assumed by "showing" in the *Tractatus* reflects is that what shows itself is neither agent nor patient of but immanent to its showing. What shows is hardly inexpressible. If only as an antidote, we might say that it is, if anything, not impossible so much as *superfluous* for *us* to express what shows, given that it expresses itself (*ausdrückt sich*) anyway—that it shows itself irrespective of what we do (or intend to do). For logic to take care of itself (5.473) just is

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I. ELEMENTS OF A NON-CONTRASTIVE UNDERSTANDING OF THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN SHOWING FORTH AND BEING SAID

1. THE PLACE OF SHOWING IN THE *TRACTATUS*

Perhaps the best-known feature of the *Tractatus*, because the most perplexing one, is that its success at exposing the nonsensicality of pseudo-philosophical problems requires of it to traffic itself in nonsense. The *Tractatus* famously culminates in a gesture of self-retraction. In the penultimate section of the book (6.54), we are told that the elucidatory sentences that the book comprises only achieve what they are meant to achieve—to elucidate (*erläutern*)—to the extent that we understand it to be the *intention* of their author that they be recognized as nonsensical (*unsinnig*)—as so many rungs of a ladder that must be thrown away once it has helped us attain “the correct perspective on the world.”³ By the time we reach the end of the book it has become clear that it does not abide by its own strictures as to what qualifies as “the only correct method” of philosophy, if only because it does not rest content with “saying nothing but what can be said” (6.53). This forces on us the question of the *point* of the method that it *does* employ. In which respect, if any, does the nonsense in which the book wittingly engages qualify as *illuminating*, in contrast to the *misleading* nonsense into which pseudo-thinking unwittingly lapses.

That most of the book does not make sense by its own lights, we had been suspecting all along, as it emphatically (sometimes almost comically) talks about what it says cannot be talked about (e.g., about “logical form”). As we try to come to terms with this perplexing fact about the book, we are most likely to indulge into a form of “double-thinking” (see Conant 2002, 422; Sullivan 2004, 35). We discern, we think, the reason of and for the nonsense. What makes it impossible for the book to say what it tries to say is also what justifies it in trying to say it: it deliberately tries to say what it knows to be impossible to say in order to bring out, through its very failure at saying it, why it is impossible to say it. It deliberately runs up against the limits of language, tries to get outside the sphere of the thinkable (of “logical space,” as Wittgenstein calls it), in order to bring out, through its very failure at doing so, why it cannot be done, what it is about the limit of the sphere of the thinkable that makes it insurmountable. In particular, it may seem to us, the book deliberately tries to articulate categorial distinctions in order to bring out, through its very failure at doing so, what they are and why there is no getting around them (why they constitute limitations to which thought is subject). It is as if elucidatory sentences were marking out the limit of the thinkable by standing right on it.

Natural as it may be, the temptation to engage in such “double-thinking” is one the Preface forewarns us against, and of whose sterility 5.61 (after 3.03 and 4.12) reminds us: to regard it as an intelligible enterprise to draw a limit to thinking after the above fashion just is to regard it as an intelligible possibility to stand with one foot on the outer side of that limit, hence to regard it as an intelligible possibility to think what cannot be thought and so to think illogically. But to “think illogically” is simply nonsense for “not to think”: beyond the limit lies nothing but mere nonsense (*einfach Unsinn*). In a nutshell:

5.61 What we cannot think, we cannot think. So what we cannot think,
we cannot *say* either.⁴

Of *any* notion—such as the notion of showing (*zeigen*)—that is not *obviously* to be discounted from the range of those that figure *only* in rungs of the ladder, we are bound to wonder whether we are meant to make sense. But the status of the notion of showing is in some other respects unique. First, it figures prominently in passages in which Wittgenstein presents the main point of his book and which it seems implausible to regard as merely therapeutic in function,⁵ such as this well-known passage from a letter to Russell of August 19, 1919:

I'm afraid you haven't really got hold of my main contention, to which the whole business of logical propositions is only a corollary. The main point is the theory of what can be expressed [*gesagt*] by propositions—i.e. by language—(and, which comes to the same, what can be thought) and what cannot be expressed by propositions, but only shown [*gezeigt*]; which, I believe, is the cardinal problem of philosophy.

Again, in a letter to Engelman (see the quotation below), Wittgenstein explains that in refraining from attempting to utter the unutterable (*das Unaussprechliche*) one allows it to be unutterably contained in what is uttered, which links up with 6.522, where he says that there is such a thing as the unutterable (ineffable) (*das Unaussprechliche*) and that it shows itself (*zeigt sich*).

Second, and relatedly, the notion of showing has a direct bearing on the tangle of issues in 6.54. It goes together with a notion of what cannot be said (4.1212) that is *prima facie* *distinct* from the one that collapses into that of mere nonsense. And it is essentially bound up with the question of the expression of distinctions between logical categories. It is meant to provide a way out of the predicament in which we are apparently caught whenever we attempt to express such distinctions: we seem to have no choice but to help ourselves to the very sort of cross-categorical talk which such distinctions preclude. Thus, the questions raised by the notion of showing both crystallize and compound with the difficulties raised by the method of the book.

To some readers, however, the topic of showing has seemed to provide a way out of the above double bind toward elucidatory sentences. On what has been dubbed the “standard reading” of 6.54, elucidatory sentences fail to make sense because of *what* they try to and fail at saying. In so failing at saying anything, they nonetheless manage to gesture silently at what lies beyond the limits of language.

For, through their very failure to say what they try and fail at saying, they somehow manage to convey *it*. They somehow hint at it, “show” it. Thus, what cannot be said can *nonetheless* be “shown.” The notion of what can be said is understood in a *restrictive* way; that of what can be shown, in a *compensatory* way.

The first thing to observe about this reading is that the language in which it is clothed breeds confusion insofar as it blurs the distinction between showing, in the sense in which this term (i.e., the term *zeigen*) is used in the *Tractatus*, and the conveying of ineffable insights by means of nonsensical propositions, in which it takes Tractarian elucidation (*Erläuterung*) to consist, or even obliterates that distinction (by using the Tractarian label “showing” [*zeigen*] for the latter)—when it does not negate it altogether (by) (see Conant 2002; Conant and Diamond 2004, 48, 87). It bears emphasizing in this respect that what Wittgenstein says about showing (*zeigen*) in the *Tractatus* has no obvious or direct relevance to the question how nonsensical sentences might elucidate (Conant and Diamond 2004, 48). Not only does the *Tractatus* scrupulously mark the distinction between showing and elucidating (Conant 2002, 425), but also the sense that the *Tractatus* itself reserves for the term *zeigen* does not apply to nonsense⁶: “a ‘proposition’ that is *unsinnig* (contrary to the ineffability interpretation) neither says nor shows anything (which is not to say that it cannot elucidate)” (Conant 2002, 429). Showing does not apply to sentences taken to be neither senseful nor tautologies nor contradictions. The notion of showing deployed by the standard reading is concocted (I shall refer to it as “showing”) (Cp. Conant 2002, 425).

The standard reading, to the extent that it helps itself to the idea that strings of signs can gesture at ineffable truths through their very failure to make sense, seems designed to allay the pressure exerted by the remarks that clue us in the intentions of the book. However, as Peter Sullivan notes, “the cover these labels [‘say’ and ‘show’] provide is here patently thin. Showing, as it figures in this story, is patently a matter of showing that something is so. So long as that is the case, ‘show’ will serve only as an alternative to ‘say’ when, without it, we would openly and obviously contradict ourselves” (Sullivan 2004, 37). In fact, it is hard to see how such a reading can accommodate the *Tractatus*’s insistence that only what can be thought *clearly* can be thought *at all*.

But the more forceful, and to my mind decisive, objection against this reading is that it flies in the face of Wittgenstein’s insistence that we cannot so much *fail* in (on behalf of) logic (see Diamond 1991; Conant 2002; Jolley 2007). In taking failed attempts at articulating categorial distinctions to bring out what they are and why there is no getting around them (why they constitute limitations to which thought is subject), the standard reading opens a gap between the logical category of what a sign signifies and how that sign is actually used in a sentence. But the originality of the *Tractatus* lies precisely in its denial of the intelligibility of such a gap (see Diamond 1991; Conant 2002).

On the alternative, “resolute” reading of 6.54, elucidatory sentences are meant by their author to take us in, to induce us into imagining that we somehow understand what they try and fail to say, only to make us realize by ourselves that the

illusion that we do understand *what* they try and fail at saying, and *why* they fail at saying it, is the very illusion which they are ultimately meant to counter. In other words, “the illusion that the *Tractatus* seeks to explode, above all, is that we can run up against the limits of language” (Conant 2002, 424). Accordingly, on this alternative reading, the standard reading of the *Tractatus* partakes of its very target (see Conant 2002, 422).

Getting the standard reading out of our way, however, hardly resolves the puzzle posed by Tractarian showing—unless, that is, we are prepared to grant to the standard reader that the notion of showing apparently deployed in the book is *meant* to invite *his* reading, that his reading unwittingly captures the very sort of outlook that the *Tractatus*’s talk of “showing” is meant to conjure up for the sake of therapy. While some resolute readers have abstained from embracing such an approach (see, e.g., Floyd 2001) or positively recoiled at it (in addition to the works of Conant and Diamond, see Ostrow 2002 and Floyd 2007), others have leaned toward (see, e.g., Ricketts 1996; Kremer 2001; Kuusela 2008) or positively adopted it (see, e.g., Read and Deans 2003; McManus 2006⁷). Still others have taken the subtler view that the *Tractatus*’s idiom of “showing” stands in need of being “redeemed” (i.e., rescued from the nonsense to which it *prima facie* amounts), as it oscillates between a way of talking that fuels the standard reading and a way of talking that is “innocent” (see Kremer 2002, 2007).

But it is one thing to claim that the *Tractatus* invites a misreading in terms of *showing; it is another thing to claim that the very sections that mention showing (*zeigen*) invite that misreading of the book by inviting a reading of them in terms of *showing; and it is still a third thing to claim that these sections are *meant* to invite that misreading of the book insofar as they are *meant* to be read in terms of *showing and perhaps not readable otherwise. According to the third claim, *showing does not misconstrue Tractarian showing after all. The incoherence of *showing betrays the incoherence of Tractarian showing. However, in granting that Tractarian showing calls for being read in terms of showing that, this version of the resolute reading does not only run the risk of oversimplifying the standard reading (see Sullivan 2002, 50): it also, and more importantly, runs the risk of oversimplifying the dialectic of the *Tractatus*. It risks painting itself in a corner: the more grossly incoherent is *showing, the weaker is the target with which the *Tractatus* means to engage. An interpretation of showing that takes the standard interpretation of it to be *exactly* wrong gives up on showing too hastily. It grants *too much* to the standard reading.

A second respect in which some versions of the resolute reading may fail to distance themselves enough from the standard reading is that they tend to adopt the latter’s loose way of speaking about the “ineffable.” In effect, resolute readers and standard readers alike tend to use interchangeably the terms “inexpressible,” “unsayable,” “ineffable,” “unutterable,” as if they were more or less synonymous by the lights of the *Tractatus*. This loose way of talking might be in some ways nearly as damaging as the loose way of talking about saying and showing on which some

versions of the standard reading trade (see Conant 2002, 382). For there is every reason to think that Wittgenstein is at pains to mark distinct notions by means of the corresponding German terms. Thus, while “unsayable” straightforwardly renders “*unsagbar*,” “inexpressible” is a most natural way of referring to what does not admit of expression in the Tractarian sense of the word (*Ausdruck*), and “unutterable” (or for that matter, “ineffable”) well renders “*unaussprechlich*.” But, as we shall see in more details below, while what can be shown (*gezeigt werden kann*) can in a way be deemed “unsayable,” since it is “not sayable” (*kann nicht gesagt werden*) (4.1212), it can hardly be said to be “inexpressible,” since it is precisely to the extent that it “expresses itself” (*sich ausdrückt*) that what shows forth cannot be said. It is not at all inexpressible: it is inexpressible *by a proposition* (not sayable), because inexpressible *by us*. Again, contrary to what existing English translations suggest, there is no mention of the inexpressible in 6.522:

6.522 There is indeed the unutterable.
It shows forth, it is the mystical.⁸

Nor is there any mention of the inexpressible in the letter to Engelman of April 9, 1917:

And this is how it is: if one does not endeavor to utter the unutterable, then nothing gets lost. But the unutterable will be—unutterably—contained in what is uttered.⁹

This may seem terminological quibbling. But it ties up with what most certainly is not: how to understand what the author of the *Tractatus* presents in the Preface as the task of his book, namely “to draw a limit” (*eine Grenze ziehen*) “to the expression of thoughts” (*dem Ausdruck der Gedanken*), one beyond which nothing lies but mere nonsense (*einfach Unsinn*), non-expression parading as expression, non-expression looking or sounding like expression.

This is the enterprise that supplants the illusory enterprise of “drawing a limit to thought.” Unlike the latter, it draws the limits of sense *from within* (4.114); it does not involve any attempt at stepping outside logic. It can still count as an enterprise of drawing the limit of thought *under the condition that* the concept of “limit” be construed in a non-contrastive way. I am here taking my cue from Peter Sullivan: “In both his early and his later work Wittgenstein is concerned with understanding the limits of thought. By the notion of a limit here is meant something set by, so essentially equivalent to, the essential nature or form of what it limits. It is the notion used when one says that a space is limited by its geometry (to take Wittgenstein’s favourite analogy from the *Tractatus*). This notion of a limit is not a contrastive one. There is nothing thought-like excluded by the limits of thought for lacking thought’s essential nature, just as there are no points excluded from space for being contra-geometrical” (Sullivan 2011a; see also Sullivan 1996, 197; Diamond 2012; Moore 2012, 233–34).

In what follows, I shall mainly seek to articulate a non-contrastive account of the distinction “between showing and saying” (as it is standardly called) in the

hope that it can contribute to a non-contrastive account of the limits of sense. I shall trace a connection between the *Tractatus's* view of logic as the all-embracing unbounded medium of thought and the medium-character (in the grammatical sense) of showing.

In any case, I hope to have said enough in this section to motivate the diagnosis that we must try harder at making sense of Tractarian showing. If we should fail, at least we shall—to paraphrase Beckett's *Worstward How*—fail better.

2. THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN SHOWING ITSELF AND BEING SAID

It is readily admitted by all parties to the debate, if not altogether taken for granted, that the book contains a certain contrastive distinction that is aptly denominated “the say vs. show distinction” and that turns upon an opposition between “what can be said” and “what cannot be said but only shown.” At most, the aptness of the definite article is questioned, that is to say, the implication that the book contains one single distinction, and that showing always stands in contrast to saying. The central question is taken to be what we are to make of the distinction. And surely, as mere shorthand, this designation may seem entirely innocuous by itself. But does the *Tractatus* so much as mention a “say vs. show distinction”? I shall suggest that the designation is not nearly as innocuous as it looks. In fact, it misconstrues *ab initio* the grammar of “show” (*zeigen*) in the book.

There *is* a distinction lurking in the vicinity. But it could only be misleadingly called in the above way. Whether we are to make the right kind of sense of the book's use of “show” or only to learn from our failure to make any sense of it, we had better get hold of the right distinction to begin with. We must climb the right ladder. Accordingly, in this section, I begin to lay out what I take to be the grammar of “showing” in the *Tractatus*. This grammar is often disfigured for lack of an appreciation of the principle of its unity. It will be claimed in the next section that its principle of its unity lies in the employment of a certain variety of (what grammarians call) the “middle voice” (or “medial diathesis”).¹⁰ The latter reflects an endeavor to honor and articulate the insight that logic is to take care of itself (5.5473). The *Tractatus* is a book in which the grammatical distinction between the “active voice” and the “middle voice” takes on logical significance.¹¹ The grammatical category of the medial diathesis can also help to trace the relations entertained by a whole array of Tractarian concepts that might otherwise seem only loosely related. When we read the *Tractatus*, we are apt to look for lexical unity where grammatical unity stares us in the face.

The distinction that can be found in the *Tractatus*, I shall suggest, is not a contrast between what we can say and what we can *only* show by means of propositions, but instead a non-contrastive distinction between what shows itself (*zeigt sich*) in propositions and what can be said *by means of* propositions.¹² This section traces the contrastive interpretation to the collusion of a restrictive understanding of “what can be said” and a compensatory understanding of “what can be shown.”

In order to get a first inkling of the distinction that does figure in the book, the best place to begin with is 4.1212:

4.1212 What *can* be shown *cannot* be said.
Was gezeigt werden kann, kann nicht gesagt werden.

Syntactically, Wittgenstein's sentence is built around an axis of symmetry that passes in between the two occurrences of the modal auxiliary verb "*kann*" (*can*). The double emphasis on the two occurrences of "*kann*," on each side of the caesura marked by the comma, heightens the perfect balance that the sentence achieves between its two parts. The resulting effect is that the two symmetric parts into which the sentence divides stand to each other like mirror images. The possibility of being shown as it were turns its back on the possibility of being said.¹³

In face of the widely shared belief that in 4.1212 Wittgenstein invokes a certain distinction between "saying and showing"—or at least one between "what can be said and what can be shown"—it is worth noting from the outset that Wittgenstein did *not* write: "What *cannot* be said *can* nevertheless be shown" (*Was gesagt werden nicht kann, kann dennoch gezeigt werden*), 4.1212, that is to say, is not about "what cannot be said." In fact, it makes no mention of "what cannot be said." It is about what can be shown. Of what can be shown, it says that it is not such as to admit of being said; or again—to the extent that it says no more—that it is such as not to admit of being said. There is no suggestion that the possibility of being shown counterbalances the impossibility of being said, as if the former were a partial compensation for the restriction constituted by the latter. The section simply contains no trace of a distinction between "what can be said" and "what can only be shown."

On the face of things, section 4.1212 is content to point out that with the possibility of being shown comes along the impossibility of being said. Saying of what shows itself that it can be shown and saying of it that it cannot be said, these are not ways of saying two opposed things (i.e., that in some sense it *is*, while in some other sense it *is not*, expressible by us) but, rather, two ways of saying the very same thing: for what shows itself to be showable simply is for it not to be sayable; its not being sayable is not something over and above its being showable. The two aspects are strictly equivalent. One switches from the one to the other by a mere reversal of perspective. The possibility of being shown does not clash with that of being said. It cancels it. Wherever the possibility of being shown is in order, the possibility of being said is void. Logically speaking, the two possibilities stand back to back, as it were.

At this point, it might be objected that the reading of 4.1212 just adumbrated is only sustainable so long as it is read in isolation from the rest of the book. The view that the distinction at play in 4.1212 is in the last event one between "what can be said" and "what can only be shown," might be said to get support from various tracts of the text, starting with the very one in which 4.1212 occurs.

It is true that the section under the head of which 4.1212 occurs (4.12) explicitly draws a contrast between what the proposition can present and what it cannot present. It seems to suggest that while there is no restriction whatsoever on what

the proposition can present *of reality* (it can present the whole reality), what it presents is still subject to this fundamental restriction, that it cannot present the logical form of reality (i.e., what it must share with reality if it is to present it at all). The sections 2.17s, to which 4.12 runs parallel, likewise insist that a picture (*Bild*) can depict (*abbilden*) every reality whose form it has (i.e., whose 'pictorial form' [*Form der Abbildung*] it shares) (2.171) *but* (*aber*) not its pictorial form itself (2.172). In 2.172, the claim that a picture cannot depict its pictorial form is juxtaposed with the claim that it manifests it (*er weist sie auf*), as if the two were standing on a level. Thus, it must be admitted that the very section in which the Tractarian concept of showing (*zeigen*) is first deployed, if only implicitly, in the guise of the cognate concept of manifesting (*aufweisen*), leaves room for the impression that the picture is essentially endowed with a power to show that partially offsets an essential restriction afflicting its power to depict.

Nevertheless, the sections that develop the meaning of 4.12 precisely work at undoing the notion that the presentation of reality is subject to such a restriction. In effect, as it progressively unpacks the meaning of 4.12, the sequence that culminates in 4.1212 forestalls any understanding of 4.12 that construes the negation of the logical possibility of presenting logical form as a *privation*. It implicitly pits against each other two distinct ways of construing the claim that philosophy marks out the region of the unthinkable entirely from within that of the thinkable (4.114–4.115). In effect, the main point of that sequence is that it is not so much logically impossible as it is logically *superfluous* to present logical form by means of a proposition, given that the manifestation of logical form *takes care of itself anyway*. It is not so much that philosophy cannot step outside the region of the thinkable as that it need not do so anyway. There isn't anything that cannot be presented by a proposition because there isn't anything that need be so presented in the first place. The sense of confinement that the line of reasoning summed up in 4.12 is apt to elicit turns on our mistaking the superfluous for the impossible. Conversely, according to the diagnosis on which the sequence of the 4.121s closes, that the manifestation of logical form takes care of itself is what grounds our feeling that we have *already* attained a correct logical perspective (*einer richtigen logischen Auffassung*), once we have perfected our logical notation (*Zeichensprache*) (4.1213). In a nutshell, while 4.12, like the earlier sequence foreshadowing it (2.171–2.173), might seem at first to make *some room* for a distinction between "what cannot be said" and "what can only be shown," it soon proves to be explicitly impugning any distinction of the sort.

To see how, we need to have the entire 4.121 sequence before our eyes:

- 4.121 The proposition cannot present the logical form, the logical form mirrors itself in it.
 What mirrors itself gets reflected in language, language cannot present.
 What expresses *itself* in language, *we* cannot express by means of language.
 The proposition *shows* the form of reality.

It manifests it.

Der Satz kann die logische Form nicht darstellen, sie spiegelt sich in ihm.

Was sich in der Sprache spiegelt, kann sie nicht darstellen.

Was sich in der Sprache ausdrückt, können wir nicht durch sie ausdrücken.

Der Satz zeigt die logische Form der Wirklichkeit.

Er weist sie auf.

- 4.1211 Thus one proposition “*fa*” shows that “*a*” occurs in its sense, two propositions “*fa*” and “*ga*” show that it is talked of the same object in both of them.

If two propositions contradict one another, this is shown by their structure; likewise, if the one follows from the other; and so on.

- 4.1212 What *can* be shown *cannot* be said.

Was gezeigt werden kann, kann nicht gesagt werden.

- 4.1213 Now we understand our feeling that we already are in possession of a correct logical conception (*einer richtigen logischen Auffassung*), if only all is right in our sign-language (*Zeichensprache*).

The first thing to note about 4.121 is that it is concerned with a distinction that is entirely located within the realm of the expressible. The locus of what can be shown is the sole proposition. Conspicuous at it might seem, this central feature of the distinction at stake in 4.121 is equally obscured by readings of the *Tractatus* that assume Tractarian “showing” (*zeigen*) to be readily predicable to nonsensical strings of signs and by readings that take the three concepts of “the unsayable” (*das Unsagbare*), “the unutterable” (*das Unaussprechliches*), and “the inexpressible,” to be more or less interchangeable in the *Tractatus*.¹⁴

Section 4.121 moves through a series of steps. The claim that the proposition shows or manifests the form of reality is reached at the end, as if the last term of a series of successive reformulations of the initial sentence, and strictly parasitic upon those. By the time we reach the claim that the proposition *shows* the form of reality, it is clear that this way of putting things is not to be taken wholly at face value, or at least is best regarded as but a short way of saying that the form of reality *shows itself* in the proposition. Like the caesura of 2.172, the caesura of the first sentence of 4.121 is open to more than one understanding. It might be held to have the value of an adversative coordinative conjunction such as “but” (*aber*). Nevertheless, the second sentence of 4.121 rules out this reading. It reverses the order of the first sentence so as to make clear that the reflection of logical form in the proposition, far from counterbalancing a restriction attending the power of the proposition to present (*darstellen*), makes it intelligible that it should not be in the latter’s power to present logical form. The distinction between, on the one hand, what gets reflected or reflects itself (*sich spiegelt*) in the proposition and, on the other hand, what the proposition presents (*darstellt*), is then recast as a distinction between what expresses *itself* (*sich ausdrückt*) in the proposition and what *we* express (*wir ausdrücken*) by assembling a proposition. In other words, it is

recast as a distinction between two radically heterogeneous modes of the “coming to expression” of whatever it is, that proves “expressible” (in its undifferentiated sense). To say that a proposition shows (*zeigt*) the logical form of reality, that it manifests it (*er weist sie auf*) in the way that any picture does, just is to say that, as *we* express something by means of that proposition, the logical form of reality expresses *itself* in it. What looked to be impossible (for us to express logical form) has turned out to be superfluous: it finds itself expressed anyway, quite apart from us. What is unsayable—that is, not expressible *by us*—is not inexpressible, for the simple reason that it is always already expressed in the mode of what expresses itself.¹⁵ What is unsayable—or rather, more properly, not-sayable—does not lie beyond our reach, on the far side of the circle of the expressible. It lies at its very center as it were. It lies, so to speak, not far enough for us to be able to express it. There can be no need for us to express it. Indeed, it must constantly be kept in mind that to regard the system of logic as a universal medium is to hold not just “that nothing can be,” but also that nothing “*has to be*,” said outside of the system (Van Heijenoort 1985, 13) (my emphasis).¹⁶

Key to 4.121, and more generally to the 4.121 sequence as a whole, is the distinction just alluded to between two non-overlapping modes of expression, one of which has *nothing* to do with us, while the other has *everything* to do with us. It would be misleading, however, to think of expression (*Ausdruck*) as a genus dividing into two coordinate species (presumably, “*das Ausdrücken* and “*das Sich-ausdrücken*”). Correlatively, the emphasis on the superfluity of saying what expresses itself should not be regarded as more than an “antidote” to the emphasis usually laid on its impossibility.

The ubiquity, throughout the book, of “show itself” (*sich zeigen*) and other verbal phrases with the same grammar (on which more in section 3) such as “*sich ausdrücken*” and “*sich spiegeln*,” confirms what the 4.12s already suggest: namely, that the notion of what is shown by a proposition is to be understood in terms of the notion of what shows itself (*zeigt sich*) *in* (*am*) a proposition, rather than conversely. The distinction between what a proposition shows and what it says is derivative. What is said is essentially said *by* a proposition. Moreover, for a proposition to say that *p* is essentially *for us* to say that *p* by means of a proposition. By contrast, what is shown is not essentially shown “by means of” a proposition, and not at all shown by us. As we shall see in the next section, what is said to show the form of reality (the proposition) is no *agent*, what is shown (or rather shows itself) *in* it, no *patient*.

The difference between the respective grammatical voices of “say” (*sagen*) and “show” (*zeigen*), which the next section lays out in details, connects with the general distinction, throughout the book, between what is the result of performances on our part (what we make [*machen*, form [*bilden*], construct [*konstruieren*], etc.) and what is not, between what is and what is *not* “up to us.” Thus, on the first score, we are said to “make pictures of facts for ourselves” (2.1), to “possess the capacity to construct languages, by means of which every sense can be expressed” (*womit sich jeder Sinn ausdrücken lässt*) (4.002).

The intentional activity of saying is but a paradigmatic case of the more general intentional activity of *making* pictures or *constructing* models of reality. Pictures and models, in effect, are essentially *made* and *built*. As 2.1 underscores, this means both that they are essentially made and built *by us*, and that we essentially make and build them for *our own sake*. This does not mean, however, that *we make* sense (as the idiom would have it): as we shall see in part 2, I need not and cannot make a picture manifest what it manifests; in making a picture, I only *indirectly* contribute to the manifestation of whatever it manifests—that is to say, of what shows itself in it.

In conclusion, 4.1212 simply sums up in a well-built formula the point that 4.121 drives home through a series of steps: given that saying is our business only, while showing is none of our business, showing can have no truck with saying.¹⁷

3. THE MEDIAL DIATHESIS OF TRACTARIAN “SHOWING” AND ITS LOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE

In the Preface to the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein says that the value (*Wert*) that his work owes to the fact that thoughts are expressed in it (*dass in ihr Gedanken ausgedrückt sind*) (as distinct from the fact that the thoughts thereby communicated are true) is the greater as they are better expressed: “the more the nail has been hit on the head,” as he puts it. One respect in which the nail has been hit on the head, I want to suggest, has to do with the extreme care with which verbal diathesis (or “grammatical voice,” as it is often called) is handled in the book. More specifically, I want to suggest that recourse to the so-called middle voice (or “medial diathesis”) serves the main aim of the book, to draw a limit (*eine Grenze ziehen*) to the expression of thoughts (*dem Ausdruck der Gedanken*) in ways that help us no longer to want to construe the limit to thinking (*dem Denken*) as a limitation. Two closely related aspects of the medial diathesis prove relevant for an understanding of Tractarian showing: first, its disregard for the active-passive bipolarity (which at best recedes in the background); second, the location of the grammatical subject *within* the verbal process (the latter being consequently conceived as a *medium*). In effect, as we shall see, what shows itself, while neither agent or patient of the process, is immanent to it.¹⁸

While the linguistic notion of *medial* diathesis is notoriously elusive, that of diathesis is slightly less so. By the term *diathesis* (literally, “disposition”), Greek grammarians referred to the determinate way in which the subject of a sentence stands to (“is disposed toward”) its verb. They distinguished three diatheses: active, passive, and middle (see Humbert 1972, 100; Benvéniste 1966, 168). Generalizing that notion, we can define “verbal diathesis” as the determinate way in which the participants of a verbal process stand to that process (see Tesnière 1959, 238, 242; Descombes 2004, 87–88). To the extent that the process expressed by the verb can be compared to a small-scale drama, its participants can be thought of as the protagonists of such a drama, as distinguished from its circumstances (Tesnière 1959, 102; Descombes 2004, 84). To the distinction between the protagonists and

the circumstances of a drama corresponds the syntactic distinction between the “actants” and the “circumstants” of a sentence. The number of “actants” it calls for defines the syntactic “valency” of a verb. Verbal diathesis is bound up with syntactic valency (Tesnière 1959, 238). It is worth noting from the outset that the dichotomy between transitivity and intransitivity is evidently not enough fine grained to capture the relations between verbal diathesis and valency.

Throughout his work, Frege contends that the mechanism of voice reversal through which a sentence in the active voice can be transformed into one in the passive voice (and conversely) is devoid of any logical significance, as it leaves unaffected (in the terminology of the *Begriffsschrift*) the “conceptual content” of the sentence (where by definition two sentences have the same conceptual content if and only if they are interchangeable for inferential purposes), that is to say (in his later terminology) the “thought” (*Gedanke*) conveyed by a sentence, as distinct from its “coloring.” Thus, the difference between the two sentences “The Greeks defeated the Persians at Plataea” and “The Persians were defeated by the Greek at Plataea” is logically immaterial. A concept-script will not concern itself with it.¹⁹

In conferring logical significance to the medial diathesis, the *Tractatus* can be said, in one way, to vindicate Frege’s point, in another way, to contest it: it vindicates it to the extent that it takes the bipolarity of the active and the passive to threaten to distort the nature of the logical (to which that bipolarity is exactly foreign: we do not *make* thoughts for Frege, they precede us); it contests it to the extent that it holds a third diathesis (the “Medium,” as it is called in German) to capture the nature of the logical, to forestall the distortion, and to bring out its. In this section, I lay out the grammar of Tractarian “showing” (*zeigen*) by differentiating it from the grammar of “*zeigen*” (in German) taken as a whole. Unclarity about the difference is sure to give rise to serious misinterpretations of the text. For one thing, it masks the fact that the *Tractatus* consciously leaves out the part of the grammar of “*zeigen*” that is connected to *pointing to*—that it will have no truck with *ostension*. For another, it clouds the unity of Wittgenstein’s carefully crafted “presentation” (*Darstellung*) of his thought in the *Tractatus*.

In German the verb *zeigen* displays variable valency. In other words, not only does *zeigen* not always rule the same number of *actual* actants given a fixed valency (inasmuch as not every potential actant need be saturated on every use of it with the relevant valency [cf. Tesnière 1959, 238]), but also it does not even always require the same number of even *potential* actants (i.e., does not always have the same valency). This being said, the verb *zeigen* can still be characterized as essentially *trivalent* in the sense that it admits of at least one kind of employment under which it exhibits trivalency, i.e. requires three distinct potential actants, pertaining to the three basic types of actants, in order to form a sentence. I have in mind the kind of employment illustrated by the following sentence: “*Er zeigtet ihr das Bild.*” (= “He showed her the picture.”)²⁰

The trivalent structure characterizing the behavior of *zeigen* in *this employment* can be brought out at once by pointing to its structural affinities with the

pattern of behavior shared by the verbs *sagen* (say) and *geben* (give). The latter constitute the very paradigms of trivalency, this in at least two respects (Tesnière 1959, 255). First, verbs belonging to the two families of verbs that they define systematically share in their trivalency (Tesnière 1959, 256). Second, such verbs are *causative*. In effect, the trivalent verb *zeigen* (“to show”) can be seen as the “causative” of the divalent verb *sehen* (to see), just as *sagen* (say) and *geben* (give) can be seen as the causatives of the divalent verbs “know” and “have” (cf. Tesnière 1959, 260):

sagen	= zu kennen machen / lassen	to say	= to make / let know
geben	= zu haben machen / lassen	to give	= to make / let have
zeigen	= zu sehen machen / lassen	to show	= to make / let see

Accordingly, the causative diathesis of the verb “showed” in the sentence “He showed her the picture” can be brought into relief by rewriting the sentence this way: “He made her see the picture” (Tesnière 1959, 260; Descombes 2004, 93). In turn, this makes it intelligible that the behavior of the trivalent “*zeigen*” (show) should align on that of “*sagen*” (say) and “*geben*” (give): just as someone says (*sagt*) something to someone and someone gives (*gibt*) something to someone, so someone shows (*zeigt*) or “points” something or someone to someone.²¹

The existence in English of two distinct passive transformations of a sentence like “He showed her the picture” (= “*Er zeigtet ihr das Bild*”) admits of two distinct passive transformations, testifies to the trivalency of “show” in this employment.²² Finally, it bears emphasizing that while the trivalent “*zeigen*” (show) need not actualize all three of the potential actants, it cannot actualize just one (let alone none).²³ This has the consequence that the trivalent “*zeigen*” cannot be in the medial diathesis in the strict sense, since medial diathesis, in German, does not extend to trivalent verbs. With trivalent verbs, only the *sich-lassen* construction is possible.

If now we turn to the *Tractatus*, we can see at once, in the light of the previous section, first, that in the *Tractatus* “*zeigen*” (show) and its cognate “*aufweisen*” (manifest) are never employed as trivalent verbs except when they are manifestly not used with the special meanings that they have in the book; second, and even more importantly, that their divalent employment is parasitic upon their monovalent employment.

Only in 4.1212, where it is put in the *passive* diathesis (“Was gezeigt werden kann, kann nicht gesagt werden”) (What can be shown cannot be said), might the verb “*zeigen*” (show) seem to be employed as a trivalent one. Only there might the employment of “*zeigen*” seem to leave room for the idea that what can be shown, although it cannot be said by us, can nonetheless be shown by us in some other way. Or at any rate I might, if it were read in isolation. In its effort to present the non-privative impossibility of being said as nothing but the other side of the possibility of coming to expression in the guise of showing itself, 4.1212 runs a risk. It runs the risk of being misread as suggesting that what can be shown and what can be said stand on a level as two varieties of what can be conveyed by us. In fact, as we have seen, even to construe them as two modes of expression is potentially misleading.

Many versions of the standard reading of the *Tractatus* actually turn on a misreading of the sort. It is worth noting in this respect that the English verb “convey” combines the meanings of the verbs that are in effect the two paradigms of trivalency, “say” and “give.” The misreading is evidently fueled by the three following facts: first, there *is* indeed, as we have seen at length, a standard trivalent employment of *zeigen* (show) in German (English), on account of which the verb *zeigen* can be said to belong to the class of trivalent verbs; second, the trivalent employment of *zeigen* (show) is structurally the same as that of *sagen* (say); third, the *Tractatus* draws extensively on the trivalent structure of *sagen* (say). As we have seen, however, section 4.121 defines the *Tractatus*’s use of the notions of “showing” (*zeigen*) and “manifesting” (*aufweisen*) in ways that preclude this reading. Thus, the notion of an “activity of ‘hinting’ or ‘gesturing’ at ineffable truths by means of nonsense” (Conant 2002, 425) to which the standard reading typically helps itself is drawn from the very area of the grammar of *zeigen* (call it the “trivalent area” of showing) with which the Tractarian grammar of *zeigen* wants to have nothing to do.

In fact, not only is *zeigen* introduced in the *Tractatus* as a divalent verb (like “*aufweisen*”), *not as a trivalent one*, but, as the previous section has established, in 4.121 its divalent employment gets referred to its monovalent one from the outset, insofar as our understanding of the former is clearly parasitic upon our understanding of the monovalent values assumed respectively by “*spiegeln*” and “*ausdrücken*” in the verbal phrases “*sich spiegeln*” (= to reflect itself) and “*sich ausdrücken*” (= to express itself). Thus, what we need now to understand is what enables verbs of the like of “*spiegeln*” and “*ausdrücken*,” which are originally divalent, to assume a monovalent value in phrases like “*was sich (. . .) spiegelt*” and in “*was sich (. . .) ausdrückt*.” The answer lies in the notion of valency introduced above. What enables these divalent verbs to assume a monovalent value is obviously some mechanism of valency-reduction. Valency-reduction is typically achieved by means of the “recessive” (Tesnière 1959) or “decausative” diathesis (as I shall call it in this essay). It is here syntactically marked by “*sich*.” The effect of the decausative diathesis is the exact reverse of the effect of the causative one: as the causative diathesis increases a verb’s valency by one unit, so the recessive diathesis decreases it by one unit (see Tesnière 1959, 272; Descombes 2004, 100–102).

One standard way of rendering the transitive-intransitive alternation “*X zeigt Y*” - “*X zeigt sich*” in English is by the transitive-intransitive alternation “*X shows Y*” - “*X shows*.” Of course, not every divalent verb admits of such alternation (“to throw” does not). But the characteristic of “show” that is crucial here lies in the *kind* of transitive-intransitive alternation that it displays. In contrast to so-called *unergative* verbs (e.g., “sing,” “eat”) and like so-called *unaccusative* verbs (e.g., “break,” “open,” “sink”), “to show” changes prime actant when it undergoes alternation. By definition, the prime actant of the so-called unaccusative intransitive construction (after which “unaccusative” verbs are named) is the *second* actant of the corresponding transitive construction. Thus, consider the contrast between the kinds of alternation respectively displayed by the unergative “sing” and the unaccusative “break”:

“She sang an old tune.”	“He broke the window.”
“An old tune was sung (by her).”	“The window was broken (by him).”
“She sang.”	“The window broke.”

When undergoing transitive-intransitive alternation, the English “show” likewise takes as prime actant the second actant of its transitive construction:

“She shows her disappointment.”
 “Her disappointment shows.”
 “The picture shows a horse.”
 “A horse shows in the picture.”

Unaccusative constructions and passive constructions have in common that they must take a non-agentive prime actant. Where the former differ from the latter is in precluding the possibility of mentioning an agent.²⁴ While a passive construction may well abstain from mentioning any agent (as in “The boat was sunk”), it always admits of the possibility of mentioning one, as it implies the existence of a transitive process.

Unaccusative verbs like “break” or “sink” mean the causal achievement of a change of state when they are used transitively. In that sense, they count as “causative.” But they are often said to be “*anticausative*” in the sense that the unaccusative construction they admit seems to be *the exact anticausative counterpart of their transitive use*. It is as if their intransitive versions were introduced in accordance with the following pattern of valency-reduction (cp. Hornsby 2011, 111):

break _{Tr.}	= def	to make/cause to	break _{Intr.}
melt _{Tr.}	= def	to make/cause to	melt _{Intr.}
open _{Tr.}	= def	to make/cause to	open _{Intr.}
move _{Tr.}	= def	to make/cause to	move _{Intr.}

It would seem that causative verbs that depend on the category (or form of description) of *intentional action* for their sense (e.g., “cut,” “crush”) are debarred from counting among anticausative verbs in this sense (cf. Anscombe 1957, §47; Hornsby 2011).

Now medial constructions resemble unaccusative constructions in that they likewise preclude the possibility of mentioning an agent. The difference between the passive diathesis and the medial diathesis is often illustrated by means of examples of this sort (see, e.g., Steinbach 2002, 1; Fagan 2009, 173):

“ <i>Er liest das Buch.</i> ”	“He reads the book.”	“ <i>Il lit le livre.</i> ”
“ <i>Das Buch wird gelesen.</i> ”	“The book is being read.”	“ <i>Le livre est lu.</i> ”
“ <i>Das Buch liest sich leicht.</i> ”	“The book reads easily.”	“ <i>Le livre se lit facilement.</i> ”

In both the passive diathesis and the medial diathesis (of the kind just illustrated), the prime actant of the process is demoted while the second actant of the process, assuming there is one, is promoted in its stead. However, in the medial diathesis, the prime actant is not demoted to the role of second actant, as in the passive diathesis, but altogether left out, at least syntactically. The prime actant can no longer be mentioned: thus, while one can say “*Die Tür wird durch mich leicht geöffnet*”

(“The door is being opened easily by me”), one cannot say **“Die Tür öffnet sich leicht durch mich”* (*“The door opens easily by me”). Unlike the passive diathesis, the medial diathesis does not alter the morphological properties of the verb: in the medial diathesis, the verb does not differ morphologically from its active counterpart. In other words, such medial constructions involve valency-reduction, like the anticausative constructions referred to before (cf. Tesnière 1959, 273; Steinbach 2002, 19). Their diathesis is recessive or decausative in the above-defined sense.²⁵ One consequence is that *even* in the passages where the book almost comically states what it says to show itself (and therefore what, by its own light, cannot and need not be stated), it does not *even ostensibly* help itself to the construction “shows that *p*”: the medial construction “It shows itself that *p*” (*es zeigt sich, dass*) is equivalent to “That *p* shows itself,” which is *not* equivalent to “shows that *p*.”

Generally speaking, the medial diathesis, whether in the sense just illustrated or in the broader sense exemplified by the inflectional category of Ancient Greek (after which it was originally named), has nothing to do with the reflexive diathesis exemplified by “She shot herself.”²⁶ In the reflexive diathesis, one and the same individual actualizes at once the prime actant and the second actant of a divalent verb (Tesnière 1959, 246; Descombes 2004, 105). Thus, in Aristotle’s famous terms, a doctor who heals herself heals herself *qua* other, as it is not inscribed in the nature of the art of healing that she who heals should be identical to her who is being healed (see Descombes 2004, 110; Rödl 2007, 8). The reflexive index (“herself”) signals that the individual in question simultaneously plays two roles. In that sense, the reflexive diathesis represents a synthesis of the active diathesis and the passive diathesis. By contrast, the medial diathesis excludes transitivity.²⁷ The notions of “pronominal verb” and “reflexive verb” are spurious, as they conflate morphology and syntax (Tesnière 1959; Descombes 2004).²⁸

The diathesis of Tractarian showing must be distinguished: first, from the reflexive diathesis; second, from the kind of pseudo-reflexive medial diathesis illustrated above.

It is all the more necessary to demarcate the decausative diathesis of Tractarian showing from the reflexive diathesis as the former is initially defined as being the same as the one assumed by the verb *“spiegeln”* (literally: “to reflect itself”) in the verbal phrase *“Was in der Sprache spiegelt sich”* (“What reflects itself in language”). The reflection of a light-ray in a mirror obviously provides a model for the reflexive diathesis. Thus, the transitive process of killing described by “She shot herself” leads back to the agent from which it emanated “as if it had been reflected by a mirror” (Tesnière 1959, 242). Another model is provided by the simple drama depicted in Louis Lumière’s movie *Larroseur arrosé* (*The Sprinkler Sprinkled*) in which a gardener is tricked into sprinkling himself (see Descombes 2004, 111). More literally, the transitive process through which a person “sees herself in a mirror” (i.e., sees her own reflection) provides a good paradigm of reflexive diathesis (Tesnière 1959, 242; Descombes 2004, 165). In effect, the German verb *“sich spiegeln”* can be used reflexively, with the meaning of “watching oneself in a mirror” (i.e., considering one’s own

reflection [*Spiegelbild*]). The sentence “*Narziss spiegelt sich im Wasser*” (or, say, its French equivalent “*Narcisse se mire dans l'eau*”) would be most naturally understood to mean “Narcissus gazes at himself in the water.” However, one may still be speaking truly of Narcissus in saying that “*Narziss spiegelt sich im Wasser*” (or that “*Narcisse se mire dans l'eau*”), even if, warding off the spell of narcissism, he is averting his eyes from the sight of his own reflection, or simply sitting with his back to the water: for one may be employing “*sich spiegeln*” (or “*se mirer*”) non-reflexively, with the same meaning as in the sentence “*Die Himmel spiegelt sich im Wasser*” (or “*Le ciel se mire dans l'eau*” = “The sky is reflected in the water”). While it may be employed either way (just like “*se mirer*”), by far the most common use of “*sich spiegeln*” is the non-reflexive one. That is of course how 4.121 uses “*sich spiegeln*.” In the *Tractatus*, not only is reflection not a model for reflexion, but also it is a model of anti-reflexion. As we shall see, this proves most relevant for understanding Wittgenstein's view of logic as world-mirroring (*weltspiegelnde*) (5.511, 6.13).

While likewise pseudo-reflexive and decausative, the diathesis of Tractarian showing needs to be sharply distinguished from the medial diathesis exemplified by constructions like “The door opens easily” (“*Die Tür öffnet sich leicht*”). Even though these constructions, unlike passive ones, preclude adjoining an agentive complement introduced by a “by”-phrase (one cannot say **“This book reads easily by linguists*”) and they are irreducibly generic, they still carry some *implicit agency*. This is witnessed for their need for adverbial modification.²⁹ Thus, while no agent can surface in the syntax of the sentence, some generic agency must be presupposed at the semantic level (see Abraham 1995, 25; Steinbach 2002; Ackema and Schoorlemmer 2006, 135; Fagan 2009, 176). Here, what cannot be mentioned must be implied. If the demoted agent were not somehow still implied, the prime actant of the medial diathesis would no longer count as patient *at all*.

Just this seems to be the case with the form of medial diathesis ruling Tractarian showing. Even though it is both pseudo-reflexive and decausative, like the form of middle diathesis just mentioned, it differs fundamentally from it in that it *leaves agency altogether out*: it leaves it out at both the syntactic and the semantic level. While it likewise precludes the adjunction of an agentive complement, it certainly does not require adverbial modification. In this respect, it more closely resembles the *anticausative* diathesis illustrated by “The glass broke” (cf. Fagan 1988; Steinbach 2002).³⁰ Unlike the medial diathesis exemplified by “The door opens easily” (“*Die Tür öffnet sich leicht*”), the medial diathesis ruling Tractarian showing is fundamentally *anticausative*. Agent-demotion is carried to the point where the prime actant is not even implicitly patient of the process. But this is still to understate the case: it results from the considerations of the previous sections that the form of medial diathesis that is central to the *Tractatus* *precludes agency altogether*. Its paradigm is “The blue of the sky reflects itself in the lake” or “Her back reflects itself in the mirror.” It stands in a sharp contrast with the diathesis displayed by the *sich-lassen* construction. The latter stands way closer to the passive, even though it qualifies as medial in a somewhat loose sense. It goes

with the idea of something that can be done. Even though it does not take the perspective of agency, it is in order only where some agency is at play. Significantly, the *Tractatus* never resorts to the *sich-lassen* construction in connection with the concept of showing (or related concepts). It quite systematically resorts to it, on the other hand, whenever it is at pains to present a possibility whose actualization depends on us (is “up to us”)—or at least a possibility which we imagine it *should* (and therefore *could*) have been in our power to actualize.³¹

All this suggests that the notion of agent-demotion can only take us so far. To make a fresh start on things, we need to call into question the assumption that the medial diathesis is essentially a radicalization of the mechanism of agent-demotion. There is in effect a deeper sense in which the diathesis of Tractarian showing must be counted a variety of medial diathesis. This is the sense identified by Emile Benveniste as the core of the medial diathesis in his landmark essay “Active and Middle in the Verb” (Benveniste 1966). It is aptly conveyed by the German term for the medial diathesis, “*Medium*,” and obscured by the term “middle”: “The middle voice, particularly according to Benveniste’s account, points to a medium in the chemical sense: a medium in which and not only by which something takes place. It directs one’s attention away from the subject/object distinction between ‘doer’ and ‘done to’ and shifts it toward the relation between the process of the verb and the subject. The question is not what the subject actively effects and how he or she is affected, but where he or she is situated. In the middle voice, the emphasis is on the locality of the subject with respect to the verb.” According to Benveniste, in effect, the medial diathesis indicates that the subject is *involved in* the process designated by the verb, that it is *interior to* the latter. By contrast, the active diathesis indicates that the subject *lays outside* the process, which accordingly does not *originate in* it, so much as it *originates from* it (Benveniste 1966, 172). In the one case, the subject is presented as the *seat* of the process; in the other case, she is presented as the *instigator* of the process (i.e., as she, who *brings it about* that the process takes place). Thus, in Ancient Greek, the “middle” form “*loiúmai*” (as distinct from the active “*loiúw*”) indicates that I am involved in the washing—not that I am also the one being washed (see Humbert 1972, 104).³²

In the former case, as we might also put it, the subject *transcends* the process; in the latter case, the subject is *immanent* to the process. The medial diathesis emerges as the true opposite of the active one, while the very conception of a “middle” diathesis standing in between the active and passive diatheses, and somehow partaking of both, appears to be fundamentally flawed (Benveniste 1966, 174). The central opposition around which verbal diatheses revolve (at least in Indo-European languages) is not the bipolarity of the active and the passive but the topological distinction between two alternative locations of the subject in relation to the sphere of the verbal process: beyond and within its confines. This explains why the conversion from medial (internal) to active (external) diathesis is causative (and so necessarily results in transitivity), while conversely the conversion from active (external) to medial (internal) diathesis is decausative (and so may result in intransitivity) (Benveniste 1966, 173).

What shows itself (*zeigt sich*) by Tractarian lights is indeed essentially *involved in* the process through which it shows itself. As we shall see in detail in parts 2 and 3, what reflects itself (*spiegelt sich*) is essentially *embedded in* its reflection, what expresses itself (*ausdrückt sich*), essentially *embodied in* its expression (4.121). The crucial point is thus that what shows itself *cannot be abstracted from its expression*, or rather that it does not make sense so much as to *want to* abstract it from its expression.

This inclusion of what shows itself within the medium (*am*) of the process of showing is likely to be misinterpreted as a reflection of what shows itself *upon itself* as long as the process of showing is approached through the lenses of the distinction between the active and the passive. However, to mistake the medial diathesis of showing for a form of reflexive diathesis is to distort it completely: it is, in effect, to miss the point of the concept altogether.³³

It remains to be explained *why* the diathesis of Tractarian showing must be, so to speak, exclusively medial; why it must preclude any agency altogether. In the light of what precedes, this is intelligible just in case the medium of the process of showing is unbounded. But the medium of showing is language (*Sprache*). Thus, the diathesis of showing must be the *Medium* diathesis (as it is called in German) just in case language is a universal logical medium.³⁴ Now the latter point is of course, as we saw in the introduction, the very one that is made in the Preface of the book and that sets about its entire course, all the way through the confrontation with solipsism. In particular, it underwrites 4.12, the section that motivates the distinction between what shows itself and what is said: it order to be able to present logical form, we would have to station ourselves on the far side of the limit.

We should expect the point articulated in 4.121, then, to be echoed in the sections of the *Tractatus* in which Wittgenstein articulates his conception of logic. Unsurprisingly, the first echo of the sort actually thematizes the *Medium* diathesis itself. It constitutes what is perhaps the single most lucid formulation of “the heart of the Tractarian conception of logic” (Conant 2002, 421):

- 5.473 Logic must take care of itself.
A possible sign must also be able to signify. All that is possible
in logic is also permitted. (. . .)
In a certain sense, we cannot make mistakes in logic.³⁵
- 5.4732 We cannot give a sign the wrong sense.³⁶

The first sentence of 5.473 (*Die Logik muss für sich selber sorgen*) is evidently in the same diathesis that we have seen to rule showing. Not only that to which it characterizes logic as that to which only the *Medium* diathesis applies, as the sphere where only the register of the *Medium* diathesis is *in place*. The diathesis that we have called, after Benvéniste, the “internal diathesis,” captures alone the sense in which the limits of thought can be drawn *from within*. The limit (*Grenze*) may be said to “show itself” (*sich zeigen*) in what it limits (*begrenzt*) to this extent only, that it is internal to it (see 4.114a and 5.5561a). It bespeaks the essence of logic that it

should be neither possible nor necessary for us so much as to want to take care of it: to undertake to “see to it” that logic is not handled in a way that sins against its nature. Logic does not forbid anything. Nor, by the same token, does it “permit” anything. That is to say, it neither “forbids” nor “permits” anything.

The distinction underwriting the conception of logic articulated in 5.473 comes to the fore in 6.124. It is the distinction between what is and what is not our business—between our business and (so to speak) logic’s business—as reflected in the distinction between what is and what is not at our discretion (arbitrary, *willkürlich*) in the symbols we employ. When it comes to clarifying the essence of logic, the “decisive point” (*das Entscheidende*), as 6.124 calls it, is that it is not our business—that is to say, it is neither incumbent upon us nor at our discretion—to express what, in our symbols, is not “up to us,” for the simple reason that this expresses itself in logic (*in der logik drückt dieses aus*):³⁷

6.124 In logic only this [= the non-arbitrary aspect] expresses itself. But what this means is: in logic it is not *we* who express what we want with the help of signs, but rather in logic the nature of the signs of a necessary nature declares itself (. . .)
(. . .) *Das heißt aber: in der Logik drücken nicht wir mit Hilfe der Zeichen aus, was wir wollen, sondern in der Logik sagt die Natur der naturnotwendigen Zeichen selbst aus (. . .)*

The emphasis laid on “we” (*wir*) makes unmistakable the anaphoric reference to 4.121. The diathesis of “we express” (*wir ausdrücken*) is external: what can be said is that whose expression we can bring about. The diathesis of “expressing itself” is internal.

The main point is that the medium of expression, language, prevents us from making logical mistakes because the logical categories of our symbols cannot be meaningfully divorced from them. They adhere to them, cannot be extracted from them. In short, they show themselves in them (which is not to say that they do so perspicuously). One implication, to which I shall return in section 5, is that the non-contrastive distinction between what expresses itself and what can be expressed (by us) aligns with another central distinction of the book: the distinction between non-quantificational generality and quantificational generality.

In sum, for logic to take care of itself just is for what shows itself to show itself irrespective of what we do (and intend to do): for logic to take care of itself just is for showing to take care of itself, for showing to *be* how logic takes care of itself. This is the sense in which logic is said to be “transcendental” in 6.13. Again, the wording of 4.121 is echoed:

6.13 Logic is the mirror-reflection of the world.
Logic is transcendental.
Logik ist das Spiegelbild der Welt.
Logik ist transzendental.

Logic is not an image or picture (*Bild*) of the world and as such answerable to the world. It is not modeled on the world. What defines all answerability to the world

is not itself answerable to anything (see Sullivan 2011b, 169, 175–76; Travis 2010, 263, 286). Logic is not, like a picture, *made*; it is not *ours* to make. Rather, logic is the world's “mirror-image” (*Spiegelbild*): the logical form of the world “reflects itself” (*spiegelt sich*) in the medium of (*am*) language (*Sprache*). To say that logic is “world-mirroring” (*weltspiegelnde*) is to say that the world reflects itself in language *without restriction*.

The most conspicuous, and in some sense, most central instance of the medial diathesis in the *Tractatus* is one that is hardly ever noticed. It is to be found in 4.5, which has recourse to a verbal construction with null valency to describe the “general form of propositions”:

This is how things stand.
Es sich verhält so und so.

The number of actants in this medial construction is equal to zero. Valency-reduction has been carried to its extreme.³⁸ Accordingly, in the formulation in English, “things” takes a “catholic” meaning, as in “Things don't change.” It is not just the description but also the “how” mentioned in it, that possesses generic generality (i.e., non-quantificational generality). This significance of this point will emerge in later sections.

From what precedes, it hardly ensues that talk of what “shows itself” will not fall apart as we probe it further. What ensues is nothing more, if also nothing less, than this: such talk cannot be thrown away in the name of the *Tractatus*'s conception of logic, or at least by appealing to the passages that articulate that view, for the simple reason that it stands on a level with them. It goes exactly as far as them toward articulating that conception in proper fashion.

I have suggested that the *Medium* diathesis of “showing” lends support to a non-contrastive way of construing the Tractarian distinction between what shows itself and what is said, in light of which showing no longer appears to “make up for” “restrictions” to which saying is subject. The idea of “the inexpressible” figures nowhere in the *Tractatus*. The word itself does not occur, even where it might have seemed apposite, if only to deny that it refers to anything else than non-expressions parading as expressions. The idea of what is “unsayable” (*Unsaybar*), we have seen either to collapse into nonsense or to amount to the idea of what “expresses itself”: all and only all that expresses itself can be said not to be sayable (and so, if you will, “unsayable”). What is “unsayable” in this sense is hardly inexpressible. Only, it is not our business (and so both “impossible” and “unnecessary” for us) to express it—which is why we are tempted to say that it is “unnecessary” (or even “impossible”) for us to express it.

What of the idea of the “unutterable” (*das Unausprechliches*), or of “the inefable,” as one might also call it? It *does* figure in the book. Of the unutterable, Wittgenstein says 6.52 that it shows itself. Presumably, then, it is not “inexpressible” either. Rather, it is not our business to express it: it expresses itself in what we say. Why, then, mention it at all? Because there is more to it: the term “deliberately conjures up [. . .] the sense of a real and intelligible aspiration that is necessarily

frustrated” (Sullivan 2011a, 173; 2013, 258–59). What it is not our business to express, but we nonetheless feel we *should have been* able to express (hence the use of the *sich-lassen* construction in 3.321), Wittgenstein calls “unutterable.” Thus, we are inclined to observe that we can only speak *of* objects, not *utter* them (3.321) as if frustrated by this triviality. Thus, the term “unutterable” refers both to a limit that expresses itself in language and to a fantasy of confinement.

In the next part, I turn to the relation between showing and pictoriality (*Bildhaftigkeit*), with the hope of showing that Wittgenstein’s conception of language as pictorial is to be understood in the light of the *Medium* diathesis of “showing.” The *same* concept of showing, I shall suggest, goes *equally* to the heart of the *Tractatus*’s vision of logic and of its vision of language.

II. SHOWING AND PICTORIALITY

1. THE SENSE OF THE PROPOSITION CANNOT AND NEED NOT BE SAID

The topic of showing (*zeigen*) first explicitly occurs in connection with the idea that a proposition shows its sense (4.022):

- 4.022 The proposition *shows* its sense.
The proposition *shows* how things stand if it is true. And it *says*
that they do so stand.

Like 4.121 and 4.1212, 4.022 contrasts showing with saying. In asserting that the proposition *shows* (*zeigt*) or *manifests* (*aufweist*) the logical form of reality, 4.121 would therefore seem to comment back on 4.022, not just on the 2.1s and the 3.1s. However, it might seem that the contrast at work in 4.022 *cannot* be the same as the one at work in 4.121. Thus, commenting on 4.022, Peter Sullivan says: “This showing of what is said is distinct from, though related to, the showing of what cannot be said” (Sullivan 2001, 89). And Warren Goldfarb likewise observes: “How things stand, if a certain proposition is true, is hardly in the realm of the unsayable; so ‘showing’ here [= in 4.022] is doing a different sort of work” (Goldfarb 2004). Another section that might seem to plead for this diagnosis is 4.461:

- 4.461 The proposition shows what it says, the tautology and the contradiction, that they say nothing.
Der Satz zeigt was er sagt, die Tautologie und die Kontradiktion,
dass sie nichts sagen.

For Goldfarb, there “seems to be a flat-out contradiction between this remark [= 4.461] and the more famous 4.1212” (Goldfarb 2004). Section 4.24 exacerbates the problem:

- 4.24 To understand a proposition means to know what is the case if it is true.
Einen Satz verstehen, heißt, wissen was der Fall ist, wenn er wahr ist.

This apparent inconsistency puts in jeopardy the unity of the concept of showing. More importantly, it stands in the way of an understanding of the cohesion between the *Tractatus's* view of logic as universal medium and its stress on the pictoriality (*Bildhaftigkeit*) of language. I shall try to demonstrate in this section that the appearance of inconsistency really stems from a misunderstanding on our part. Once that misunderstanding is cleared away, 4.022 and 4.461 fall into place. They can then be seen fully to cohere with 4.121 and 4.1212.

Before addressing this issue, however, we need to rehearse the basic steps leading up to 4.022's claim that the proposition shows its sense. What provides the immediate context for this claim is the elaboration of the idea that a proposition is *immediately* intelligible. The immediate context of 4.121 we have mentioned already: to imagine that the logical form of reality could be presented *in* language (by means of a proposition) is like imagining that the geometry defining a geometrical space could be presented *in* that space, which in turn is to imagine that something contra-geometrical could be presented in a geometrical space (4.12). What 4.121 adds to 4.12 is only that logical form of *need not* be presented anyway, as it shows itself. What we need to understand is the connection between these two sets of ideas.

Prior to 4.022, *sense* (*Sinn*) has been characterized as what the picture (*Bild*) presents (*darstellt*) (2.221) insofar as it *contains* (*enthält*) the possibility of the situation that it presents (*darstellt*) in logical space (2.202–2.203). For containing the possibility of the situation that it presents enables the picture to present whatever it presents *independently of whether it is true or false* (2.22). Just as any picture contains the possibility of the situation that it presents within logical space, so likewise the *thought* (*der Gedanke*), being the logical picture of facts (*das logische Bild der Tatsachen*) (3), contains (*enthält*) the possibility of the situation that it thinks (*denkt*) (i.e., presents in the way thoughts do) (3.02). We can therefore understand the thought-sense as what the thought (*der Gedanke*) presents insofar as it contains (*enthält*) the possibility of what it thinks (*denkt*). Containing the possibility of what it thinks enables the thought to think whatever it thinks *independently of whether it is true or false*.

For a thought to find itself expressed (*sich ausdrücken*) in a *proposition* (*Satz*) is, by definition, for it to find itself sensuously perceptible (*sinnlich wahrnehmbar*). The proposition (*Satz*) is essentially that whose sensuously perceptible part we make use of (*wir benützen*) as the projection of a possible situation—as the “screen” (as it might be called³⁹) where that possible situation finds itself displayed. The sign that we use as such a projection-screen is called “the propositional sign” (*Satzzeichen*) (3.12). Clearly, the propositional sign is an abstraction. As we shall see in more details in section 6, we do not begin with the propositional sign and turn it into a proposition by projecting a possible situation onto it. The propositional sign is not a self-standing, sensuously perceptible fact awaiting projection. We do not *make* such a fact express a thought. Nor do we *render* a thought sensuously perceptible.

For us to express the thought by means of the propositional sign (3.12) is necessarily for that thought to *find itself sensuously displayed* in the proposition (3.1), or again for the thought-sense to be presented to *the senses*; but that, in turn, simply is for the possible situation that is thought (i.e., presented) by that thought to *find itself projected* onto the projection-screen of the propositional sign.

The “propositional sense” (*Satz-Sinn*) is the thought-sense of the sensuously displayed thought. To understand the propositional sense (*Satz-Sinn*) is therefore to think the thought-sense sensuously displayed in the proposition. But for us to think that sense, in turn, simply is for the possible situation to find itself projected *in a certain way* onto the propositional sign used to this effect. To put this last point differently, the thinking (*das Denken*) of the propositional sense is nothing but “the method of projection” (*die Projektionsmethode*)” (3.11b).

Only a meaningful proposition (*sinnvoll Satz*)—not just any old thing that looks like one—can be said to “contain” (*enthalten*) anything, have “content” (*Inhalt*) (3.13d). If the proposition is to be meaningful, yet its sense presented independently of its truth or falsity, then the proposition cannot contain the projected (*das Projizierte*) itself but only the possibility of the projected (3.13a–b). In effect, if what finds itself projected (*das Projizierte*) onto the propositional sign did belong to the content of the meaningful proposition, then the sense of the proposition would no longer be presented independently of its truth or falsity, since we could recognize from a thought alone whether it is true or false (3.05). Therefore, just as the thought contains the possibility of what it presents (no more, but also no less, than that), so the proposition in which the thought finds expression contains the possibility of expressing its sense (again, no more, but also no less, than that). To use the distinction introduced in 3.13, the proposition contains the “form” of its sense (*die Form seines Sinnes*) but not the “content” of its sense (*der Inhalt seines Sinnes*), i.e. not that sense itself (3.13e). Given that for the proposition to express its sense is for its sense to manifest itself in a sensuously perceptible manner, the proposition can literally be said to *embody* the form of its sense.

This point takes on a new significance once the meaningful proposition is officially recognized to be itself the thought (4), rather than the expression of a thought. The meaningful proposition constitutes the very essence of thought insofar as—counterintuitive as this might seem at first—it is itself *literally* a picture of reality (*ein Bild der Wirklichkeit*) (4.01), that is to say, a *picture* of reality *in the very sense* in which the thought was earlier said to be a (logical) picture of facts (3).⁴⁰ It is in virtue of this literal pictoriality that a proposition is *readily intelligible to us* without further ado, i.e. without its sense (*Sinn*) having first to be elucidated (*erklärt wurde*) to us (4.02). As Rhees explains: “What we start with is just the recognition that the proposition does say something. We do not start by recognizing any correlation between it and something else. And this makes it rather like recognizing something as a picture (not just a jumble of marks). We may say that we understand a picture, when we do not know the scene from which it is taken. Think of a ‘still life’, for instance; or a Dutch interior. It is a picture of what

is *in* it. And we may see this without noticing its similarity to anything outside it” (Rhees 1970, 6).

To understand that we need not compare a proposition with something else, trace correlations between its elements and worldly elements, in order to *see* what it says (its sense), is the same thing as to understand that there is no need to ground our confidence that the combining possibilities of propositional elements align on those of worldly elements. It is one and the same thing for the proposition to be *readily* intelligible and for it to be intelligible *at all*, i.e. to present a *possible* situation. It is one and the same thing for the sense of the proposition *literally* to show itself *in* it and for the eventuality that it presents *nonsense* to be unintelligible. The two points merge in the insight that there must be something in the proposition that does not go proxy for anything else, “something *common*, that does not represent anything other than itself” (Sullivan 2001, 101) (where the verbal diathesis of “represent itself” is of course the medial one, *not* the reflexive one). The crucial point is summed up in a striking formula of Wittgenstein’s 1930 Cambridge lectures: “The proposition, he says, does not point outside itself”; “it is self-contained.” The sense (*Sinn*) of the proposition is not the direction (*Sinn*) of an arrow pointing toward reality (let alone one that points toward or away from it according to whether it is true or false), but the direction of an arrow that parallels reality (3.144), a standard in the light of which facts are assessed as having the same or the opposite direction. Like a motion picture, the proposition literally *absorbs* us *into* itself, on account of what one might call its radical “anti-theatricality.”⁴¹

We can now return to the apparent inconsistency in Wittgenstein’s use of *zeigen*. The difficulty was this: if what a certain proposition says is shown by it—or at any rate shows itself in it—in some sense of “show” or other, then it can hardly be said of what shows itself in a certain proposition, in that sense of “show,” that it cannot be said, since it evidently includes the very thing that that proposition says; 4.461 is therefore inconsistent with 4.1212.

The difficulty disappears the minute we realize that as a matter of fact 4.461 does *not* imply that what it says shows itself in the proposition. It would carry such an implication *if* “what it says” (*was er sagt*) were a nominal phrase constructed by means of the free (i.e., unbounded) relative pronoun “what” (*was*), as it is indeed in the sentence “What it says shows itself in the proposition.” But in 4.461 “what it says” is an indirect interrogative clause introduced by the interrogative pronoun “what” (*was*).⁴²

In 4.461, the pronoun “what” (*was*) is not employed as a headless definite relative pronoun, that is to say as a definite relative pronoun with no mentioned antecedent, functioning like a free (i.e., unbounded) variable. It is employed as an interrogative pronoun. To put the point differently, 4.461 employs “what” (*was*) as the equivalent, not of the Latin pronoun “*quod*” (the accusative neutral of the relative pronoun “*qui, quae, quod*”), but of the Latin pronoun “*quid*” (the accusative neutral of the interrogative pronoun “*quis, quae, quid*”).⁴³ “What it says” here provides the answer to the question “what does the proposition *p* say (to be the

case)?” To say that the proposition shows its sense (4.022) is to say that we do not need to *make out* what it means. Likewise, to say that the proposition shows what it says (4.461) is to say that we do not need to *make out* what it says. (Note that “make out” here makes the interrogative character of the pronoun evident.) Therefore, in 4.461, “what it says” (*was er sagt*) does *not* in fact mean “*that which* it says” (*Das, was . . .*). For the proposition to show what it says is not for it to “show that which it says.” Not being a nominal phrase, “what it says” (*was er sagt*) does not admit of a paraphrasing apposition of the form “namely, (the fact) that . . .” It is used intransitively, as it were.

The same holds of “what is the case” in the first sentence of 4.024: “To understand a proposition means to know what is the case if it is true” (. . . *heist, kennen, was der Fall ist, wenn er wahr ist*) (4.024a). There, “what is the case” (*was der Fall ist*) does *not* have the meaning of “*that which* is the case.” It is not a definite free relative clause but an indirect interrogative clause. To understand a proposition is to know the answer to the question as to what it says.⁴⁴

In 4.024, the phrase “what is the case” does not admit of a paraphrasing apposition of the form “namely, (the fact) that . . .”—anymore than “what it says” in 4.461 does. It is used intransitively. To know what is the case if *p* is true is not to “know *that which* is the case if *p* is true.” It is not to “know the facts that would make *p* true.” Knowing what is the case if *p* is true is not the same thing as knowing the answer to the question as to which states of things hold if *p* is true. Thus, in order to understand a proposition *p*, not only do I not need to know whether what *p* says to be the case is indeed the case or not (4.024b), but also I need not know *which are* the states of things that *p* says to hold. Not because I need not know *that much*, but rather because there is, in the first instance, *no such thing* as *the* states of things that *p* says to hold. The question as to which states of things hold if *p* is true, or as to which facts would make *p* true, does not have any sense. The proposition divides logical space (4.023), but it does not divide it into a certain class and its complementary within logical space: it does not *partition* logical space. Thus, *only if* the phrase “what is the case” is construed in the right way, i.e. as “what_{INT} is the case,” is it not misleading to translate the first half of 4.022b (“*Der Satz zeigt, wie es sich verhält, wenn er wahr ist*”) as “The proposition shows what is the case if it is true.”

So read, 4.461 and 4.024 cohere perfectly well with both 4.022 and 4.1212. The answer to the question as to what_{INT} it says shows itself in the proposition. Trivially, the proposition says what_{REL} it says: that is, it says exactly *that which* it says. But the proposition does not say what_{INT} it says: that is, it does not say what it says in the sense in which it shows what it says. It does not utter the answer to the question as to what_{INT} it says. If it did, it would be saying something about itself, talking about itself—in contradiction with 3.332, where it is maintained that “No proposition can state something about itself (*über sich Selbst aussagen*).” As it shows itself in the proposition, the answer to the question as to what_{INT} it says need not and cannot be said. We need not and cannot say what_{INT} a proposition *p* says. Of what is in fact the answer to the question as to what_{INT} it says, the proposition says *that* it

is the case. The question as to what_{INT} a proposition says is not a yes-no question. That is, the proposition does not show what_{INT} it says in the sense of showing it rather than not, but in the sense of showing it rather than something else. By contrast, in saying what_{REL} it says, the proposition answers a yes-no question.⁴⁵ The only yes-no question whose answer shows itself in the proposition is the question whether the proposition says anything at all, i.e. whether there is something it says or not. That it says something shows itself in the proposition insofar as it shows what_{INT} it says (i.e., insofar as the answer to the question as to what_{INT} it says shows itself in it); that they say nothing shows itself in tautologies and contradictions insofar as they do not show a way for things to stand (i.e., insofar as no answer to the question as to what_{INT} they say shows itself in them).⁴⁶

It shows itself in a proposition what_{INT} it says, how_{INT} things stand if it is true. We need not and cannot say what_{INT} a proposition says, how_{INT} things stand (*wie es sich verhält*) if it is true. By means of a proposition, we say that things stand in a certain way, say things to stand in a certain way. How_{INT} we say things to stand (i.e., how_{INT} we say that things stand), we need not and cannot say. All that we can and need do is opt for other ways of saying *that* things *so* stand. We need not and cannot say what_{INT} we know when we understand a proposition. Not because how_{INT} things stand if the proposition is true lies beyond the reach of expression, but because it already expresses itself in the proposition, reflects itself in it. The sense in which we cannot *explain* how_{INT} things stand if the proposition is true is the sense in which we need not do so anyway.

I conclude that the contrast between showing and saying at work in 4.022 is the same as the one elucidated in 4.121 and 4.1212. The “transparency” in virtue of which the proposition shows what_{INT} it says and the unsayability of what_{INT} it says are one. The reading of 4.121 and 4.1212 presented above already suggested as much, insofar as it claimed that the impossibility of saying what_{INT} shows itself went together with its superfluity (as an antidote to our hypnotization by the former).

Thus, in claiming that the proposition *shows* its sense (4.022) the *Tractatus* claims indeed that it is not simply the form of its sense (which is contained in the proposition) but also *its sense itself* (which is not *wholly* contained in the proposition, since its content [*Inhalt*] is *not*) that need not and cannot be said. What *we* can say is *that* the proposition’s sense *is* the case (rather than not). More generally, it is not simply the form that a picture shares with what_{INT} presents (*darstellt*) (i.e., depicts in a definite way) (2.17), which form it both contains (*enthält*) and manifests (*ausweist*) (2.172), but also what_{INT} the picture in question presents, i.e. *its sense itself* (2.221), that need not and cannot be said. What *we* can say is *that* the picture’s sense *is* the case (rather than not). For a picture to be true or false is for its sense to accord (*übereinstimmen*) or not to accord (*nichtübereinstimmen*) with reality (2.222).

2. THE INTRANSITIVITY OF THE PROPOSITION’S ARTICULATION

It is not simply form (*Form*), i.e. the possibility of structure (*Struktur*) (2.033), but also structure itself that shows itself according to the *Tractatus*. It can neither be

named nor said (stated). In particular, the proposition is not articulated by anything. Nothing ties its elements (the names it comprises) into the whole that it is. Rather, the proposition articulates into its elements: it articulates itself.

In effect, the structure of a state of things (*Sachverhalt*), that is to say the definite way in which things stand with each other (*verhalten sich . . . zueinander*) in a state of things (2.031), their definite way of hanging together (*zusammenhängen*) (2.032), is neither a “thing” nor a “situation.” It is neither “nameable” nor “sayable.” As the structure of a fact (*Tatsache*) is simply the structures of the state of things in whose obtaining and not obtaining it consists (2.034), it is likewise neither a thing nor a situation, and so is likewise neither nameable nor sayable. But the same thing can be said of the structure of a picture. The structure of a picture is the structure of the fact into which it consists, *insofar as* it represents (*vorstellt*) things to be so and so: it is the definite way in which elements stand with each other (*sich zu einander verhalten*) in the state of things (*Sachverhalt*) in whose obtaining it consists, *insofar as* it represents (*stellt vor*) that things stand in that way (*dass sich die Sachen so zu einander verhalten*) (2.15).

Basic as it may be in the *Tractatus*, the distinction between saying (*sagen*) and naming (*nennen*) (the single categorial distinction ratified *a priori*) is not fully intelligible apart from the prior distinction between what shows itself in language and what we say by means of it. In effect, if we are to understand that “only facts can express a sense, a class of names cannot” (*Nur Tatsachen können einen Sinn ausdrücken, eine Klasse von Namen kann es nicht*) (3.142), we must first appreciate this: *how* _{INT} (*wie* _{INT}) the propositional sign expresses its sense cannot and need not be expressed (i.e., expressed by us) even though it is to some extent “up to us.” Like its sense itself, *how* _{INT} the propositional sign expresses it is neither a “thing” nor a “situation,” and so neither “nameable” nor “sayable.” It cannot and need not be expressed (i.e., expressed by us).

To appreciate this point, it is worth dwelling for a moment upon the terms of the claim that pictures and propositions must be *facts* if they are to represent (*vorstellen*) at all:

- 2.14 The picture consists in the fact that its elements stand with one another in a definite way.
Das Bild besteht darin, dass sich seine Elemente in bestimmter Art und Weise zu einander verhalten.
- 2.15 That the elements of the picture stand with one another in a definite way represents that the things so stand with one another.
This hanging-together of the elements of the picture is called the structure of the picture and its possibility the pictorial form of the picture.
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 heiÙe seine Struktur und ihre Möglichkeit seine Form der Abbildung.

- 3.14 The propositional sign consists in the fact that its elements, the words, stand with one another in a definite way in it.
Das Satzzeichen besteht darin, dass sich seine Elemente, die Wörter, in ihm auf bestimmte Art und Weise zu einander verhalten.
- 3.1432 Not: "The complex sign 'aRb' says that a stands in the relation R to b," but instead: *that* "a" stands in a certain relation with "b" says *that* aRb.
Nicht: "Das komplexe Zeichen 'aRb' sagt, dass a in der Beziehung R zu b steht," sondern: Dass "a" in einer gewissen Beziehung zu "b" steht, sagt, dass aRb.

These sections can be said to make an "intransitive use" of one or both of the adjectives "definite" (*bestimmt*) and "certain" (*gewiss*).⁴⁷ The use of "definite" (*bestimmter*) in 2.15 does not leave room for a description because it is simply not meant to introduce one. It is akin to the intransitive use of "peculiar" in the emphatic "This soap has a *peculiar* smell!" rather than to its transitive use in the specificatory "This soap has a peculiar smell: it is the kind we used as children" (Wittgenstein 1958, §15, 158). However, when we talk of the definite way in which the elements of the picture stand with each other, we *might* "appear to ourselves to be on the verge of describing the way, whereas we aren't really opposing it to any other way" (Wittgenstein 1958, §15, 159). There can be a temptation to mistake the intransitive use of "definite" (*bestimmt*) for a *reflexive* one, hence for a special case of the transitive use (cp. Wittgenstein 1958, §15, 160). The illusion that the structure of the picturing fact lies beyond the reach of description stems from the illusion that talking of "the definite way in which the elements of the picture stand with each other" involves a sort of "reflexive comparison." What we forget is that we need not describe it anyway.⁴⁸ I do not mean that 2.15 and 3.1432 must here be understood in the light of 2.14 and 3.14, but rather the opposite.

Naturally, there is a sense in which the structure of the proposition differs from its form (the possibility of structure) precisely to the extent that, in contrast to the latter, it is "clearly specifiable" (*klar angebbare*) (3.251). There is something arbitrary (*willkürlich*), and therefore accidental (*zufällig*), to the way the proposition is structured: the sense of the proposition could have been expressed by means of a proposition structured *otherwise*. Even though the way the proposition is structured cannot be prized apart from its method of projection, it is still the case that *another* method of projection could have been employed. This is the sense in which the proposition presents (*darstellt*) what it presents from a position outside it, by taking a perspective on it, as it were (2.173). Its "form of presentation" (*Form der Darstellung*) is *how* the proposition stations itself outside reality in order to present it. By contrast, its "form of depiction" (*Form der Abbildung*) is not a "perspective" on reality, but the form that the proposition *shares* with any reality that it could equally depict *given* the perspective it takes on reality (2.17–2.171) (see Friedlander 2001, 55–56). And yet the proposition cannot station itself outside its own form of presentation so as to present *it* (2.1274). It cannot take a perspective *on* the perspective on reality that it *is*. And while another proposition might take

another perspective on reality, and even talk of the perspective taken by the first on reality, it will not say *what* it is. How a proposition articulates cannot and need not be articulated.

The same point was made in substance by Ryle and Dummett at a quite early stage of the reception of the *Tractatus*. Dummett traces the Tractarian insight that only a fact can express a sense while a class of names cannot (3.142) to Frege's anti-abstractionist insight that the symbol for a *complex* concept is nothing but a certain *pattern*: "Just as Frege would say that that which, in the sentence 'Cato killed Cato', signifies the ascription to an object of the property of falling under the concept committed suicide is not any constituent part of the sentence, attached to a proper name of the object, but rather that feature of the sentence which consists in its being composed by putting the same proper name on either side of the word 'killed'; so Wittgenstein would say that what signifies that Cato killed himself is not the string of words 'Cato killed Cato', but certain facts about these words" (Dummett 1973, 246). A complex predicate like "[] killed []" is not even a discontinuous string of signs. It cannot be literally removed from a sentence in which it occurs so as to be displayed on its own. It is a pattern discernible in the sentence. Ryle had made what is substantially the same point in his 1939 essay on "Letters and Syllables in Plato": not only can a consonant letter (say, "b" or "t" in "bat") not be pronounced (uttered) *on its own*, in contrast to the pronounceable monosyllables in which it occurs (say, "bat," "bad") (Ryle 1939, 22), but also *the way in which letters are arranged in a monosyllable*, their mode of arrangement, not being itself a letter, cannot be pronounced (uttered) *at all* (Ryle 1939, 21, 23, 40).

3. THE INTRANSITIVITY AT PLAY IN THE RECOGNITION OF SYMBOLS IN SIGNS

We are obviously involved in the recognition of symbols in signs: we must do something to recognize them, above all attend to senseful *use*. To this extent, while recognizing (*erkennen*) the symbol in (*am*) the sign is not an activity (like *making* a picture), neither is it, like showing itself (*sich zeigen*), an agentless and intransitive process. Nevertheless, according to the *Tractatus*, recognizing cannot be understood apart from the characteristics of the latter.

The three sequences of the 3.31s, the 3.32s, and the 3.33s are devoted, respectively, to the concepts of symbol (*Symbol*) (or, equivalently, of expression (*Ausdruck*)), sign (*Zeichen*), and logical syntax (*logische Syntax*). If we are to understand the relation between symbol and sign, we must come to grips with the relation between sections 3.31 and 3.32:

- 3.31 Any part of the proposition that characterizes its sense I call an expression (a symbol).
(The proposition itself is an expression.)
- 3.32 The sign is what is the sensuously perceptible of the symbol.
Das Zeichen ist das sinnlich Wahrnehmbare am Symbol.

If the sign is the perceptible aspect that the symbol presents to our senses, conversely the symbol is the pattern discernible in the sign. We do not recognize the

symbol “through” the sign.⁴⁹ Nor is the sign “extractable from” the symbol. The sign is the *face* of the symbol. The symbol is the *expression* displayed by the sign (in the sense in which one speaks of a facial expression):

- 3.326 In order to recognize the symbol in the sign, we must attend to the senseful use.
Um das Symbol am Zeichen zu erkennen, muss man auf den sinnvollen Gebrauch achten.

As 3.327 goes on to explain, we cannot recognize (*erkennen*) the symbol in the sign unless we attend to senseful use (*sinnvollen Gebrauch*) because a sign does not yet determine a logical form by itself. A sign does not determine a logical form apart from the formal rules governing its contribution to the senses of the propositions in which it occurs, i.e. apart from its “logico-syntactical employment” (*logisch-syntaktischen Verwendung*) or (it comes to the same) its “mode of signification” (*Bezeichnungsweise*). A symbol determines a sign together with a mode of signification of that sign, while conversely a sign together with a mode of signification determines a symbol (see Johnston 2007, 368).

The definition of the sign (*Zeichen*) as what, of the symbol, is sensuously perceptible (3.32) directly echoes the wording of 3.1:

- 3.1 In the proposition, the thought expresses itself as sensuously perceptible.
Im Satz drückt sich der Gedanke sinnlich wahrnehmbare aus.

3.1 seems worded in such a way as to conjure up the suggestion that it enters in our business to express sense, i.e. to endow sense with a sensuous aspect. Indeed, in light of 4.121, a straightforward implication of 3.1 is that the expression of sense is none of our business, i.e. that *we* ourselves need not and cannot express sense. From the medial diathesis taken by the verb of 3.1, we gather that we need not and cannot display sense for the sake of the senses, make it show in the proposition.⁵⁰

The point of 3.1 is evidently that for sense to take care of itself is equally for sense to take care of its availability to the senses.⁵¹ If it were not so—if we need and could interfere with the sensuousness of sense as such—then there would be room for mistakes on this register. There would be room for illegitimate constructions, i.e. for propositional symbols that were possible yet illegitimate. It is within our discretion to use this or that propositional sign as the projection of the possible situation (3.11): its propositional sign is an accidental feature of the proposition. And we have our say in the presentation of the possible situation by the propositional symbol. But with what is essential to a given propositional symbol, i.e. with what it shares with all the propositional symbols that could likewise express the same sense (3.341), we can and need have no truck. Therefore we can and need have no truck with the ability of a given propositional symbol to make its sense sensuously available *at all*: the assumption of *a* sensuously perceptible aspect by a propositional symbol (as distinct from *the* sensuously perceptible aspect that it assumes), its transparency to our senses, is none of our doing. What exonerates us from the obligation of seeing to it that our constructs do not present logical

impossibilities—the identity in logical form of symbol and symbolized—also exonerates us from the obligation of seeing to it that our constructs are transparent to our senses. The determinacy of their sense is already palpable in our everyday propositions as they stand, i.e. prior to analysis. It is not hostage to knowledge of the complicated workings of everyday language. Language is not a vehicle by means of which sense can be conveyed. It is what becomes of sense itself as the latter offers itself to our sense organs. It is itself an organ, wholly comparable to the sense organs that make up the human organism, and no less complicated than them (4.002).

A consequence of great importance is that *signs are not perceivable on their own*: being abstract (i.e., dependent) parts of symbols (3.32), they cannot be perceived apart from symbols whose signs they are. This point is apt to elude us because it may seem to conflict with what is indeed a cornerstone of the sign-symbol distinction, namely the possibility that “one and the same sign [. . .] be common to two different symbols,” which accordingly “will signify in different ways” (3.321). From this possibility, together with the definition of the sign of a given symbol as the perceptible aspect of that symbol, we are tempted to infer that all the symbols sharing a sign have a certain perceptible aspect in common and that a sign simply is, by definition, the perceptible aspect which the symbols sharing that sign have in common. A symbol is then thought of as the conjunction of a perceptible aspect and a mode of signification (*Bezeichnungsweise*). A proposition is thought of as the conjunction of a fact (*Tatsache*) and a mode of presentation (*Darstellungsweise*). The fact into which the propositional sign consists is held to be perceptible and available for description independently of any projective relation to the world. According to how we use that fact, we turn the propositional sign into this or that propositional symbol. On this account, while a symbol is partly individuated by its sign, the criteria of individuation of a sign, by contrast, are altogether independent from the symbolic function that it performs, for the simple reason that there is more than one way in which it may perform that function.

But if propositional signs were “facts in their own right, needing something to be ‘added’ before they have sense” (to use Peter Sullivan’s apt characterization), then the propositions (i.e., propositional symbols) recognizable in them would no longer display transparently their sense (Sullivan 1996, 221). It is true that a symbol is partly individuated by its sign in a way the converse does not hold true: there is no single symbol a sign must be the face of, whereas by definition there is a single sign that is the face a symbol must present to the senses if it is to be the symbol it is. However, this by no means entails that the criteria of individuation of a sign are prior to, and so independent from, its employment. Even though a sign can be employed in different ways (i.e., signify in the different ways) and so be the sign of different symbols, it is not a sign except within the context of a symbol. A propositional sign is indeed a fact. But such a fact is not to be conceived as the highest common factor of the distinct propositional symbols that one may come to recognize in it⁵²—just as the essential in a propositional symbol is not to be

conceived as the highest common factor of the distinct propositional symbols that may serve to express the same sense.

We have seen the non-contrastive distinction between showing itself and being said to lie at the heart of the articulation between Wittgenstein's anti-prescriptive view of logic and his anti-abstractionist view of sense. It is time we turn from the question of *how* what shows itself in language does so to the question of *what* _{INT} shows itself in language.

III. SHOWING AND GENERICITY

1. EXEMPLIFICATION

According to the foregoing, nothing does the showing of what _{INT} shows itself. Nothing can do so, inasmuch as nothing need do so. The question as to *what* (or who) performs the showing is not one to be answered but one to be declined. The negation involved in the remark that nothing does the showing is not a privation. It is not even a second-order predicative statement to the effect that a certain first-order concept does not subsume any object. It is not like the negation involved in the statement "None," said in answer to the question, "How much money do you have in your pocket?" (Cp. Anscombe 1957, §17.)

What about the question as to *what* is shown? Must this question too be rejected as having in the nature of the case no intelligible application? Clearly, it must be rejected, *if* what is shown is construed as the passive correlate of an act of showing. But, in the light of what precedes, this rather pleads against so understanding the question. What is at issue, then, is whether the question as to what is shown can stand as a genuine question when it is construed as the question as to what shows itself. Only a joint rejection of *both* questions would bring about the collapse of the Tractarian idea of showing altogether.

To the extent that resolute readers have brought into question the very intelligibility of the Tractarian idea of showing, they have usually done so on the ground of misgivings over the intelligibility of the *latter* question. They have pointed out that talk of "what is shown" is of a nature to tempt us into construing "the 'showing' side of the distinction as a kind of 'conveying' of a quasi-propositional content that we can at least attempt to say, though 'strictly speaking' we are unable to say it" (Conant and Diamond 2004, 62). By contrast, talk of "what shows," in the sense of what *effects* the showing, has been held relatively innocuous; or dubious to this extent only, that it conspires with talk of "what is shown" to fuel the temptation to turn showing into "a funny kind of saying" (Conant and Diamond 2004, 62). Some proponents of the resolute reading have gone so far as to suggest that a proper answer to the former question can allay suspicions over the intelligibility of the latter question (see, e.g., Kremer 2007; 2013). On this view, in order to resist the impulse to turn showing into a funny kind of saying, it is necessary and sufficient

to displace the assumption that what does the showing is a proposition. Showing must instead be construed as a practical achievement on our part. But if, as I have suggested, the ultimate root of the impulse to turn showing into a funny kind of saying is the very appearance that the former question makes sense, then this move comes at too late a stage. It grants to the line of reading that it opposes what is perhaps its most damaging assumption, namely that showing stands on a par with saying to this extent at least, that both are ways of achieving communication. On the present view, on the contrary, talk of “what_{INT} is shown,” once construed as talk of “what_{INT} shows itself,” is *relatively* innocuous in comparison to talk of “what shows” (in the sense of what effects the showing).

Talk of what_{INT} “shows itself” is part of what holds the *Tractatus* together. In turn it is held together, I shall suggest, by the idea that what_{INT} shows itself are *features* (*Züge*).⁵³ We already had a glimpse into what features are not: they are neither objects (they cannot be named) nor states of things (they cannot be stated). But this negative characterization comes short of a positive elucidation of the formal concept of feature (*Zug*). At this point, we need to get a better grip on the *Tractatus*’s talk of “features.” We saw in the previous part that its sense shows itself in the proposition. And indeed the sense of a proposition counts among what the *Tractatus* regards as its “essential features.” But the concept of feature is far from being exhausted by that of an essential feature of a proposition.

I shall proceed by first considering an apparent oddity, not to say inconsistency, in the way the *Tractatus* uses the verb “*darstellen*.” This oddity arises in connection with the *Tractatus*’s talk about “features.” It stands in the way of a proper appreciation of the unity of the book.

The oddity just mentioned resides in the discrepancy between two sets of occurrences of “*darstellen*” the first of which are in the active, the second of which in the passive. In the first sort of occurrences, “*darstellen*” takes as direct object the possible *situation* (or the possible external property of an object) and as subject the *proposition* (or picture) depicting that possible situation (or an expression of which the proposition is a function) (see 2.173, 2.201–2.203, 2.22, 2.221, 4.031, 4.04, 4.1, 4.115). If, as one might have expected, the second set of occurrences of “*darstellen*” differed from the first only with respect to diathesis, then they should demote the prime actant (i.e., subject) of the active construction and promote the second actant (i.e., direct object) in its stead: that is to say, in the passive “*darstellen*” should take as subject the possible *situation* (or the possible external property) and as agentive complement the *proposition* (or the expression). As it turns out, this is not the case. Most often, when “*darstellen*” is in the passive, it takes as subject an *expression* and as agentive complement a *variable*, exactly as if it were reversing an active construction in which it took a *variable* as subject and an *expression* as direct object (see 3.312–3.313, 4.126, 4.1271). Cases where “*darstellen*” is used in the passive in a way that coheres with (i.e., is simply the syntactical reversal of) its standard use in the active turn out to be the exception (e.g., 2.0231) rather than the rule. This is odd. Consider these two instances of the more frequent use of “*darstellen*” in the passive:

- 3.312 It [= the expression] is therefore presented by the general form of the propositions that it characterizes.
And in this form the expression is constant and everything else is variable.
- 3.313 An expression is therefore presented by a variable, whose values are the propositions that contain the expression.
(In the limiting case the variable becomes a constant, the expression a proposition.)

This way of using “*darstellen*” is matched by 4.1271:

- 4.1271 Every variable is the sign of a formal concept.
For every variable presents a constant form, which all its value possess, and which can be apprehended as a formal property of these values.

In the 3.31, which are devoted to the concept of expression (or symbol), the concept of expression no longer stands on the side of what does the presenting (as for example in 4.1) but on the side of what *undergoes* it. What is presented is no longer the world, but *words*. On the other hand, what presents is no longer an expression but a variable. Thus the two sets of occurrences correspond to *two* distinct ways of employing “*darstellen*.”

It might seem therefore that the use made of *darstellen* in the *Tractatus* either founders into incoherence or at best borders on equivocalness. Accordingly, to absolve the author from such charges, some commentators have gone so far as to embrace the conclusion that the two above-distinguished sets of occurrences of *darstellen* were simply unrelated and that *darstellen* assumed *two* distinct meanings, calling for distinct translations (see, e.g., Black 1964, 190).⁵⁴

I think that the two distinct ways of employing *darstellen* that confront us are two ways of employing *one and the same concept*: the two employments of *darstellen* do not differ with respect to meaning but with respect to the relative weights allocated to the two dimensions of the single meaning of *darstellen*. All presentation (*darstellen*) involves both signification (*bezeichnen*) (which is agentful) and exemplification (*zeigen*) (which is medial and so agentless). But in the first kind of use of “*darstellen*” (typically in the active), signification takes precedence over exemplification, while in the second kind of use (typically in the passive) it is the other way around, that is to say exemplification takes precedence over signification. In the active employment of *darstellen*, the active diathesis *nearly* eclipses the medial one; in the passive employment of *darstellen*, the passive diathesis *nearly* has the value of the medial one.

The relevant concept of exemplification can be defined by means of the conceptual apparatus developed by Nelson Goodman in his *Languages of Art* (see Goodman 1976, 52 & sq.). The symbolic relation that a sad picture (resp. a sad face) bears to what it expresses (namely, sadness), Goodman notes, runs in the opposite direction from the symbolic relation that a picture bears to what it represents (Goodman 1976, 50–52). A sad picture (resp. a sad face) cannot be said to signify sadness “except in the upside-down way that a local newspaper was said to have

‘acquired new owners’” (Goodman 1976, 51–52): a sad picture (resp. a sad face) does not signify (subsume), so much as it is signified (subsumed), by sadness (or, more properly speaking, by the label “sad”). The symbolic relation runs up from rather than down to what is signified (Goodman 1976, 52). This generally holds true of all exemplification (all expression is exemplification but not all exemplification is expression): a sample *s* exemplifies a label *T* if and only if *T* signifies *s* (so that *s* possesses *I*) and *s* refers back to *T*. As Goodman puts it, “Exemplification is possession plus reference. To have without symbolizing is merely to possess, while to symbolize without having is to refer in some other way than by exemplifying. The swatch [figuring “in a tailor’s booklet of small swatches of cloth”] exemplifies only those properties that it both has and refers to” (Goodman 1976, 53). Like ostension, exemplification crucially involves samples; but “whereas ostension is the act of pointing to a sample, exemplification is the relation between a sample and what it refers to” (Goodman 1976, 53 n. 5).

Insofar as it is also a logical picture, every picture is both a picture of reality and a mirror *into* which logical features (including inferential relations) reflect themselves. It would not represent (*vorstellen*) things to be so and so if it did not exemplify the form of its sense. Conversely, insofar as it is brought out, every formal property presented by means of a variable is also *made to* appear perspicuously. It would not be exemplified in (*am*) a feature of the variable if we did employ the variable in a certain way.

The generality inherent in exemplification, it will emerge, is not material but formal. It is not the *quantificational* generality that attaches to a propositional *function* (say, () *is sad*) insofar as the latter takes true propositions as values for a determinate range of its arguments; or, equivalently, that attaches to a material concept (say, the concept of *being sad*) insofar as the latter subsumes a determinate range of objects. Rather, the generality inherent in exemplification is *generic*: it is the generality attaching to a *sample* (say, a certain sad picture, or a certain sad face) insofar as it “refers back to” (“subsumes back,” as it were) a material predicate (“is sad”) that applies (literally or figuratively) to it. In Tractarian terms, the generality inherent in exemplification is not accidental but essential, not quantificational but logical (6.1232). It is the logical generality attaching to a propositional *variable* insofar as the latter perspicuously “refers back to” (“subsumes back,” as it were) a common propositional form that, together with any of its values, it possesses.

It is in fact one and the same thing for variables to present in the *opposite* direction from propositions—for forms to be presented (*dargestellt*) by variables rather than for variables to represent (*vorstellen*) things to stand thus-and-so—and for the meanings (*Bedeutungen*) of names *not* to be *functions* (even *constant* ones) on ways the world might be. Neither the forms exemplified by propositional variables nor the meanings of names are functions on ways the world might be. To acknowledge the free variable as the paradigm of direct reference (Kaplan 1989, 571–72) is in effect to acknowledge that the generality of a variable is *not* quantificational. Indeed,

the universality (or essential generality) that pertains to logical propositions, insofar as they are true *come what may*, is not quantificational but generic: “It is not that they are true because their truth conditions are met in all possible worlds, but because they have none” (Diamond 1991, 198). Transposing a remark by Kaplan, we can say that a logical form “is simply independent of the circumstance and is no more a function (constant or otherwise) of circumstances, than my action is a function of your desires when I decide to do it whether you like it or not” (Kaplan 1989, 497). As Kaplan emphasizes, this crucial point is “obscured by the style of possible world semantics” (Kaplan 1989, 497).

As we shall see in the next section, for a formal concept (*formal Begriff*) to be presented (*dargestellt*) by a propositional variable is for it perspicuously to show itself (i.e., express itself) in that variable, as a feature (*Zug*) thereof. Perspicuous exemplification is of features (*Züge*) of thought and reality, by means of *variables*, in (*am*) features of variables. Exemplification of features need not be perspicuous to take place in (*am*) features of the symbols we make use of.

2. FEATURES

The conceptual nexus between showing itself (*sich zeigen*), formal concepts (*formale Begriffe*), and features (*Züge*) is the subject of the 4.12s. The cardinal distinction drawn in the 4.121s between what we express *by means of* language and what expresses itself (i.e., shows itself) *in the medium of* language (4.121) is meant to cast light on the distinction between the uttering (*aussprechen*) and the delimiting (*abgrenzen*) of the thinkable (*das Denkbare*) (4.114–4.116), which in turn are respectively the tasks of the natural sciences (as a set of doctrines resulting in the totality of true propositions [*die Gesamtheit der wahren Sätze*] [4.11]) and of philosophy (as an activity resulting in the getting clear of propositions [*das Klarwerden von Sätzen*] [4.112d]). At 4.122, Wittgenstein says that he introduces the twin concepts of “internal property” (or “property of structure”) and “internal relation” (or “relation between structures”), to signify properties and relations that cannot be thought not to hold (4.123a), because much philosophical confusion rests on conflating internal properties and relations (which are really *pseudo*-properties and *pseudo*-relations) with the genuine article (material properties and relations). Although it is introduced as early as in 3.34, the concept of feature (*Zug*) really comes to the fore only in the 4.122s:

- 4.1221 An internal property of a fact can also be called a feature (*Zug*) of this fact. (In somewhat the sense in which we speak of facial features [*Gesichtszüge*].)

As we shall see, the concept of feature, when thus *literally* construed, brings together the two concepts of expression and genericity. Before getting to that, however, we need to delve a little on the first appearance made by the concept of feature in the book. For the two sequences of remarks in which the concept comes to the fore cast light one on another. The term first occurs at the threshold of the 3.34s. The

main thread of the 3.34s is the distinction between two sorts of features. Features divide into essential (*wesentliche*) and accidental (*zufällige*) ones:

- 3.34 A proposition possesses essential and accidental features. Accidental are the features that are due to the particular way of producing the propositional sign. Essential are those that alone enable the proposition to express its sense.
- 3.341 The essential in the proposition is therefore that which is common to all the propositions that can express the same sense.

The contrast between what, “in” the symbol (*am Symbol*), is sensuously perceptible (*das sinnlich wahrnehmbare am Symbol*) (3.32), what essential (*das Wesentliche am Satz*) (3.341) shapes the whole 3.3 sequence. As a symbol, the proposition has one foot in the realm of the sensible, another in the realm of sense. It is Janus-faced. At 3.34, the contrast is recast as a particular case of the contrast between what, “in” the propositional symbol (*am Satz*), is unessential (accidental), what essential (non-accidental). As we saw at the end of section 3 (when we looked at 6.124) the closely related contrast between what is and what is not up to us (*willkürlich*) “in” the symbols we use (*an den Symbolen, die wir gebrauchen*) is decisive for a general understanding of the sense in which only the latter expresses itself (shows itself) in logic.

What is sensuously perceptible “in” (*am*) the propositional symbol evidently counts as unessential since it is entirely dependent upon the way in which the propositional sign is produced. Its propositional sign is unessential to the proposition (and so an accidental feature of it), not in the sense that the proposition could change it for a different propositional sign and still be the very same symbol (for by definition a symbol has only one sign), but in the sense that the proposition could express the very same sense by means of a different propositional sign. Generally, given that any sign is essentially arbitrary (*willkürlich*) and therefore replaceable at will, that two objects are signified (*bezeichnet*) by one and the same sign can never, on its own, testify to (*anzeigen*) their having a common trait (*gemeinsame Merkmal*) (3.322). What really signifies (*bezeichnet*) in a symbol is what is essential in it, in other words what it has in common with all the symbols that could likewise fulfill the same purpose (3.341) or by which it could be replaced in accordance with the rules of logical syntax (3.344).⁵⁵

In 3.31, an expression (*Ausdruck*) or symbol (*Symbol*) was defined as any part of a proposition that characterizes its sense (3.31a). Counts as expression, among what is essential to propositional sense, all that propositions can have in common one with another (3.31b). In the terminology of 3.34, an expression (or symbol) is therefore an essential feature (*wesentlich Zug*) of any proposition in which it occurs (*vorkommt*). In 3.311 and 3.313, an expression is said respectively to be the characteristic trait (*charakteristische Merkmal*) of the class (*Klasse*) of all the propositions whose sense it characterizes (or, equivalently, in which it occurs as an expression) and to be presented by a variable whose values are exactly the propositions in which it occurs (i.e., by a “propositional variable” [*Satzvariable*]). In the terminology of 3.34, such a common characteristic trait (*gemeinsam charakteristische Merkmal*) is

therefore an essential feature (*wesentlich Zug*) shared by all the propositions whose sense it characterizes (*charakterisiert*). Insofar as the propositional variable whose values are exactly the propositions containing the expression makes such a feature prominent (3.312), the expression can be said to be presented by the propositional variable (3.313). Conversely, an essential feature of a proposition can be said to attach to a characteristic trait (*charakteristische Merkmal*) of its sense: as such, it is itself the characteristic trait of the class of all the propositions whose sense is characterized by the former.⁵⁶

The concept of feature (*Zug*) introduced in 3.34 in connection with propositions is explicitly extended to expressions (i.e., symbols) in general in 4.126. Meanwhile, the concept is stretched along another direction: in 4.1221, it is extended from the realm of language to that of reality. In effect, in 4.1221 (quoted above), an internal property of fact (*eine interne Eigenschaft einer Tatsache*) is said to be a “feature” thereof. Wittgenstein is emphatic that he is using the word “feature” (*Zug*) quite literally, in somewhat the sense in which we ordinarily speak of “facial features” (*Gesichtszügen*). It is evidently the sense in which we say of the features of someone’s face that they are “thin,” or “chiseled,” or “unlined,” and so on.

We can turn at last to 4.126–4.1271:

- 4.126 In the sense in which we speak of formal properties, we can now also talk of formal concepts.
 (I introduce this expression, in order to make clear the origin of the confusion between formal concepts and genuine concepts that pervades the whole of the old logic.)
 That something falls under a formal concept cannot be expressed by means of a proposition (*kann nicht durch einen Satz ausgedrückt werden*). Rather it shows itself in the sign (*es zeigt sich an dem Zeichen*) of that object itself. (The name shows, that it signifies (*bezeichnet*) an object, the number-sign, that it signifies (*bezeichnet*) a number, etc.)
 Formal concepts cannot, like genuine concepts, be presented by means of a function (*können nicht durch eine Funktion dargestellt werden*).
 For their traits (*Merkmale*), formal properties, are not expressed by means of functions (*nicht durch Funktionen ausgedrückt*).
 The expression of the formal concept is a feature of certain symbols (*ein Zug gewisser Symbole*).
 The sign of the traits (*Merkmale*) of a formal concept is therefore a characteristic feature (*charakteristischer Zug*) of all the symbols whose meanings fall under that concept.
 The expression of the formal concept is therefore a propositional variable in which only this characteristic feature (*charakteristische Zug*) is constant.
- 4.127 The propositional variable signifies (*bezeichnet*) the formal concept and its values the objects that fall under this concept.
- 4.1271 Every variable presents (*darstellt*) a constant form, which all its value possess, and which can be apprehended (*aufgefasset*) as a formal property of these values.

The point of the sections just quoted comes out in the immediately following one (4.1272). Wittgenstein there draws a distinction between confused and unconfused (or problematic and innocuous) uses of *words* for formal concepts. A perspicuous conceptual notation will help bring out the distinction on a case-by-case basis. In a perspicuous conceptual notation, the unconfused use of a word for a formal concept will go over to the use of a variable. By contrast, we will find ourselves at a loss how to render the confused use within such a notation (see Diamond 2012). Thus, the innocuous use made of the word “things” in “There are two things which I forgot to take with me in the plane” will be rendered by means of quantifiers and variables as “ $\exists x \exists y \dots$.” Here the formal concept of an “object” is perspicuously exemplified by a feature of the name-variable. The problematic use of the word “things” in “There are things,” by contrast, is revealed for the piece of nonsense that it is when we try to render it in the conceptual notation.

In the terminology of 4.126, the internal (or formal) property of logical simplicity is a conceptual trait (*Merkmal*) of the formal concept of object (taken in the narrow sense). As a conceptual trait of that concept, it is a property of whatever falls as an object (in the broad sense) under that concept. That something is an object (in the narrow sense), i.e. falls as an object (in the broad sense) under the pseudo-concept of object, and so possesses the formal property of logical simplicity, cannot and need not be said, i.e. expressed by means of a propositional symbol (i.e., expression). That something is logically simple, we cannot and need not express. Indeed, it is not our business to express it: rather, that something is logically simple expresses itself (*ausdrückt sich*) in (*am*) the propositional symbols (i.e., expressions) in which the sign of that thing occurs with sense, in the very sign (*am Zeichen*) of that thing, as a feature (*Zug*) of its symbol; in that way, it shows itself (*zeigt sich*) in the very sign of that thing, as a feature of its symbol. It is at once impossible and superfluous that we should express the pseudo-instantiation of the pseudo-concept of object: it expresses itself as a certain feature of symbols signifying objects, in other words, as a certain feature of *names*. The expression (*Ausdruck*) of the formal concept of object is a certain feature of names, in the sense that the sign of the trait of objecthood is a certain feature common to all symbols for objects.

Any elementary proposition in which a name occurs is a functional expression of the expression (i.e., symbol) constituted by that name. A concept whose conceptual traits are properties expressed by means of functions (i.e., functional expressions) can be presented by a function (i.e., functional expression). Such is the case of a genuine concept—say, the concept of *being short*, or again that of *being shorter than*. By contrast, a formal property, like that of logical simplicity, expresses itself as a feature of symbols and so is not expressed by us; a fortiori, it is not expressed by means of a functional expression. As the conceptual traits of a formal concept are themselves formal, it cannot be presented by means of a functional expression. But a formal concept can be presented (*dargestellt*) by a propositional variable (*Satzvariable*): namely, by a propositional variable that *singles out*

and thereby *makes prominent* the symbolic feature that is the sign of the traits of that concept. In effect, a formal concept is signified (*bezeichnet*) by a propositional variable in which that feature alone is constant. The propositional variable *brings out* or *perspicuously exemplifies* the common form constituting the traits of the formal concept by making prominent the feature that is the sign of those traits. By resorting to a propositional variable, we can make plain a logical form.

Conversely, every propositional variable (and so, by 3.314, every variable), insofar as it presents a common form, signifies (*bezeichnet*) a formal concept. Now we saw before that an expression was presented (*dargestellt*) by means of a propositional variable exhibiting (i.e., perspicuously exemplifying) the general form of all the propositions in which that expression occurs (3.312a). The propositional variable perspicuously exemplifies that general form by singling out the expression as its only constant feature (3.312b). It follows that it is not just the concept of expression that is formal, but also the concept of each expression. The occurring of an expression within another cannot and need not be expressed by us since it shows itself (expresses itself). Only, of course, it does not necessarily show itself perspicuously.

It is important to realize, however, that there is something fundamentally misleading about the terms in which 4.126 is couched. The same evidently holds of my own comments. That some of the above formulations must be climbed upon and ultimately discarded should be clear from the fact that in them what is said to show itself, and so to be unsayable (inexpressible by us), is recurrently (“almost comically”) stated (expressed by us). As Diamond writes, “Really to grasp that what you were trying to say shows itself in language is to cease to think of I as an inexpressible content: that which you were trying to say” (Diamond 1991, 198).

Contrariwise, the single most important point to grasp in connection with these sections, and part of the motivation for appealing to the concept of exemplification in the first place, is that we should not assume what _{INT} is exemplified to be determinable prior to and apart from its *perspicuous* exemplification in (*am*) features of *variables*. Exemplification might be said to be “reflective” in the Kantian sense. It is precisely on account of its reflective character (in that sense) that exemplification is not contrastive. The perspicuous exemplification of logical features that is central to the practice of clarifying thoughts is not in the business of getting such features *right*.⁵⁷ Exemplification does not become contrastive in becoming perspicuous. Features of variables are not constraints built into them (the way syntactical restrictions are built into Russell’s “structured variables”). For this very reason, the medium of a perspicuous symbolism must, in the end, speak for itself. Even to say that, in a perspicuous symbolism, formal concepts are “replaced” by variables is potentially misleading, since it makes it look as if the formal concepts in question were identifiable prior to and apart from their perspicuous exemplification. More generally, talk *about* “logical features” is as self-defeating as what it is meant (and does contribute) to free us from, namely talk *about* categorial distinctions. To take but an example, in dividing features into “essential” and “unessential”

ones, one runs the risk of treating the terms of that division as if they named the coordinate species of a genus (see in this connection 5.454). Some other misgivings over talk of “features,” however, I take to be far less warranted. In the next section, I shall try to disentangle them from the genuine concern just adumbrated.

IV. SHOWING AND MAKING PLAIN

1. THREE CONCERNS ABOUT FEATURES

I have argued that a resolute stance toward the *Tractatus* requires “taking seriously Wittgenstein’s own attempt to take the distinction between saying and showing” (Conant and Diamond 2004, 63)—*not* jettisoning that distinction. Not only do the qualms over “showing not extend to the very idea of showing as it figures in the *Tractatus*, but they are best conceived as being put forward on behalf of a proper articulation of the latter idea (Conant and Diamond 2004). But this hardly implies that no qualms can arise in connection with an account of showing of the sort I have outlined. In this section, I address three concerns regarding the Tractarian concept of feature (*Zug*) that may be adduced in the name of a resolution stance. The first two concerns are tied to specific misgivings about (talk of) “features of reality.” The third concern can be traced to general misgivings about (talk of) “features” *as such* and about the *generality* inherent in such talk. The first concern seems to me misplaced. It simply barks up the wrong tree. The other two—once disentangled from the first and reappraised in light of its rejection—I take to reflect genuine difficulties. The third one, I shall further contend, is actually in order and all-important.

As all three concerns can be found in the works of Cora Diamond, in what follows I mainly dwell on the latter. The first thing to note is that, contrary to what its advocates and detractors alike have often suggested, the resolute reading advanced by Diamond does *not* impugn the very idea of showing that figures in the *Tractatus*. Thus, in her seminal essay, “Throwing Away the Ladder,” Diamond talks of the replacement of terms for logical types by “features of a notation designed to make logical similarities and differences clear.” She adds: “As part of the transition to grasping what is thus made clear, we may say such things as that the possibility of a state of affairs is not something that you can say but that it shows itself in signs with such-and-such general characteristics. But once the transition is made, the analyzed sentences must in a sense speak for themselves, and we should not any longer be telling ourselves that now we grasp what possibility is, it is what shows itself, what comes out, in a sentence’s having a sense” (Diamond 1985, 183–84). Clearly, Diamond disavows only one of two notions of showing, and the one that she endorses (and that she calls “making clear,” or “making perspicuous”) indisputably draws on *some* aspects of the *Tractatus*’s own invocation of the notion of showing. The so-called Conant-Diamond reading of

the *Tractatus* is *not* committed to the view, entertained by some resolute readers, that the *Tractatus* exposes the very idea of “what shows forth in language” as “yet another piece of justificatory nonsense” (Kremer 2001, 56; see also Ricketts 1996; Read and Deans 2003; McManus 2006).

It is equally indisputable, however, that Diamond’s early work on the *Tractatus* displays specific misgivings about (talk of) “features of *reality*.” It voices qualms over (talk of) “features of *reality*” *as contrasted with* (talk of) “features of thought” and (talk of) “features of language.” Thus, Diamond maintains, in “Throwing Away the Ladder,” that “to speak of features of reality in connection with what shows itself in language is to use a very odd kind of figurative language. That goes also for ‘what shows itself’” (Diamond 1985, 181–82).

It bears emphasizing that Diamond was never concerned to question the *reality* of the logical similarities and differences exhibited (i.e., perspicuously exemplified) in an adequate concept-script. This would indeed go against the grain of the very spirit in which she approaches the issue of the relation between logic and language—“the realistic spirit” after which her first collection of essays was entitled (Diamond 1991). What Diamond did question comes out clearly from the following passage: “Nothing external to it [= to the concept-script] fixes its logical structure; but it is not arbitrary. Where then is the reality that fixes what distinctions must be embodied in it? That reality lies in it. There is an order, a logical order, in thought and in language” (Diamond 1983, 141).⁵⁸ In emphatically refraining from ending this last sentence by “(. . .) and *in reality*,” in taking it to be complete as it stands, Diamond is implicitly contrasting the reality embodied in the concept-script (i.e., the logical similarities and differences exhibited in it) with a certain philosophical fantasy of what “reality” is. But she is also reading this fantasy into the *Tractatus*’s talk of “features of reality.” But what warrants such asymmetry? If there is room for an innocent way of talking of “features of thought,” why should there not be room for an innocent way of talking of “features of reality”? In effect, Diamond has since then explicitly distanced herself from the anti-realist bias such qualms over (talk of) “features of reality” (see Conant and Diamond 2004, 93).

A second concern may subtend the anti-realist concern regarding “features of reality” just criticized. Although it can be defused too, it differs from the first concern in that it is traceable to a genuine issue. The concern is that talk specifically of “features of *reality*” simply flies in the face of the *Tractatus*’s emphatic rejection of the very idea of a *substantial* a priori. In effect, it may seem hard to understand how the concept of logical features or limits of reality could fail to be an empty without collapsing into the concept of limitations of reality. There is, after all, by Tractarian lights, only one logical shareable feature that can be presented *in advance* (*von vornherein*), and so *at a single stand* (*auf einmal*) (5.47), by means of a variable, and that is the general propositional form, the sign for which is the one and only general primitive sign (*Urzeichen*) of logic (5.472).

Indeed, the idea of a substantial a priori is explicitly rejected in the last sentence of 5.634:

- 5.634 There is no a priori order of things.
Es gibt keine Ordnung der Dinge a priori.

In particular, contrary to Kant's claim, there are no a priori forms that our sensibility imposes on experience, no *synthetic* a priori necessities (5.634a). In general, the question whether reality is *amenable* to the forms of thought—whether there must be elementary propositions of such-and-such forms, objects of such-and-such forms, if reality is to be at all thinkable (5.5541)—is nonsensical.⁵⁹ 5.634 is the negative answer to the question raised earlier (5.5542) as to the pertinence of a regressive inquiry into something like the necessities apart from which no fact would be so much as possible, or upon which sense as such depends:

- 5.5542 Does the question make sense: what must there *be*, in order that anything can be-the-case?

In the light of 5.634, the latter question cannot, but also (and even more importantly) need not be answered, because there can and need be no such necessities to begin with. Grounds for the negative verdict rendered in 5.634 are adduced in sections 5.555–5.557:

- 5.555 The specification of any special form (*speziellen Form*) would be completely arbitrary (*willkürlich*).
5.556 There cannot be a hierarchy of forms of elementary propositions. Only what we construct (*konstruieren*) ourselves can we foresee (*voraussehen*).
5.557 The *application* (*Anwendung*) of logic decides what elementary propositions there are. What lies in its application (*Anwendung*), logic cannot anticipate (*vorausnehmen*).
5.5571 If I cannot specify a priori (*a priori angeben*) the elementary propositions, then it must lead to obvious nonsense to attempt to specify (*angeben*) them.

“There can never be surprises in logic” (6.1251) because in logic the only predictions we can meaningfully make are expressions of intentions: namely, predictions as to what we shall *design* and *build*. Conversely, there must be a general propositional form because otherwise there could be a proposition whose constructional form one could not foresee (4.5).

It bears noting that the second concern about (talk of) “features of reality” does not fit well with the first. For it is justified, to the extent that it is justified at all, by an appreciation of the anti-idealist drift animating the *Tractatus*. The ultimate target of the *Tractatus* is not the sort of metaphysical *realism* that the resolute reading rightly takes to be impugned by the book, but rather the sort of transcendental *idealism* that is embraced by Kant in the First *Critique* (see Sullivan 1996, 2011a, 2011b). And there need be nothing the matter with the idea of features of reality emerging a posteriori as the result of being made perspicuous through formal presentation, analysis, or proof; nor with the idea of features of reality showing a posteriori (if not yet perspicuously) in our ever-expanding use of language as we go along. On

the last score, Wittgenstein says that the forms of objects show themselves in the syntax of the application (*Anwendung*) of names of them: “We have become clear, then, that names may and do stand for the most various forms, and that it is only the syntactical application (*die syntaktische Anwendung*) that characterizes the form to be presented (*die darzustellende Form*)” (Wittgenstein 1962, 59).

3.262 What does not come to expression in the signs, their application shows. What signs swallow, their application utters.
Was in den Zeichen nicht zum Ausdruck kommt, das zeigt ihre Anwendung. Was die Zeichen verschlucken, das spricht ihre Anwendung aus.

One important consequence of discarding the very idea of an a priori order of things is that, with the one exception of the provision of the general propositional form (6), logical notations are not designable *in advance* of formal presentation, analysis, or proof. Rather, they must be designed along the way (see Johnston 2009, 154).

Finally, a third concern about talk of logical “features” “showing themselves in language” must be addressed. This last concern is actually in order. It transpires in these lines from “Throwing Away the Ladder”: “We are left after the transition with a logical notation that in a sense has to speak for itself. If we try afterwards to say why it is a good notation, we know that we shall find ourselves saying things which may help our listeners, but which we ourselves cannot regard as the expression of any true thought, speakable or unspeakable. When we say why the notation is a good one, when we explain what logical distinctions and similarities it makes perspicuous, we are in a sense going backwards, back to the stage at which we had been when grasping the point of the transition” (Diamond 1985, 183). This is indeed the crucial point. Not only is general talk about “logical features” “showing themselves” misleading if we take ourselves to identify what shows itself (in general) as being logical features (in general); but also talk of *the* “features” brought out by *the* logical notation under consideration is misleading if we take ourselves to recognize that it identifies the *right* logical features, or identifies logical features in the *right* way (see Diamond 2011, 2013). Rather, features are *whatever* shows itself; and the features brought out by the logical notation under consideration through the use of variables are simply whatever perspicuously shows itself *in it*. To understand that the determination of what is exemplified cannot, in the nature of the case, precede its perspicuous exemplification by means of variables, *is* to understand that the medium in which perspicuous exemplification is achieved must in the end speak for itself.

2. THE RELATION BETWEEN SHOWING AND MAKING PLAIN

Even apart from the fact that the general propositional form is the only logical form which it makes sense to specify a priori by means of a variable, the view that showing is none of our doing may seem objectionable on yet another ground. It may seem to obscure the medium of showing. More precisely, the present view may seem to be open to two objections.

First, it may seem to have no room for the activity of logical clarification with which philosophy is equated in the *Tractatus* (4.112) and more generally for the very idea of achieving logical clarity. Second, in insisting on the medial character of showing, it may seem to get things almost exactly wrong. I have urged, in effect, that the difference between showing itself and saying was made too slight as long as Tractarian showing was not recognized for the agentless process that it is. But, to some resolute readers, it has seemed that the difference was made too slight as long as Tractarian showing was not construed as “showing-how” and thereby definitively contrasted with any variety of “showing-that” (see especially Kremer 2002; 2007; 2013). On the latter account, construing showing as “practical showing” is the true and only one alternative to construing it as “propositional showing.” I shall call this account “the practical account of showing.” As a peculiarly lucid and stringent exposition of it is to be found in Michael Kremer’s work, I shall mostly draw from the latter.⁶⁰

Superficially at least, the practical account of showing and the one presented in this essay are radically at odds with each other. They mean to cash out the same diagnosis, central to the resolute reading: namely, that the difference cannot be given its proper weight unless one ceases to “construe the ‘showing’ side of the distinction as a kind of ‘conveying’ of a quasi-propositional content that we can at least attempt to say (though ‘strictly speaking’ we are unable to say it)” (Conant and Diamond 2004, 62). But, they take opposite courses to meet that goal. In effect, “practical showing,” understood “on the model of a demonstration of a technique” (Kremer 2002, 297), is plainly an activity of which we are the agents, performed with the intention of conveying some “practical knowledge” (or “knowledge-how”) by exemplifying it concretely. Thus understood, showing is anything but an agentless process. By the lights of the account presented in this essay, this practical account of showing gets things upside down indeed. Built into it is the theatricality I take the *Tractatus* to keep systematically at bay, in complete coherence with its conception of logic.

In what follows I shall mostly draw from the latter. The concept of “practical showing” pivotal to Kremer’s version of the resolute reading is not meant to capture the grammar of “showing” in the *Tractatus*, but rather to “redeem” it. It aims at disambiguating the *Tractatus*’s talk of “showing” in order to isolate and salvage one of two strands running through it (Kremer 2007, 158). According to the practical account of showing, the grammar initially displayed by the *Tractatus*’s use of “show” dissolves into our hands as we probe it, and with it “the distinction between saying and showing” that it pretends to secure (Kremer 2007, 157). The concept of “practical showing” is meant to capture *one* of two incompatible grammars between which the *Tractatus*’s use of “show” confusingly wavers. This use is essentially “two-sided”: the *Tractatus* uses the sign “showing” now in one way, as a symbol for showing-that, now in another way, as a symbol for showing-how (Kremer 2007, 158; 2013, 674). Kremer takes the idea (central to the “standard reading”) of “an insight that can be shown, but not said—but an insight into a truth nonetheless” to help itself to this

equivocation: “Thinking of the practical sense of ‘showing how,’ we expect that what is shown can’t be said; slipping towards the propositional sense of ‘showing that,’ we think of this ‘what’ as something like a fact” (Kremer 2013, 674). But his more important contention (at least for present purposes) is that this equivocation is one into which the *Tractatus* deliberately engages for the sake of therapy. The standard reading aptly (if of course unwittingly) captures its target.

Insofar as the term “feature” (*Zug*), in the *Tractatus*, is applied now to reality, now to symbolism (itself understood as the use *we make* of signs), it displays for Kremer the same equivocalness as the one fostered by the word “show” (Kremer 2007, 162; 2013, 674). The *Tractatus*’s talk of “features” is held to be irremediably incoherent. On this view, talk of “features” “showing themselves” compounds confusion (Kremer 2007, 159–62). At bottom, it bespeaks a residual commitment to a speculative understanding of showing. The suspicion may thus seem to hover over a reading like the one I have outlined, that it is irresolute after all. Independently from the incoherence of the idiom of “features,” such a speculative commitment deprives any reading like the one outlined here of the resources to do justice to the activity through which alone the logical is brought into view. In particular, it cannot account for the activity of bringing out logical commonalities and differences. Or so the suspicion runs.

It is with the latter suspicion (the first of the two objections distinguished at the beginning of this section) that I shall mainly be concerned here. For it stems from the mishandling of what is a genuine insight. And it bespeaks, I think, a misconception that the *Tractatus* is most concerned to steer clear of.⁶¹ That the Tractarian grammars of “showing” (*zeigen*) and “features” (*Züge*) do not fall apart in our hands the simple manner just adumbrated, if only because they eschew the simple alternative between showing-that and showing-how, I have argued already. If what precedes is at all on the right track, then construing Tractarian showing in terms of showing-how is *neither* the only way of *not* construing showing in terms of showing-that, *nor* the right way.

The conflation that risks being projected on the text is between *showing itself* (*sich zeigen*) (which takes care of itself) and *making plain* (which requires activity on our part).⁶² As we have seen, the *Tractatus* is concerned both to disentangle the non-arbitrary from the arbitrary and to emphasize how tightly interwoven they are.⁶³

There is a genuine insight behind the practical account of showing. It is two-fold. First, what shows itself only does so to the extent that it shows itself in signs-*in-use*. Second, what shows itself *perspicuously* only does so to the extent that *we make* it perspicuous: that we bring it about that it shows perspicuously. With the showing itself of what shows itself, we have nothing to do (it is not “up to us,” but neither does it lie “beyond the reach of our will”). With its *perspicuously* showing itself, we have everything to do. On the one hand, the logical features (of language, of reality) perspicuously exemplified in a logically perspicuous notation had better not be a matter of the will (*willkürlich*). On the other hand, a logically perspicuous notation must be *designed*—that is, of course, designed *by us*.

On Kremer's view, the *Tractatus's* talk of "features" "showing themselves" bespeaks our unwillingness to let the logical take care of itself (Kremer 2013, 675). However, if the logical side to our symbols (the essential [*das Wesentliche*] in [*am*] them) is to take care of itself, and if the logical patterns we bring into relief are likewise to take care of themselves, they had better be in some sense *readable* into language before we bring them into relief. They must in some way have been *present all along* in the signs-in-use in which we come to discern them. And this is just to say, in the terminology of the *Tractatus*, that they must *have shown* all along. To bring them out, to make them plain, *is* to realize that "they had shown all along" (Diamond 2004, 160). To return to our slogan: for logic to take care of itself just is for showing to take care of itself. In effect, to say that logic takes care of itself, that it is neither helped nor hindered by what we do (including the notational choices we make) *is* to say that logical features (including those symbols *are*) show themselves irrespective of what we do.

The suspicion thus stems from unclarity about the sense and measure in which logical clarity must be reckoned an achievement on our part. Neither philosophy nor logic is a doctrine (*Lehre*). However, philosophy and logic fail to be doctrines in very different ways: whereas philosophy fails to be a doctrine to the extent that it is "an activity" (*eine Tätigkeit*) (4.112), logic fails to be a doctrine to the extent that it is "a mirror-reflection of the world" (*ein Spiegelbild der Welt*) and so "transcendental" (6.13). Philosophy is a practice of clarification. It consists in the logical clarification of thoughts (*die logische Klärung der Gedanken*) and results, "not in 'philosophical propositions', but rather in the getting clear of propositions" (*nicht 'philosophische Sätze', sondern das Klarwerden von Sätze*) (4.112). Properly speaking, the philosopher is never the first to speak: he engages into the practice of logical clarification *in response* to philosophical confusion (see 6.53; and Diamond 2013, 1190). Analysis, which is one form the activity of logical clarification may take, involves the *application* of logic. Accordingly, its findings cannot be anticipated (5.557). By contrast, logic is a priori in the sense that it has no room for mistakes, i.e. for illogical thoughts (5.4731). It does consist in logical propositions (*logischen Sätze*), however degenerate and dispensable they might be (6.122), namely tautologies that exemplify (*darstellen*) the logical "scaffolding of the world" (*das Gerüst der Welt*) (6.124). The scaffolding of the world reflects itself in tautologies insofar as features (that characterize language and world alike) show themselves in them (6.12). Logical propositions do not add up to a doctrine for the simple reason that they all say nothing (6.11), 'treat of' nothing (*'handeln' von nichts*) (6.124).

In fact, the practice of logical clarification in which philosophy consists *presupposes* that logic is not a practice. The diathesis to which 4.112 resorts in order to capture the transition in which philosophy results—"the getting clear of propositions" (*das Klarwerden von Sätze*)—depends for its sense on the medial diathesis characteristic of the expression of the logical (see section 3 above).⁶⁴ Philosophy can only clarify what was in some sense clear all along.⁶⁵ Not only is the result it

achieves not a task,⁶⁶ but also it comprises something more, or other, than the carrying out of a task.

It takes work, no doubt, to bring out logical features, to make them plain. But to make them plain is simply to bring it about that they show themselves *perspicuously*. That is to say, what we can help or hinder is the clarity of perspicuity of the showing itself of logical features. What we cannot and need not do is to *bring it about that* they show themselves *simpliciter*, i.e. that they show themselves *at all*. What is more, this is how it should be. Were it not nonsensical (so much as to attempt) to make logical features show themselves, then there would be room for mistakes: there would be room, that is, for making perspicuous the wrong logical features, for getting them wrong. The difficulty lies in holding together the two sides—active and middle—of the “getting clear of propositions”; and, more generally, in holding together the two sides—active and middle—of the perspicuous exemplification of features (whether it is the result of analysis or of other logical procedures such as the method of tautologies or the mathematical method of equations). In showing in some details how “the activity of clarification turns propositions into versions of themselves that enable us to see clearly what the proposition had shown all along” (Diamond 2004, 160), Cora Diamond offers an example of how the two sides can be held together.

Yet another motivation for embracing a practical account of showing is that it promises to avert the *reification* both of *what* shows itself and of *wherein* it shows itself (i.e., of the medium of showing itself). The former of these two concerns has already been addressed in what precedes. I have suggested that the suspicion that reification of what shows itself in language is *built into* the very idea of showing itself in language gets things almost exactly wrong: the idiom of showing itself imposes itself precisely to the extent that it prevents reification (recall Wittgenstein’s insistence that features be conceived on the model of “facial” features). The proper response to the latter concern is that there need be nothing the matter with the idea of features showing themselves in the very flesh of (*am*) *signs-in-use* as long as their being *in use* is not conceived as some extra-feature superadded onto them.

There is a risk of shifting back and forth between two symmetric conceptions of the medium of showing: in recoiling from the idea that logical features of sense can show themselves without materializing in anything, we are led to the view that they must *materialize in signs*; but as we get struck by the idea that their use cannot be contained in signs, we recoil from this view back into our initial view that logical features of sense (and our mastery thereof) must *transpire in the activity of using signs*. We oscillate between the temptation to reduce the medium of showing (symbols) to its material (signs) and the temptation to conclude, on account of the irreducibility of medium to material, that there is no medium of showing except the intelligent activity of using signs. But this is to conflate embodiment and reification. There is no rampant fetishism concealed in the idea that *symbols* (i.e., signs-in-use) display what shows itself in virtue of embodying it. A symbol does

condense or crystallize a use in a sign. It is nothing but the condensation or the crystallization of a use in a sign. A symbol materializes in its sign. That is just what being a symbol is. Only we must consider and do many a thing to recognize one.

“All that is possible in logic is also permitted,” claims 5.473. For Wittgenstein, as already for Spinoza and Nietzsche, the philosophy of logic that holds sway over our philosophical tradition is saturated with moralism; the latter, in turn, nourishes itself from the corruptions plaguing the former. The moralistic conception of logic turns on the idea that nonsense arises when we sin against logic. This idea rests on the assumption that illogical thinking can and must be an object of imputation: that it can and must be imputed to—and so blamed on—the transgression of logical prohibitions—the violation, as it were, of logical taboos. Categories, i.e. logical types, are indeed thought of as “counts of indictment,” as the original meaning of “*katègoreísthai*” suggests⁶⁷: as ways in which reason might sin against its own nature.

The crucial move consists in construing categorial distinctions as *privations*, as if an “object” was any more deprived from being a “fact,” or a “name” any more deprived from being a “proposition,” than a rose is deprived from having teeth. A rose might as well begrudge the cow its power to chew it, and resent it for not refraining from chewing it.

Not only is the register of showing not one to which we need to resign ourselves in the face of restrictions attending saying, but it differs from that of saying principally in this, that it is *not* inherently contrastive. For, to paraphrase J. L. Austin, showing as not is but nonsense for not to show.⁶⁸

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NOTES

1. Cavell 1979, 19.
2. As James Conant and Cora Diamond are the first to acknowledge: “so much energy has been directed by resolute readers towards absolving Wittgenstein of any commitment to (what Williams calls) ‘showing’ (as something that nonsense can do) that it has directed attention away

from the topic of (what Wittgenstein calls) showing (and other topics that are not directly tied to the topic of nonsense)" (Conant and Diamond 2004, 89). See also Conant 2001, 425.

3. On 6.54, see especially Diamond 1985, 2000; Conant 2002; Sullivan 2004.
4. 5.61 *Was wir nicht denken können, das können wir nicht denken; wir können also auch nicht sagen, was wir nicht denken können.*
5. This is however the view defended by Michael Kremer in Kremer 2007.
6. In that measure, it can be deemed "aseptic," to use Kelly Jolley's apt phrase. See Jolley 2007, 44.
7. Thus according to Denis McManus, by Tractarian lights logical distinctions are neither said nor shown but "unmasked" or "shown up," exposed as nonsense (McManus 2006, 86).
8. 6.522 *Es gibt allerdings Unaussprechliches. Dies zeigt sich, es ist das Mystische.*
Odgen translates: "There is indeed the inexpressible. This *shows itself*; it is the mystical"; Pears and McGuinness: "There are, indeed, things that cannot be put into words. They *make themselves* manifest. They are what is mystical."
9. The original wording of the passage from the letter to Engelman is:
Und es ist so: wenn man sich nicht bemüht, das Unaussprechliche auszusprechen, so geht nichts verloren. Sondern das Unaussprechliche ist—unaussprechlich—in dem Ausgesprochen—enthalten!
The current English translation runs: "And this is how it is: if one does not endeavour to express the inexpressible, then nothing gets lost. But the inexpressible will be—inexpressibly—contained in what has been expressed."
10. The ubiquity and superficial unity of the various *idioms* of "showing" to be found in the *Tractatus* do not warrant the presumption that the book puts forward (even ostensibly) a consistent set of notions of showing, let alone one single overarching notion of showing (see Sullivan 2002; Goldfarb 2004; Floyd 2007, 184–85). I think that there *is*, as a matter of fact, one single Tractarian distinction between what shows itself and what is said (although there isn't any distinction between showing and saying), but that the difficulty resides in identifying the exact level of generality, other than *lexical*, at which lies that distinction.
11. Another such book is Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*. Heidegger's preliminary delineation of the concept of phenomenon is explicitly meant to do justice to Aristotle's employment of the "middle voice" ("Medium" in German) in his articulation of "lógos" (d) in terms of "apophaneisthai" (Heidegger 1929, §7a–b, 32–34): "The Greek expression 'phainómenon', to which the term 'phenomenon' goes back, is derived from the verb 'phainesthai', which means 'to show itself' [*sich zeigen*]. [...] Thus we must keep in mind that the expression 'phenomenon' means 'what shows itself in itself, what is manifest'" (Heidegger 1929, §7a, 28). Summing up the internal relation between logos and phenomenon, Heidegger writes: "Thus 'phenomenology' means 'apophainesthai ta phainómena'—to let that which shows itself be seen from itself in the very way it shows itself from itself" (Heidegger 1929, §7c, 34) (Macquarrie and Robinson's translation). Many interpretations of these passages suffer from what is a misunderstanding of the middle voice. In effect, as Philip Eberhard notes, in these interpretations, "The emphasis on the intermediary position of the middle voice obscures its value as internal *diathesis*. The middle voice appears solely as a back and forth motion which lets the subject be subject and object at the same time. It does not highlight the verbal aspect of the process and the location of the subject with reference to it" (Eberhard 2004, 21). See in this connection section 3 below.
12. *In this employment*, the verbal phrase "shows *itself*" is far less natural in English than its counterparts in German (*sich zeigen*) and Romance languages (e.g., French "se montre," Spanish "se muestra"). What are natural in all these languages are constructions of the form <show *oneself* + C> (as in "He shows himself courageous"; "Er sich zeigt mutig"). In English, the more natural translation of "*sich zeigen*" is by the unaccusative construction <S + shows>. But the latter has the defect of hiding from view the medial diathesis of "*sich zeigen*." See section 3 below.
13. As the visual shape of the sentence is partly the result of exploiting resources of the German language regarding *Wortstellung*, it can hardly be rendered in English. To capture the pattern of the German sentence in English, basic grammatical strictures regarding word order and the morphology of sentential negation in English would have to be contravened: "What of being shown *admits admits* not of being said."

14. See section 1.
15. I concur with Warren Goldfarb's sense that "Wittgenstein's rhetoric here does not call up visions of the ineffable" (Goldfarb 2004).
16. Hintikka's elaboration on Van Heijenoort's characterization loses sight of the point here emphasized. See Hintikka 1997, 2003.
17. Section 4.1212 can hardly be said to "counteract" some misleading "grammatical insinuation" traceable to 4.121 (Ricketts 1996, 92–94). What must be conceded is that it does counteract the apparent implications of 4.1211. In any case, if "the rhetoric of saying and showing" (as Ricketts calls it) deployed in 4.121 is to prove incoherent, then so does 4.1212.
18. On the first score, this section is deeply indebted to Eli Friedlander's reading of the *Tractatus*, in particular to chapter 7 of Friedlander 2001.
19. From a logical point of view, the former sentence is no less about its grammatical object (the Persians, here patient of the process) than about its grammatical subject (the Greeks, here agent of the process) (Frege 1879, §3), as its possible analysis in terms of the dyadic function (i.e., relation) *X defeated Y at Plataea* attests enough. The sentence can be indifferently analyzed in terms of the monadic function *defeated the Persians at Plataea* or in terms of the monadic function *being defeated by the Greek at Plataea* (see Frege 1879, §9). From this perspective, the difference between being the agent and being the patient of a "transaction" (i.e., transitive process) is not logical in character. Clearly, Frege's contention is meant to apply more generally to any diathesis. Arguably, however, the logic of actions-ascriptions cannot be understood apart from the bipolarity of active and passive (see Descombes 2004, 72–73; Ford AP, §1).
20. The counterparts of "zeigen" in other languages (to name but a few: English "to show"; French "montrer"; Portuguese "mostrar") are likewise trivalent.
21. Marking cases, we obtain this pattern:
- | | |
|--|--|
| <i>sagen</i> ($X_{\text{NOM}}, Y_{\text{ACC}}, Z_{\text{DAT}}$) | to say ($X_{\text{NOM}}, Y_{\text{ACC}}, Z_{\text{DAT}}$) |
| <i>geben</i> ($X_{\text{NOM}}, Y_{\text{ACC}}, Z_{\text{DAT}}$) | to give ($X_{\text{NOM}}, Y_{\text{ACC}}, Z_{\text{DAT}}$) |
| <i>zeigen</i> ($X_{\text{NOM}}, Y_{\text{ACC}}, Z_{\text{DAT}}$) | to show ($X_{\text{NOM}}, Y_{\text{ACC}}, Z_{\text{DAT}}$) |
22. In effect, in virtue of the very same internal link between valency and passive diathesis that accounts for the fact that divalent verbs admit of a passive construction whereas monovalent verbs do not (cf. Tesnière 1959, 246), trivalent verbs admit of two species of passive constructions, according to whether the prime actant of the passive construction is the second or the third actant of the active construction (cf. Tesnière 1959, 256; Descombes 2004, 88):
- | | |
|--|---|
| "He showed her the picture." | show-ACT ($X_{\text{NOM}}, Y_{\text{ACC}}, Z_{\text{DAT}}$) |
| "The picture was shown by him to her." | show-PASS (Y, X, Z) |
| "She was shown the picture by him." | show-PASS (Z, X, Y) |
23. Like the trivalent "geben" / "to give," the trivalent "zeigen" / "show" may actualize only two of them (cp. Tesnière 1959, D, 97, §5, 239):
- | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| "He shows the picture." | "She gives clothes." |
| "He shows her." | "She gives to the needy." |
- Nevertheless, the trivalent "zeigen" / "to show" cannot actualize only one of its three potential actants: **Er zeigte* is ungrammatical. In the English active sentence "He did not show (up) (at the office)," "show" is monovalent.
24. It may, though it need not, be that the window broke because somebody caused the window to break. Even in that circumstance **The window broke by somebody* is ungrammatical: "The window broke" remains neutral on the matter.
25. Note that while a divalent verb meaning the causal achievement of a change of state *may* admit of a medial construction in this sense (e.g., "Glass breaks easily"), a verb need not have this meaning to admit of a medial construction ("read" is a case in point) (cf. Fagan 1988).
- Neither the passive diathesis nor the medial diathesis is as such confined to transitive verbs. German is a prime example in this respect. A monovalent (i.e., intransitive) verb like "tanzen" admits of both a passive and a medial construction: "*Von Kinder wurde getanzt*" (= "It was danced by children"); "*Es tanztet sich gut*" (= "It danced well"). Intransitively derived medial constructions are sometimes called, somewhat misleadingly, "impersonal middles" (see, e.g., Fagan 2009, 175). On the other hand, strictly speaking, the medial diathesis does not extend to trivalent verbs in German; only the *sich-lassen*-construction does. Finally, from an aspectual point of view,

medial constructions of the above variety are necessarily stative in German and English. By contrast, anticausative constructions need not be stative (thus, e.g., “The window broke” reports an event, “The ice is melting” reports a process) (cf. Fagan, 1988).

26. As Humbert puts it, “The middle has no truck with the reflexive, and it was never possible to say in Ancient Greek **‘apokteínetai*, ‘he killed himself’, instead of *‘apokteínei heautón*.”
27. Even when the medial-marker is not a decausative-marker (i.e., does not signal a decausative operation through which the number of roles is decreased by one unit), as in “*Elle se boit un café*” (= “She treats herself to a coffee”), the medial-marker is still not an actant: it is then a circumstant (i.e., an adjunct) (Tesnière 1959, 143; Descombes 2004, 105).
28. As for the contrast between “essentially reflexive” and “accidentally reflexive” verbs, it gets things upside down (Tesnière 1959; Descombes 2004).

Unlike languages such as German and French, English does not use a free morpheme to mark agent-demotion. Neither does it comprise essentially pseudo-reflexive verbs. It resorts far less to its standard reflexive-marker to form verbs by means of valency-reduction. Finally, when it does, as in “She threw herself to the floor,” there is hardly any risk of ambiguity. By contrast, in German and French, one and the same free morpheme is systematically used *both* as the marker of the reflexive diathesis and as the principal marker of the medial diathesis in the sense introduced above (see Tesnière 1959, 272). Thus, in German “*sich*” is at once a medial-marker and a reflexive-marker: it is a reflexive-marker in “*Sie erschoss sich*” (= “She shot herself”)—a sentence of the same valency as “*Sie erschoss den Sheriff*” (= “She shot the sheriff”)—but a medial-marker in “*Die Tür öffnet sich leicht*” (= “The door opens easily”). German thereby allows for ambiguous sentences: thus, pending the provision of contextual clues, “*Diese Leute beherrschen sich nicht (leicht)*” can be read either as “These people have difficulty in controlling themselves” (reflexive diathesis) or as “These people are not easy to control” (medial diathesis) (Abraham 1995, 8, 12).

By the same token, English lends itself to a far lesser extent than German or French to the confusion between the decausative diathesis and the reflexive diathesis.

29. At least in some languages (that include German and English, but not French), the constructions that partake of this kind of medial diathesis can hardly dispense with adverbial modifiers pertaining to the paradigm of “easily” / “*leicht*” (thus in German one can say “*Das Brot schneidet sich leicht*” (= “The bread cuts easily”) but not “*Das Brot schneidet sich*” and in English one can say “Bureaucrats bribe easily” but not “*Bureaucrats bribe”; see e.g. Fagan 2009, 176). Moreover, they display both generic quantity and non-prescriptive modality: thus, “Bureaucrats bribe easily” is close in meaning with “One can easily bribe bureaucrats” (obviously the latter construction does not involve valency-reduction). The other side of the indispensability of modifiers like “easily” is the incompatibility with the modifier “of its own”: thus, one cannot say “*Glass breaks easily of its own” (one can say “Glass easily breaks of its own” but only because easily no longer means “without trouble”).
30. It is true that in some cases medial constructions of the above sort can do without an adverbial modifier: thus one can say “This dress buttons” in the *context* of describing *how* the dress is (or must be) fastened (it is [or must be] buttoned rather than zipped) (see Fagan 1988, 201; 2009, 176–77). Indeed, one might be tempted to understand the *Tractatus*’s contrast between what shows itself (*zeigt sich*) and what is said (*gesagt wird*) as a contrast between what lends itself to (or calls for) being shown and what lends itself (or calls for) being said, so as a contrast between two ways for something to be expressed (or more generally, conveyed) by *us*. But this is of course what the third sentence of 4.121 is concerned to deny (see also 6.124).
31. See e.g. 6.421, where Wittgenstein says of ethics that it “cannot be uttered” (*sich nicht aussprechen lässt*).
32. Likewise, the “middle” “*lúetai tòn híppon*,” in contrast to the active “*lúei tòn híppon*,” indicates that one is involved in the untying of the horse: it indicates that one is untying *one’s own* horse, rather than simply untying *the* horse (see Humbert 1972, 104; Benvéniste 1966, 173).
33. It is therefore at best very misleading to construe the contrast between showing itself and being said as one between “self-directed aboutness” and “other-directed aboutness” (Decauwert 2013, §4).
34. I am here echoing Jean Van Heijenoort’s seminal distinction between “Logic as Calculus and Logic as Language.” See Van Heijenoort (1985).

35. 5.473 *Die Logik muss für sich selber sorgen.*
Ein mögliches Zeichen muss auch bezeichnen können. Alles was in der Logik möglich ist, ist auch erlaubt. (. . .)
Wir können uns, in gewissem Sinne, nicht in der Logik irren.
36. 5.4732 *Wir können einen Zeichen nicht den unrechten Sinn geben.*
37. On this point, see Sanford Shieh's contribution to this volume.
38. Most languages do not allow it.
39. See Friedlander 2001, 67.
40. I develop this point in Narboux 2013.
41. See Narboux 2013.
42. I am here indebted to Anselm Müller, who made the point in private correspondence.

Generally, whether a clause is an indirect interrogative clause or a free relative clause often transpires from the verb to which it is appended, as in the following triplets of examples:

"He guessed	what _{INT} she had cooked."	(1a)
"He tasted	what _{REL} she had cooked."	(1b)
"He never likes	what _{REL} she cooks."	(1c)
"What _{INT} she had cooked	remained a mystery."	(2a)
"What _{REL} she had cooked	was tasty."	(2b)
"What _{REL} she cooks	is never tasty."	(2c)

However, one and the same sentence might admit of both readings:

"What she says is not obvious."	or	= It is not obvious what she says. _(INT)	(3a)
		= That which she says is not trivial. _(REL)	(3b)
		= It is never obvious what she says. _(INT)	(3a)'
"What she says is never obvious."	or	= Whatever she says, it is not trivial. _(REL)	(3c)

Although they may assume a conditional meaning (as in the c-examples), free relative clauses standardly assume a specificatory meaning (as in the b-examples): e.g. (3b) can be specified through an apposition of the form "namely that *p*": "What she says, namely that *p*, is no triviality." By contrast, indirect interrogative clauses neither allow nor require specification.

43. This paragraph is indebted to conversations with Cora Diamond.
44. Everywhere else in the *Tractatus*, "what is the case" (*was der Fall ist*) does have the meaning of "that which is the case." That is to say, in the rest of its occurrences, "what" (*was*) is a relative pronoun, whether bound or free, and "what is the case" (*was der Fall ist*) is a relative clause. The book opens with a characterization of the world as being "all that is the case" (*Die Welt ist alles, was der Fall ist*) (1). For something to be a fact (*Tatsache*) is for it to figure among all that is the case, to be a member of the totality (*Gesamtheit*) of all that is the case (1.1). Therefore, for something to be a fact is for it to be something that is the case. Accordingly, the fact (*die Tatsache*) is, by its very definition, what (= that which) is the case (*Was der Fall ist*) (2). What (= that which) is the case (*Was der Fall ist*), in turn, is the holding of states of affairs (*das Bestehen von Sachverhalten*) (2). The substance of the world is "what (= that which) holds fast (*besteht*) independently from what (= that which) is the case" (*unabhängig von dem was der Fall ist*) (2.024), that is to say, independently from facts. Whether it is bound (as e.g. in 1 and 2.024) or free (as e.g. in 2), the relative pronoun "what" then functions as a variable; it is quantifiable over. In 1, it is universally quantified over. Being quantificational, the relevant generality is of course accidental in nature; it is not logical. Not so in 4.024.
45. 4.24 can receive a parallel interpretation. The answer to the question as to what_{INT} is the case (how_{INT} things stand) if it is true shows itself in the proposition. The proposition does not say what_{INT} is the case (how_{INT} things stand) if it is true. It does not say what_{INT} it says. If the proposition said what_{INT} is the case (how_{INT} things stand) if it is true, then it would be saying something about itself, talking about itself (in contradiction with 3.332). As it shows itself in the proposition, the answer to the question as to what_{INT} is the case (how_{INT} things stand) if it is true need not and cannot be said. We need not and cannot say what_{INT} is the case if a proposition *p* is true. Of what is in fact the answer to the question as to what_{INT} is the case (how_{INT} things stand) if it is

true, the proposition says *that it is the case*: it says *that things do stand the way it shows them to stand*. The question as to what_{INT} is the case (how_{INT} things stand) if the proposition is true is not a yes-no question. That is, the proposition does not show what_{INT} is the case (how_{INT} things stand) if it is true in the sense of showing it rather than not, but in the sense of showing it rather than something else. Only if it showed *that things stood in a certain way* could the proposition show that they stood in that way rather than not. But the proposition does not show that things stand in a certain way; it shows a way for things to stand. By contrast, in saying that things stand the way it shows for them to stand, the proposition does not say that things stand that way rather than another. It answers a yes-no question, namely the question whether things do stand that way or not.

46. In 4.461, Wittgenstein is at pains to bring out both the parallelism and the point at which it breaks. In the following passage from the *Notebooks*, he is more concerned to stress the parallelism:

It must show in the proposition itself that it says something and in the tautology that it says nothing.

Es muss sich im Satz selbst zeigen, dass er etwas sagt und an der Tautologie, dass sie nichts sagt. (Wittgenstein 1962)

47. In *The Brown Book*, the contrast between the “transitive” and the “intransitive” uses of certain adjectives is drawn as follows: “Now the use of the word ‘particular’ is apt to produce a kind of delusion and roughly speaking this delusion is produced by the double usage of this word. On the one hand, we may say, it is used preliminary to a specification, description, comparison; on the other hand, as what one might describe as an emphasis. The first usage I shall call the transitive one, the second the intransitive one” (Wittgenstein 1958, §15, 158).

48. The pattern of use to which the above occurrences of “definite” (*bestimmt*) and “certain” (*gewiss*) all conform is already to be found in the characterization of the concept of a state of things (*Sachverhalt*). Although the concept of a state of things is introduced at the threshold of the book and a state of things provisionally equated with “a combination of objects (things)” (*eine Verbindung von Gegenständen [Sachen, Dingen]*) (2.01), its real definition must await the introduction of the concept of a simple thing or object in the proper sense (*Gegenstand*) (in the 2.02s). Accordingly, the true definition of a state of things is provided only in the 2.03s, where it is provided together with those of its structure and its form:

2.03 In the state of things objects hang in one another like the links of a chain.

Im Sachverhalt hängen die Gegenstände ineinander, wie die Glieder einer Kette.

2.031 In the state of things objects stand with one another in a definite way.

Im Sachverhalt verhalten sich die Gegenstände in bestimmter Art und Weise zueinander.

2.032 The way in which (= How_{REL}) objects hang together in the state of things constitutes the structure of the state of things.

Die Art und Weise, wie die Gegenstände im Sachverhalt zusammenhängen, ist die Struktur des Sachverhaltes.

2.033 Form is the possibility of structure.

Form ist die Möglichkeit der Struktur.

Section 2.03 having made clear that a state of things comprises no further links beyond those that its objects already constitute by themselves, so no links *between* its objects, the next section (2.031) can unpack the meaning of the term “*Sachverhalt*” in a way that suggests that its meaning entirely resolves into the meanings of its sub-terms (*Sachen, verhalten*). Their being themselves the links of the state of affairs preempts the need for objects to *be linked by* something else *into* a state of affairs. Likewise, their relating *to one another* as they do preempts the need for objects to *be related by* something else. In 2.031, the reciprocal diathesis of the verb (*verhalten sich . . . zueinander*) explicitly obviates the need for some third component acting as a *factor of unity*. As they already hang *in one another*, objects need not and cannot *be tied to* one another. Mutuality dispenses with mediation.

49. Here I depart from Friedlander: see Friedlander 2001, 61, 63. Friedlander holds that “the symbol is not perceivable as the sign is” insofar as “it does not belong to the factual” (Friedlander 2001, 78). I take up Friedlander’s appeal to the notion of medium in connection with the sign-symbol distinction. But I equate the symbol with the medium. The sign I equate with the material of this medium.

50. As noted in section 4, as far as verbal diathesis (grammatical voice) is concerned, 3.1 stands in a stark contrast with both 3.11 and 3.12:

3.11 We use the sensuously perceptible sign (whether it is a spoken sign, a written sign, etc.) of the proposition as a projection of the possible situation.
Wir benutzen das sinnlich wahrnehmbare Zeichen (Laut- oder Schriftzeichen etc.) des Satzes als Projektion der Möglichen Sachlage.

3.12 The sign by means of which we express the thought, I call the propositional sign. And the proposition is the propositional sign in its projective relation to the world.
Das Zeichen, durch welches wir den Gedanken ausdrücken, nenne ich das Satzzeichen. Und der Satz ist das Satzzeichen in seiner projektiven Beziehung zur Welt.

Equally telling is the contrast of 3.1 with 3.2, which introduces to the lineaments of the *Tractatus's* view of analysis:

3.2 In the proposition, the thought can be expressed in such a way that to the objects of the thought correspond the elements of the propositional sign.
Im Satze kann der Gedanke so ausgedrückt sein, dass den Gegenständen des Gedankens Elemente des Satzzeichens entsprechen.

Like the sensible use of signs, the process of analysis is an activity on our part. *We can* in principle perform the complete analysis of the proposition (3.25) *in order to* bring to the fore the correspondence between the elements of the propositional sign and the objects of the thought (which correspondence, however, is none of our doing, as we have just seen); whether to rewrite the proposition so as to bring its logical multiplicity to the fore is in principle *up to us* (again, its logical multiplicity, by contrast, is none of our doing: we only *arrive at* the ultimate articulation of sense, we need not and cannot intrude on it).

51. In languages (such as most Romance languages) in which verbs of sensation (“see,” “hear,” “touch,” etc.) admit of a form of medial diathesis (in contrast to languages like German and English), the point made by 3.1 can be phrased most straightforwardly: in the proposition the thought, as we might put it (say, in French), *se voit* (literally: “sees itself”), *s’entend* (literally: “hears itself”), *se touche* (literally: “touches itself”), etc.

52. Arguably, this is one of the lessons that may be gleaned from 5.423:

5.423 To perceive a complex means to perceive that its constituents stand with each other in such and such a way. This no doubt also explains why the figure can be seen in two ways as a cube; and all similar phenomena. For we really see two different facts.

53. Peter Sullivan also stresses this point. See e.g. Sullivan 2002, 50.

54. Indeed, in the English translation by Pears and McGuinness, occurrences of “*darstellen*” of the first sort are translated by “represent”; occurrences of the second sort by “present.” In the English translation by Ogden, “*darstellen*” is uniformly rendered by “represent.”

55. For example, what really signifies in a certain name (the genuine name in it, as one might call it) is whatever that symbol has in common with all the symbols that signify the object for which it stands and accordingly could replace it in accordance with the relevant rules of logical syntax (3.3411). From the consideration of all such symbols it would result step by step that all compositeness is unessential to that name (3.3411). The compositeness displayed by a name is necessarily an unessential feature of it, a feature exclusively of the way in which the sign of that name is produced.

56. This account of how an expression (i.e., symbol) can be presented (*dargestellt*), as Anscombe makes clear in her book, is the only one consistent with the principle that an expression has meaning only in the context of a proposition (3.314). As Anscombe notes, “this prohibits us from thinking that we can *first* somehow characterize ‘a,’ ‘R’ and ‘b’ as symbolic signs, and *then* lay it down how we can build propositions out of them. If ‘a’ is a symbolic sign only in the context of a proposition, then the symbol ‘a’ will be properly presented, not by putting it down and saying it is a symbol of such a kind, but by representing [= presenting, in our terminology] the whole class of the propositions in which it can occur” (Anscombe 1963, 93). Elaborating on this passage by Anscombe, Cora Diamond writes: “Here the recognition of some occurrence of the sign ‘a’ as an occurrence of that symbol is dependent on its occurrence in a proposition of the class in question, and there is no question of setting up which propositions it can occur in by considering its correlation with an object, taken to impose restrictions on its use, allowing some combinations of

signs and disallowing others. The logical characteristics of what ‘a’ means are plain from its role in the propositions in which it can occur. It is a consequence of this view that there is no logical error in using the sign ‘a’ in other sorts of proposition; for in those contexts it would not be the same symbol” (Diamond 2013, 1985).

57. Diamond 2011, 2012, 2013.
58. The same bias transpires at places in early work by Hide Ishiguro. In recoiling from the sort of metaphysical realism to which many interpretations of the *Tractatus* had committed themselves by adhering to an “object-based view of the relation between language and reality” (i.e., a view according to which objects impose on language the logical forms that it must display if what we say is to be so much as possible), Ishiguro would fall prey to the temptation to *reverse* the onus of match between logic and reality instead of *exposing* it as a target of the *Tractatus*: “If there is any relation between the world and logic of one moulding the other, the direction seems to be the reverse. It is not the essence of things in the world that shapes logic, it is the logical form of propositions that gives the essence of the world” (Ishiguro 1990, 22).
59. As Peter Sullivan puts it, “An a priori order would be an assurance of the harmony through which thinking genuinely engages with the world. But if the very notions of what it is for there to be a world—for logical space to be determined in such and such a way—and of what it is to think—to present a determination of logical space through its coordinates—are already intrinsically tied, then the need for any such assurance falls away” (Sullivan 1996, 203). The last sentence of 5.634 is also the conclusion of Wittgenstein’s assessment of solipsism, the view that “the limits of my language mean the limits of my world” (5.63), and encapsulates the kernel of truth concealed in it (see Sullivan 1996).
60. Here is a capsule summary: “We should not read talk of ‘showing,’ and correlatively of ‘perceiving,’ ‘seeing,’ ‘recognizing’ that which is shown on the model of a relation between a subject and some ineffable fact-like entity (‘that p is shown to S,’ ‘S perceives that p’). This form of the idea of showing is exactly what the *Tractatus* wants to teach us to abandon. Rather we should read talk of ‘showing’ and correlatively ‘seeing,’ on the model of the demonstration of a technique, and the uptake required to understand the demonstration. In essence, my suggestion is that one who ‘sees’ that which is shown, is simply one who ‘knows how to go on’” (Kremer 2002, 297).
61. Kremer’s account is indebted to Ryle. It was Ryle who first drew a distinction between “saying” and “showing” in terms of a contrast between “teaching that” and “teaching how.” He thought that Lewis Carroll’s famous puzzle concerning inference could be dissolved with the help of this pair of distinctions: the crucial point, he pointed out, is that knowing a rule of inference is a matter of knowing-how rather than knowing-that (Ryle 1946, 226–27). In his work, Ryle also brings out the respects in which a technical demonstration and a mathematical demonstration (i.e., a proof) bear affinities: “Consider, for example, lessons in drawing, arithmetic and cricket—and, if you like, philosophy. These lessons cannot consist of and cannot even contain much of dictated propositions. . . . [The child] can exhibit what he has begun to master, but he cannot quote it” (Ryle 1967, 467; see also Ryle 1946, 232–33). Finally, he brings the irreducibility of knowledge-how to knowledge-that to bear on a problem that is (by his own lights) structurally analogue to the problem of how one can recognize Tractarian symbols: namely, the problem of how a child can recognize (the audible contribution of) a consonant in a voiced monosyllable that he had not heard before (say, the audible contribution of “b” in “box”). (See Ryle 1960, 64–65; Ryle 1967, 465.)
This makes it all the more noteworthy that Ryle (to the best of my knowledge) should have himself refrained from taking the further step that leads to the practical account of showing. He refrains from assimilating one to another: (1) the contrast between “showing” and “saying” that goes with the distinction between “knowing-how” and “knowing-that”; (2) the contrast between what “shows” and what can be “said” that he construes in terms of the distinction between, on the one hand, features and aspects of sense (in the analogous case: noise-similarities and noise-differences between integral noises (“box,” “fox,” etc.), features and aspects of integral noises) and, on the other hand, sayables (in the analogous case: monosyllables [like “box”], each of which is a minimum pronounceable). (Ryle 1960, 61; Ryle 1962, 191–92.)
62. A dialectical reading is by nature exposed to the risk of mistaking an exegetical confusion for a dialectical maneuver. Something of the sort happens, I think, in this passage: “That something like this confusion is involved in the *Tractatus*’s talk of ‘showing’ is suggested by the fact that showing is connected by Wittgenstein to sense and so also to understanding. At 4.02 Wittgenstein says

that ‘we understand the sense of the propositional sign, without having had it explained to us.’ He comments on this at 4.022 that ‘the proposition shows its sense.’ Yet [my emphasis] sense is something that we make: ‘We make to ourselves pictures of facts’ (2.1). And ‘to understand a proposition,’ ‘to know what is the case if it is true’ (4.024), is simply to know how ‘reality is compared with the proposition’ (4.06). Similarly, inferential relations are said to be shown in the *Tractatus*: ‘if two propositions contradict each other, this is shown by their structure; similarly if one follows from another, etc.’ (4.1211). Yet [my emphasis] we draw conclusions and make inferences (. . .) (5.132). (. . .) So, the idea that ‘logical form,’ as something *shared* by propositions and the reality they depict, is *shown* by those propositions but cannot be represented by them, exploits the equivocation we have found in ‘show.’ We slip back and forth between the idea of a feature of reality, the world which we represent, and the idea of an aspect of our making sense by representing that world, an activity which we engage in and which depends on abilities we possess. We confusedly think of these features both as having to do with how reality *is*, and as having to do with how language is to be *used*” (Kremer 2013, 674–75).

63. See also Sanford Shieh’s contribution to this volume.
64. I am here adopting the translation of “*das Klarwerden von Sätzen*” (Diamond 2013) initially suggested by Wittgenstein to Ogden. On this point, see Conant 2002.
65. Wittgenstein implied as much when he suggested, as a translation of “*das Klarwerden von Sätzen*”: “the propositions *now have become clear* that they ARE clear” (Wittgenstein 1973, 28). As Conant puts it, “the transition from unclarity to clarity (*i.e.* the kind of *Klarwerden*) that is at issue here is not one that is effected through a transformation in the logical character of the *propositions* of ordinary language, but rather through a transformation in the view that *we* command of their logical character” (Conant 2002, 417). See also Diamond 2004, 160–61.
66. Wittgenstein pointed this out to Ogden (Wittgenstein 1973, 28).
67. As Heidegger never tires of observing: “That means, first of all: to accuse publicly, to say something to someone directly and in front of everyone. Used ontologically, the term means: to say something to a being, so to speak, right in the face, to say what it always already is as a being; that is, to let it be seen for everyone in its being. What is caught sight of in such seeing and what becomes visible are the *katēgoriai*” (Heidegger 1927, §9, 44) (Stambaugh’s translation).
68. Austin says that “to identify as not is nonsense for not to identify” (Austin 1979, 153). On the importance of this point, see Narboux 2011.

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