

The top level of Wittgenstein's Tractatus

We spent a considerable amount of time, on 26 April 2011, on the general aspect of Ludwig Wittgenstein's „Tractatus“. What was the time when he wrote it? What was his main concern? How may its literary form help or hinder an understanding?

Since this is not a seminar on logical positivism but one on the relation of reality to database, our interest in young Wittgenstein's radical text can be of limited significance only. We, nevertheless, managed to discuss the few paragraphs of (logical) section 1. We read and, perhaps, admired the author's preface, and we took a look at 6.5 where, as the inexpressible that *shows* itself, the mystical appears.

Section 6.5 (which is the last one before the horrendous 7: „What we cannot speak about we must consign to silence“ or, in a later translation: „Whereof one cannot speak thereof one must be silent“) – section 6.5 is great in terms of our relation to science (but, again, not our main concern). One of the paragraphs is worth mentioning:

6.52 We feel that even when *all possible* scientific questions have been answered, the problems of life remain completely untouched. Of course there are then no questions left, and this itself is the answer.

However, this note only intends to summarize the top level of the book, those seven statements to which the rest of the book is a comment and further explanation. Here it is in a translation that differs occasionally from the one you find on the website for the course.

- 1 The world is all that is the case.
- 2 What is the case – a fact – is the existence of states of affairs.
- 3 A logical picture of facts is a thought.
- 4 A thought is a proposition with a sense.
- 5 A proposition is a truth-function of elementary propositions.
- 6 The general form of the truth-function is $\left[\bar{p}, \bar{\xi}, N(\bar{\xi}) \right]$. This is the general form of a proposition.
- 7 What we cannot speak about we must consign to silence.