

Diversity of Showing in the *Tractatus*

D.T. Freeman¹

In the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Wittgenstein asserts that some things can be said and others can only be shown. This aphorism about the things which can be shown but not said, the saying/showing distinction (4.1212), is now a commonplace in analytic philosophy. Yet its meaning remains elusive. The proposition suggests not only that there are things which can be shown but not said, but that there is some unifying rule explaining why this is so. This, however, is not the case. Wittgenstein spends the bulk of the *Tractatus* providing an exhaustive account of how we employ descriptive language to say things about reality. But we should not presume that once the saying/showing distinction is introduced, he will also provide a single, exhaustive account of showing.

We can identify at least three distinct usages of showing in the *Tractatus* when it is used in relation to logic, value and ‘meaning of life’. The claims that logic and value are shown but not said are based on discrete arguments which develop out of the detail of the picture theory. The relationship between these two arguments is in need of investigation. It is not clear that these arguments employ ‘showing’ in the same sense. It seems that showing in the *Tractatus* results in both nonsense and ineffability and that this ambiguity is not unintentional. The use of showing is further complicated by the claim that the meaning of life shows. This claim is derived from a conviction which cannot be readily traced to the picture theory. Rather, it is extrinsic and informs the whole project which unfolds in the text.

There is a loose unifying aspect to these categories of showing, but essentially we should prefer to speak of a diversity of showing in the *Tractatus*. Understanding it in this way means not only are we able to see the different reasons why things are shown but not said, but also, the differing senses in which things show in each case. We should not be afraid of entertaining the thought that ‘showing’ has a range of meanings in the *Tractatus* if we are prepared to see it as a concept having been influenced by a range of sources which is employed in different ways.

In order to understand the saying/showing distinction and showing itself, we must first have some elementary understanding of saying in the *Tractatus*. This begins with a rather peculiar explanation of the world’s ontological status and how we come to know about it. The world, we are told, consists of facts (1.1). Facts are the existence of states of affairs (2). States of affairs are combinations of objects (2.01) which stand in a determinate relation to one another (2.031).

We picture facts to ourselves (2.1) and when we do so, the objects constituting the fact are the same as the elements of the picture corresponding to the fact (2.13). This correspondence is the essence of the ‘picture theory’. What allows pictures (propositions) to represent reality is the common structure of pictorial form and the form of reality (2.17). Of pictorial form Wittgenstein says, “A picture can depict any reality whose form it has” (2.171) but “A picture cannot, however, depict its pictorial form: it displays it” (2.172).² It is this idea, that a picture cannot depict its own pictorial form, that forms the basis of the claim that logic is shown in the *Tractatus*.

¹ This unpublished essay was written in 2004, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the MPhil degree in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Sydney.

² All references to the *Tractatus* are taken from the translation by D.F. Pears and B.F. McGuinness (Routledge: London and New York, 1974).

In propositions 4-4.116, Wittgenstein discusses the relationship between the natural sciences and philosophy. Here the argument about the ineffability of logic is developed. Science gives us the totality of true propositions (4.11). Philosophy is not a branch of science (4.111) nor does it constitute its own body of knowledge. Rather, it is an activity concerned with reviewing the body of scientific propositions (4.112). The proper business of philosophy, for Wittgenstein, is to determine the *limits* of the corpus of scientific propositions (4.113). The concept of limits is important because implicit in the concept of a limit or boundary is the sense of forming a boundary between two sides. So philosophy does not merely explain the process through which science is able to describe reality. In setting the limit, it also reveals something about what is on the other side; what descriptive language is unable to say due to its own limitations. If one accepts that the role of philosophy is to investigate this limit between what can be described by science and what cannot, it follows that the only way to do this is by examining the propositions which can be asserted. A comprehensive statement about these propositions will indirectly show one something about the bit left over, that which cannot be said (4.114-5).³

At this point Wittgenstein addresses the difficulty of capturing logic in descriptive language. In proposition 4.12, he explains that the exclusive and exhaustive way that language represents reality is by the structure of propositions mirroring the structure of facts. But the structure of a proposition cannot mirror the phenomenon of mirroring. The problem is that saying anything requires the use of logical structure and as such saying anything about logical structure involves self-reflexivity.

It seems apparent that logic's mirroring is not going to be capable of being reduced to the form required for propositions to mirror it. Thus it cannot be described in propositions. We are, however, aware of the phenomenon of mirroring even if for technical reasons we cannot say that this awareness is found in propositions. It is to account for this situation that Wittgenstein introduces the concept of showing in 4.121. He has demonstrated that the picture theory cannot be used to say anything about logic but that we are never the less aware of logic at work in descriptive language. This discussion about logic being shown but not said leads to the more general assertion in 4.1212 that what can be shown cannot be said.

In 6.41 Wittgenstein takes up the saying/showing distinction again with the problem of value. Value is not found in the world but lies outside it. Hence propositions about value, which are what he regards ethical propositions as, are not possible (6.42). The world consists of facts and facts consist of objects standing in relations to each other. If a fact has value, the value is not intrinsic to it because its only components are the objects and relations that constitute it. If the value is extrinsic to the fact, then given Wittgenstein's definition of the world, it must lie outside the world (because the world consists only of facts). Given that he has established that propositions only mirror facts, propositions convey neither value nor ethics. This does not necessarily mean that ethics cannot be conveyed at all. But it does mean that it cannot be said. It can only be shown.

Having established that according to the picture theory ethics is ineffable, Wittgenstein proceeds to assert a number of claims of a mystical nature which are not

³ It has often been noted that Wittgenstein's project of drawing boundaries between legitimate forms of discourse has a parallel in Kant's first *Critique*. A concise summary of Kant's influence on Wittgenstein in this and other respects may be found in Glock, H.-J., "Wittgenstein and Reason", in Klagge, J. C. (ed.), *Wittgenstein: Biography and Philosophy* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 195-220, p. 199.

strictly grounded in the system which he has developed in the earlier part of the book. In particular, he makes the following three claims about the meaning of life:

- 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.
- 6.521 The solution of the problem of life is seen in the vanishing of the problem. (Is not this the reason why those who have found after a long period of doubt that the sense of life became clear to them have then been unable to say what constituted that sense?)
- 6.522 There are, indeed, things that cannot be put into words. They *make themselves manifest*. They are what is mystical.

The authority for these claims will be considered later and contrasted with the basis for his statements about value. These propositions are followed in 6.53 by a return to the idea that there are no special philosophical propositions. This is developed with the explanation that the philosopher should limit himself to speaking about the propositions of natural science and when teaching someone who seeks to assert a metaphysical proposition, he should demonstrate to the student that he has failed to give a meaning to one of the signs in his proposition.

Finally, in 6.54 a critical assertion is made about the nature of the *Tractatus* itself. Given that the propositions in the *Tractatus* are not propositions of natural science, it follows that by the *Tractatus*'s own standard they fail to describe the world. So the conclusion is that anyone who understands this will understand that the book consists of nonsense as opposed to propositions of descriptive language. Thus, he says, one who understands him will ultimately give up these propositions if he is to see the world aright. One influential interpretation to be considered below maintains that 6.54 is the key to understanding the distinction in 4.1212.

With the foregoing exposition of the propositions in the *Tractatus* that deal with showing completed, we are now in a position to consider how commentators have glossed the remarks about showing in the *Tractatus*. We shall begin by considering Cora Diamond's interpretation before considering how this relates to the work of Janik & Toulmin.

In her essay, "Throwing Away the Ladder",⁴ Cora Diamond argues that the saying/showing distinction is advanced not in order to prove that there are ineffable truths, but rather, to prove that ultimately it is a mistake to think about the problem of logic in terms of things that can be said or cannot be said. She contrasts the idea of a correct philosophical perspective on logical structure with realizing that no such perspective is possible. Diamond favours the latter interpretation and argues that ultimately the *Tractatus* leads one to see that talking about showing things which cannot be said assumes that there are 'things' capable of constituting truths effable or ineffable - a position which is in fact misguided.

The problem of interpretation for Diamond is defined in terms of how seriously we are to take the remark that whoever understands the propositions will come to regard them as nonsense. This approach is radical because the text initially says that logic is ineffable, not nonsense. Diamond, however, advances an interpretation of the saying/showing distinction in 4.1212 based on her interpretation of 6.54. In an

⁴ Diamond, C., "Throwing Away the Ladder: How to Read the *Tractatus*", in *The Realistic Spirit: Wittgenstein, Philosophy and the Mind* (MIT Press: Cambridge, 1991), pp. 179-204.

introductory passage she writes, “The problem is how seriously we can take that remark [6.54], and in particular whether it can be applied to the point (in whatever way it is put) that some *features of reality* cannot be put into words.”⁵ She gives the following illustration: “One thing which according to the *Tractatus* shows itself but cannot be expressed in language is what Wittgenstein speaks of as *the logical form of reality*.”⁶ She then proceeds to discuss how she understands showing as it applies to the logical form of reality.

According to Diamond, showing can be understood in two ways. On the one hand there is the “chickening out” interpretation which says that there is a special philosophical perspective, a perspective from which one can see what is going on but cannot be said. On the alternative reading, Wittgenstein’s reference to showing is a transitional remark which must ultimately be renounced. On this reading one comes to understand that it is a mistake to think that logical structure exists to be shown or not shown, said or not said; one must refine the way one thinks about logical structure rather than the way one thinks about showing and saying. Her preferred interpretation is this latter one.

The “chickening out” interpretation which she associates with P.M.S. Hacker suggests that there is a special philosophical perspective from which we can see what is going on when we examine the logical structure of language even though we cannot - for technical reasons - put our observations into propositions.⁷ Diamond thinks this position is an illusion. She characterises the attempt to gain such an artificial perspective through philosophy with McDowell’s phrase “the view from sideways on”.⁸

She follows Geach’s advice that the saying/showing distinction should be understood as Wittgenstein’s way of retaining Frege’s function-and-argument analysis after Wittgenstein has rejected Frege’s idea that sentences are complex names.⁹ Frege’s analysis requires us to understand that linguistic terms such as “function” are useful to a point, but ultimately should be removed from the philosophical vocabulary once a system of notation is refined to make the distinction between logical similarities and differences clear. Just as Frege shows that we have to cease using deceptive grammatical terms, Wittgenstein wants us to cease thinking that there is content to be expressed in any way when we talk about things such as “logical structure of language”. The essence of Diamond’s preferred interpretation is found in the following passage:¹⁰

The very idea of the philosophical perspective from which we consider as sayable *or* as unsayable necessities that underlie ordinary being so, or possibilities as themselves objective features of reality, sayably *or* unsayably: that very perspective is the illusion, created by sentences like “A is an object,” which we do not see to be simply nonsense, plain nonsense.... When Wittgenstein says that we cannot say “There are objects,” he does not mean “There are, all right, only *that there are* has to get expressed another way.” That the sentence means nothing at all and is not illegitimate for any other reason, we do not see. We are so convinced

⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 181.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Vide* Hacker, P.M.S., *Insight and Illusion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), pp. 20-4.

⁸ McDowell, J., “Non-Cognitivism and Rule-Following”, in *Wittgenstein: To Follow a Rule*, Holtzman, S.H. and Leich, C.M. (eds) (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1982), p. 11.

⁹ *Vide* Geach, P.T., “Saying and Showing in Frege and Wittgenstein”, in *Essays on Wittgenstein in Honour of G.H. von Wright*, Hintikka, J. (ed.), *Acta Philosophica Fennica* 28 (North-Holland: Amsterdam, 1976), pp. 54-55, 64.

¹⁰ *Op. cit.*, pp. 197-98.

that we understand what we are trying to say that we see only two possibilities: *it* is sayable, *it* is not sayable. But Wittgenstein's aim is to allow us to see that there is no 'it'. The philosophical insight he wants to convey will come when you understand that you want to make use of a syntactical construction "A is a such-and-such," and that you are free to fix the meaning of the predicate noun in any way you choose, but that no assignment of meaning to it will satisfy you. There is not some meaning you cannot give it; but no meaning, of those without limit which you can give it, will do; and so you see that there is no coherent understanding to be reached of what you wanted to say. It dissolves: you are left with the sentence-structure "A is an object," standing there, as it were, innocently meaning nothing at all, not any longer thought of as illegitimate because of a violation of the principles of what can be put into words and what goes beyond them. Really to grasp that what you were trying to say shows itself in language is to cease to think of it as an inexpressible *content: that which* you were trying to say.

Diamond's conclusion is that the saying/showing distinction in 4.1212 should be interpreted so as to conform to the concept of a transitional remark leading to nonsense in 6.54. This conclusion, that showing leads to nonsense rather than ineffable truth is valuable if in need of qualification. First, the subject matter of 6.54 is more limited than Diamond appears to think. The text is concerned in 6.54 with "my propositions", in other words, the set of propositions contained in the *Tractatus*. Wittgenstein is not making a statement about the impossibility of ineffable truth generally, but only in the context of the *Tractatus* propositions.

A commitment to showing as revealing ineffable truth does not entail accepting that the meaning of the propositions in the *Tractatus* is ineffable. The *Tractatus's* propositions do not purport to show anything about logical structure. Rather, they purport to tell us how we can see logical structure at work in ordinary propositions. So 6.54 does not itself have any significant implications for the meaning of showing. There is, however, a very real problem created by 6.54 as regards the meaningfulness of *Tractatus* propositions including those which deal with how language shows. To be sure, this prevents us from saying anything about a special philosophical perspective. But 6.54 does not prevent it from existing. Diamond's interpretation of showing may be correct but the authority for it is not to be found in how we take the reference to nonsense in 6.54.

More importantly, Diamond is concerned only to prove that there is nothing ineffable about logic. An argument proving the non-ineffability of logic does not prove that the other things which Wittgenstein regards as ineffable are in fact not ineffable. This is because there is a distinct basis for his claim that ethics is ineffable. The logical form of reality is introduced by Diamond as an example of something that can be shown but not said by language. She provides a thorough treatment of this. Conceivably, the interpretation advanced concerning the status of logic is satisfactory. It is concerning, however, that it is never established why the example of logic is a paradigm for all showing in the *Tractatus*. Either there is an assumption that this is the only form of showing, or that all showing is qualitatively similar, or that any other form is of no interest. None of these is the case.

The reason that descriptive language cannot say anything about logic is quite distinct from the reason that it cannot say anything about value. Because Diamond's argument hinges on the peculiarity of self-reflexivity presented by logic, it should not be read as applying to value or any of the other topics which Wittgenstein maintains are shown but not said. The consequence of this is that even if we accept that showing in the *Tractatus*, as it applies to logic, should be taken to result in nonsense rather than to convey any ineffable truth, this need not apply to value or any other matter.

Whether or not Diamond's interpretation of showing in the *Tractatus* as nonsense is radical, the narrow focus on logic is not. It is entirely consistent with the reticence which is witnessed throughout the analytic tradition to the mystical aspect of the *Tractatus*.¹¹ It is in response to this approach that Allan Janik and Stephen Toulmin advance their interpretation of showing in the *Tractatus* based on a broader appreciation of literary, artistic and cultural movements current in the last decades of Habsburg Vienna in their monograph, *Wittgenstein's Vienna*.¹² In doing so, they develop an interpretation which draws much support from secondary material including Paul Engelmann's letters from Wittgenstein.¹³

Wittgenstein's early studies in engineering are commonly known. He was impressed by Hertz's mechanics and its success in providing a systematic account of the physical world and he came to hope that this could be extended to language generally. On the other hand, he was also deeply impressed by the existentialist tradition of Kierkegaard and Tolstoy (not least during his active service in the First World War).¹⁴ Following them, he came deeply to believe that the most important truths are ineffable. According to Janik & Toulmin, it was this combination of interests that led Wittgenstein to develop a critique of language which could account for the ineffability of moral truth without resulting in scepticism as did Mauthner's analysis of language which fails to provide for the objectivity of science. Wittgenstein's success is achieved through the introduction of techniques he found in Frege and Russell. With them, Wittgenstein is able to provide a fully worked out system which provides an account of how science works through descriptive language, and at the same time allows for the communication of ethics through poetic language.

We have seen how the saying/showing distinction is developed in the *Tractatus*. We have also observed that once this distinction is established, unsubstantiated mystical claims such as those in 6.52-6.522 are introduced. These remarks seem unrelated to the rest of the text and in need of development unless one believes - as Janik & Toulmin do - that Wittgenstein has Kierkegaard in mind and that he develops the saying/showing distinction explicitly to defend Kierkegaard's concept of ineffable truth. They explain the purpose of the saying/showing distinction in the following terms:

His philosophy aims at solving the problem of the nature and limits of description. His world-view expresses the belief that the sphere of what can only be *shown* must be protected from those who try to *say* it. The philosophy of the *Tractatus* is an attempt to show, from the very

¹¹ E.g. Coffa, J.A., *The Semantic Tradition from Kant to Carnap* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1994) p. 193:

Whether there is any link at all between the view we are about to explain and God, or the meaning of life, or any of the mystic images that Wittgenstein was hoping to rescue from the claws of Reason, is a matter I must leave for better minds to determine.

¹² Janik, A. & Toulmin, S., *Wittgenstein's Vienna* (Simon & Schuster: New York, 1973).

¹³ Engelmann, P., *Letters from Ludwig Wittgenstein, With a Memoir*, McGuinness, B.F. ed., trans. Furtmueller (Blackwell: Oxford, 1967).

¹⁴ Janik & Toulmin provide the following summary of Kierkegaard's existentialism as it is relevant to their interpretation of the *Tractatus* at p. 178:

The problem of life, the meaning of human existence, is the sole object of his contemplation; yet it is impossible for reason, his own tool, to find any solution to the resulting paradoxes of life. Reason can only lead Kierkegaard to paradox; faith is needed to overcome it. This is the task of the "subjective" thinker - to attain the higher sort of truth which is beyond reason and once again integrates life and thought. Within the terms of factual description, subjective truth - the truth that is life, moral truth - is incommunicable. The subjective thinker, who would possess and teach values, must assume the intellectual posture of Socrates; irony, satire, comedy, polemic are the instruments of "indirect communication" and so the means to this end.

nature of propositions, that poetry does not consist of propositions. In this world-view, poetry is the sphere in which the *sense* of life is expressed, a sphere which therefore cannot be described in *factual* terms...

In science, we want to know the facts; in the problems of life, facts are unimportant. In life, the important thing is the capacity to respond to the suffering of another. It is a matter of right feeling.¹⁵

Once this existentialist project is established, and Russell and Frege's contribution taken to be merely instrumental, it becomes clearer why propositions such as 6.52-6.522 lack solid justification. These ineffable issues can only be alluded to indirectly. Poetic not descriptive language must be invoked. Understanding when poetic and descriptive language should be used is the very purpose of the *Tractatus's* saying/showing distinction.

There are two contrasts which should be drawn between this existentialist interpretation and Diamond's. First, there is their respective understandings of the function of the saying/showing distinction in the *Tractatus*; secondly, the differing characterisations of their respective conceptions of the nature of showing.

Whereas the existentialist interpretation takes the picture theory's function as effectively to protect the ineffable from the mundane and descriptive, for Diamond the implications for logic are a consequence of the discovery about description. Like Russell, Diamond sees showing as a consequence of Wittgenstein's claims about saying, rather than regarding saying as a system designed with the intention of protecting showing.¹⁶ One can either see the logic as recruited to assist the existentialist project or one can regard the work in logic to be the primary concern which happens to have existentialist implications. The choice rather depends upon whether one conceives of the early Wittgenstein as a logician or an existentialist; a man determined to solve problems in logic or to protect the ineffable.

The most accurate explanation is perhaps that he was a man with deep interests in a wide variety of matters, some of which are logical, and some existential. The saying/showing distinction is the product of the coming together of all these aspects. It has both logical and existential origins. One of Wittgenstein's most remarkable personal characteristics is his combination of diverse abiding interests which informs his work so significantly.

A more important consideration, however, is the nature of showing according to each account. We have considered that within the analytic tradition, where the focus is on logic, showing has been understood by Diamond as resulting in nonsense. If one begins with the conviction that there are ineffable truths, however, then in building a system one is committed to showing as providing a place for ineffability. Janik & Toulmin are a case in point. They concede that the picture theory does not necessitate ineffability of truth in the existentialist tradition although they purport to establish that existentialism is compatible with the picture theory. This is apparent from the cautious expression used in the following passage where it is claimed that strictly, there is no more than an "implication" or "corroboration" between the picture theory and the ineffability of the "meaning of life":

¹⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 195.

¹⁶ Russell, B., Introduction to *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, *op. cit.*, p. xxiii:

More interesting than ... questions of comparative detail is Mr Wittgenstein's attitude towards the mystical. His attitude upon this grows naturally out of his doctrine in pure logic, according to which the logical proposition is a picture (true or false) of the fact, and has in common with the fact a certain structure.

The implication of the model theory was that the “meaning of life” lay outside the sphere of what could be said; the “meaning of life” should properly be referred to as a riddle, rather than as a problem, since there is no question of solving it, or answering it. So the model theory corroborates Kierkegaard’s notion that the meaning of life is not a topic which can be discussed by means of the categories of reason.¹⁷

Clearly nonsense and ineffability both have a claim to showing. We shall return later to this point. Before doing so, however, we should attend to the role of argument and conviction in Wittgenstein’s treatment of showing.

Janik and Toulmin do us a great service by drawing out the centrality of Wittgenstein’s interest in existentialism for understanding his concept of showing in the *Tractatus*. They fail, however, to distinguish between the two strands of existential material involved with showing: the argument about value which is directly related to the picture theory and the “purple passages” for which there is no more than corroboration. In this respect we can distinguish between cases such as 6.42, which explains that propositions about value are impossible, and cases such as 6.52, which deals with the inability of propositions to describe the meaning of life.

In the case of value, the picture theory precludes propositions about value. Propositions represent facts and facts consist of objects and relations. It makes sense that these facts might have moral, aesthetic or emotional value. But that value must be extrinsic to the fact (and therefore it is not part of the world either which is nothing but the totality of facts). On this account value might be most easily understood as an attitude to the world.¹⁸ If value is treated as a way of relating to facts or the world (these being synonymous for Wittgenstein), there is a strong case for claiming that the value of facts is connected with the picture theory in a way that requires it to be shown but not said. Insofar as it deals with facts, it is a product of the direct implications of the picture theory. It is then only a small step to say that if we are going to use language to express the value of facts it is not descriptive language but expressive or poetic language that is required.

Such arguments should be contrasted with claims such as 6.52 which are not intimately related to the picture theory in the same way. In 6.52, Wittgenstein says, “We feel that even when all *possible* scientific questions have been answered, the problems of life remain completely untouched...” This may be true. But if it is, it is not because of anything to do with the picture theory. This is a genuinely mystical sentiment. It is attributable only to a personal conviction of Wittgenstein’s which

¹⁷ *Op. cit.*, p. 198.

¹⁸ The idea of emotion as an attitude to the world is developed by Richard Wollheim in *On the Emotions* (Yale University Press: New Haven, 1999). Attitude is a special way of experiencing the world in which imagination plays a critical role in a process he describes as “correspondence”. In addition to the development of attitude in emotion, correspondence is also responsible for the expressive perception of nature, the expressiveness of art, and the connection in the physiognomic expression of emotion. The perception of correspondence is responsible for the development of an attitude or emotion. This expressive experience of the world is essentially ineffable. Wollheim writes at p. 78: “I can see no sure way either of getting someone to grasp the notion of correspondence who has not experienced correspondence, or of getting someone who has not experienced correspondence to do so.” There is a similarity between the attitude which is the essence of Wollheim’s concept of emotion and the experience of what can be shown but not said in the *Tractatus* which would merit further investigation. *Contra* Ramsay’s claim that if it can’t be said it can’t be shown, and it can’t be whistled either, Allan Gibbard writes in *Wise Choices, Apt Feelings: A Theory of Normative Judgment* (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, Mass., 1990), p. 131: “An emotion, we can say, involves a special way of experiencing one’s world, a way that will be difficult to express and perhaps can only be whistled.”

stems from his interest in Kierkegaard and Tolstoy. It is these claims for which Janik & Toulmin rightly assert no more than mere corroboration.

The genuinely mystical feelings are not related to the world of facts at all. It is for this reason that the picture theory does not have much relevance for them. Feelings about facts, however, are in a different position. If we say that the fact aRb is said by descriptive language but that the value of it can only be shown, there is a nexus between what can be said and what can be shown which is not available for claims such as that in 6.52.

Hans-Johann Glock writes that “it is obvious from the notes dictated to Moore in 1914 that the saying/showing distinction arose not out of ethical concerns, but out of a discussion of Russell’s Theory of Types.”¹⁹ He proceeds to explain that a mystical branch is grafted onto a “prior logical trunk” and that these two parts are held together by the saying/showing distinction. He concludes as follows:²⁰

In this context it should be noted that Wittgenstein later complained that the *Tractatus* along with things “good and genuine” also contained “kitsch,” passages in which he filled in gaps in his own style ... Unfortunately, he did not single out specific parts. But in the preceding paragraph he urges us to “evaporate cheap symbolism (*Symbolik*) in a higher sphere.” It is plausible to conjecture, therefore, that he meant neither the theory of tautologies nor the picture theory, with its correlated metaphysics of logical atomism, but the purple passages about ethics, aesthetics, and death.

It must remain conjecture which passages are the kitsch ones. Glock suggests that all of the parts not concerned with logic are what is meant. I would suggest, however, that we might narrow it down a bit further. It should be apparent by now that showing consists of three identifiable threads: the logic argument, the value argument, and the generic mystical conviction. The first two have an intimate connection with the work on saying. The propositions which we have considered under the heading of mystical conviction, however, look like good candidates for the kitsch passages that fill in gaps. I do not wish to ascribe too much significance to the fact that Wittgenstein might later have rejected these passages: a subsequent event in the author’s intellectual biography should not dictate our interpretation of the text. We need not share Glock’s aversion to Wittgenstein’s mystical tendencies in the *Tractatus*. What we should see, however, is that some of the mystical passages are purely dependant on a conviction or intuition whereas others to do with value are grounded in reasoned arguments and thus can be differentiated from the “purple passages”.

We have seen that a comprehensive account of showing in the *Tractatus* involves a degree of diversity which has previously gone unremarked in Wittgenstein scholarship. Where this problem has been addressed, the focus has been on alternative accounts rather than on giving an account of diversity of showing in the *Tractatus*.²¹ The idea of a diversity of showing is important because it explains why one form of showing can reveal ineffable truth and yet co-exist with another which results in nonsense.

Our examination of showing in the *Tractatus* demonstrates that whilst there are various approaches to the concept, these need not be regarded as distinct competing interpretations of showing, but as complementary strands of a broader concept. These

¹⁹ Glock, *op. cit.*, p. 202.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Glock (*op. cit.*, e.g. p. 196) provides a summary of the “variations on the irrationalist theme” that have been taken in Wittgenstein scholarship.

strands have their origins in the sources that influenced the writing of the *Tractatus*. If one looks for a single source of the saying/showing distinction one is likely to misinterpret the text. We have seen that some of the ideas to do with value are intimately connected with the picture theory. Other mystical passages are not linked to the picture theory in this way. Comments such as those about the meaning of life make most sense when the work is read within the existentialist tradition as Janik & Toulmin maintain it ought to be read. In both cases the result is a claim to ineffable truth. If one places the work in the context of Frege, Russell and the origins of the analytic tradition, however, the tendency is to see the mystical passages as an unfortunate - almost hysterical - afterthought which can be severed from the rest of the text. Taking this approach, Diamond's interpretation of the showing of logical structure as nonsense is readily accommodated.

The preferred reading of showing in the *Tractatus* is as follows. We know that the work is a deeply personal one. We know from both textual and extrinsic evidence that the author drew on a wide range of thinkers, and that these thinkers appear to have influenced discrete aspects of the work. Wittgenstein produced a comprehensive account of descriptive language which purports to establish the limitations of what can be said using descriptive language. In doing so, he claims to establish that there are things which descriptive language is not suitable to describe but which are shown. He then gives his account of what can be shown but not said.

In this context, he deals with some things which his system - specifically, the picture theory - leads him to conclude must be able to be shown but not said. This includes logic and value. He advances discrete arguments to establish why logic can be shown but not said and why value can be shown but not said. It follows that the sense in which things may be shown might differ in accordance with differences in the reasons why they are shown but not said. Thus it need not seem problematic that the *Tractatus's* saying/showing distinction results both in arguments which lead to ineffable truth (such as value) and others which result in a void of content (such as logic).

In addition to these, having established the saying/showing distinction, Wittgenstein then discusses problems to do with the ineffability of the meaning of life which are not implied by the detail of the system of descriptive language. That these matters should be discussed in this context is appropriate if one identifies with an established tradition which regards them as matters of ineffable truth. It is utterly implausible to maintain, however, that these parts of the text establish that there are things that can be shown but not said. But it is plausible to argue that once it is established that some things can be shown but not said, the author is entitled to discuss things which he believes fall into this established category even though of themselves they do not establish that such a category exists. This is particularly important if one is convinced that such things are part of one's life experience.

The three strands which result from the arguments and conviction result in a diversity of showing. This diversity should be regarded as a hallmark of the work rather than as a problem in need of resolution. It reflects the remarkable combination of influences on the author's thinking. Such unity as there is comes from Wittgenstein's deeply held conviction that the things that matter most in life are the ones which can be shown but not said. But he attempts to demonstrate that logic can lead one to this

conclusion. He is at once a logician and an existentialist who straddles the boundary between analytic and continental philosophy.²²

Just as our use of language can be divided into saying and showing, showing can be subdivided into different kinds of showing. Language may describe the world. It may also convey ineffable truth or simply result in nonsense. The *Tractatus* reflects one man's attempt to reconcile very different kinds of linguistic experience. In doing so, he brings together many different ideas concerning what is shown. His method is partly dependent on argument, partly on conviction. His concept of showing results partly in ineffability, partly in nonsense. This is not a deficiency. It is proof of the variety of activities that are carried out in different ways through language - an idea that is developed extensively in Wittgenstein's later philosophy.

²² Wittgenstein's understanding of the saying/showing is fundamental to his relationship with the logical positivists. Their failure to appreciate the significance of what can be shown places him at odds with them. As Engelmann writes:

Positivism holds - and this is its essence - that what we can speak about is all that really matters in life. Whereas Wittgenstein passionately believes that all that really matters in human life is precisely what, in his view, we must be silent about. When he nevertheless takes immense pains to delimit the unimportant, it is not the coastline of that island which he is bent on surveying with such meticulous accuracy, but the boundary of the ocean.

This account owes something to the existentialist reading of the *Tractatus*. Note that the following comment of Neurath's resonates strongly with Diamond's reading [Neurath, O., "Sociology and Physicalism" in Ayer, A.J. (ed.), *Logical Positivism* (Free Press: Glencoe, 1959), p. 284, p. 284]:

The conclusion of the *Tractatus*, "Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent," is, at least grammatically, misleading. It sounds as if there were a "something" of which one could not speak. We should rather say: if one really wishes to avoid the metaphysical attitude entirely, then one will "be silent," but not "about something."

It is in response to this position that Wittgenstein identifies himself with Heidegger in the *Lecture on Ethics* (vide Janik & Toulmin, *op. cit.*, p. 194. Also relevant to the historical issue is Friedlander, E., "Heidegger, Carnap, Wittgenstein: much ado about nothing", in Biletzki, A. and Matar, A. (eds), *The Story of Analytic Philosophy* (Routledge: London, 1998) and Friedman, M., "Carnap and Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*", in Tait, W.W. (ed.), *Early Analytic Philosophy* (Open Court: Chicago).