

Simplicity or singularity? Two conceptions of object in the *Tractatus logico-philosophicus*

ABSTRACT

In this paper, I argue, on the basis of textual evidence, that two conceptions of object instead of one are present in the *Tractatus*. One of them, based on the notions of a complete analysis of meaningful sentences and of absolute simplicity, was explicitly endorsed by Wittgenstein on purely logical grounds as the official doctrine of the book while the other, based on the notions of a multidimensional formal analysis and of singularity, was noncommittally entertained by him in the form of an analogy between the object's relation to its 'surrounding' logical space (of states of affairs) and the relation of a phenomenal item to the specific sense modality it belongs to and in which it is located. Armed with this distinction, I attempt to clarify the debate around the issue of the exemplarity of certain categories of things (particulars, universals) with respect to the logical notion of a Tractarian object. I also give my interpretation of how Wittgenstein deals in the *Tractatus* with the problem of the incompatibility of certain color ascriptions, and of the related episode of the abandonment of logical atomism in the early so-called 'transitional period'.

Keywords: *Tractatus logico-philosophicus*; Object; Simplicity; Singularity; Exemplarity; Multidimensional sensory spaces; Logical Atomism.

RESUMO

No presente artigo, argumenta-se, com base em evidências textuais, que há duas concepções de objeto presentes no *Tractatus*. A primeira, norteada pelas noções de analisabilidade completa e de simplicidade absoluta, foi explicitamente assumida por Wittgenstein como doutrina oficial do livro por razões puramente lógicas. A segunda, norteada pelas noções de análise formal multidimensional e de singularidade, só foi contemplada por ele com base em uma analogia entre a relação do objeto (em sentido lógico) ao espaço de possíveis estados de coisas que o 'cerca' e a de um item fenomenal qualquer à modalidade sensorial na qual está localizado. À luz dessa distinção, tenta-se clarificar o debate acerca da exemplaridade (ou não exemplaridade) de certas categorias de coisas (particulares, universais) em relação à noção tractariana de objeto. E dá ainda uma interpretação do tratamento por Wittgenstein do problema da incompatibilidade de certas atribuições de cores no *Tractatus* e do episódio do abandono do atomismo lógico no início do chamado 'período intermediário'.

Palavras-chave: *Tractatus logico-philosophicus*; Objeto; Simplicidade; Singularidade; Exemplaridade; Espaços sensoriais multidimensionais; Atomismo lógico.

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In my 2011 book and related papers, I argued that, if one is to take seriously Wittgenstein's hints as to which types of particulars or even universals are liable to exemplify the concept of object in the *Tractatus*, the best option is to think of Tractarian objects either in mathematical terms as points in multidimensional sensory manifolds or in logical terms as coordinates of locations in logical space¹. It might be objected that insofar as the identification of a point or of a location through its coordinates involves some kind of formal complexity, the ultimate residues of an analysis of sensory spaces cannot be good examples of Tractarian objects, for the very notion of a simple object in the *Tractatus* rules out that the would-be candidates be somehow compound². The objection is, I take it, perfectly sound and legitimate and it will not do as a response to point out that all that is necessary to confer simplicity on objects in the *Tractatus* is that the atomic facts in which they occur be logically independent of each other³. For the requirement of simplicity is not the overall requirement that the states of affairs in which the objects occur be logically independent; it is the more specific requirement that the ultimate residues of analysis, on the language as well as on the world side, be devoid of any kind of complexity whatsoever (be it material or formal). So it looks like one is facing a dilemma here: either one holds fast to the view that points in multidimensional sensory manifolds are good examples of Tractarian objects at the cost of giving up the very idea of absolute simplicity or one opts for the view that Wittgenstein had no specific examples of objects in mind at the time of the *Tractatus*, nor could have had any for logical reasons at the cost of overlooking telling suggestions about the exemplarity of some types of particulars, and presumably, of universals too. In this paper, I argue that this is a false dilemma and that the conception of object that Wittgenstein's examples are meant to illustrate is not the one known as the Doctrine of Logical Atomism. More positively, I argue that there are two conceptions of object rather than a single one at play in the *Tractatus* and that one ends up with a false dilemma just in case one mistakes one for the other.

To begin with, I briefly comment upon two sets of remarks (of Wittgenstein's) that run in opposite directions, thus generating a tension. In a next step, I outline the classical account of the tension and show that it rests on a misunderstanding. To clear this up, I draw a distinction between two views as to what a Tractarian object is, which I call respectively 'the A-View' and the 'B-View', and show how the tension should be properly understood. Armed with this distinction, I explain why they are incompatible with one

¹ See (SOUTIF, 2008); (SOUTIF, 2009); (SOUTIF, 2011, p. 90-105). For a similar view, see (McCARTY, 1991); (HYDER, 2002); (YOUNG, 2004).

² I thank Prof. João Vergílio Gallerani Cuter for having voiced the objection. A similar one is voiced and addressed in (YOUNG, 2004, p. 120).

³ This is meant as a criticism of Young's reply.

another and, as a result, how one is to understand the phenomenon of color incompatibility alluded to by Wittgenstein in 6.3751⁴. I also briefly explain how one is to understand his decision to give up the official Tractarian doctrine of logical atomism in the late 1920s.

1 Two sets of remarks

What is Wittgenstein's stance in the *Tractatus* on the issue of whether this or that thing may (or may not) be considered an example of simple object? As far as I can judge, the answer is not as straightforward as one might think. Among the mass of remarks devoted to the topic, both from the *Tractatus* period and from later stages of his work, two sets deserve to be singled out as they manifestly run in opposite directions.

Set 1. Presumably the clearest statement on the issue belonging to this set is a retrospective one. In his *Memoir*, Malcolm reports a conversation held with Wittgenstein long after the publication of the *Tractatus* in the following terms:

I asked Wittgenstein whether, when he wrote the *Tractatus*, he had ever decided upon anything as an example of a 'simple object'. His reply was that at that time his thought had been that he was a *logician*; and that it was not his business, as a logician, to decide whether this thing or that was a simple thing or a complex thing, that being a purely *empirical* matter! (MALCOLM; WRIGHT, 2001, p. 70).

Here Wittgenstein's answer is unambiguous. As far as the existence and the nature of Tractarian objects are concerned, his position in the *Tractatus* was that it is not and cannot be the job of the logician to answer such questions, that is, it cannot be considered one of his tasks to tell whether this or that particular thing is or is not an example of 'simple object' in the Tractarian sense. So, exemplarity issues just fall, on this account, outside the scope of logic (though within the scope of its application) and need not, one is to understand, be addressed by the philosopher *qua* logician.

Just the same position is expressed in the *Tractatus*, matching perfectly the above-mentioned retrospective statement. 5.551 states Wittgenstein's 'fundamental principle':

Our fundamental principle is that whenever a question can be decided by logic at all it must be possible to decide it without more ado.
(And if we get into a position where, we have to look at the world for an answer to such a problem that shows that we are on a completely wrong track.)

⁴ Hereafter, all references to (WITTGENSTEIN; PEARS; MCGUINNESS, 1961) in body text are to the decimal numbers assigned by the author to his propositions.

Although the immediate context of the remark (5.55 ff.) suggests that the issue at stake here is slightly different – Wittgenstein wonders how questions about the possible forms and the actual structure of elementary propositions are to be answered, it is clear enough that the stated ‘fundamental principle’ (to the effect that if any question is to be ever decided by logic, it must be regardless of, and prior to, any investigation of how the world is) also holds for that which he always considered fundamental philosophical questions such as the question as to whether such and such item (say, a point in the visual field) ‘is a simple object, a thing’ (WITTGENSTEIN; WRIGHT; ANSCOMBE, 1979, p. 3). And here too, the answer seems to be that questions of this type cannot be decided by way of an empirical investigation either of what we actually see or of the constitution of matter. If they ever, they must be regardless of, and prior to, any such investigation.

A passage from the *Notebooks* (dated 14/06/1915) bears this out. There, the author comes to the conclusion that the issue of the availability of (empirical) examples of ‘simple objects’ has no relevance for the philosopher’s task as the idea of simplicity is already contained or ‘prejudged’ in (that of) the complex, just like the sense of negation is already ‘contained’ or ‘prejudged’ in (that is, internally related to) the sense of the negated proposition. So, if the philosopher ever comes to the idea that there are simple objects from the very fact that there are complex ones (as seems required by the very idea of a complete analysis), this cannot be but the result of a stipulation made *qua* logician as to their existence:

It seems that the idea of the SIMPLE is already to be found contained in that of the complex and in the idea of analysis, and in such a way that we come to this idea quite apart from any examples of simple objects, or of propositions which mention them, and we realize the existence of the simple object – *a priori* – as a logical necessity.

So it looks as if the existence of the simple objects were related to that of the complex ones as the sense of $\sim p$ is to the sense of p : the *simple* object is *prejudged* in the complex (WITTGENSTEIN *et al.*, 1979, p. 60).

That this was the view eventually endorsed by Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus* as a result of placing logical requirements on meaningful sentences (the requirement that their sense be completely determinate and, accordingly, that they be fully analyzable) is clear from the following set of propositions devoted to explaining the vocabulary used to describe the elements put into one-one correspondence in a fully analyzed meaningful sentence:

In a proposition a thought can be expressed in such a way that to the objects of the thought correspond elements of the propositional sign.

I call such elements 'simple signs', and such a proposition 'completely analyzed'.

The simple signs employed in propositions are called names. A name means an object. The object is its meaning. [...]

The requirement that simple signs be possible is the requirement that sense be determinate (WITTGENSTEIN et al., 1961, 3.2-3.203; 3.23. Slightly modified translation).

But the most telling series of remarks stating Wittgenstein's official position in the *Tractatus* is, undoubtedly, the following one:

Objects are simple.

Objects make up the substance of the world. That is why they cannot be composite.

If the world had no substance, then whether a proposition had sense would depend on whether another proposition was true.

In that case we could not sketch any picture of the world (true or false) (WITTGENSTEIN et al., 1961, 2.02; 2.021-2.0212).

Here we have (i) a very sketchy argument, the so-called 'argument for substance', designed to establish that there are things that exist necessarily, that is, that persist through all existence changes from one possible world to another (ii) the claim that the objects *qua* referents of the simple signs of a fully analyzed meaningful sentence make up the (logically) required substance of the world. Note that no example of 'simple objects' is invoked, nor needed here to flesh out (ii). The latter is arrived at and supported by a *modus tollens* style of argument that contains but non-empirical metaphysical and semantic premises (On this, see PROOPS, 2004).

Set 2. The most often cited remark that runs in just opposite direction is, again, based on a testimony. Desmond Lee reports a discussion had with Wittgenstein 'at some time during the year 1930-1931' about the opening propositions of the *Tractatus* as follows:

2.01. "An atomic fact is a combination of objects (entities, things)". "Objects", etc. is here used for such things as a colour, a point in visual space, etc: cf. also above. A word has no sense except in a proposition. "Objects" also include relations, a proposition is not two things connected by a relation. "Thing" and "relation" are on the same level. The objects hang as it were in a chain (WITTGENSTEIN; LEE, 1980, p. 120).

This is a commentary on the very notion of 'object' as used by Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus*, especially in the 'definition' of the notion of an atomic fact (state of affairs). Assuming that Desmond Lee's report is faithful and reliable,

Wittgenstein would be claiming here that the notion was used in the book to refer to things such as 'a color', 'a point in visual space', etc., that is, things usually categorized as phenomenal entities or, more accurately, positions in quality spaces. So, provided a color (in color space) and a point in the field of vision are good examples of what Wittgenstein terms 'objects' in the *Tractatus*, one is left with the twofold task of explaining what sense of the word 'object' these items are meant to exemplify and why the word 'object' is used there with such a categorial flexibility that it includes universals (relations) in addition to particulars ('things')⁵.

The propositions from the *Tractatus* that come closest to bearing out Lee's testimony are the following ones:

Each thing is, as it were, in a space of possible states of affairs. This space I can imagine empty, but I cannot imagine the thing without the space.

A spatial object must be situated in infinite space. (A spatial point is an argument-place.)
A speck in the visual field, though it need not be red, must have some colour: it is, so to speak, surrounded by colour-space. Notes must have some pitch, the object of the sense of touch some degree hardness, and so on (WITTGENSTEIN *et al.*, 1961, 2.013-2.0131).

Note that the examples of 'spatial' object invoked here by Wittgenstein all are phenomenal items; more accurately, they are locations in multidimensional sensory manifolds: a speck in the visual field, a sound in auditory space, a *tactile* in the space of touch, etc. If one compares, for instance, the present version with the earlier version of the *Prototractatus*, one is struck by the fact that all reference to material points was given up⁶. 'Space' now means phenomenal space. So, one is left here with the same tasks as the ones mentioned above, plus the further task of explaining what grounds the analogy between the object's relation to its surrounding logical space (that of the states of affairs it is 'in') and the relation of phenomenal items to their surrounding quality spaces. Wittgenstein draws an analogy, but the question is: on what *grounds* does he do that?

2 The tension

Considering the two sets of remarks, their conflicting character strikes one. On the one hand, Wittgenstein not only claims explicitly that it is not the business of the philosopher *qua* logician to answer empirical questions such

⁵ Lee's testimony is in tune with a statement from the *Notebooks*. See (WITTGENSTEIN *et al.*, 1979, p. 61).

⁶ See *Prototractatus*, 2.0141. In: (WITTGENSTEIN; MCGUINNESS; SCHULTE, 2001, p. 186)

as that of the existence and the nature of simples as referents of a fully analyzed language; he also claims that the answer, if any, cannot be given except on purely logical grounds, as a result of requirements imposed by logic on how one is to consider the sentences of meaningful discourse –as far as complex sentences are concerned, as truth-functions of logically independent simpler ones and the latter, in turn, as immediate concatenations of names in one-one correspondence with their referents; the requirement of full analyzability flowing, on the Tractarian view, from that of the determinateness of sense of meaningful sentences. So, being able or unable to provide examples of simples are not only harmless here, it is not even required. More accurately, it is harmless because it is not required.

One may even wonder whether it is at all possible, given the strictures placed by Wittgenstein on the would-be candidates to the title of object in the *Tractatus*: (i) they must be *absolutely* simple, that is, devoid of any kind of complexity whatsoever (ii) therefore, indestructible (iii) they must exist necessarily, *i.e.* in all possible worlds, etc. Which objects, it may be asked, could ever instantiate such properties? The fact that no ‘object’ in the usual logical sense of the word (namely, as referent of an ordinary proper name) instantiates such metaphysical properties suggests, as Wittgenstein himself will later point out, that we still are in the grip of a particular picture of meaning, reference, and metaphysical simplicity that somehow distorts our understanding of the way language actually works:

‘A name signifies only what is an *element* of reality — what cannot be destroyed, what remains the same in all changes.’ — But what is that? Even as we uttered the sentence, that’s what we already had in mind! We already gave expression to a quite specific idea, a particular picture that we wanted to use. For experience certainly does not show us these elements. We see the *constituent parts* of something composite (a chair, for instance). We say that the back is part of the chair, but that it itself is composed of different pieces of wood; whereas a leg is a simple constituent part. We also see a whole which changes (is destroyed) while its constituent parts remain unchanged. These are the materials from which we construct that picture of reality (WITTGENSTEIN; HACKER; SCHULTE, 2009, §59, p. 33).

On the other hand, Wittgenstein not only claimed that he did have specific examples of ‘objects’ in mind at the time of the *Tractatus*, but he resorted quite naturally there to examples of the phenomenal kind to explain by way of an analogy how a simple object is related to its surrounding logical space – that of the states of affairs. So, on this account, not only are the examples philosophically *useful*, they illustrate a conception the core feature of which is to grant the possibility that the objects be individuated by their position in the corresponding logical space of states of affairs.

So, there is potentially a tension here. But how are we to appraise it?

3 Appraisal

A way to account for it that actually amounts to downplaying it is to interpret the scarcity of examples of (simple) objects in the *Tractatus* as a flaw characteristic of all armchair philosophizing. On this construal, Wittgenstein either would have been unable to provide good examples of whatever was meant by 'object' in the *Tractatus*, or would have given in to the temptation to theorize *a priori* about their existence. Either case, the outcome is that he would have been engaged at that time in some kind of bad philosophizing, at least with respect to the notions of a simple object and of a complete analysis of meaningful sentences. One instance of this negative appraisal is Marion's following statement:

Unfortunately, arguing without examples is a widespread flaw in philosophy and Wittgenstein is no exception: he does not provide any example of a 'complete' analysis. As a result, his claims and terminology fall short of clarity – minor inconsistencies can even be spotted; this lack of clarity being the source of many interpretive quarrels both about complexes and about simples (MARION, 2004, p. 68)⁷.

This account relies on a couple of assumptions that are easily challenged: (i) the examples invoked and used in set 2 are meant to illustrate the view of objects embodied in set 1 (ii) The view embodied in set 1 is not illustrated as it should be. Accordingly, Wittgenstein's metaphysical atomism is a sort of groundless *a priori* theorizing about the nature of reality. As to (i), it might be replied that the examples invoked and used in set 2 are not bad illustrations of the view embodied in set 1; they are good examples of *another* view, namely the one embodied in set 2. As to (ii), we saw that Wittgenstein did not deem it necessary or possible to illustrate the view embodied in set 1. So, the scarcity of examples cannot be considered a flaw or a failure of the theory. There is no theory at work in the *Tractatus*; just a set of logical requirements placed on meaningful sentences as a precondition for their clarification (See (WITTGENSTEIN et al., 1961, 4.112). As I understand it, the tension, if any, is not between a view and its alleged examples, but between two views, one of which (call it the 'A-view') need not be illustrated while the other (call it the 'B-view') is properly illustrated by examples of the kind appealed to in set 2.

⁷ Our translation. The original French has: 'Raisonnement en l'absence d'exemple est un défaut malheureusement très répandu en philosophie et Wittgenstein n'y échappe pas: il ne donne aucun exemple d'analyse « complète ». Le résultat est que ses thèses et sa terminologie manquent de clarté – on trouve même quelques incohérences mineures. Cette obscurité est la source de bien des problèmes d'interprétation, à la fois à propos des complexes et des simples.'

The situation can thus be depicted as follows:

The Tension Misunderstood	The Tension Properly Understood									
<p style="text-align: center;">One View</p> <p style="text-align: center;">The A-View</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Bad or no examples</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(from Set 2)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Two Views</p> <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center; width: 50%;">The A-View</td> <td style="text-align: center; width: 50%;">The B-View</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">↓</td> <td style="text-align: center;">↓</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Cannot/need not be illustrated</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Is properly illustrated</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2" style="text-align: center;">(by examples from Set 2)</td> </tr> </table>		The A-View	The B-View	↓	↓	Cannot/need not be illustrated	Is properly illustrated	(by examples from Set 2)	
The A-View	The B-View									
↓	↓									
Cannot/need not be illustrated	Is properly illustrated									
(by examples from Set 2)										

Once the tension is properly understood as a matter of conflict between two incompatible views – one of which is the official Tractarian doctrine of logical atomism while the other, explicitly endorsed by Wittgenstein in the late 1920s, is a brand of logical holism foreshadowed in the *Tractatus* by the analogy with the multidimensional sensory manifolds, the scarcity of examples of objects and the lack of examples of a complete analysis of meaningful sentences in the *Tractatus* need not be interpreted as a flaw of the theory ; they are, rather, a clue to Wittgenstein’s ambivalent attitude toward exemplarity issues. On the one hand, no example seems to be needed for the idea that there are (*must* be) simple objects is arrived at on purely logical grounds; on the other hand, there were examples of objects available and Wittgenstein did have such examples in mind at the time of the *Tractatus*, which may lead one to ask what determines their exemplarity. It is time now to spell out the features of each view to size up its potentially conflicting character with the other and see to what extent it is or need not be illustrated.

4 The A-view

This is the view embodied in set 1. On this view, an object just is what is required to exist for certain things to be the case, namely, for meaningful sentences *as they are* (that is, even in their unanalyzed form) to have a determinate sense, for their having a sense independently of the truth/

falsehood of other meaningful sentences (2.0211), etc. The argument used here is reminiscent in its form of the so-called 'transcendental arguments'; more accurately, of transcendental arguments of the 'word-directed' (as opposed to 'experience-directed') kind (See STERN, 2000, p. 10-11). On their standard construal, they arguably have the following form: If not X , not Y ; Y therefore X . They are often considered non-empirical, though perfectly valid, ways of establishing the reality of some world properties. The fact that Wittgenstein uses an argument of this type in the *Tractatus* explains why no example is required or needed to establish the truth of the conclusion, that is, of the claims that the world does have a substance and that simple objects make it up. The conclusion simply flows by *modus tollens* from non-empirical (logical) premises. The notion of simplicity at stake here is that of an unanalyzable item, directly inherited from the logical requirement of the full analyzability of meaningful sentences, which is just the same requirement as that of the determinateness of their sense. Thus, on this view, it is precisely because the analysis of meaningful sentences must come to end (if such sentences are to have a determinate sense) that there must be simple 'objects', that is, things of whatever kind (particulars or universals) unanalyzable signs go proxy for. Their simplicity here rules out the possibility of telling two objects apart by reference to a set of formal properties had by one, but not by the other. Otherwise, one would have to acknowledge that they are not simple for being further analyzable.

5 The B-view

This is the view embodied in set 2. To begin with, it admits of examples, for the object's existence or simplicity is not established this time by means of a world-directed kind of transcendental argument. In 2.013-2.0131, Wittgenstein draws an analogy with the relation of phenomenal items to their surrounding quality space to explain that between an object in the logical sense and the logical space of possible states of affairs that surrounds it. The point of the analogy seems to be this: just like a particular quality corresponds to a point or a location in a multidimensional order – a quality 'space' in the mathematical sense of the word, an object is but a location or a set of coordinates in a combinatorial space, the space of all the possible states of affairs in which it can occur. Assuming the analogy is grounded, this means that a Tractarian object is individuated by its coordinates in logical space, that is, by a set of independent variables that give its position in that very space. Tractarian objects, in other words, have a kind of formal complexity. They can be analyzed with respect to a set of formal properties that individuate them in their surrounding (logical) space. These formal properties are the dimensions of the logical space of states of affairs. They are to be conceived of as classes of

intersubstitutable items that share the property of possibly occurring in the same possible states of affairs.

This view of 'objects' is in sharp contrast with the A-View for the latter precludes that an object be characterized by a complexity of any sort, be it material or formal. On the B-view, however, the object is somehow analyzable with respect to the dimensions of the space it is 'in' – the analogs of which in visual or auditory space are, respectively, hue, brightness, saturation; pitch, loudness, and volume. It follows that they are not simple; they are, instead, the *absolutely singular*, that is, that which is uniquely determined by a set of formal parameters.

6 Incompatibilities

The A-view and the B-view are incompatible in many respects. One important respect involves the requirement of the logical independence of elementary propositions. According to the B-view, a sentence of the form [Green, x , y , z] would be a good example of elementary proposition since it identifies a point in (three-dimensional) visual space by means of the concatenation of properties that are determinate values of spatial and chromatic coordinates. Note that in this case one is just as entitled, according to Wittgenstein, to view the sentence as the ascription of a determinate chromatic property to a spatial point as the ascription of a spatial property to a color, depending on how one analyzes it⁸. This would also explain the categorial flexibility, rather than the categorial indeterminacy⁹, of the notion of an object in the *Tractatus*¹⁰. This is plainly incompatible with the A-view as the latter rules out that there be logical relations among elementary propositions. Now, as Wittgenstein points out at 6.3751, a sentence stating 'the simultaneous presence of two colors at the same place in the visual field' (for instance, [Green at location 3,4] and [Red at location 3,4] is 'logically impossible'. It follows that neither [Green at location 3,4], nor [Red at location 3,4] is an example of elementary proposition and that the determinate values of the spatial and chromatic coordinates cannot be either examples of 'objects' in the official Tractarian sense of the word. The B-view here is plainly incompatible with the official Tractarian doctrine of logical atomism.

⁸ On this, see (HYDER, 2002, p. 30-31; 109). Hyder takes Wittgenstein's insight to be rooted in Helmholtz's notion of a *Qualitätskreis* surrounding colors and with respect to which they can be analyzed. On such analyses, the notion of object as a *thing*, that is, as bearer of properties becomes totally superfluous. It might be objected, however, that there still is an asymmetry in the above example between the nominal part and the predicate part of the sentence for the predicate green (or any other color predicate) can be ascribed different locations at the same time in the (visual) field while the spatial point (identified with respect to a unique set of spatial coordinates) cannot be ascribed two primary colors (say, red and green) at the same time. Thanks to André Porto for the objection.

⁹ See (JOHNSTON, 2009) and (CAMPBELL, 2011).

¹⁰ By 'categorial flexibility', I mean exactly what Wittgenstein had in mind when he said to Lee that the word 'objects' also included *relations* (that is, universals just as much as particulars).

7 Giving up logical atomism

Notoriously, Wittgenstein eventually gave up the official Tractarian doctrine of logical atomism in the late 1920s and endorsed, instead, the view that meaningful sentences are applied (laid against) reality for truth-evaluation not in isolation, but as wholes, that is, as entire propositional systems¹¹. It is also well known that incompatibilities of the kind mentioned above between simultaneous ascriptions of two primary colors to a single location in visual space served as test case for the appraisal of the former doctrine. From the fact that, say, [Green at location 3,4] and [Red at location 3,4] contradict each other and that no elementary proposition can contradict another, it no longer follows as it did in the *Tractatus* that they cannot be examples of elementary propositions and that the determinate values of the spatial and chromatic coordinates involved in those ascriptions cannot be examples of Tractarian objects; it rather follows that the concepts of elementary proposition and of object inherited from the *Tractatus* must be revised in order to accommodate such incompatibility cases and the idea of full determination (description) of a location in a given logical space through the combination of distinct logical parameters.

It is customary to construe this turnabout in Wittgenstein's philosophical development as a shift from one conception to another as if the view endorsed in the late 1920s had nothing to do with the *Tractatus*. This is an oversimplification. If, as suggested earlier, the A-view (i.e. the doctrine of logical atomism) was not the only view of objects present in the *Tractatus*, the abandonment of the doctrine of logical atomism in the late 1920s is, I take it, best understood as a matter of choice between two incompatible theories, one of which (the A-view) was officially endorsed by Wittgenstein while the other (the B-view) was noncommittally entertained. For the view that comes to the fore in the late 1920s, namely the view that an object is nothing but the determinate value of a set of independent coordinates (parameters) that single it out uniquely and completely, just is the view described above as B, although it was so to speak barred in the *Tractatus* by the official doctrine of logical atomism and its underlying logical requirements. This construal is retrospectively borne out by the following passage from the *Philosophical Remarks*:

In my old conception of an elementary proposition there was no determination of the value of a coordinate; although my remark that a coloured body is in a colour-space, etc., should have put me straight on to this (WITTGENSTEIN et al., 1975, §83, p. 111).

¹¹ For a canonical wording of the view, see (WITTGENSTEIN et al., 1975, §82b, p. 110).

As Wittgenstein is discovering in the late 1920s that some classes of property ascriptions are not analyzable as logical products of propositions, although they involve relations of mutual exclusion, it becomes obvious that the dominant conception of objects and elementary propositions, which was officially that of the *Tractatus* (namely, the A-view) no longer is sustainable and that the alternate view (the B-view), not endorsed as such in the *Tractatus*, is more liable to be exemplified by the various classes of sentences now under scrutiny – color-degree, mixed-color, sound, electric-charge ascriptions (See WITTGENSTEIN et al., 1975, §81). As the tension is getting resolved, one should not forget, though, that the view officially endorsed in the late 1920s in lieu of logical atomism (namely, logical *holism*) was already present in the *Tractatus* in the form of an analogy between the object's relation to its surrounding logical space and that of any phenomenal item to a specific multidimensional sense modality.

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