

Book Review
L'albero del *Tractatus*

Luciano Bazzocchi
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Unexpected consequences can be drawn by taking seriously Wittgenstein's own instructions on how to read the *Tractatus logico-philosophicus*, that he carefully added as the only footnote to the text, but that often have not been adequately stressed by critics. The structure of the book, with its decimal figures, becomes the key to its correct reading, and its correct reading becomes the key to our correct vision of the world. On these bases, Luciano Bazzocchi offers a well-grounded new reading of Wittgenstein's masterpiece.

L'albero del Tractatus is divided into two parts: in the first part Bazzocchi, starting from the footnote in which Wittgenstein invites us to consider the decimal figures as showing the «logical importance» of his propositions, puts forward the metaphor of the tree as the only possible guide to the text. In the second part, he examines the MS (manuscript) 104, from which it was derived the so-called *Prototractatus*, and finds in it an important confirmation: the tree metaphor is not only the correct guide, but also the real method of the composition of the *Tractatus*.

One of the most interesting point in Bazzocchi's work is the analysis of the relations among the propositions of the *Tractatus*. Placing side by side propositions of the same decimal level inside the same "bough" of the tree, we can often notice meaningful syntactical and terminological resemblances. More generally, since Wittgenstein underlines the importance of the decimal numbers, it is pointless to read the book sequentially, as if each proposition were a consequence or a comment of the immediate previous proposition. On the contrary, each proposition has a position determined by its decimal number, and therefore refers either to the upper proposition (i.e. proposition

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2.172 is a comment of 2.17), or to the same level previous proposition (i.e. 2.172 refers to 2.171). This simple indication is often forgotten by critics. The best example is to be found in last page of the *Tractatus*, namely, where we come to see the general sense of the entire work. Proposition 7, «Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent», does not refer to 6.54, «My propositions are elucidatory in this way: he who understands me finally recognizes them as senseless, when he has climbed out through them, on them, over them. (He must so to speak throw away the ladder, after he has climbed upon it). He must surmount these propositions; then he sees the world rightly». Instead, it refers to proposition 6, in which Wittgenstein gives the general form of the truth function and says: «This is the general form of proposition». The meaning is clear. Either the proposition has the form of the truth function, or it is not a proposition; either it describes facts that can happen in the world of facts, or it is not a part of language. Proposition 7 – says Bazzocchi – is nothing but a principle of modal logic: «What cannot be said, must not be said». Silence, as is recommended in 7, has no connection with «seeing the world rightly», the ending of 6.54. This is confirmed by the genesis of these sections of the *Tractatus*, documented in Bazzocchi's work on MS104, which shows that proposition 7 follows some remarks about the general form of propositions and about being all propositions of the same value. Instead, 6.54, together with its predecessor 6.53, are subsequent in Wittgenstein's elaboration. Also, 6.54 had originally another ending: after transcending the propositions, the reader – as we can see under the corrections of MS104 – «gets, on the right level, to what can be said».

What does this reading mean for the image of the world that the *Tractatus* suggests? Bazzocchi's aim seems to be to contrast two well-established interpretations. On the one hand, the resolute interpretation given by the New Wittgenstein current, that affirms basically that the *Tractatus* gives no image of the world, but only shows itself, and every other similar attempt, to be nonsensical. Indeed, if we understand that proposition 7 is not a comment or a consequence of 6.54, the impression of nonsense – says Bazzocchi – dissolves. On the other hand, by insisting on the connection between propositions 6 and 7, he contrasts the mystical interpretations of the *Tractatus*, that emphasize silence as the only correct approach to the existence of the world. What is most interesting to notice, is that Wittgenstein's deep attention to the structure of his work is a substantial part of his picture theory of language. The only way to read the *Tractatus* rightly, is by paying attention to the relations among

propositions. And, in the same way, the only way to see the world rightly, is to see that it is «all that is the case», it is made of facts and relations among facts. Language has the same logical structure of the world: every fact can be depicted in language, but language can't depict anything else than facts. Whether this vision eliminates the mystic sense of reality, or even more clearly lets it emerge, is a question that Bazzocchi doesn't ask; but that, in conclusion, may be worth asking.

