Józef Bremer. *Ludwiga Wittgensteina teoria odwzorowania w filozofii, mechanice, muzyce i architekturze* [Ludwig Wittgenstein's Picture Theory in the Context of Philosophy, Mechanical Engineering, Music and Architecture]. Krakow: Ignatianum University Press, 2018.

Józef Bremer's book on Wittgenstein's picture theory offers us a captivating journey through the latter's philosophical ideas, interpreted in the light of the broader context furnished by the Austrian philosopher's life. In doing so, it not only reveals the multifariousness of Wittgenstein's conception of logical picturing, which is valuable in itself, but also helps us to understand his philosophy more broadly, thanks to its analysis of a range of significant biographical facts that may reasonably be thought to have influenced him. Thus, the value of the book is twofold: firstly, it analyses Wittgenstein's picture theory as a philosophical conception, together with its applications in the fields of mechanical engineering, music and architecture, and secondly, it sheds light on one of the most distinctive philosophers of the twentieth century, who has exerted a far-reaching influence on philosophy and linguistics, through its investigation of the contexts and events that shaped what could be referred to as the Wittgensteinian approach to philosophical matters. My aim here is to briefly show how Bremer's book goes about analysing the influences flowing in both directions between the early philosophy as presented in the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* and the events of Wittgenstein's life—something whose goal is to furnish us with a broader understanding not only of the philosophy, but also of the philosopher himself. The book is divided into four chapters, dealing in turn with philosophy, mechanical engineering, music and architecture. My own intention is thus to examine each of these with a view to showing how Bremer approaches the task of setting out the unfolding trajectory in the context of which Wittgenstein's life and philosophy are to be properly seen intertwined.

The general idea of the picture theory in the context of Wittgenstein's early philosophy is that our language mirrors the physical world: that is to say, a meaningful proposition pictures a state of affairs (*Tractatus* 2.1). With reference to Wittgenstein's own life history, Bremer sets out to explain where the roots of this theory are to be found. He recalls a practice of using

✍ Jakub Pruś, Jesuit University Ignatianum in Krakow, ul. Kopernika 26, 31-501 Kraków, Poland
✉ jakub.prus@ignatianum.edu.pl 0000-0003-0585-3865

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papier-mâché models of automobiles to reconstruct car accidents. This practice was described in one of the Parisian newspapers of Wittgenstein's day: the miniatures were used to show what really happened on the road. Using this example, one can better understand Wittgenstein's Tractarian conception of language: in a fashion analogous to the way in which models may correspond to vehicles, and relations between such models may serve to represent some traffic accident or other, our language corresponds to reality—words correspond to objects, and propositions to states of affairs. Such a theory of meaning thus assumes a correspondence relation between language and reality, and provides a foundation for a theory of truth: we say that a proposition is true if, and only if, the relations between names appearing in the proposition correspond to the relations between real objects in the world. This, in turn, is crucial for Wittgenstein's theory of meaning (which is itself also in effect a theory of truth).

The key term in Wittgenstein's picture theory—which is also the most controversial for philosophers—is therefore "correspondence." What does it mean that language corresponds to reality, and that this correspondence makes a proposition true?

Ever since the proposals of Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, and others, many critiques have been levelled against what have come to be known in contemporary parlance as correspondence theories of meaning and/or truth. When Aquinas asserts that *veritas est adequatio rei et intellectus*, we may have some doubts about this: what, after all, does such correspondence (*adequatio*) really amount to? More specifically, how can we compare a real object with a linguistic one, and how can we assert a negative proposition if this does not actually correspond to anything? Let us briefly analyse these critical points, in order to see how Bremer himself is inclined to address them in the context of his understanding of the picture theory.

Firstly, the assumption that language pictures, models or copies reality—and that its propositions are true if they correspond to reality—leads to the problematic question of what the criterion is according to which we compare language and reality. On the one hand there is a language (words, sound waves, ink marks, etc.), and on the other there are real objects (tables, chairs, flowers, and so on). How can these two categories of being be compared with each other? How can they correspond to one another—or rather, under which aspect should we compare them? Bremer's answer to this can be construed as amounting to the following: according to the picture theory, we do not compare words (or thoughts) with objects, but rather relations between names in a proposition and relations between real objects. In other words, we are prepared to say that a proposition is

true if, and only if, these relations correspond to one another. We speak of a correct representation of real objects by linguistic objects when "the things are combined with one another as are the elements of the picture" (*Tractatus* 2.151).[1] Thus, it is the relations—between the names and between the objects—that correspond to each other.

The second critical question refers to the problem of negative propositions. "There are no dragons in Cracow" is a proposition that is true, but to what state of affairs does it correspond? Bremer explains that logical functors, such as negation, do not bring anything new to the "picture," for they do not have any meaning—their role is similar to punctuation marks. Therefore, negative propositions cannot correspond to any "negative" facts. Instead, it is simply that the corresponding affirmative statement (e.g. "There are dragons in Cracow") does not correspond to anything, and *this* makes it false. At the same time it is a meaningful proposition, as it describes some possible state of affairs. And here lies the "added value," so to speak, of the picture theory: Wittgenstein has managed to explain how it is possible for a proposition to be meaningful and false at the same time.

What do we need such a theory for? As Bremer notes, the Tractarian account of meaning not only describes the way in which language refers to reality: it also explicates the difference between senseless and meaningful propositions and provides, above all, a foundation for the theory of meaning and/or truth.

Having said this, we should note that Bremer's book is not dedicated exclusively to Wittgenstein's logico-metaphysical conception or philosophy of language—this only serves to introduce the philosophical framework and concepts needed for further investigations. As I mentioned before, the main value of the book lies in the comparisons that it offers between the quite different areas in which Wittgenstein can be thought of as having applied the picture theory. Bremer's investigation works in two directions: it helps us to understand Wittgenstein himself and his way of thinking about language and reality, but also itself sheds light on various non-theoretical areas of human activity, these being mechanical engineering, architecture and music.

Bremer's detailed examination of Wittgenstein's biography in the second chapter of the book reveals what the key shaping influences on the philosopher's way of thinking were. His technical education began at his school in Linz, which he attended for three years. He then started studying

1. All citations from the *Tractatus* are taken from: Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, translated by Brian McGuinness and David Pears, London: Routledge, 1974.

mechanical engineering in Berlin-Charlottenburg, where he spent three semesters. Afterwards, he moved to Manchester to study aerodynamics, becoming fascinated there by empirical experiments in propeller aerodynamics—something which led him on to more advanced studies in mathematics. Three years later he left Manchester and moved to Cambridge, where he met Bertrand Russell. This is the general background to "Wittgenstein's path to philosophy," and as Bremer points out, each of these facts certainly left a mark on his way of thinking. For example, during his studies in Berlin there were two famous experts who were engaged in teaching mechanical engineering: Professor Franz Reuleaux and Professor Alois Riedler. The two of them influenced mechanical engineering in different ways, but what was common to both was the emphasis they put on technical drawing, which was held to be crucial for developing the engineer's spatial imagination. What is more, they both sought to develop a special symbolic language: one that would describe all possible mechanical devices and be easily understood by engineers. This seems very similar to Wittgenstein's idea of creating a logical language to capture the structure of natural language, and with this the form that it shares with reality. Thanks to Bremer's analysis we are now in a position to assess, in the light of this aspect of what is presented in the *Tractatus*, just how great an impact Wittgenstein's technical studies must have had upon him.

The third chapter introduces Wittgenstein's musical family background—something which also explains his great liking for music. Bremer draws our attention to two musical examples that can be seen as helping to explain the difference between the "earlier" and "later" Wittgensteinian approaches to language. In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein puts forward an analogy to show his idea of the triple isomorphism between the language, thought and the world:

> A gramophone record, the musical idea, the written notes, and the sound-waves, all stand to one another in the same internal relation of depicting that holds between language and the world. (*Tractatus* 4.014)

> There is a general rule by means of which the musician can obtain the symphony from the score, and which makes it possible to derive the symphony from the groove on the gramophone record, and using the first rule, to derive the score again. That is what constitutes the inner similarity between these things which seem to be constructed in such entirely different ways. (*Tractatus* 4.0141)

The alternative idea of language, which Wittgenstein was to present many years later in *Philosophical Investigation*, amounted to a far more internally varied one, it being the notion of "language games," conceived as including not just language itself, but also the practices with which it is interwoven. The "later" Wittgenstein's conception of language can also be characterized using a comparison with music:

> Understanding a sentence in language is much more akin to understanding a theme in music than one may think. What I mean is that understanding a spoken sentence is closer than one thinks to what is ordinarily called understanding a musical theme. Why is just this the pattern of variation in intensity and tempo? One would like to say: "Because I know what it all means." But what does it mean? I'd not be able to say. As an "explanation," I could compare it with something else which has the same rhythm (I mean the same pattern). (*Philosophical Investigations* §527)[2]

Analysing the connection between Wittgenstein's philosophy and his understanding of music, we can start to see how his understanding of music must have influenced his picture theory (the gramophone having only been invented in the late nineteenth century). We can also better understand how the picture theory itself works at a detailed level, having analysed the example of music that is "transferable" between a musical idea, written notes, sound waves and a gramophone record. Thus, Bremer demonstrates how music influenced the picture theory, and how the latter can itself be invoked to shed a certain light on our understanding of music.

The fourth chapter of the book also points to the influence that certain facts from Wittgenstein's life had upon his philosophy, seeking as it does to show how his picture theory can be understood in relation to architecture. Bremer analyses Wittgenstein's experience of building a house (the *Haus Wittgenstein*) for his sister, Margarethe Stonborough-Wittgenstein. Although Wittgenstein never studied architecture, he designed and erected an innovative building. Many architects regard it as a masterpiece on account of its application of philosophical ideals of harmony, precision and logical form (exemplified in the *Tractatus*) to architecture—a field which always tempts us to want to combine the beautiful with the strictly functional. When considering this work of architecture, Bremer aims to highlight the fact that the way in which Wittgenstein evolved from the *Tractatus*'s

2. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 4th edition, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe, P.M.S. Hacker and Joachim Schulte, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009.

conception of meaning as logical picturing to the *Investigations*' idea of meaning as use is itself analogous to what goes on in the process of building a house. Wittgenstein did indeed design a beautiful house, in line with a Euclidean-logical approach, but he also went on to make it a highly functional one. (Nowadays, we would rather call it "a smart house.") A similar aspiration towards functionality can, moreover, easily be discerned near to the beginning of *Philosophical Investigations* (§2):

> language is meant to serve for communication between a builder A and an assistant B. A is building with building stones: there are blocks, pillars, slabs and beams. B has to pass him the stones and to do so in the order in which A needs them. For this purpose they make use of a language consisting of the words "block," "pillar," "slab," "beam."

Bremer's book thus has a dual value. It firstly presents the picture theory of meaning as conceived by Wittgenstein not only via an explanation of its philosophical significance, but also in terms of its practical applications to mechanical engineering, music and architecture. Secondly, it shows how Wittgenstein was influenced by his technical education and life experience, which prompted him to construct such a theory but also led him to reject it later on in favour of the idea of language games. In conclusion, I think it is fair to say that the book is ideally suited both to those who do not yet know a great deal about Wittgenstein or his philosophy and would like to understand it better, and those who are already familiar with it, but who now wish to see more clearly how it could be related to—or applied in the context of—other, essentially non-theoretical, areas of human life.

JAKUB PRUŚ