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What Remains of the Notion of "World": from the *Tractatus* to the Later Texts

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Abstract This paper analyses the concept of world (*Welt*) in the *Tractatus* and the transformations of this concept in Wittgenstein's later writings. As for the *Tractatus*, the semantic link between world and totality (the world *als begrenztes Ganzes*) and the necessary (logical, transcendental) giving of form are considered. As for the transformation of this notion in the Thirties, and in the *Big Typescript*, the essentialist theme of logical form is abandoned and reformulated from the pluralist perspective of the ensemble of grammatical rules. In *Philosophical Investigations* the notion of world, like other notions called super-concepts (for example language, proposition), undergoes a de-sublimation and a lowering, and it is traced back to the normal use in language. In this way the pluralistic sense of world as form of life is gaining ground, and in *On Certainty* will lead to the concept of *Weltbild*, image of the world.

Keywords: Welt, Form, Gesamtheit, Grammar, Desublimation of Super-Concepts, Weltbild.

1. The world as totality and form in the *Tractatus*
1.1. *Welt*

I have recently been studying the concept of world in the *Tractatus*[1]. In my research I identified the notions of totality (*Gesamtheit*) and form (*Form*) as the interpretative keys for understanding the word-concept with which the book opens. In this paper, I will first briefly set out the results of this research and then consider the transformations of this notion in the later writings[2].

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[1] Borutti 2023.
[2] List of the abbreviations of the Wittgenstein's works: T = Wittgenstein 1921; PU = Wittgenstein 1953; N = Wittgenstein 1960; PB = Wittgenstein 1964; LE = Wittgenstein 1965; Z = Wittgenstein 1967; PG = Wittgenstein 1969; BGM = Wittgenstein 1974 [1956]; UG = Wittgenstein 1977; LC = Wittgenstein 1980; RF = Wittgenstein 1993; NA = Wittgenstein 2000; VB = Wittgenstein 2006 [1977]; BT = Wittgenstein 2013.

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In my previous paper, I have examined the concept of world in the *Tractatus* from a meta-philosophical viewpoint: that is, trying to consider the underlying implications of the author's philosophical stance. I believe this is the reading that Wittgenstein is expecting in the *Preface* when he evokes a reader who might understand the thoughts expressed in the book[3]. For this reason, I have discussed the construction of the text and the nexuses between the propositions which Wittgenstein's characteristic philosophical work establishes in the text. Indeed, I believe that the meaning of the book should be derived from the text's architecture; that is, I believe Wittgenstein is offering it not so much in the form of an explicit argumentation as in the form of a textual construction.

If we reflect on the choice of the term world, we can notice straightaway that the semantic link between world and totality dominates the first two propositions and their related corollaries: the ontological opening is matched by a semantic choice, the choice of the word *Welt*. *Welt* does not mean existing reality, actual reality, a notion for which German can use *Wirklichkeit*, a term in which the etymological link with *wirken* refers to the meaning of actuality; *Welt* instead means configured, formed, unitary totality, which refers to a link between its parts (Aristotle's *to holon*).

This is the semantic orientation that is recalled by consideration of the historical and cultural background of the term world and the meanings with which it has been endowed. Of course, we cannot attribute these considerations to Wittgenstein since it is more likely that, to his ear, *Welt* echoed the title of Schopenhauer's book. It is nevertheless interesting to note that historical and cultural considerations of the meaning and use of the term world call attention to the notions of universe, cosmos, and order. In the Grimms' Dictionary (Grimm J. and Grimm W. 1971 [1854-1961])[4], the term is connected historically and culturally with the Latin *mundus*, universe, which translates the Greek *kosmos* (let's also remember that etymologically universe is *uni-versus*, facing in a single direction). Walch's Dictionary (Walch 1775 [1726]), which lists a series of philosophical meanings, endorses the Leibnizian tradition of the world (and likewise of the various possible worlds) as harmonious order.

1.2. *Gesamtheit*

In the *Tractatus logico-philosophicus*, Wittgenstein speaks from the start about totality as completeness (*Gesamtheit*) in relation to the definition of world:

(T, 1.1) «The world is the totality of facts [*Die Welt ist die Gesamtheit der Tatsachen*]».

(T, 2.04) «The totality of existing states of affairs is the world [*Die Gesamtheit der bestehenden Sachverhalte ist die Welt*]».

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[3] A theme also found in Schopenhauer's *Preface* to the first edition of *The World as Will and Idea*: «I propose to point out here how this book must be read in order to be thoroughly understood.» (Schopenhauer 1819; https://archive.org/details/theworldaswillan01schouoft/page/218/mode/2up/ (accessed January 31, 2022).

[4] http://woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB/ (accessed February 15, 2021).

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Again, he specifies that the world is not simply *Wirklichkeit*, but is *die gesamte Wirklichkeit*. It is the whole of reality, in its totality, that is the world: (T, 2.063) «The sum-total of reality is the world [*Die gesamte Wirklichkeit ist die Welt*]».

The same self-understanding by Wittgenstein in the *Notebooks 1914-16* refers to this use of the word world as *ordered, self-delimited universe*, not delimited because it is in relation with an outside, but because it demands to be understood from inside, in its essence; as he himself says about his Odyssey in the *Notebooks*: «My work has extended from the foundations of logic to the nature of the world [*Wesen der Welt*]» (N, 2.8.16). This is a sentence that makes us think of the world not as external reality and container of objects, but as a logically ordered universe.

Besides, in the *Notebooks* he uses the notion of world in a meaning that I would call essential horizon of sense. He writes, «As a thing among things, each thing is equally insignificant; as a world, each one equally significant [*als Welt jedes gleichbedeutend*]» (N, 8.10.16), and speaks of contemplating a stove not as a thing among others but as it constitutes a world («War *er* meine Welt»), as it is seen *sub specie aeternitatis*[5]: «The thing seen *sub specie aeternitatis* is the thing seen together with the whole logical space [*mit dem ganzen logischen Raum*]» (N, 7.10.16). Again, he writes of being «in agreement [*Übereinstimmung*] with Something», and wonders: «But what is this? Is it *the world*» (N, 8.7.16)?

1.3. Form

Now, the concept of world as totality entails a particular orientation of the *Tractatus's* ontological engagement. The opening proposition, «The world is all that is the case [*Die Welt ist alles, was der Fall ist*]» (T, 1) says that the world is a chance segment cut from the realm of the possible. But after asserting the accidental nature of the world, Wittgenstein immediately puts the contingency of the world's events in relation to a necessary form of totality and completeness. The propositions of philosophy which concern the world have to do with the necessary form of the world (*Welt*), and not with the actuality of happening (*Wirklichkeit*).

(T, 1.1) «The world is the totality of facts [*Die Welt ist alles, was der Fall ist*]».

(T, 1.13) «The facts in logical space are the world [*Die Tatsachen im logischen Raum sind die Welt*]».

Totality, with the completeness that identifies it (that is, a delimited totality, one defined as that totality), constitutes the necessary character of the world, a necessary character guaranteed by its form: that is, by the logical necessity that gives form to the world. The totality of the world must be understood as a logical space, or space of the possible; because of which, if I have the thing, I have its logical space: that is, the world of its possible occurrences in states of things[6]. The world is not given to us as a that, as existence, as an ensemble of existing things (*Dinge*), but is given to us as form, in possible configurations of things: the world is a logical world, as he said in the *Notebooks*:

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[5] I will briefly return to this Spinozian topic as mediated by Schopenhauer.

[6] T 2.014: «Objects contain the possibility of all situations. [*Die Gegenstände enthalten die Möglichkeit aller Sachlagen*]».

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«In every possible world there is an order [*Ordnung*] even if it is a complicated one» (N, 19.9.16). An illogical world is a contradiction in terms: it would not be a world: «The truth is that we could not say what an 'illogical' world would look like [*Wir könnten nämlich von einer "unlogischen" Welt nicht sagen, wie sie aussähe*]» (T, 3.031).

1.4.   Neither realism nor antirealism

Now, this concept of world, which implies the necessary (logical, transcendental) giving of form, has nothing to do with realism or antirealism, whether ontological or semantic. In what sense? The necessary constitutive form of the world rests on two assumptions that Wittgenstein would abandon after the *Tractatus*: *figurative logic*, by which, according to 2.15 and 2.18, every image must have form in common with reality[7], and the *fixed substantial structure* given by simple objects – two assumptions whose contradictory coexistence[8] can be explained thus: «The world is an accidental configuration of non-contingent elements (simple objects)» (Rosso 1976: XXXVII).

Regarding this, some passages from the important essay by Brian McGuinness on *The So-called Realism in Wittgenstein's Tractatus* (1981) are still illuminating. He writes:

> What Wittgenstein is trying to convey is a point of view according to which what [our propositions] are about is not *in* the world any more than it is *in* thought or *in* language. Objects are the form of all these realms, and our acquaintance with objects […] is not an experience or knowledge of something over against which we stand (McGuinness 1981: 72-73).

Reality is the representable, but the representability relation does not refer to entities existing in the ontological, psychological, or linguistic sense: the representable, in its variability, has a substantial form that is objectuality. That the object is inherent in totality means that it is inherent in what unifies language, in what makes language a language. The object is an essential section of language, or of the world that is given with language. In this proposition: «The substance is what subsists independently of what is the case [*Die Substanz ist das, was unabhängig von dem was der Fall ist, besteht*]» (T, 2.024), with the use of the verb *bestehen* Wittgenstein is speaking about *being there*: that is, the worlds and language's giving of themselves. Pears and McGuinness rightly translate *bestehen* here as *subsists*[9].

1.5   The world as a limited whole

Now, we know from the propositions on the Mystical that world's giving itself as a totality, the *that* of the world, is not a theoretical question, it is a feeling, the feeling

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[7] That is, the possibility of structure: «This is the distinction between form and structure, and the association of form with possibility at TLP 2.014-2.0141, which tell us that the form of an object is its possibilities of occurring in states of affairs, and 2.033, which defines form as the possibility of structure» (Kremer 1997: 109). See also McGuinness 2001.

[8] The contradictory idea of a contingency without alternatives is expressed by Wittgenstein with the topic of the limits of language: see Marconi 1997: 56.

[9] Elsewhere they translate *besteht* as "exists" (Klagge 2022: 56).

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which in *A Lecture on Ethics* of 1929 he attributes to wonder at the absolute fact of the world and language. The image of a world felt as a limited whole (*als begrenztes Ganzes*) is meaningfully expressed by the expression *sub specie aeternitatis*: (T, 6.45) «To view the world *sub specie aeterni* is to view it as a whole – a limited whole. Feeling the world as a limited whole – it is this that is mystical».

The expression may derive from a significant passage in Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Idea*, which quotes Spinoza, and writes soon after:

> If, raised by the power of the mind, a man relinquishes the common way of looking at things […] if he thus ceases to consider the where, the when, the why, and the whither of things, and looks simply and solely at the *what* […] he […] forgets even his individuality, his will, and only continues to exist as the pure subject (Schopenhauer 1819: Book III, § 34)[10].

This passage may have been a source of inspiration for the distinction between the *wie* of the facts of the world and the *daß*: the «*daß* sie ist» (T, 6.44). With the obvious differences[11], Wittgenstein accords with Schopenhauer on the idea of an overall meaning of the world which cannot be given in theoretical terms but in ethical terms, as Wittgenstein will say specifically in the *Lecture on Ethics*[12].

2.   The Thirties and the *Big Typescript*
2.1.   From the Totality to Grammar
In the Thirties we do not come across the topic of totality in the sense it has in the *Tractatus*, nor the expression *begrenztes Ganzes*, limited whole, the emblematic expression by which Wittgenstein designates the world's contingency without alternatives[13].

As for the topic of totality, at the start of the Thirties, the essentialist theme of logical form is abandoned and reformulated from the pluralist perspective of the ensemble of grammatical rules. In the *Philosophical Remarks* we read: «But the essence of language is a picture of the essence of the world; and philosophy as custodian of grammar can in fact grasp the essence of the world, only not in the propositions of language, but in rules for this language» (PB, I, § 54: 85). And in *Wittgenstein's Lectures. Cambridge 1930-1932*: «To a necessity in the world there corresponds an arbitrary rule in language» (LC, p. 57). The

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[10] https://archive.org/details/theworldaswillan01schouoft/page/218/mode/2up/ (accessed February 12, 2022).

[11] For Schopenhauer, the consideration of the world *sub specie aeternitatis* concerns a particular and exceptional way of looking at the world that the subject achieves when in a position to free the world from the forms that constitute it as a phenomenal reality, illusions which distort and obscure the world's authentic nature. For Wittgenstein too, the view of the world *sub specie aeternitatis* is another state of comprehension: it is not contemplation of the pure subject, however, but the Mystic as comprehension of the existence of the world (T, 6.44). The Mystic is having comprehended the difference between "*how* the world is" (i.e., the world of facts, that is not illusion but is the world described by the natural sciences) and "*that* the world is", the world's unsayable giving of itself in language – in the final analysis, the ethical "sense" of the world: that is, the world of values and vital problems which are not facts of the world.

[12] In 1930 he writes: «[…] besides the work of the artist there is another through which the world may be captured *sub specie aeterni*. It is – as I believe – the way of thought which as it were flies above the world and leaves it the way it is, contemplating it from above in its flight» (VB: 7).

[13] This expression appears in T, 6.45, and four times in the *Nachlass*.

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Bildhaftigkeit – he writes in *Philosophical Grammar* – «the harmony between world and thought», «the old problem [*das Alte Problem*]» (PG, I, § 95: 107) of the *Tractatus*, «like everything metaphysical […] is to be found in the grammar of the language» (PG, I, § 112: 162)[14].

As for the topic of the limits of language, we find a reformulation of it in the Section of the *Big Typescript* entitled *Philosophie*, where Wittgenstein speaks of philosophy as an exercise and activity with the task of giving back to us what we already have under our eyes: «When I say: Here we are at the limits of language, that always sounds // seems // as if resignation were necessary at this point, whereas on the contrary complete satisfaction comes about, since *no* question remains» (BT: 310). «The goal of philosophy is to erect a wall [*Mauer*] at the point where language ends anyway» (BT: 312). «One could also give the name "philosophy" to what is present // possible // [*da ist*] *before* all new discoveries and inventions» (BT: 309).

The themes of the wall and the end of language make the notion of delimitation more vivid, bringing us to the multiple boundaries of linguistic uses; but it also preserves its ethical value of respect for limits – a value which in the *Vermischte Bemerkungen* and in *Über Gewissheit* will be expressed via the notion of background (*Hintergrund*), as we will see. The work of philosophy starts from an already, from language as immanent horizon. The themes of already, before and memory – that is, of the character of language that Perissinotto calls inaugural (1991: 219) – confirm the ethical value of language as a domain that is given to us and must be protected. The ethical (delimited) aspect of the philosophical is also constantly expressed through the theme of showing: philosophy does not accumulate knowledge of objects but shows the meaning of language, where show also means assume the limit: that is, the impassable background of meanings to which we are consigned[15].

But this ethical value loses the essentialist aura[16] of *that* it [the world] exists, i.e., the Mystical. The theme of the limit and end of language is now connected to a work of destroying houses of cards[17] and liberation from the traps of language through the grammatical work of the philosopher: «Where does our investigation get its importance from, since it seems only to destroy everything interesting, that is, all that is great and important? (All the buildings, as it were, leaving behind only bits of stone and rubble)» (BT: 304). «The results of philosophy are the discovery of one or another piece of plain nonsense and are the bumps that understanding got by running its head up against the limits [*Grenze*] // end [*Ende*]// of language» (BT: 312)[18].

Grammatical analysis, as a «description of the actual use of a language» (BT: 302), is given the task of «bringing words back from their metaphysical to their normal // correct // use in language» (BT: 304) and «rejecting false arguments» (BT: 302).

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[14] Cf. Perissinotto 1991: 59.

[15] On Wittgenstein's immanentist conception of language, see Gargani 2003: 118.

[16] «The nimbus of philosophy has been lost» (LC: 21).

[17] Thus, in *Philosophische Untersuchungen*: «Where does our investigation get its importance from, since it seems only to destroy everything interesting, that is, all that is great and important? […] What we are destroying is nothing, but houses of cards and we are clearing up the ground of language on which they stand» (PU, I, § 118).

[18] The text goes on like this: «These bumps allow us to recognize // understand // the value of that discovery».

Grammar is indeed a notion of form but should be understood as the form that is immanent to life and to the variety of linguistic practices, and no longer as a sublimated form. In the writings of 1930, Wittgenstein starts to critique the processes of sublimation. This may be the meaning of the rather obscure distinction between primary[19] and secondary in the *Philosophische Bemerkungen* and the *Big Typescript*, where we find the distinction between primary, or immediate phenomenological datum, which belongs to the form of our world[20], «the world we live in» (PB, I, § 34: 71), and the secondary objective world, which claims to be fundamental – so that we end up taking the fundamental primary datum, i.e., our world, as marginal:

> This which we take as a matter of course, life, is supposed to be something accidental, subordinate [*sekundär*]; while something that normally never comes into my head, reality! That is, what we neither can nor want to go beyond would not be the world (PB I, § 47: 80)[21].

2.2. Desublimation of "super-concepts"

Via the critique of the (secondary) processes of sublimation and the new conception of philosophy as description of linguistic facts, Wittgenstein sets out to dismantle what in the *Philosophical Investigations* he will call super-concepts, including the concept of world. A manuscript observation which Wittgenstein had not copied into the typescript containing the notes on Frazer's *The Golden Bough* because he considered it bad (*schlecht*), is significant in this respect: «For, back then, when I began talking about the world (and not about this tree or table), what else did I want but to keep something higher spell bound in my words» (RF: 117)?

And in the *Big Typescript* he writes that the concepts of world, proposition, and reality must belong to the same class (BT: 309); again, he writes: «Each of the words "world", "experience", "language", "proposition", "calculus", "mathematics" can stand only for trivial demarcations [*trivial Abgrenzungen*], similar to "eat", "rest", etc.» (BT: 54). «We have to […] use them back within their boundaries [*Wir müssen sie […] in den Grenzen benützen*]» (BT: 50).

Here Wittgenstein thinks of meanings as contexts of sense delimited in their relevant uses, almost as worlds within the world, which is in itself not delimitable: that is, not definable in essential terms, as he writes in a note from 1930: «I cannot trace the boundaries of my world, but I can trace boundaries inside my world [*Die Grenzen meiner Welt kann ich nicht ziehen, wohl aber Grenzen innerhalb meiner Welt*]» (TS 208: 54r).

So, he is referring to boundaries as delimitations of uses and no longer to the world as essential delimitation between sense and non-sense through the form of the propositions[22].

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[19] The theme of the primary occurs during this period in the *Nachlass*: a note from 1930, TS 208: 63r, says: «What corresponds to this mechanism in the primary world, only that could be the primary language [*Was diesem Mechanismus in der primären Welt entspricht, nur das könnte die primäre Sprache sein*]».

[20] «There is nothing that contrasts with the form of our world» (PB, I, § 47: 80). Cf. BT: 315.

[21] Cf. BT: 315.

[22] «I would like to say: "I must *begin* with the distinction between sense and nonsense. Nothing is possible prior to that. I can't give it a foundation"» (PG, I, § 81: 126-127).

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2.3. *Mythologie* and *Weltanschauung*

As we said above (§ 2.1.), in the Thirties the semantic link between world and totality is dropped, and consequently also the essentialist meaning of the concept of the world is set aside. Wittgenstein's interest progressively shifts to the picture we make of the world. In the *Big Typescript* and the *Bemerkungen über Frazers "The Golden Bough"* two notions recur – *Mythologie* and *Weltanschauung* – by means of which Wittgenstein seems to outline the particular meaning of the concept of world as image of the world (*Weltbild*) which characterises his last writings. In both texts, the sentence «An entire mythology is stored within our language» (BT: 317; RF: 133) recurs in a context which defines mythology as an ensemble of images «according to which reality [*Realität*] is thought of» (BT: 317). In the *Remarks* on Frazer's book Wittgenstein speaks of the «world as seen by me» (RF: 135) as of a persuasive way for the subject to see the world and adds that «every view is equally significant» (*ibidem*), referring to the diversity of other images of the world[23].

Another significant feature in these contexts is the opposition between the original character of mythology and the intellect which tends towards the formal unification of the world. In the *Remarks* on Frazer, he talks about the intellect as «a separation from the original *soil*, the original basis of life» (RF: 139). In this way, Wittgenstein seems to be referring to a mythopoetic work that is present in the formation of our grammars, and which must not be transformed into an ontology. As we will see, mythology is a theme that returns in *On Certainty*. In the *Big Typescript*, he writes that mythology, laid down in simple and univocal forms of language like «noun, adjective and verb», is a model that may become a dangerous myth if, he writes, we «sublimate it» (BT: 317), if we intellectualistically make it into an essentialist metaphysic.

As for the notion of *Weltanschauung*, in the *Big Typescript* and in the *Remarks* on Frazer we find the same sentence:

> The concept of a surveyable representation [*übersichtliche Darstellung*] is of fundamental significance for us. It designates our form of representation, the way we look at things (A kind of "*Weltanschauung*", as is apparently typical of our time. Spengler) (BT: 307)[24].

Wittgenstein makes an explicit reference to the Spenglerian theme of intuition or world-view typical of a period and a civilisation, a reference by which, as Baker and Hacker write (2005: 260), he acknowledges a debt to the morphological method of Hertz, Boltzmann, Ernst, Kraus and Spengler: that is, to thinkers who do not solve problems by making scientific hypotheses, but by recognising and establishing connections. But of course, as Marilena Andronico notes, in these writings the concept of perspicuous representation as a view of the ensemble of a word's grammar already refers to an elaborated method not reducible to a simple «adherence to the spirit of the age» (1998: 199-200). In the final analysis, Wittgenstein does acknowledge a methodological debt to

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[23] The subjective, social, and differential aspects of the image of world are commented on by Joachim Schulte (1990: chap. VII).
[24] «The concept of perspicuous representation is of fundamental importance for us. It denotes the form of our representation, the way we look at things. (A kind of "World-view", as it is apparently typical of our time. Spengler.)» (RF: 133).

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the Spenglerian theme, but his notion of the image of the world does not seem entirely identifiable with the notion of *Weltanschauung*. In *Philosophical Investigations*, this term is only mentioned once, in the same passage referring to perspicuous representation that we read in BT and RF, and the reference is in interrogative form: «Is this a 'Weltanschauung'» (PU, I, § 122)?

3. From the *Investigations* to *On Certainty*
3.1. *Philosophical Investigations*: lowering of the concept of world

In the *Philosophical Investigations*, the concept of world is definitively humbled, as we read in § 97: it is one of the super-concepts that must be brought back to their *niedrige* (i.e., low) use:

> We are under the illusion that what is peculiar, profound, essential in our investigation, resides in its trying to grasp the incomparable essence of language. That is, the order existing between the concepts of proposition, word, proof, truth, experience, and so on. This order is a *super*-order between – so to speak – *super*-concepts. Whereas, of course, if the words "language", "experience", "world", have a use, it must be as humble a one as that of the words "table", "lamp", "door" (PU I, § 97).

Therefore, what counts for our ex super-word, as for all words, is enacted meaning, the meaning in action within linguistic games. Now, in the Wittgenstein of games we might expect a contrastive and pluralistic use of the notion of world, where he comparatively imagines forms of life and anthropological situations different from our own, in which concepts such as calculation, pain, game are used in different ways from ours (BGM, I, § 142; Z, § 380; PU, I, §§ 200-206). In these contexts, Wittgenstein does not speak about world, but about tribe, community, people (*die Stamm*, *das Volk*, *die Leute*) in anthropological terms. In *Philosophical Investigations* I have found only one occurrence of the term world in this differential and pluralistic sense, where world becomes a synonym of form of life: «it is imaginable that two people should play chess in a world in which otherwise no game existed» (PU, I, § 205)[25]. But I believe it is exactly this pluralistic sense of world as form of life that is gaining ground, and will lead to the concept of *Weltbild*, image of the world.

3.2. *On Certainty*: the *Weltbild* as a system of propositions

On the notion of *Weltbild*, I will base my argument on the reading given of it by Luigi Perissinotto in his book *Logica e immagine del mondo. Studi su "Über Gewissheit" di L. Wittgenstein* (1991), which I consider unsurpassed, and I will comment on two aspects of the concept of world: the *Weltbild* as a system of propositions which determines how the

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[25] Ms-166:5v-11r talks about a world in which a certain type of measure is adopted: «That is to say not only the prop. which tells us the result of measurement but also the description of the method & unit of measurement tells us something about the world in which this measurement takes place».

world is considered within a form of life; and the *Weltbild* as background without foundation.

The *Weltbild* is the world represented through a fabric of determined propositions. They are not verified propositions about the world; they can have logical or empirical content («2+2=4», «This is a tree»), but they are neither demonstrable nor refutable; they can be «empirical propositions which we affirm without a special testing; proposition, that is, which have a peculiar logical role in the system of our empirical propositions» (UG, § 136); they ultimately have the logical function of being frames of reference and a condition of our experience. In Wittgenstein's metaphors they are hinges (*Angeln*: UG, §§ 341, 343, 655), scaffolding (*Gerüst*: UG, § 211), river-bed (*Flussbett*: UG, § 97): that is, they are a stable background through the variety and flow of experience and thoughts[26]. They are propositions, says Wittgenstein, «describing this world-picture» (UG, § 95), and therefore, comments Aldo G. Gargani, they are not «beliefs or statements of a cognitive character» but are rules having a «grammatical and paradigmatic nature» (1978: XXIII-XXIV, S. B. Engl. transl.); they are therefore defined not by their specific form but the function they fulfil (Schulte 1990: 113). These propositions are set up as a frame of reference (*Bezugsystem*: UG, § 83) in our way of considering the world – almost as a mythological system.

> The propositions describing this world-picture [*die dies Weltbild beschreiben*] might be part of a kind of mythology. And their role is like that of rules of a game; and the game can be learned purely practically, without learning any explicit rules (UG § 95).

It is important that Wittgenstein takes up the theme of the mythology deposited in our language here: it means that our image of the world is not a cognitive construction but is a system of propositions formed in vital practices that give meaning to our world. This system of propositions is «the element in which arguments have their life [*das Lebenselement der Argumente*]» (UG, § 105); but this does not rule out the possibility that the busy working of the various vital practices may transform them and induce us «to look at the world in a different way [*die Welt anders zubetrachten*]» (UG, § 92). «The Mythology may change back into a state of flux, the river-bed of thought may shift» (UG, § 97).

For the purposes of our analysis, it is significant that with the theme of the *Weltbild* Wittgenstein returns to the concept of delimitation, preserving its ethical and inaugural aspect present in the *Big Typescript*, but at the same time transforming it. In that they trace the boundaries of games, the custodial propositions of the image of the world are both opening and delimitation: they make meaningful practices possible but, tracing the plural boundaries of linguistic games, they dissolve the world's substance into the variety and mobility of uses. Wittgenstein thus reiterates the theme of care for the boundaries

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[26] Wittgenstein discusses Moore's propositions here. In agreement with Moore, he holds that they are propositions that are simultaneously certain, indubitable, and unjustified, but he considers it erroneous to believe that their certainty is an indication of their knowability. On the very rich contemporary debate concerning the epistemic or non-epistemic nature of the so-called hinge propositions, which I cannot deal with here, I'll just refer to Coliva (2010), Coliva and Moyal-Sharrock (2016).

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of language and the world, and at the same time suspends the essentialism of the distinction between sense and non-sense.

For these propositions which constitute the *Weltbild*, Wittgenstein goes back to talking about totality [*Ganzes*], but no longer in the sense of completeness and generality: here it is a matter of totality as system («Our knowledge forms an enormous system»: UG, § 410), or as contextual ensemble of relations, an ensemble that «is rather held fast by what lies around it» (UG, § 144) and in which «consequences and premises give one another *mutual* support» (UG, § 142).

3.3.   The *Weltbild* as background without foundation

With this concept of *Weltbild* as system-world of images, Wittgenstein is referring in a peculiar way to the firm foundation of our thinking and acting.

> But in the entire system of our language-games it [the Moore's assumption that the world existed many years ago] belongs to the foundations [*Fundament*]. The assumption, one might say, forms the basis of action, and therefore, naturally, of thought (UG § 411).

A foundation that is not, however, a substantial or objectual bases: it is an unfounded foundation, which Wittgenstein expresses through the concept of *Hintergrund*: background, horizon, world around: «[…] my picture of the world […] is the inherited background against which I distinguish between true and false» (UG, § 94). «You must bear in mind that the language-game […] is not based on grounds. It is no reasonable (or unreasonable). It is there – like our life» (UG, § 559). «As if giving grounds [*Begründung*] did not come to an end sometimes. But the end is not an ungrounded presupposition: it is an ungrounded way of acting [*unbegründete Handlungsweise*]» (UG, § 110)[27].

A perspective that is not intended to refer either to foundedness or to unfoundedness in the theoretical sense, as the reference to life and action suggests. The true is not a founding proposition, but the communal bond experienced in the public character of language: being certain is belonging «to a community which is bound together by science and education» (UG, § 298).

Talking about *Weltbild* as mythology, Wittgenstein alludes to a world that we embodied agents obscurely share, a silent background behind us that we do not talk about[28], but illuminates our intentional actions, as he writes in the *Philosophical Investigations*: «Though the ether is filled with vibrations the world is dark. But one day man opens his seeing eye, and there is light» (PU, II: 184).

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[27] «What happens is not that this symbol cannot be further interpreted […] I do not interpret, because I feel at home in the present picture» (Z, § 234). Perissinotto comments: «Saying this means staying at and exposing ourselves to the limit of the language game. In fact, the limit is encountered not where it is necessary to resign ourselves to no longer asking but where there are no more requests to be made for justification and reasons to be produced» (1991: 207, S. B. Engl. transl.).

[28] A world which «we recognise by turning our backs on it» (Perissinotto1991: 234, S. B. Engl. transl.).

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