

Tore Nordenstam

CLARIFICATION: WITTGENSTEIN'S *GEDICHTETE PHILOSOPHIE*

Author's manuscript.

Published in Carla Carmona & Jerrold Levinson, eds., *Aesthetics, Literature and Life. Essays in honour of Jean-Pierre Cometti*, Mimesis International, Milano – Udine, 2019, pp. 121- 137.

Wittgenstein's first book, a bilingual publication in 1922 entitled *Tractatus logico-philosophicus*,¹ was an attempt to achieve maximal clarity in the notoriously unclear field of competing worldviews.

He characterized his method as clarification. The traditional fining agent in wine clarification is egg white. In Wittgenstein's first work, it is a combination of logic and literary form that serves as the egg.

In this work of Wittgenstein form and content are two sides of the same thing. In that respect it is more like poetry and other forms of literature and art than standard academic contributions to the field of philosophy.

Some years later, he summed it up in the sentence, 'Philosophie dürfte man eigentlich nur dichten'.²

Philosophy should really only be done as poetry and fiction.

Logical clarification and philosophy as poetry and fiction.

What is the place and rank of a work like that in the world of art and literature?

*

Wittgenstein's logical-philosophical treatise was published in a German scientific journal in 1921, and one year later it came out as a book with the original German text on the left and an English translation on the right. The German text begins with the author's own matter-of-fact title, *Logisch-philosophische Abhandlung*, Logical-philosophical treatise (dissertation, article, essay). The English version begins with the title proposed by Cambridge philosopher George Edward Moore, *Tractatus logico-philosophicus*. The Latin title is reminiscent of Spinoza's *Tractatus theologico-politicus*, but similarities with philosophical works from the 17th century was not what Wittgenstein had in mind when composing the logical-philosophical treatise. As he emphasized in the preface to the book, he was totally uninterested in possible similarities with other works. When he referred to this work later in life, he always preferred the German title, which undoubtedly is more in harmony with the style which he considered essential for reaching his aims: short

¹ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1922).

sentences with the right kind of rhythm and tone, with simple and striking expressions, as far as possible with everyday German words, with many analogies and metaphors – picture, limit, space, chain, building stones, network, hit the nail on the head, blurred, clarification, throw the ladder away after having climbed up on it, and so on.

Logisch-philosophische Abhandlung is an apposite title of a logical philosophical work which is similar to many other titles of articles and books in philosophy and logic. As the title of a literary work of art it is remarkably original.

*

That philosophy should only be done as poetry and fiction is a thought which occurs more than once in Wittgenstein's manuscripts from the 1930s. The first instances are to be found in a text from 1933: 'Die Darstellung der Philosophie kann nur gedichtet werden. Philosophie dürfte man eigentlich nur dichten.'³ Since there is no direct equivalent in English to the poetically loaded word *dichten*, one has to resort to translations like 'The presentation of philosophy can only be done as poetry and fiction' and 'Philosophy should really only be done as poetry and fiction'. I shall come back to this in a moment.

Wittgenstein returned to the poetry and fiction theme in another handwritten manuscript from 1933-34: 'Ich glaube meine Stellung zur Philosophie dadurch zusammengefaßt zu haben indem ich sagte: Philosophie dürfte man eigentlich nur dichten'⁴. *I think I have summed up my view of philosophy when I said: Philosophy should really only be done as poetry and fiction*⁵. In that passage, one also gets a couple of examples of Wittgenstein's search for the formulation which hits the nail on the head. He first wrote *müßte* (must), then replaced it with *dürfte* (should), and added the word *nur*.

Yet another variation on the theme of philosophy as poetry and fiction occurs in a manuscript from 1938 where Wittgenstein wrote that the philosopher ought to be a *Dichter*, a poet in a wide sense of that word. Here he used the word *sollte* (ought) instead of *müßte* or *dürfte*.⁶

I think those statements are not just idle wishes but expressions of an aim that permeates Wittgenstein's philosophical writings from the logical-philosophical treatise in the 1910s to the philosophical investigations in the 1930s and the other manuscripts which together make up his *Nachlass*. It is the *Logisch-philosophische Abhandlung* considered as a literary work of art which is the object of the reflections in the following pages.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Wittgenstein's Nachlass, Ms. 146, p. 50.

⁵ My translations of the German will appear in italics.

Before turning to Wittgenstein's *Abhandlung*, I want to draw attention to the words *dichten*, *Dichter*, *Dichtung* and their cognates. The sentence 'Philosophie dürfte man eigentlich nur dichten' exploits peculiarities of the German language which makes it difficult to find good equivalents in most other languages. (Swedish, Norwegian and Danish are exceptions to the rule.) *Dichter* (and the corresponding words in the mentioned Scandinavian languages) has a more solemn aura than the word 'author'.

Not all authors are referred to as *Dichter*, a designation which applies most of all to classics like Shakespeare, Goethe and Schiller. And it is not only a question of poetry. Also literary works in other genres can be referred to as *Dichtwerke*, literary works produced by authors who have the status of *Dichter*.

Goethe's autobiographical *Aus meinem Leben. Dichtung und Wahrheit*⁷ has been translated into English both as *Autobiography of Goethe: Truth and Fiction Relating to My Life*⁸ and as *Poetry and Truth From My Own Life*⁹. *Dichtung* is poetry and fiction which presents that which cannot be expressed in the language of facts.

The words *dichten*, *Dichter*, *Gedicht* (poem) are related to words like *dicht*, *abdichten*, *verdichten*, *Dichte* and *Dichtigkeit* – tight, dense, compact; caulk, seal; solidify, consolidate; density; impenetrability.

Translations of the sentence 'Philosophie dürfte man eigentlich nur dichten' into other languages are bound to be impoverished versions because of the peculiar semantical cluster *dicht*, *dichten*, *abdichten*, *verdichten*, *Dichte*, *Dichter*, *Gedicht*, *Dichtwerk*, *Dichtung* and so on. In addition, 'Philosophie dürfte man eigentlich nur dichten' has a special rhythm which contributes to the translation difficulties. If following Roman Jakobson one sees recalcitrance to translation as a sign of poeticness, then 'Philosophie dürfte man eigentlich nur dichten' is a very poetical statement.

Wittgenstein's poetical philosophy, his *gedichtete Philosophie*, is related to calmness, peace, serenity, tranquility. 'Die Beruhigung in der Philosophie tritt ein, wenn das erlösende Wort gefunden ist'¹⁰. *Calmness in philosophy arises when the redeeming word has been found*. And, in a later manuscript, 'Friede in den Gedanken. Das ist das ersehnte Ziel dessen, der philosophiert'¹¹. *Thoughts at peace. That is what one longs for when philosophizing*.

*

7 Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Aus meinem Leben. Dichtung und Wahrheit* (Tübingen: in der J.G. Cottaischen Buchhandlung, 1811-1814).

8 Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Autobiography of Goethe: Truth and Fiction Relating to My Life* (Waiheke Island: Floating Press, 1848).

9 Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Poetry and Truth From My Own Life* (London: G. Bell's & Sons, 1913).

10 Wittgenstein's Nachlass, Ms. 115, p. 30.

11 Ibid., Ms. 127, p. 41.

In section 4.112 of the *Abhandlung* Wittgenstein described his aim with the help of a suggestive metaphor: ‘Der Zweck der Philosophie ist die logische Klärung der Gedanken.’ *The aim of philosophy is the logical clarification of thoughts.* Much like the English word ‘clarification’, *Klärung* is used in many contexts. Legal issues might stand in need of clarification; the technical aspects of building projects should always be clarified in due time; wastewater ought to be purified, hence the need for *Kläranlagen*, wastewater treatment plants; in winemaking clarification is one of the standard steps towards the finished product; and so on. The analogy with purification of fluids is emphasized by the last statement in 4.112: ‘Die Philosophie soll die Gedanken, die sonst, gleichsam, trübe und verschwommen sind, klar machen und scharf abgrenzen.’ Like wines which are more or less cloudy and dull before being clarified with the help of some fining agent, thoughts may stand in need of clarification: *Philosophy should make clear and delimit sharply the thoughts which otherwise are, as it were, opaque and blurred.* As already noted, the fining agent Wittgenstein used in the *Abhandlung* was formal logic combined with various literary means. In the 1930s and 40s he experimented with a battery of other such agents, but the goal remained the same – making unclear thoughts more clear.

One could also use one of the Greek words for cleansing and purification, catharsis, which might refer to the cleansing of another fluid, menstrual blood. Aristotle used it as a name for the clarification of feelings, which he regarded as the end goal of tragedy.

The logical-philosophical *Abhandlung* tries to do the same in the field of thoughts. The aim is cognitive catharsis.

*

When the theatre performance begins, one is met with a *Bühnenbild*, a stage view.

When one has passed the short preface and the main text of the treatise begins, one is met in section 1 with a *Weltbild*, a worldview: ‘Die Welt ist alles was der Fall ist.’ *The world is all that is the case.* The rest of the text is a commentary on that statement.

The commentary consists of a series of transformations of the first statement with subsequent elucidations. The basic pattern is *A is B, B is C* and so on. At the end, there is a short conclusion. The most important stations on the road to clarity are numbered 1, 2, 3 and so on. The key statements are followed by elucidations which are numbered on the basis of their ‘logical weight’, as Wittgenstein put it. The fewer the decimals, the greater the weight. Statements with decimals are like whisperings in the text. The decimal system of the logical-philosophical treatise can be compared to the way dynamical levels are indicated in music: *mp* (mezzopiano), *p* (piano), *pp* (pianissimo), *ppp* (piano pianissimo), and so on; and similarly on the forte side. If one lets the treatise begin moderately soft (*mp*), the passages with five decimals will be like

ppppp. Tchaikovsky went even further in a passage in his sixth symphony, where he indicated *pppppp*. Wittgenstein regarded the numbers as an essential part of the work and firmly rejected a proposal to leave them out. 'Only the numbers make the book perspicuous and clear', as he put it in a letter to the publisher Ludwig von Ficker in 1919¹². Without them, it would become 'an incomprehensible jumble'.

Übersichtlichkeit and *Klarheit* was what Wittgenstein strived for both in the logical-philosophical treatise and in the philosophical investigations in the 1930s.

The logical-philosophical treatise is an invitation to take part in a reflective walk that begins at station 1, the statement that the world is all that is the case. Station 2 is the statement 'Was der Fall ist, die Tatsache, ist das Bestehen von Sachverhalten' (*What is the case, the fact, is the existence of states of affairs*), and proceeds to 'Das logische Bild der Tatsachen ist der Gedanke' (*The logical picture of the facts is the thought*), 'Der Gedanke ist der sinnvolle Satz' (*The thought is the meaningful sentence*), and 'Der Satz ist eine Wahrheitsfunktion der Elementarsätze' (*The sentence is a truth-function of the elementary sentences*). After that one comes to a statement about the general form of truth-functions and sentences, and the walk ends at station 7, 'Wovon man nicht sprechen kann, darüber muß man schweigen' (*What one cannot speak about, of that one must be silent*).

Wittgenstein's contributions to logic and the metaphysics he constructed on the basis of formal logic have provoked a huge amount of secondary literature. But that is not my concern in this essay. What I am interested in here is the question of what it might mean to say that the logical-philosophical treatise is a *Dichtwerk*, a piece of poetical philosophy. *Gedichtete Philosophie* – what is that? Are there any other works which it can be compared with? Where on the palette of literary genres should one place a work like that? In the preface to the treatise Wittgenstein explains that it is not a *Lehrbuch*. It is not a textbook. A philosophical *Dichtwerk* which is not a *Lehrbuch*, what is that? Reflection on rhythm and tempo will pave the way for an answer.

*

The difference between Wittgenstein's handling of the question about the nature of the world and other *Weltanschauung* texts is the limitation to that which is logically necessary. 'In der Logik ist nichts zufällig' (2.012). 'Etwas Logisches kann nicht nur-möglich sein' (2.0121). *In logic nothing is accidental. Something logical cannot be only-possible*, which is another way of saying that it is necessary.

According to the *Abhandlung* we must accept that the world is all that is the case and that one must be silent of what one cannot speak about, since that is necessarily so. But in addition to saying something about necessities, those sentences are ambiguous in a way which gives them a floating character. One could call them oscillating sentences.

The conclusion of the treatise can be taken as a tautology, a trivially true statement: we can't speak about what we can't speak about. But the formulation can also be used to express something that is far from necessary, for instance, that something is so bad that it had better be swept under the carpet. M.A.

Numminen's musical rendering of some of the sentences of the logical-philosophical treatise is a good example. 'Wovon man nicht sprechen kann, darüber muß man schweigen' can be read like a military march: 'Wovon man nicht sprechen kann, darüber muß man schweigen'. One of my friends who once attended a Numminen performance in Innsbruck reports that many in the audience walked away when the final sentence of the treatise was performed in a parodic fashion accompanied by the sound of tramping boots. In Austria much was swept under the carpet when the Greater Germanic Reich of the German Nation came to an end after its time on earth.

What the last sentence of the treatise suggests without saying so in so many words is that the most important things in life, including ethics, belong to the realm we cannot speak about. The persuasiveness of 'Wovon man nicht sprechen kann, darüber muß man schweigen' depends both on the oscillation between necessity and contextual dependence and on the fact that it comes as no surprise at all. There is an almost identical formulation in the preface.

The message of a truism like '*What one cannot speak about, of that one must be silent*' depends upon the context in which it is used and on how it is performed. Variations of rhythm and tempo might lead to very different meanings. As Wittgenstein put it in a manuscript from 1947: 'Sometimes a sentence can only be understood when one reads it in the right tempo. All my sentences are to be read slowly'¹³. In music one uses tempo designations like *lento*, *adagio*, *allegro* and so on. A suitable tempo for the logical-philosophical treatise as a whole would be *Nachdenklich*, thoughtfully.

But there are many ways of reading 'Wovon man nicht sprechen kann [...]' slowly and thoughtfully. One can e.g. read it slowly and thoughtfully, moderately soft with diminishing loudness (*diminuendo*), and with small variations between stressed and unstressed syllables: 'Wovon man nicht sprechen kann, darüber muß man schweigen'. The necessity of being silent regarding that which one cannot speak about is emphasized by stressing the words '*nicht kann*' and '*muß*'.

With that rhythm the sentence comes close to a classical hexameter line, a verse with six feet which one finds in works from Homer to Klopstock and Goethe and Mörike and many others, especially in German literature in the 18th and 19th centuries. It is almost a classical hexameter line, but it fails to fulfill the traditional demand that the penultimate foot must be dactylic. The virtue of my translation of the conclusion of the logical-philosophical treatise is that it preserves the rhythm of the original if read in the right way.

13 Wittgenstein's *Nachlass*, Ms. 134, p. 76.

Works like Lucretius's *De rerum natura*¹⁴ and Manilius's *Astronomica*¹⁵ are classical examples of hexameter texts. We have arrived at the corner of literature called 'Didactic Poems'.

*

The *Lehrgedicht* tradition led a dwindling existence in the 19th century, but it did not disappear completely. There are examples also from the 20th century, e.g. Ezra Pound's *ABC of Reading* (1934)¹⁶. Pound's magnum opus, *Cantos* (1915-1962) is perhaps the best example of a modern didactic poem, in which reflections on economy, government and culture play an important role¹⁷. See the informative article *Didactic poetry* in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*¹⁸, which also mentions Kafka's parables in this context. One of Bertolt Brecht's projects was a didactic poem on the nature of man, in which he intended to treat of the unnatural nature of bourgeois circumstances in the same respectable verse form as Lucretius's *On the nature of things*. The work was not completed, but he wrote some drafts, including several versions of the text which was to be the core of the whole, *Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei*¹⁹. It is, I suggest, against the background of that venerable literary tradition that Wittgenstein's first literary work of art, the logical-philosophical treatise, should be seen.

At this juncture, I take the liberty of quoting from the lucid entry entitled 'Didactic Poem' in the first edition of the classical Swedish encyclopedia, *Nordisk familjebok* (1886):

Lärodikt or didactic poem, a versified account of some topic from the fields of morals, spiritual life, the professions, science or art. [...] In the 18th century, when the pseudo-classical taste along with considerations of utility reigned in literature, the didactic poem was cultivated as one of the highest forms of poetry. Thus one sang of e.g. beekeeping and sericulture, the dressage of hunting dogs, navigation, the art of translation, the game of chess, syphilis, wool, health fountains, diatetics, astronomy, the immortality of the soul, education, and so on. For the aesthetic culture of the 19th century that kind of didactic poem has only got the value of historical curiosity²⁰.

14 Titus Lucretius Carus, *De rerum natura* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1947).

15 Manilius, *Astronomica* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977).

16 Ezra Pound, *ABC of Reading* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1934).

17 Ezra Pound, *Cantos* (New York, NY: New Directions, 1996).

18 *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics: Fourth Edition*, ed. by Roland Greene (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), pp. 361-364.

19 Bertolt Brecht, *Werke: Grosse kommentierte Berliner und Frankfurter Ausgabe*, vol. 15 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag 1993), pp. 120-157.

20 *Nordisk familjebok. Konversationslexikon och realencyklopedi*, Tionde bandet. Lloyd - Militärkoloni (Stockholm: Gernandts boktryckeri- aktiebolag, 1886), pp. 443-444.

The anonymous author of the dictionary article contrasts the didactic utility literature with the truly poetic contributions to the genre:

A genuinely didactic poem is one in which thoughts flow from a turbulent poetic soul that strives for clarity and deliverance through pronouncing them.

As examples the dictionary article mentions a number of works by authors like Hesiod, Parmenides, Lucretius, Vergil, Horace, Ovid and others. Lucretius, in particular, seems to be what the author of the article had in mind when referring to the turbulent poetic soul that strives for clarity and deliverance. *De rerum natura* is said to be ‘genuinely poetic in virtue of its enthusiasm’. The list of didactic poets in more recent times includes names like Boileau, Pope, Young, Stiernhielm and Leopold. In spite of his enormous prestige in the literary world of the 19th century Johann Wolfgang Goethe is not referred to in the dictionary article, maybe because of his rejection of the view that the didactic poem is a genre in its own right. Like Wordsworth, he believed that all poetry has something to teach us²¹. But as we shall see in a moment, there are good reasons to take Goethe into account when searching for the literary and philosophical background of Wittgenstein’s *Abhandlung*.

It was the rhythm of the statements ‘Wovon man nicht sprechen kann, darüber muß man schweigen’ and ‘Philosophie dürfte man eigentlich nur dichten’ which led me to the didactic poetry tradition. And it was the rhythm of ‘Die Welt ist alles was der Fall ist’ which led me to the short poem which begins with the words ‘Über allen Gipfeln ist Ruh’. As it turned out, both leads went in the same direction.

*

It was on an evening in September 1780 that Goethe wrote the first version of the poem, with a lead pencil on a wooden wall in a cottage at the top of the mountain Kickelhahn some forty miles or so from Weimar. There one could read his graffito until the cottage burned down in 1870. The original had no title. When he published a revised version of it in his collected works 35 years later, Goethe placed it after a poem entitled *Wandrer's Nachtlid* (Wanderer’s Night Song), and gave it the title *Ein gleiches* (One more). For that reason it is often called *Wandrer's Nachtlid II* (e.g. in Schubert’s version of it).

Ueber allen Gipfeln / ist Ruh’, In allen Wipfeln / Spürest Du
Kaum einen Hauch; / Die Vögelein schweigen im Walde.
Warte nur! Balde / Ruhest du auch.²²

21 In the article ‘Über das Lehrgedicht’ Goethe defended the view that all poetry is didactic: ‘Alle Poesie soll belehrend sein, aber unmerklich; sie soll den Menschen aufmerksam machen, wovon sich zu belehren wert wäre; er muß die Lehre selbst daraus ziehen, wie aus dem Leben.’ *All poetry should be didactic, but inconspicuously so; the reader himself must extract the teaching from it, as from life* (Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Schriften zur Literatur* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1970), p. 69). Goethe expressed an attitude which led to the virtual disappearance of the didactic poem as a genre of its own in the course of the 19th century. William Wordsworth had proposed a similar view already in the beginning of the 19th century in the preface to *Lyrical Ballads with Pastoral and other Poems* (London: T.N. Longman and O. Rees, 1802).

22 Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, ‘Ein gleiches’, *Goethe’s Werke*, vol. 1 (Tübingen: in der J.G. Cotta’schen Buchhandlung, 1815), p. 99.

It is not possible to preserve all the relevant features of this dense poem in translations into other languages. Here is Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's compromise from 1845:

O'er all the hill-tops / Is quiet now,
In all the tree-tops / Hearest thou
Hardly a breath; / The birds are asleep in the trees:
Wait; soon like these / Thou too shalt rest.²³

At the same time, in 1780, Goethe started thinking of a great project which was intended as a synthesis of his scientific research and his work as a *Dichter*. The working title was *Roman über das Weltall*, a novel about the cosmos. The aim was to present the whole universe in literary form, going from inorganic nature through the plants and animals up to the level of man. Like Brecht's project about the unnaturalness of bourgeois life, Goethe's great project did not lead to the envisaged product. He wrote a couple of poems on the metamorphosis of plants and animals, and in his capacity as a natural scientist he spent years and decades amassing a large collection of minerals which was to be the solid scientific basis for the planned grand work. If one allows oneself to be anachronistic for a moment, one could regard the formulation 'Roman über das Weltall' as an early contribution to conceptual art, and the unremitting scientific fieldwork could be viewed as a performance where the activity itself was the work of art.

Über allen Gipfeln can be read in several ways: as a contemplation on nature, a poem about eternal rest, a text on the place of man in the cosmos, or the consummate version of the novel about the universe which Goethe dreamed of²⁴. The passage from the inorganic world to the plants and animals and man is presented with unbeatable brevity, leading to a state which can be described with words like repose, serenity and peace of mind.

Lucretius's didactic poem *On the nature of things* was intended to lead to precisely that kind of mental state – peace of mind, tranquility, ataraxia – based on Epicurus's atomistic philosophy. Goethe's novel about the cosmos can be seen as a modern version of the classical didactic poem, based on recent scientific research, including the author's own mineralogical investigations. And Wittgenstein's logical-philosophical treatise can be seen as a modernist version of the classical didactic poem, based on recent advances in the field of logic, including the logical investigations carried out by the author himself, like the works of Lucretius and Goethe intended to lead to clarity and thoughts at peace.

In literary works of art one does not usually find such things as notes, bibliographies and lists of sources. The logical-philosophical treatise is no exception to the rule. But the first few sentences indicate what it is all about. Metrically the first sentence is like the beginning of *Über allen Gipfeln*, except for the fact that the rhythm is rising in the first case and falling in the second case. *Über allen Gipfeln* begins with a landscape view which opens on what one might describe as cosmic contemplation. The *Abhandlung* begins with a

23 Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, *The Complete Poetical Works of Longfellow* (Cambridge, MA: The Riverside Press, 1893), p. 617.

24 Sigrid Damm, *Goethes letzte Reise* (Frankfurt am Main und Leipzig: Insel Verlag, 3. Auflage, 2014), p. 130.

worldview which looks toward philosophical reflection on the nature and meaning of the world. Goethe does not argue in *Über allen Gipfeln*, and Wittgenstein does not argue in the logical- philosophical treatise. He presents suggestively formulated proposals and hopes that the benign reader will accept the suggestions and continue to the next station. He rarely considers the views of other thinkers. But in the second sentence, 1.1, there is a clear rejection of an alternative view of the world: the world is the totality of facts, not of things. The view he rejects is obviously the picture of the world which Lucretius presented in *De rerum natura*. That that is so is supported by sentence 1.13: *The facts in logical space are the world*. According to Epicurus and Lucretius the world consists of things which are made up of atoms moving around in empty space. The metaphorical expression ‘logical space’ becomes more understandable when one sees it as an alternative to the physical space which Lucretius operated with and looks toward constructing a worldview on the basis of recent logic, which is precisely what Wittgenstein does in the logical- philosophical treatise.

That Wittgenstein treated of metaphysical, logical and ethical themes in the same work has confounded some philosophers. A logician who presents an alternative to Epicureanism could hardly have done it in another way. Lucretius’ presence is very clear in the concluding whisperings from 6.41 to 6.54, which deal with the meaning of the world and the nature of life and death. That death is not an event in the world (6.4311) is precisely what Lucretius found in his exposition of the Epicurean worldview. And in both Lucretius and Wittgenstein understanding the nature of the world issues in calm and peace. It is a calmness beyond words and music. This kind of contemplative tranquility does not lead to passivity and retreat from the world. In both Lucretius and Wittgenstein understanding the nature of the world leads to an active life in a spirit of simplicity.

*

The beginning of the 20th century was the time of the great modernistic experiments in painting, music, literature, dance and theatre. To clarify where in this chaotic landscape the logical-philosophical *Abhandlung* might belong comparisons with the visual arts is a good starting-point. At the same time as Wittgenstein completed the treatise during his years as a volunteer in the First World War Piet Mondrian worked incessantly on his great project – to liberate art, architecture, music, city planning and human life from all hindering traditions, by developing new forms of expression heralding a new life in a new world²⁵. Mondrian was first of all a painter. In his production from the 1910s to the beginning of the 1920s one can follow the dismantling process which led to his mature style, neoplasticism, in which the means of expression are limited to horizontal and vertical stripes in black and quadrangles of different sizes in a colour scale which consists of the basic colors red, blue and yellow plus shades of white. Mondrian regarded the horizontal and

25 Harry Holtzmann, ed., *The New Art – The New Life. The Collected Writings of Piet Mondrian* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1986).

vertical stripes and the selected colours as visualizations of the fundamental forces and elements in the world. All that which Wittgenstein referred to as accidental and only-possible was to be eliminated. The result is usually called abstract art.

Wittgenstein's logical-philosophical work of art is the result of a similar dismantling process in the field of worldviews which led to the elimination of all representative components in the form of narratives, myths and descriptions of landscapes, persons and things in physical space. The result could be called *abstrakte Dichtung*, abstract poetry, in a wide sense of that word.

A hundred years after the creation of this work it continues to fascinate new readers not least because of its double citizenship – it is both an essay treating of logical and philosophical themes and a literary work of art. To understand it as a literary work of art means to place it in an acoustic chamber with special resonances. To understand it as a contribution to logic and philosophy means to place it in other contexts with other resonances. That the work belongs to both contexts at the same time gives rise to shimmering effects of a very special kind.

To construct a worldview on the basis of the propositional and predicate calculi in the form of a prose work which lies in the prolongation of the didactic poetic tradition and to combine clarification in the field of *Weltanschauungen* with original work in the field of mathematical logic is a rather breathtaking enterprise. But the author succeeds in holding it all together through the structure of the work (the passage from 1 to 7), the style (lapidary sentences, metaphors, simplicity of expression, skillful use of classical rhetorical devices), and the dynamics of the work (the different levels of whisperings). My conclusion is that it is high time to include the logical-philosophical treatise in the modernist literary canon.

*

The import of the statement that the world is the totality of the facts depends upon how one regards *facts*. It turns out that the author of the logical-philosophical treatise presupposes a sharp distinction between facts and values. For those who consciously or unreflectively make a distinction of that kind it cannot come as a surprise that all values worth their name must lie outside the world (6.41). In the 1930s Wittgenstein suggested that the philosophical uses of words like 'knowledge', 'being', 'object', 'I', 'proposition', 'name' are based on confusions which can be clarified by bringing the words back to their everyday usage²⁶. He could have added such notoriously troublesome words as 'body', 'mind', 'fact' and 'value'. Clarification of wine cannot be done once and for all, it has to be done every year. Purification of wastewater must be done all the time. Philosophical clarification is a never-ending story.

26 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophische Untersuchungen/Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1953), p. 48.

References

- Brecht, Bertolt, *Werke: Große kommentierte Berliner und Frankfurter Ausgabe*, vol. 15 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag 1993).
- Damm, Sigrid, *Goethes letzte Reise* (Frankfurt am Main und Leipzig: Insel Verlag, 3. Auflage, 2014).
- Greene, Roland (ed.), *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics: Fourth Edition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012).
- Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von, *Aus meinem Leben. Dichtung und Wahrheit* (Tübingen: in der J.G. Cottaischen Buchhandlung, 1811-1814).
- , *Autobiography of Goethe: Truth and Fiction Relating to My Life* (Waiheke Island: Floating Press, 1848).
- , 'Ein gleiches', *Goethe's Werke*, vol. 1 (Tübingen: in der J.G. Cotta'schen Buchhandlung, 1815).
- , *Poetry and Truth From My Own Life* (London: G. Bell's & Sons, 1913).
- , *Schriften zur Literatur* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1970).
- Holtzmann, Harry (ed.), *The New Art – The New Life. The Collected Writings of Piet Mondrian* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1986).
- Longfellow, Henry Wadsworth, *The Complete Poetical Works of Longfellow* (Cambridge, MA: The Riverside Press, 1893).
- Lucretius Carus, Titus, *De rerum natura* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1947).
- Manilius, *Astronomica* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977).
- Nordisk familjebok. Konversationslexikon och realencyklopedi*, Tionde bandet. Lloyd - Militärkoloni (Stockholm: Gernandts boktryckeri-aktiebolag, 1886).
- Pound, Ezra, *ABC of Reading* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1934).
- , *Cantos* (New York, NY: New Directions, 1996).
- Wittgenstein, Ludwig *Tractatus, Logico-Philosophicus* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1922).
- , *Philosophische Untersuchungen/Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1953).
- , *Wittgenstein's Nachlass: The Bergen Electronic Edition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000),
- Wittgenstein, Ludwig et. al., *Briefe an Ludwig von Ficker* (Salzburg: Brenner-Studien Bd. 1, O. Müller, 1969).
- Wordsworth, William, *Lyrical Ballads with Pastoral and other Poems* (London: T.N. Longman and O. Rees, 1802).