

HOW THE *TRACTATUS* WAS MEANT TO BE READ

BY P. M. S. HACKER

This paper describes the results of the work of Luciano Bazzocchi on the composition of the Tractatus, and the significance of the numbering system. The method of composition can be inferred from MS 104 (which is not to be confused with the Prototractatus that was constructed from it). The book was constructed as a logical tree, with propositions 1 to 6 as the basic propositions. From these, various branches are constructed as numerical sequences (e.g. 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4 and 4.5). From each of these nodes further branches stem. Bazzocchi demonstrates that the book was not meant to be read linearly (as we all read it), but sequentially. This renders the argument of the book perspicuous, illuminates the anaphoric references, makes clear the dependence of proposition 7 on 6, rather than on 6.54. It shows that the conception of the book as a 526-rung ladder, as suggested by the American Wittgensteinians, is misguided.

Keywords: Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*, Luciano Bazzocchi, *Prototractatus*, New Wittgensteinians.

Between 3 and 5 June, 2014, a seminar was held under the auspices of Professor Gabriele Usberti, director of the summer school programme 'Mind and Language' at the University of Siena. The title of the seminar was 'The Tree and the Net: reading the *Tractatus* two-dimensionally'. The seminar was given by Dr Luciano Bazzocchi and me. The audience, consisting of some *Tractatus* specialists, graduate students from various Italian universities, and a few foreign visitors, were privileged to hear Dr Bazzocchi describe, over the period of three days, how the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* was composed, precisely what the numbering system of the book signifies, and hence, how the book was meant to be read. His account of the complex structure of the book was tested by applying it to specific case studies: the ontology of the book, the picture theory of meaning, solipsism, showing and saying, and the notorious propositions 6.53, 6.54, and 7 that have so preoccupied the self-styled 'New Wittgensteinians'. I came away, as I believe did the audience, completely convinced that Dr Bazzocchi had had a most important insight into the structure of the *Tractatus* and into how Wittgenstein intended it to be read. He made it clear just how much thought and labour went into putting the book together

once its major ideas had been thought through. Read correctly, it becomes patent that the *Tractatus* is not only a philosophical masterpiece, but also a finely crafted work of art. This slim book of a mere 20,000 words is surely one of the most difficult and opaque of all great works of philosophy. But read correctly, it becomes much more perspicuous. Once one avoids reading the work only consecutively, and also reads it tree-wise, the line of argument becomes clear, the anaphoric references, baffling in a consecutive reading, become evident, and the interpretation of the text becomes much easier. The *Tractatus* must be read *in accordance with the numbering system*, and that *demands* that the reader follow the text after the manner of a logical tree, which is the way in which the book was composed and in which Wittgenstein arranged (selected and supplemented) the best of the philosophical remarks that he had been writing since 1913.¹ The purpose of this article is to introduce Dr Bazzocchi's remarkable discoveries to a wider audience.

I. THE *TRACTATUS* NUMBERING SYSTEM: MISUNDERSTANDINGS

The *Tractatus* contains 526 numbered remarks. The book is printed in numerical order, starting with 1, 1.1, 1.11, 1.12, 1.13, 1.2, 1.21, 2., 2.01, 2.011, 2.012, 2.0121, and so on throughout the book until the final four remarks 6.522, 6.53, 6.54, 7. In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein inserted an asterisked note to 1, which runs as follows:

The decimal numbers assigned to the individual propositions indicate the logical importance [*Gewicht*, weight] of the propositions—the stress laid on them in my exposition [*Darstellung*, presentation]. The propositions *n.1*, *n.2*, *n.3*, etc. are comments on proposition no. *n*; the propositions *n.m1*, *n.m2*, etc. are comments on propositions no. *n.m*; and so on. (TLP, p. 7)²

This asterisked note was added in pencil to the TS 204 typescript when it was returned to Wittgenstein by Frege in November/December 1919. The

¹ Dr Bazzocchi has recently published a volume *The Tractatus According to its Own Form* (2014), which is a tree-wise rearrangement of the remarks of TLP according to their number, each branch of which receives a separate page of same-level remarks. This is not a substitute for the *Tractatus*, but it is an *indispensable* supplement to it. It is an *essential tool* for any course or seminar on the book. Unfortunately, Dr Bazzocchi was forced to use the Ogden translation, as Routledge refused permission to use the superior Pears/McGuinness translation.

² It is crucial to realize that by 'logical importance' or 'logical weight', i.e., the stress laid on a proposition in Wittgenstein's exposition, Wittgenstein did not mean importance *simpliciter*. The briefer the decimal numbers in the logical tree, the more *weight bearing* they are. The decimals signify five different levels of remarks, the outermost being, as it were, the leaves, and sometimes some of the fruits, of the tree. Hence, Wittgenstein's *Grundgedanke* (his fundamental thought) that 'logical constants' are not representatives', numbered 4.0312, is one of his most important insights. But it is not a weight-bearing element in the tree.