Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* contains a wide range of profound insights into the nature of logic and language – insights which will survive the particular theories of the *Tractatus* and seem to me to mark definitive and unassailable landmarks in our understanding of some of the deepest questions of philosophy. And yet alongside these insights there is a theory of the nature of the relation between language and reality which appears both to be impossible to work out in detail in a way which is completely satisfactory, and to be bizarre and incredible. I am referring to the so-called logical atomism of the *Tractatus*. The main outlines of this theory at least are clear and familiar: there are elementary propositions which gain their sense from being models of possible states of affairs; such propositions are configurations of names of simple objects, signifying that those simples are analogously configured; every proposition has its sense through being analysable as a truth-functional compound of elementary propositions, thus deriving its sense from the sense of the elementary propositions when this view is taken in conjunction with the idea that the sense of a proposition is completely specified by specifying its truth-conditions. In this way the *Tractatus* incorporates in its working out a philosophical system analogous to the classical philosophical systems of Leibniz or Spinoza which are regarded by many people, in a sense rightly, as the prehistoric monsters of philosophy which are not to be studied as living organisms, but studied as the curiosities of human thought. And we may here agree that in the end we must simply reject a philosophy which incorporates such features as its postulation of simple eternal objects, or of a possibility of an analysis of a proposition which was presented as a pre-condition for the propositions that we ordinarily utter to make sense, and yet the specific form of which we are unaware of, and so on.

And yet paradoxically it is this last fact – the incredibility of the picture of the relation of language and reality which Wittgenstein offers – which makes the *Tractatus* a constant stimulus to further reflection on a wide range of the most fundamental questions of philosophical logic. (We could incidentally say that the same is true mutatis mutandis for those other philosophical systems such as Leibniz' monadology in as much as we do not approach them with a crude philistinism or mere dilettante aesthetic curiosity.) For what the *Tractatus* represents is in fact a systematic and rigorous thinking out with full consequence of a series of ideas on the inter-relations between a proposition’s making sense, its being true or false, its having a negation, where we usually appeal to these ideas sporadically and unsystematically, without thinking them through to the end. These ideas are entirely natural and apparently self-evident, and yet taken at their face value are shown in the *Tractatus* to lead to the consequences which we find so bizarre and unacceptable. In this way we are forced to rethink the interrelations, say, between the idea of a proposition’s making sense and its being true or false, either abandoning ideas which seem self-evident or else being forced to realise that those ideas have to be understood far more subtly than we naively assume. That the *Tractatus* can be regarded as the rigorous thinking through of certain very natural ideas about what it is for a proposition to make sense, and that the theories of the *Tractatus* are therefore not merely to be regarded as oddities, is, I think, mainly overlooked for two very different reasons.

The first and most obvious reason is the mode of exposition which Wittgenstein adopts in the *Tractatus* – what he was to call later a ‘dogmatic’ method of exposition. The explanation of this method of exposition, apart from aesthetic considerations, appears to have been twofold: the first relates to the difficulties Wittgenstein refers to in conversation with Waismann of communicating what he had to say at all, of organizing his ideas into a coherent and intelligible form when he was constantly groping for what he wanted to say, and the second is that it was I think always true that Wittgenstein thought that in philosophy if you spared someone the difficulty of thinking something out for himself, you also deprived him of the opportunity of really understanding what it was that was to be said.

1 *WWK*, pp. 182ff.
But be that as it may, in the case of the *Tractatus* this has led a large number of people to think of the book as a series of aphorisms without the deep underlying structure of argument ever coming into focus, with the result that they fail to recognise how doctrines of the *Tractatus* are in fact supported by an attempt to give substance to many of our most basic ideas in philosophical logic, and therefore that repudiating the *Tractatus* must lead to a subtle shift in our understanding of those basic ideas in as much as we do not simply reject them.

The second reason why discussions of the *Tractatus* do not do justice to the strength of the arguments of the book is a more curious one: this is the way that the doctrines of the *Tractatus* are presented for criticism in the *Investigations*. I am sure I am not alone in the feeling at times that the author of the *Investigations* appears in its early sections not to have understood the *Tractatus*, that what we are offered there are almost straw men, certainly crude caricatures of the positions of the *Tractatus*, and that the actual ideas of the *Tractatus* were far subtler than anything that is put under critical review in those parts of the *Investigations* which deal explicitly with the *Tractatus*. If I am right in this impression, it is certainly an odd one, which is, I think, susceptible of two explanations: the first and obvious one is that Wittgenstein was so out of sympathy with certain of the ideas of the *Tractatus* that he had lost the ability to give them even a sympathetic exposition before criticising them, but the second and, I think, real reason is that the criticism of some of the crucial ideas of the *Tractatus* was in fact so radical that it involved a total shift of perspective on the nature of the relation between language and reality, and was thus not capable of the succinct exposition in which the views of the *Tractatus* would be refuted by brief arguments. The real criticism of those ideas of the *Tractatus* which he found to be misguided is, rather, diffused throughout the book, and is to be found in a change of perspective which permeates the later book; the early remarks about the *Tractatus* are to be regarded as shots across the bows, and the real criticisms are to be found less directly but, once found, represent a real engagement with the *Tractatus* at the deepest level. But those early remarks may have distracted readers from the nature of the critique of the *Tractatus* offered in the *Investigations* and consequently caused them to read a grossly oversimplified position back into the *Tractatus*. It is at least to indicate the nature of what I take to be the real engagement between the two books with which I am concerned in this talk.

Near the centre of Wittgenstein’s concerns in the *Tractatus* is the intimate relation between a proposition’s making sense and its having truth/falsity polarity: that to understand the sense of a proposition is to know what is the case if it is true and what if it is false. Where of course there is not merely an accidental relation between what must be the case for a proposition to be true and what for it to be false. In making it clear what is to be the case for a proposition to be true, we *ipso facto* determine what it is for it to be false. What I have said thus far is innocent and perhaps even platitudinous: it is in its interpretation and working out that we get involved in the more suspect features of the *Tractatus*. This stress on the relation between making sense and having truth/falsity polarity is clearly right; we would not understand what was meant by someone’s understanding a proposition and yet being unclear what it would be for the proposition to be true. Equally it is clear that we define the sense of a proposition by making it clear what it is for it to be true and what it is for it to be false simultaneously: as Wittgenstein stresses, we have missed the point of the notions of truth and falsity if we think that we give distinct accounts of a proposition’s being true and of its being false. When we make an assertion, we put forward an utterance as the appropriate thing to say, as true, and if we fail, if it is clear that the utterance is inappropriate, we have made a false assertion.

Now the stress on these points, which if taken correctly can be seen as innocuous, can suggest a certain picture which if worked through is far from innocuous. This picture can be given as follows: we imagine there to be a spectrum of possible situations and we demarcate a region within that spectrum as comprising the possible situations which make a particular proposition true. A proposition gains its sense by thus demarcating a part of a spectrum of possible states of affairs. If the actual situation falls within that part of the spectrum then the proposition is true, otherwise it is false. So that the proposition divides a spectrum of possible situations in two, and thereby simultaneously defines what it is for it to be true and what for it to be false, and any adequate account of the sense of a proposition should make it clear what its truth value is in the face of any possibility. One may see part of what is at stake here in Wittgenstein’s emphatic endorsement of Russell’s theory of definite descriptions. Whereas Frege said of a proposition of the form ‘The *F* is *G*’ that such a proposition presupposed but did not imply that there was one and only one *F*, Russell construed the sense of such a proposition in such a way that it did directly imply there to be one and only one *F*. The immediate consequence of this was that for Frege we could envisage a situation in which we were clear that a proposition was not true, and yet did not thereby deem it false,
whereas Russell had given an account of the sense of the propositions involved which made it clear that in determining the proposition not to be true, we were ipso facto determining it to be false.

For Frege, for the proposition ‘the F is G’ to be true or false, which is in *Tractatus* terms what it is for it to make sense, another proposition – namely that there is one and only one F – had to be true, thereby rendering unclear for Wittgenstein the role of the notions of truth and falsity, by making room for the possibility of our being clear that a proposition was not true, that it was incorrect to assert it, while not thereby deeming it false, so that the relation between being true and false becomes obscured, since it now appears that a proposition may have to satisfy a condition over and above not being true in order to be false. The fact that in a concrete situation it may be well known to all concerned that a certain possibility does not obtain, does not prevent us from saying of a proposition which if that possibility had obtained would have been false, that it implies or asserts that that possibility does not obtain. And for us not to say this is to obscure the relation between a proposition’s making sense and its division of the possibilities into those which make the proposition true and those which make it false: it may seem that those who have talked like Frege and, more recently, Professor Strawson, of possibilities which are presupposed but not implied by a proposition’s being true are simply confusing our purpose in asserting a proposition with the content of what we assert. If it is known to us and our audience that a certain possibility does not obtain it may well be that when we assert a proposition which implies that that possibility does not obtain, it is not part of our purpose to deny that possibility, but that does not prevent what we assert from implying that that possibility does not obtain. If I am told that Richard Nixon has been re-elected president of the United States, then the use of the word ‘re-elected’ makes it clear that it is being claimed that he was elected previously, even though that may be common knowledge and not the purpose of the announcement: to try in the concrete to draw a distinction between those implications of a proposition which are common knowledge and so to be designated presuppositions of the proposition rather than true implications seems not only a virtually impossible exercise, but also a pointless one, lumbering us with an irrelevant distinction which does not seem, without further explanation, to clarify the sense of what is being claimed, what would make the claim true or false. It is clear that I cannot within the scope of this talk do more than sketch a position and not go into the intricacies of the debate over the tenability, say, of Strawson’s account of the theory of descriptions, and if I were to make that the subject of a talk I would wish to elaborate what I have only indicated here, where the theory of descriptions has only the function of giving a preliminary indication of Wittgenstein’s position which is to lead him to a form of logical atomism.

Up to this point, I have been expressing ideas with which I have broad agreement and with which I think Wittgenstein retained broad agreement throughout his life. What we now have to see is the way of taking those ideas which led him to the positions which I described at the outset as bizarre and incredible. Within the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein envisages our putting forward a proposition as constructing a model of a situation in the world, and how the world is will make that model right or wrong, the proposition true or false, but, and this is in line with what we have been saying up to now, how the world is cannot prevent the model from presenting us with a possible situation, and so how the world is can make our model wrong, not prevent it from showing how the world would be if it were right. In line with this, if we specify a possibility and say ‘In this case the model would not be right’ then we are not specifying a possibility which prevents the model from being a model, the proposition from making sense. And an account of the sense of the model, the proposition, must be construed so as to allow no possible situation to be such that we would deny that the proposition was right, was true, without ipso facto making it false.

Now let us in the light of this consider a very everyday proposition, and the natural account that we would give of its sense. We may take the proposition ‘Martin Luther wrote a commentary on Genesis’ as the simple example which provides the base for the argument I am making. Our everyday understanding of such a proposition would involve us in saying that ‘Martin Luther’ here functioned as a proper name, that is to say a sign which has a bearer and contributes to the sense of the proposition by standing for that bearer, and that the proposition is true or false according as Martin Luther did or did not write such a commentary, and this is surely right, it is in such a way that we do understand the proposition. And yet we may note straight off that such an account at least prima facie falls foul of what we have been saying up to this point. There is at least one possibility which is catered for neither by our account of what it is for the proposition to be true or to be false, or in other words neither by the proposition ‘Martin Luther wrote a commentary on Genesis’, nor by what we would regard as its negation ‘Martin Luther did not write a commentary on Genesis’, namely the possibility of the non-existence of Luther. We must at this point be clear what we are referring to when we talk of this possibility: for it is in different ways
of understanding this possibility that we may notice a bifurcation in the programme of analysis in which Wittgenstein and Russell were collaborating, a bifurcation which explains the different natures of the logical atomism advocated at this period by Russell and of the doctrine of the *Tractatus*. For we may take the phrase ‘the possibility of the non-existence of Luther’ either to refer to that envisaged by the proposition ‘It is possible that there was no such person as Luther’, or to that envisaged by the proposition ‘It is conceivable that Martin Luther should never have existed’. Where the first of these propositions alludes to the possibility of doubting that in fact there was such a person as Luther, while the second says that even though we know there to be such a person, we can well imagine what it would have been like for the history of the world to be different – say for Luther’s mother to have died before reaching the age of childbirth – in such a way that it would not have come about that Luther existed. It is important to notice that these two different ways of taking the phrase ‘the possibility of the non-existence of Luther’ point in completely different directions, very different possibilities are being envisaged, and that it is essential to the first that we should not prejudge whether it is a counterfactual possibility, whereas the second is quite definitely envisaging a possibility that we know does not obtain. The former, the epistemological possibility of doubt of Martin Luther’s existence, partly because of curious features of the theory of judgment he held during this period, was the one of crucial importance to Russell, and was what led his logical atomism to assume the simple objects to be sense-data, and the logically proper names to be the words ‘this’ and ‘that’ used to refer to them: here we had escaped the sphere of what could be doubted. This theory, a hybrid combination of logical and epistemological features, although starting out along the same lines as the *Tractatus* has in its final form little in common with the final position of the *Tractatus*. Epistemological considerations play no part at all in Wittgenstein’s thought, in fact it is crucial to understanding Wittgenstein’s position to see him as treating as completely irrelevant that we know a certain possibility not to obtain when we determine the sense of a proposition which can only be true if that possibility does not obtain: our knowing that it does not obtain does not alter one jot the fact that the proposition implies that it does not.

What we have in Wittgenstein’s case is something like the following situation: if we take a proposition containing a term that we would ordinarily regard as a proper name, then if we are to be able to regard it as having truth/falsity polarity, as dividing the logically possible situations into two groups, those which make the proposition true and those which make it false, we run up against the conceivability of the non-existence of the object named, and our account of the sense of the proposition must cater for this possibility, must show, say, the proposition to be false in case that possibility had occurred. Thus the proposition is taken to imply that that possibility did not obtain, and the supposed proper name is analysed in such a way that it no longer contributes to the sense of the proposition by standing for its bearer, for that sense must cater for the possibility that such a bearer might never have existed, otherwise whether the proposition makes sense, divides the possibilities into two groups, depends on another proposition being true: i.e. the proposition to the effect that the history of the world did not go in the way envisaged by the claim ‘Luther might never have existed’. Now if it is essential to language that there should be proper names, as it is in the theory of the proposition as a truth-functional compound of models of reality, then those proper names can only be of objects of which it makes no sense to suppose that they might never have existed. In the detailed working out of the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein here contrasts complexes and simples. Given an object which is complex, which is made of parts, it is easy enough to conceive of its non-existence, i.e. we simply imagine those parts not to have been put together in this way. This concrete working out of the theory is in many respects slightly fishy, but does not affect the substance of what Wittgenstein is arguing for in the *Tractatus*: that if we take a proper name as a sign which has a bearer and contributes to the sense of a proposition by standing for that bearer, then our ordinary proper names can only be regarded as such if we make the question whether one proposition makes sense depend on the truth of another, and thus put in jeopardy our idea of the link between a proposition’s making sense and its dividing possible situations into two groups – those that make the proposition true and those that make it false: we must therefore reconstrue such propositions, give them an analysis which shows these everyday names to be, from a logical point of view, only apparent names, and that the real names must be names of objects for which it makes no sense to suppose that they might not have existed; the existence of such objects is then the precondition for our being able to produce a model of the world. We may summarise the path we have followed in the language of the *Tractatus* itself, where the sense of certain key theses which have been found obscure should by now be intelligible:

(1) A proposition which talks of a complex will not be nonsense if this complex does not exist but simply be false.
(2) If the world had no substance then whether one proposition made sense would depend on whether another proposition was true. In that case, we couldn’t sketch out a picture of the world (true or false).

Now what are we to say to this whole line of thought and its result? It is clear that the queerness of the outcome does not of itself show what is wrong with Wittgenstein’s pattern of argument, and if we find the argument fishy, then we should reflect on the fact that at those points where we are most suspicious all Wittgenstein does is to take at their face value certain of our most fundamental ideas about logic and think them through to the end. If, for instance, we object to the insistence that the possibility countenanced by the proposition ‘Luther might never have existed’ is one that is to be taken into account when explaining the truth-conditions of ‘Luther wrote a commentary on Genesis’, then we cannot object glibly, for at a number of points we appeal to a notion of possibility which stands in deep need of explanation if we do reject certain possibilities as relevant. For instance, we construe the negation of a proposition as a proposition whose sense is explained by the fact that it, together with the original proposition, exhausts the possibilities. If we now cite logical possibilities which yet are not counted as relevant within that formula, then the notion of possibility involved, and with it the notion of the negation of a proposition, becomes a notion that we realise we have a much less clear grasp on than we had previously thought.

Within the scope of this talk, all I want to do is to indicate the way in which the range of questions prompted by the unsatisfactory character of some features of the Tractatus led Wittgenstein to subject the question of the relation of language to reality to a profound re-examination culminating in many of the most characteristic ideas of the Philosophical Investigations. The pattern of argument in the Tractatus is no superficial sophism, but a train of thought which calls forth as a reply as deep an investigation as that which runs through the Investigations: I cannot hope to do more here than to make tentative suggestions of how to regard the Investigations as at least in part a reply to the kind of argument I have here ascribed to the Tractatus.

There is one preliminary remark that needs making: the argument that I have sketched out I have developed with reference to proper names, but the points at issue are by no means restricted to names: proper names have figured so largely in the account so far for two reasons: Firstly and most simply that the Tractatus account of language, the so-called picture theory highlights the role of proper names in language and it is therefore in the context of a discussion of names that the argument will naturally be developed. Secondly, there is a pragmatic justification in that the argument can be expounded most simply for the case of proper names of contingent entities – the complexes of the Tractatus – for here the possibilities which are not catered for either by a proposition’s being true or false, and therefore the propositions whose truth seems presupposed to the sense of that proposition, are capable of being specified with most simplicity. But the reply to the Tractatus implicit in the Investigations only deals incidentally with proper names, involving as it does a total change of perspective on the phenomena of language, which is being expounded at a time when proper names no longer had the all-important role assigned to them by the Tractatus. This means two things: firstly, that in seeing the material in the Investigations as a reply to the Tractatus we may recognise that there is far more at stake than a doctrine of proper names – indeed, at one of the crucial points we shall discuss, Wittgenstein sees the nature of logic at stake: ‘this appears to abolish logic but does not do so’; and secondly that it is easy to overlook the way in which the Investigations does attempt to criticise the Tractatus, since the interrelations are not as close to the surface as they would have been if he had presented his new position in more explicit connection with the ideas of the Tractatus. I certainly find it easier to recognise the deep continuities within Wittgenstein’s thought, than the real nature of the contrasts: one only comes to recognise these for what they are after prolonged engagement with the two works.

We may begin this part of my discussion by returning to the argument with which we began and note that the parallel which I put forward between Wittgenstein’s endorsement of the theory of descriptions and his treatment of ordinary proper names masks a fundamental contrast between the two cases which may serve as a preliminary stage in the criticism I am to develop here. It is certainly the case that with both the propositions ‘The present queen of England is married’ and ‘Luther wrote a commentary on Genesis’, we may countenance the counter-factual possibility ‘The present queen of England might never have existed’ and ‘Luther might never have existed’. But there is an ambiguity in the first of these which isn’t present in the second. For the first could mean ‘There might not have been one and only one queen of England’, or that ‘Whether or not there were a queen of England, the present one (i.e. Elizabeth Windsor) might never have existed’. It is the first of these two interpretations that is catered for by the theory of descriptions, and yet it is the second alone which is analogous to the claim ‘Luther might never have existed’. The reason for this is
order to give our signs a sense, and in imagining those features not
clear and instructive: if we say that the theory of descriptions shows
the present queen of England is married' as false in case there is no
present queen of England, then we can say this because even if this
possibility had obtained we could still have formulated the proposition
in question. Whereas when we imagine the history of the world
to have developed differently, so that Luther did not exist, we are
not imagining a world in which the proposition 'Luther wrote a
commentary on Genesis', using the name Luther as a proper name
as we do, would have been false, we are imagining a world in which
there would have been no such proposition, in which it would
not have come about that people would have been in a position to
formulate a proposition tantamount to our 'Luther wrote a com-
mentary on Genesis': there would be no Luther for them to refer
to and make this claim about. (As an aside, I may remark that in the
proposition 'Luther might never have existed', 'Luther' is being
used there as a proper name, and had this possibility obtained, people
would not have been able to state its having obtained.) We then see
the beginnings of a reason for denying that the phrase 'a proposition's
being true and being false exhaust the possibilities' is to be inter-
preted in the radical and simplistic way we have taken it in our
preceding discussion: that is, that given certain propositions then
there are logically possible histories of the world in which it would
be inappropriate for us to say that the propositions are either true
or false for the simple reason that in envisaging those histories to
have obtained, we are envisaging a situation in which it would have
been impossible to formulate the propositions in question. Quite
simply, we rely on certain contingent features of our world in
order to give our signs a sense, and in imagining those features not
to have obtained, we are imagining a world in which propositions
containing such signs would be incapable of formulation, not one
in which they would be false. And in the light of this, we may say
that we must interpret our phrase 'exhaust the possibilities', to refer
to the possibilities allowed for by the existence of our language, and
not to an abstract notion of logical possibility independent of the
features which make our language capable of saying what it does. We
could say: by possibilities here, we mean the possibilities envisaged
by the language. In the light of this, Wittgenstein's first move away
from the kind of doctrine sketched out in the Tractatus is to say 'I will
count anything which looks as if it has to exist in order for a proposi-
tion to make sense as an instrument of the language'. This position,
to be found for example in the Bemerkungen, is slightly unhappy, at
least in its expression, for it is surely odd to say of the man Martin
Luther, that he is an instrument of the English language. But what
we see here is the first hint of something worked out with immense
subtlety and on a very broad scale within the Investigations: that
language evolved as a system of communication within the world,
and relies, in giving a sense to its propositions, on certain contingent
features of the world; and also that one cannot simply disregard the
fact that language has evolved as a system of communication between
men within this world, and that in imagining certain features of the
world not to have obtained, one may be imagining the world to be
such that it would be impossible to formulate the propositions which
men do in fact utter. To that extent, we cannot say that those propo-
sitions assert the existence of those features and their negations must
cater for the possibility of their not having existed, for in imagining
those features not to have existed, we are equally imagining here the
impossibility of formulation both of a proposition and of its negation.
Here we are then in a position to see a good sense in the much over-
used notion of presupposition; if in envisaging a certain possibility
to obtain we are ipso facto envisaging a situation in which a propo-
sition can no longer be formulated, we may say that the proposition
presupposes that feature of the world, since in thinking that feature
away, we are not envisaging the falsehood of that proposition but a
situation in which there is no longer such a proposition to be true or
false. To the extent that this is not so in the case of a definite
description, the notion of presupposition is being made to do
unnecessary work when contrasted with the clear simplicity of
Russell's account of definite descriptions, but in as much as this is
so in the case of most of the proper names we employ, then the
notion becomes unavoidable. We may now reformulate: 'A proposi-
tion's being true and false exhaust the possibilities envisaged by
the language, i.e. not presupposed to the existence of the language' and
this gives us the kind of connection we require between a proposition's
making sense and being true and false – in the phrase of the Investiga-
tions, does not 'abolish logic' – without leading us like a will o' the
wisp into the quagmires of logical atomism.

We now move from the abstract consideration of language con-
ceived as a device for the construction of a model of the world, to
looking at it as a system of communication used by men within the
world, relying on certain features of their world and their mode of
existence – what Wittgenstein calls their form of life – to establish
that system of communication, and by extension of this line of
thought to seeing language as part of a broader activity including
other forms of social intercourse and life: it is at this point that the
frequently overworked metaphor of a language-game is introduced
to convey his point: that we cannot divorce the use of language from
its wider human context and that we must understand an utterance as ‘a move in the game’ of human beings engaged in a common social and therefore rule-governed way of life.

From this broadened and deeply enriched perspective we may see a wide variety of phenomena which are presupposed to the propositions of our language being formed, making sense, being true or false. I can, of course, do no more than indicate the range of Wittgenstein’s thought; but I hope that the provision of the context for that thought which this talk is aimed at should show how misleading it is to talk, as for instance most recently Pears has done, of Wittgenstein engaging in an empirical investigation of the actual phenomena of language in his later work. His concern is still with the nature of logic and what it would be for any language to relate to reality, not merely the particular characteristics of our language: he in fact talks about his anthropological method, where this does not mean anthropological field work or anything of that sort, but rather the reverse – imagining hypothetical tribes whose lives run along very different lines from ours, in order that we may see in that context what it is for there to be a language about reality.

I will end by sketching a few of the kind of phenomena which Wittgenstein draws attention to in this connection, over and above the simple case with which I have developed this talk, the use of everyday proper names being dependent on the existence of bearers of those names.

1 In order that there should be a common language – or, indeed, a language at all – there must exist the possibility of human beings following rules, since this notion is involved in our using a word again in the same sense, with the same use. But if there are to be rules common to human beings, there must be agreement in human reactions to phenomena: for instance, if we think crudely of teaching someone how to use the word ‘red’ by the use of samples of objects which are and are not red, then sooner or later we come to the point where we say ‘Now, go on’ and he must be able to respond to this training in a way which is the same as other members of his community, if he is to have a common language with them, so that confronted by a new shade of red, an object not actually used in the teaching, he must react in common with other human beings to this colour as though prefigured in the training. The fact that human beings do in general react in the same way in such situations is a contingent anthropological fact, but one without which language could never get off the ground, for there would be no such thing as human beings all following the same rule. I have used here the phrase ‘agreement in reactions’ in preference to Wittgenstein’s ‘agreement in judgments’ for although I think the idea is the same, Wittgenstein’s phrasing has in fact frequently misled people as to what he is saying, although most of those misunderstandings should have been averted by Wittgenstein’s prefacing his introduction of the phrase by the remark: ‘So you are saying that agreement among men decides what is true and what is false?’ – It is what human beings say that is true and false; and they agree in the language they use. That is not agreement in opinions but in form of life.¹ Here, more than anywhere, I feel the inadequacy of my gesture towards an account of Wittgenstein, but all that was possible here was to indicate how the long and profound discussion of what it is to follow a rule relates to my topic.

2 There is yet another sense of ‘agreement in reactions’ without which the formation of certain concepts would be unintelligible. For instance, if human beings did not agree in finding pain unpleasant, if there were not characteristic patterns of behaviour evoked by pain, the formation of a concept of pain would become unintelligible: for certainly the word ‘pain’ does not designate such behaviour, and yet but for such behaviour we could not imagine the formation of a language in which pains were referred to.

3 Wittgenstein frequently imagines tribes – particularly in the Brown Book period – which differ significantly from normal human beings, to show the ways in which they would form concepts which would be unintelligible to us, and for whom our concepts would not be applicable. For instance, to use an example which isn’t Wittgenstein’s but which is like many of his, it is a contingent matter of fact that when someone is hurt, the part of the body where the injury is inflicted, the part where the damage results, and the part where treatment should be applied, in general, coincide: we could easily imagine that when someone was hit in the stomach, this had major repercussions in the lungs which should be treated by attending to the nose and throat, and so on. If there were not such general coincidence, our concepts of pain location might very well run along very different lines, and a person might relate to very different phenomena of being injured from those which lie behind our ability to form our concepts of pain location. In all three kinds of case I have indicated, we should not say it would then be false to say what we now say – it would not, for instance, in the last case, be false to say of a man that he felt a stomach ache, we would be imagining a form of life which ran along such different lines that we could no longer apply our concepts of pain location to

¹ PI, I, 241.
him: we could not attach any sense to saying of such a man that in our sense he felt a pain in the stomach, although a tribe of such people might well develop a system of pain locations different from ours which would have a point, given their physiology. To summarise by Wittgenstein's epigram, given a very different form of life, certain propositions which make sense for us, would cease to make sense, to be true or false, and vice versa and 'If a lion could speak we would not understand him'.

So we may return by saying in reply to the Tractatus that a proposition and its negation exhaust the possibilities allowed for by the language, not the possibilities taken in some abstract sense, and these possibilities are conditioned by the form of life of the speakers of that language and by the features of the world within which they live that life.

After this discussion, Wittgenstein's criticism of the notions of the Tractatus should, I hope, have become clearer, and also perhaps the nature of the repercussions for philosophical logic, even if not their detailed working out. And we are now in a position to leave the final word with Wittgenstein, where he summarises the nature of his Investigations, and, I hope, to see how this represents the deepest engagement with the train of thought developed in his earlier book: certainly this passage is not to be seen as a curt dismissal of the Tractatus as utterly misguided, indeed, certain reported remarks of Wittgenstein suggest that he saw the Tractatus as the only possible alternative account of language to that which he later developed. This should not be seen as an arrogant estimate of the value of his own work, but rather as a reflection of the fact that the Tractatus posed certain deep problems which either led to a variant on the theory of the Tractatus period, or could only be overcome by the very different approach represented by his later work. That it required the Investigations to answer the Tractatus is a tribute to the importance of the earlier work. At II, xii of the Investigations, then, Wittgenstein writes:

If the formation of concepts can be explained by facts of nature, should we not be interested, not in grammar, so much as in nature which forms the basis of grammar? — Our interest certainly includes the way concepts answer to very general facts of nature. (Such facts as usually do not strike us because of their generality.) But our interest does not revert to these possible causes of concept-formation; we're not doing natural science; nor even natural history — since we can indeed construct fictitious natural history for our purposes.