

Sanford Shieh

‘A Path to the *Tractatus*’

Abstract: This paper traces Wittgenstein’s philosophical development culminating in the conception, central to *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, of propositions as involving essentially a primitive notion of possibility. I spell out three stages of Wittgenstein’s philosophical development, starting from criticism of Russell’s multiple-relation theory of judgment, going through the conception of propositions as signifying facts in “Notes on Logic,” to struggles with what Wittgenstein calls the “Wahrheitsprobleme” in his wartime notebooks, in which he first considers appealing to the idea of picturing to understand propositions, before finally arriving at the modal view of proposition in the *Tractatus*. The significance of the Tractarian conception of propositions is that it is part of a rejoinder to Frege and Russell’s rejection of modality, bringing modality back into logic.

Readings:

Sullivan, P. M. (2001), “A Version of the Picture Theory”, in W. Vossenkuhl (ed.), *Ludwig Wittgenstein: Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (Akademie Verlag), 89–110.

Pincock, C. (2008), “Russell’s Last (and Best) Multiple-Relation Theory of Judgement”, *Mind*, 117 (465): 107–139.

Ricketts, T. (1996), “Pictures, Logic, and the Limits of Sense in Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus*”, in H. Sluga and D. G. Stern (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Wittgenstein* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 59–99.



Sanford Shieh works in the philosophies of logic, mathematics, and modality through their histories in the analytical traditions of philosophy. His most recent book is *Necessity Lost*. He is editor, with

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Selected Publications:

Necessity Lost: Modality and Logic in Early Analytic Philosophy, volume 1

<https://global.oup.com/academic/product/necessity-lost-9780199228645?cc=us&lang=en&>

How Rare is Chairman Mao? Dummett, Frege, and the Austere Conception of Nonsense,” in B. Weiss (ed.), *Dummett and Analytical Philosophy*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015: 84-121.

“In What Way Does Logic Involve Necessity?” *Philosophical Topics* 42(2) (2014): 289-337.