

The Tractatus

Lecture 4: The theory of judgment

5.54 In the general propositional form, propositions occur in a proposition only as bases of the truth-operations.

5.541 At first sight it appears as if there were also a different way in which one proposition could occur in another.

Especially in certain propositional forms of psychology, like ‘A thinks, that p is the case’, or ‘A thinks p ’, etc.

5.542 But it is clear that ‘A believes that p ’, ‘A thinks p ’, ‘A says p ’, are of the form ‘“ p ” says p ’: and here we have no co-ordination of a fact and an object, but a co-ordination of facts by means of a co-ordination of their objects.

5.5421 This shows that there is no such thing as the soul—the subject, etc.—as it is conceived in superficial psychology.

A composite soul would not be a soul any longer.

5.5422 The correct explanation of the form of the proposition ‘A judges p ’ must show that it is impossible to judge a nonsense. (Russell’s theory does not satisfy this condition.)

Wittgenstein came to see me last night with a refutation of the theory of judgment which I used to hold. He was right, but I think the correction required is not very serious. I shall have to make up my mind within a week, as I shall soon reach judgment. (Russell to Ottoline Morrell, 21 May 1913)

Wittgenstein came to see me—we were both cross from the heat—I showed him a crucial part of what I have been writing. He said it was all wrong, not realizing the difficulties—that he had tried my view and knew it wouldn’t work. I couldn’t understand his objection—in fact he was very inarticulate—but I feel in my bones that he must be right, and that he has seen something I have missed. If I could see it too I shouldn’t mind, but as it is, it is worrying, and has rather destroyed the pleasure in my writing. (Russell to Ottoline Morrell, 27 May 1913)

If I analyse the proposition Socrates is mortal into Socrates, Mortality and $(\exists x,y)\epsilon_1(x,y)$ I want a theory of types to tell me that ‘mortality is Socrates’ is nonsensical, because if I treat ‘Mortality’ as a proper name (as I did) there is nothing to prevent me to make the substitution the wrong way round. (Wittgenstein to Russell, 16 Jan. 1913)

Further reading

Wittgenstein’s Notes on Logic, chs. 13 and 25

Anthony Kenny, ‘Wittgenstein’s early philosophy of mind’, in I. Block (ed.), *Perspectives on the Philosophy of Wittgenstein* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1981)