The World as States of Affairs in Wittgenstein and Armstrong

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In this paper it will be presented two points of view on states of affairs: Wittgenstein's one in time of the Tractatus and one of David Malet Armstrong in his book *A World of States of Affairs*. The first section of the article is dedicated to analyzing 'facts' in Wittgenstein. The general form of proposition determines a logical model of the world linguistically reflected. The second section is devoted to Armstrong's point of view on the way of considering states of affairs. It presupposes involving relations as elements of this world. In the third section it will be offered a possible conjunction of their standpoints.

The Tractatus' scheme of the world impacts an idea of its universality. Without any pernicious holism it was affirmed that there were states of affairs. The case was that not every state of affairs has corresponded ontologically the world. Also, it was doubt to build up the world of states of affairs as of bricks. But there is no doubt it was made to structure the very world. Grammatically or ontologically, it was made by means of polishing of its hard stones. The structure of the world is to be represented in propositions. There were broken so many lances over these questions.

1. Mainly it was an ontological problem of Wittgenstein's interest that made him construct and construe the model of the world as facts. A well-known passage about a state of affairs as a combination of objects is considered in the light of his logicism. The Tractatus' things are logical ones. They form the world that is presented in sets.

As the question of relations is a logical one, it is to analyse the correlation between sets of things and their relations in a state of affairs. Earlier thoughts of the author of the *Notebooks* were inquiring into the very expression about relations:

> "Are we misled into assuming "relations between relations" merely through the apparent analogy between the expressions: "relations between things" and "relations between relations"?" (Wittgenstein 1998)

The problem of relations between things has quite a long history. Probably, it originates more systematically from the materialist tradition. But it has nothing common with the question of facts that are only significant when relations are observed. As Wittgenstein assumes in 4.122

> …It is impossible, however, to assert bymeans of propositions that such internal properties and relations obtain: rather, this makes itself manifest in the propositions that represent the relevant states of affairs and are concerned with the relevant objects. (Wittgenstein 1971)

The facts have structural properties and structural relations that make them facts. Relations in turn are conditions of their being facts. But it is not in a proposition where facts (states of affairs) are observed. As they are shown in propositions it is possible to analyze them in order to investigate what is the case, and what is not. Internal relations are equally unclear as external ones. A thing to be considered here is the question how to treat them in the way of inquiring of the world as a conjunction of states of affairs.

Being irrelevant to some situation, things are not making any state of affairs. As words of a mentally ill person make no sense, a conjunction of things that are *out of place* does not. In the Tractatus it was found an analytical method of observation of propositions that was showing the world's logical framework. It was a picturing property of propositions.

Regarding the later in the course of an analysis as limits of a description of the world one should consider the propositions and the whole language as a set of relations. In this case a description of the world is possible in a definite and cleared-up theory expressed in propositions.

2. What Armstrong is accepting in Wittgenstein consists in the notion of states of affairs, as he manifests himself:

> The hypothesis of this work is that the world, all that there is, is a world of states of affairs. Others, Wittgenstein in particular, have said that the world is a world of facts and not a world of things. These theses are substantially the same, though differently expressed. (Armstrong 1997)

And that the world is a world of facts is considered as a system of ontological relations that are problematized. The later is a question of the Independence of states of affairs in the Tractatus. If we agree with the world proposed by Wittgenstein it is only possible to consider different facts in different conditions independent one from other. These then will constitute a kind of a closed system that would present a possible world. But relations between states of affairs tie them in. The author of *A World of States of Affairs* gives an elucidative passage:

> A state of affairs exists if and only if a particular (at a later point to be dubbed a *thin* particular) has a property or, instead, a relation holds between two or more particulars. Each state of affairs, and each constituent of each state of affairs, meaning by their constituents the particulars, properties, relations and, in the case of higher-order states of affairs, is a contingent existent. The properties and the relations are universals, not particulars. The relations are all external relations. (Armstrong 1997)

The question is what ontological status can a state of affairs obtain? As a state of affairs is facts in certain conditions that are relation between them, not even a possible world that they compose is questioned. To explain what kind of entity is relation it is necessary to consider its universality. It should seem a matter of metaphysics. But relations are not metaphysical entities. They are real ones. Another question that rises here is if they structure the world or are just isomorphic to it? If there is a kind of isomorphism then each state of affairs consists in a proper dimension that repeats the world. If so, then relations double the world. A thing to be considered here is what kind of distinction is in question. Armstrong emphasizes the point:

> What *should* be done is to interpret the substance / attribute distinction as the recognition of monadic states of affairs. That would clear the way to recognize relations as constituents of polyadic states of affairs. (Armstrong 1997)

Regarding this complicated theme it is important to notice that mentioned distinction is directly related to a great amount of philosophical tradition investigating the subject. It is interesting here to appeal to facts as the matter concerns things that take a place in space and time. A location of a state of affairs in the spacetime system is defined by some coordinates that get things together. Corresponding relations have no place. They are reduced to connections supporting in the mind, as also was noticed by the author:

> Relations are probably in the mind, or, more up to date, they are no more than classes of ordered classes of things. (Armstrong 1997)

On the one hand there is a world composed of states of affairs, and on the other, there is a number of situations in which these could take place. Circumstances that are significant in such a multidimensional world constitute limits within of which relations hold true for this state of affairs. But as the author is doubting of dependence of these and formulates theirs general form it is the question of a possible world of states of affairs. Each state of affairs is a part of a possible world. At least formally it is granted that there are relations structuring it.

3. It is important to notice here that both standpoints presented above were not opposed in the sense of a discussion. The world of the Tractatus is defined as a projection of the realm of facts. A world of states of affairs of the same named book was an independent structure of the spacetime however based on the notion of Wittgenstein. This fleeting glance gives no more than a hypothesis of that the relations are only in language in which they are put on things. That does not mean real dependences between things based on the laws of nature. The case is that not every state of affairs can be a real one even it is possible to describe it. A proper description of the world would consist in an analysis of all the possible worlds that are a scope of human imagination as well as of all the things. But as it was rightly noticed by Armstrong it would be a great mistake.

It is interesting to inquire what tool is used to operate on different circumstances in which states of affairs appear. Obviously there are too many problems with the ordinary language. But not less there are with any formal one. Nevertheless a perfect one probably would never be invented a question should be asked in order to clear up a point. Does the world of states of affairs exist only in language if relations are universals?

In Wittgenstein it is clear that only such a world can be. And the general form of proposition makes it possible to see it in language. Or, more correctly, the language shows the world. It seems there is no other way to know its structure but to observe propositions. Whatever is the way of speaking about different conditions that define facts, relations can only be propositions describing dependences between entities.

The Australian philosopher proposes to consider states of affairs as truthmakers for truths, and also assumes their possible character in the way of representing the truth:

> To accept the need for a truthmaker is not, of course, to be automatically committed to states of affairs. It is to be formally committed to no more than to finding *something* that will make a truth true. But there seems to be no acceptable candidate for a truthmaker for statements that contingently link particulars to universals other than states of affairs. (Armstrong 1997)

Although there is a question what link is really possible in the matter (fundamental tie or not as it is argued by the author) relations are probably acceptable for the analysis of the very states of affairs. The world as a world of states of affairs is a linguistic construction of things that take places in the physical world. As it was noticed relations are entities with mental characteristics but facts are real ones in the same sense as the laws of nature. These define possible states of affairs that can be properly described by use of relations between them. Wittgenstein supposed independent states of affairs that would make possible worlds. Armstrong offered to take them as truthmakers for truths. To conclude it can be claimed an assumption of verification of trustworthiness of a state of affairs. If a state of affairs verifies its relation (in non-Wittgensteinian sense) with another one then it is true and vice versa. This is based on both accounts of states of affairs presented above: one of a logician and a factualist one.

Thus, there is a disjunction between the points of view of two philosophers. But there is also a conjunction that does not exclude interpreting facts and relations between them. The facts demand relations but these can present states of affairs themselves. Here is a conclusion of this essay: factual and relational (though not by contrast with each other) are double-sided model of the world. Investigation of it is a suitable mean for the investigation of the world as it is. The present paper is to contribute little clarification of the matter.

Literature

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