Wittgenstein in America

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dichotomy between science and interpretation, which allows each way of speaking to realize the possibilities of clarity and perspicuity appropriate to it, and which allows each conceptual problem to be solved with the tools that it calls for, in the language-game which is its proper home. Long ago, Peter Winch also pointed in the direction of such a possibility:

> The scientist, for instance, tries to make the world more intelligible; but so do the historian, the religious prophet, and the artist; so too does the philosopher . . . It is clear that in very many important ways, the objectives of each of them differ from the objectives of any of the others . . . [But] it does not follow from this that we are just punning when we speak of the activities of all these enquirers in terms of the notion of making things intelligible. That no more follows than does a similar conclusion with regard to the word 'game' when Wittgenstein shows us that there is no set of properties common and peculiar to all the activities correctly so called . . . On my view, then, the philosophy of science will be concerned with the kind of understanding sought and conveyed by the scientist; the philosophy of religion will be concerned with the way in which religion attempts to present an intelligible picture of the world; and so on . . . The purpose of such philosophical enquiries will be to contribute to our understanding of what is involved in the concept of intelligibility, so that we may better understand what it means to call reality intelligible.[17]

It is just such a conception of understanding, one which takes into account the unities and differences between its manifold forms, that Winch was centrally concerned to explicate, in various ways, throughout much of his writing. With affection and respect, we dedicate this volume to his memory.

[17] Winch, *The Idea of a Social Science and Its Relation to Philosophy* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1958), pp. 18–20.

I

Two Conceptions of *Die Überwindung der Metaphysik*

Carnap and Early Wittgenstein

James Conant

> For me personally, Wittgenstein was perhaps the philosopher who, besides Russell and Frege, had the greatest influence on my thinking.
>
> Rudolf Carnap, "Intellectual Autobiography"

> I cannot imagine that Carnap should have so completely and utterly misunderstood the last sentences of my book—and therefore the fundamental conception of the whole book.
>
> Ludwig Wittgenstein, letter to Moritz Schlick, 8 August 1932

This paper has two aims: first, to show that if most commentators on Wittgenstein are correct in the views that they attribute to Wittgenstein, then Carnap is a far more important philosopher (and one whose thought is far closer to that of Wittgenstein) than is generally acknowledged in such commentaries, and second, to suggest that the views that are thus attributed to Wittgenstein in such commentaries, although they are to be found in some of the writings of Carnap, are not to be found in the writings of Wittgenstein—not even those of early Wittgenstein.

In broadest outline, the sort of reading of Wittgenstein I have in mind might be put as follows: Wittgenstein seeks to show that the utterances of metaphysicians are nonsense by exposing them to be logically (or conceptually) *flawed*, where these flaws are to be traced to *specifiable infringements* upon the conditions of meaningful discourse. Put this broadly, the preceding summary can serve equally well as an outline of currently standard readings of Wittgenstein's early work or of his later work. If Wittgenstein's early work is under discussion, it will be said that these infringements arise through violations of "the principles of logical syntax"; if Wittgenstein's later work is under discussion, it will

be said that they arise through violations of "the rules of grammar." What such readings have in common is the idea that Wittgenstein seeks a method which would enable him (a) to expose the sentences of metaphysicians as *intrinsically* nonsensical, and (b) through the application of such a method to *demarcate* meaningful from meaningless discourse.

Such readings attribute to Wittgenstein a particular conception of nonsense—which I will call the *substantial conception of nonsense*. This conception of nonsense distinguishes between two different kinds of nonsense: mere nonsense and substantial nonsense. Mere nonsense is simply unintelligible—it expresses no thought. Substantial nonsense is composed of intelligible ingredients combined in an illegitimate way—it expresses a logically incoherent thought. According to the substantial conception, these two kinds of nonsense are logically distinct: the former is mere gibberish, whereas the latter involves (what commentators on the *Tractatus* are fond of calling) a "violation of logical syntax" or (what commentators on Wittgenstein's later work are fond of calling) a "violation of grammar." The substantial conception of nonsense can be contrasted with another conception of nonsense which I will call the *austere conception of nonsense*. According to the latter, mere nonsense is, from a logical point of view, the only kind of nonsense there is.

The two aims of this paper stated above can now be rearticulated as three: first, to show that Carnap's method of philosophical analysis presupposes the substantial conception of nonsense;[1] second, to argue that the method of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* can be understood only in the light of his commitment to an austere conception of nonsense;[2] third, to suggest that the *Tractatus* seeks to expose as a misunderstanding the very "understanding of the logic of our language" most commonly attributed to it.

CARNAP ON THE OVERCOMING OF METAPHYSICS THROUGH THE LOGICAL ANALYSIS OF LANGUAGE

Carnap repeatedly explicitly acknowledges that his understanding of the nature of metaphysics is enormously indebted to the *Tractatus* and

[1] I think that this is true of Carnap's work from *Der Logische Aufbau der Welt* on, but considerations of space dictate that I restrict my argument in this paper to a particular phase of Carnap's career.

[2] I think the same claim can be made with regard to the method of philosophical clarification practiced in Wittgenstein's later work, but considerations of space also preclude me from defending that claim here.

that he takes himself to be borrowing from (what he takes to be) ideas of the *Tractatus* in elaborating his own successive attempts to mount a critique of metaphysics.[3] Due to the considerable influence of Carnap's own ideas on several generations of analytic philosophers, subsequent commentators on the *Tractatus* have, often unknowingly, read Wittgenstein's work through Carnap's spectacles, construing the *Tractatus*'s often quite distinctive notions along more familiar Carnapian lines and importing additional Carnapian terminology to fill in the gaps in Wittgenstein's original exposition.

Before I attempt to illustrate this, it should be noted that, for the purposes of this essay, I am going to focus narrowly on one particular phase of Carnap's thought. Carnap's thought about metaphysics—about what metaphysics is, what gives rise to it, and what means should be employed to eliminate it—passes through at least[4] the following four broad phases: (1) the *Der Logische Aufbau der Welt* phase, (2) the (comparatively brief) verificationist phase, (3) the logical syntax phase, and (4) the semantic frameworks phase. As Carnap's own philosophical views evolve so does his understanding of what is most significant and enduring in Wittgenstein's contribution to philosophy. With the transition to each of these phases of his thought, Carnap's understanding both of the sources and of the proper mode of treatment of metaphysics undergoes, each time, a considerable evolution. Nonetheless, Carnap continues, throughout all four of these phases of his thought, to express considerable indebtedness to Wittgenstein—and, in particular, to Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*—not only for having shown that metaphysical problems are *Scheinprobleme*, but for having shown what kind of problems such problems are and how they are to be diagnosed and dissolved. Thus a comparison of the sort that this paper seeks to furnish—between Carnap's critique of metaphysics and that of the *Tractatus*—must not pretend to be able to treat Carnap's thought on these matters as a single homogeneous whole. One must distinguish between the various distinct *Tractatus*-inspired projects that Carnap pursues in the course of his career, and examine the relation between the *Tractatus* and each of these phases of Carnap's thought separately.

[3] That Carnap took his views on what metaphysics is and how it is to be overcome to be influenced by Wittgenstein is evident from his generous references and acknowledgments to the *Tractatus*. See e.g. *The Logical Structure of the World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), esp. pp. 290–2, 297–8); *The Logical Syntax of Language* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1937), esp. pp. 282–4); and "Intellectual Autobiography," in P. A. Schilpp, ed., *The Philosophy of Rudof Carnap* (Carbondale, Ill.: Open Court, 1963), esp. pp. 24–9, 45).

[4] This overview could be considerably refined: within each of these phases (especially the last), Carnap's philosophy undergoes further shifts in doctrine.

It would be an interesting project to trace the successive shifts in Carnap's view of what the *Tractatus* should be credited with having anticipated in each of his own successive understandings of the proper method of exposing and eliminating metaphysics. But that is not the project of the present paper. The aim of this paper is to exploit certain features of Carnap's misunderstanding of Wittgenstein as a foil to furthering our understanding of Wittgenstein. It will therefore suffice, for the comparatively limited purposes of this paper, if we confine ourselves to an examination of the third of the above phases of Carnap's thought—the logical syntax phase—and, primarily, to the earliest expression of that phase of his thought.[5] The three most important publications in this phase of Carnap's thought are "The Elimination of Metaphysics through the Logical Analysis of Language,"[6] *Philosophy and Logical Syntax*,[7] and *The Logical Syntax of Language*. All three of these works purport to be developing and applying the method of philosophical elucidation that Wittgenstein advanced in the *Tractatus*. There are, however, substantial differences of doctrine and method across these three closely allied works. In what follows, my references to Carnap will pertain only to his views in "The Elimination of Metaphysics through the Logical Analysis of Language," unless otherwise noted.

The word "elimination" in the title of Carnap's essay is Arthur Pap's translation of the German word *Überwindung*, which might be better translated "overcoming" or even "subjugation." In the final sentence of §6.54, it is said of the reader of the *Tractatus* that *er muß diese Sätze überwinden*: he must overcome [or defeat] these sentences[8]—the sentences which serve as elucidations in that book are, eventually, to be recognized by the reader as nonsense. How faithful an inheritance of Wittgenstein's project (to teach his reader to "overcome" the sentences of the *Tractatus*) is Carnap's project of "overcoming" metaphysics? In a footnote to the essay, Carnap writes: "For the logical and epistemological conception which underlies our exposition, but can only be briefly intimated here, cf. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*."[9] In order to begin to get a sense both of how Carnap takes his own views in this essay to derive from Wittgenstein and how standard readings of the *Tractatus* owe more than they think to Carnap's reading of that work, consider §4.003 of the *Tractatus*:

> Most propositions and questions, that have been written about philosophical matters, are not false, but nonsensical . . . Most questions and propositions of the philosophers result from the fact that we do not understand the logic of our language.[10]

On what has become the standard interpretation of the *Tractatus*, this passage is interpreted to mean (1) that "the nonsensical pseudo-propositions of the philosophers" are nonsensical because they "violate the

[5] As already indicated, Carnap, throughout this phase, took himself to be following Wittgenstein's lead: "It was Wittgenstein who first exhibited the close connection between the logic of science (or 'philosophy', as he calls it) and syntax . . . He has shown that all the so-called sentences of metaphysics are nonsense" (*The Logical Syntax of Language*, p. 282n).

[6] "The Elimination of Metaphysics through the Logical Analysis of Language" (henceforth EMLAL), trans. Arthur Pap; collected in A. J. Ayer, ed., *Logical Positivism* (New York: Macmillan, 1959), pp. 59–81. I have occasionally amended Pap's translations. References to the original German are to "Überwindung der Metaphysik durch logische Analyse der Sprache" [henceforth ÜMLAS], *Erkenntnis*, 2 (1932): 219–41.

[7] First published in 1935; repr. Bristol: Thoemmes, 1997.

[8] Carnap thus, interestingly, seizes upon and takes up into the title of his essay the very word (from the closing lines of the *Tractatus*) which—once translated into English or French—has often been seized upon by commentators to advocate a reading of the *Tractatus* diametrically opposed to Carnap's own. Pears and McGuinness translate *überwinden* as "transcend," thus inviting (what I call in "The Method of the *Tractatus*") *the ineffability interpretation* of the work—an invitation which is reinforced through their translation of *schweigen* in the next sentence (which calls merely for silence) as an injunction to the reader to "to *pass over* [something] in silence" (see "The Method of the *Tractatus*," in Eric H. Reck, ed., *From Frege to Wittgenstein: Perspectives on Early Analytic Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). These mistranslations are mirrored in Gilles-Gaston Granger's French translation of the *Tractatus* (Paris: Gallimard, 1993) in which *überwinden* is rendered *dépasser* ("to go beyond") and *schweigen* is rendered *garder le silence* ("to keep silent" [in the sense of *observing* a rule of silence]). These translations are philosophically consequential: talk of "transcending" or "going beyond" only makes sense where there is a *beyond*, and talk of "passing [something] over in silence" or "guarding one's silence [with respect to something]" only makes sense where *breaking* one's silence is a possibility. My aim in noting these consequential features of certain standard translations of the *Tractatus* is not to give aid and comfort to Carnap's reading of the work, but merely to prepare the way for the claim that these translations foreclose the reading of the text for which this essay as a whole is concerned to make room—a reading according to which the work as a whole aims to show that such "transcendence" of "the limits of language" (of the sort which these translations invite us to imagine is possible) is revealed to be a putative description of a possible state of affairs upon which we have failed to confer a *Sinn*, thus revealing that (as Wittgenstein's Preface puts it) "what lies on the other side of the [supposed] limit will be *einfach Unsinn*."

[9] EMLAL, p. 69n.

[10] The whole passage runs as follows:

> Most propositions and questions, that have been written about philosophical matters, are not false, but nonsensical. We cannot, therefore, answers questions of this kind at all, but only determine their nonsensicality. Most questions and propositions of the philosophers result from the fact that we do not understand the logic of our language.
>
> (They are of the same kind as the question whether the Good is more or less identical than the Beautiful.)
>
> And so it is not to be wondered at that the deepest problems are no problems. (§4.003)

rules of logical syntax," (2) that this is what philosophers need to be brought to see about their pseudo-propositions, (3) that this requires that they be instructed in logical syntax (so as to be able to identify such violations), and hence (4) that "the misunderstanding of the logic of our language" which is the source of the confusions of philosophers is to be traced to their present inability to identify such violations. This (standard) interpretation of the *Tractatus* is broadly Carnapian: it takes the Tractarian project of uncovering *nonsense* (*Unsinn*) to be a project of uncovering instances of substantial nonsense, it takes Tractarian *logical syntax* to be a combinatorial theory governing the legitimate employment of signs or symbols, and it takes Tractarian *elucidation* to consist in the specification of ill-formed sequences of signs or symbols. In the following pages we will be concerned to recover the original sense of each of these three pieces of Tractarian terminology—'nonsense', 'logical syntax', 'elucidation'—each of which has, due to the Carnapian inflection it has acquired, become all but inaudible to the ears of contemporary commentary. We will proceed by examining the senses of each of the terms as they respectively figure in the Carnapian and Tractarian projects of *Überwindung der Metaphysik*.[11]

Let us begin with Carnap on *nonsense*. Carnap distinguishes two kinds of *unsinnige* pseudo-propositions:

(i) those which contain a meaningless word or words;
(ii) those which contain only meaningful words, but put together in such a way that no meaning results.[12]

I will refer to these as *type (i) nonsense* and *type (ii) nonsense* respectively. Metaphysical nonsense, Carnap thinks, can occasionally be traced to an unwitting attraction to type (i) nonsense. He speculates that some stretches of metaphysical discourse about "God" are of this sort. They involve a simple failure to settle on any specific meaning for

[11] I have no wish to deny that EMLAL contains a number of ideas that represent a self-conscious effort on Carnap's part to depart from (what he takes to be) Wittgenstein's teaching. My discussion of Carnap's essay will be intentionally and unscrupulously partial, focusing only on those aspects of its doctrine which rhyme with aspects of accepted interpretations of the *Tractatus*.

[12] Here is Carnap on the two kinds of pseudo-statements:

> There are . . . those pseudo-statements which contain a meaningless word. But there is also a second kind of pseudo-statement. They consist of meaningful words, but the words are put together in such a way that nevertheless no meaning results. The syntax of a language specifies which combinations of words are admissible and which inadmissible. The grammatical syntax of natural languages, however, does not fulfill the task of elimination of senseless combinations of words in all cases. (EMLAL, p. 67)

the term 'God'. In such cases, the metaphysician, in point of fact, simply does not know what he means by 'God' but nonetheless continues to employ the term under the impression that it does have a definite and familiar meaning.[13] The tools of logical syntax only play an indirect role in the exposure of type (i) nonsense. Such an employment of the term 'God' can be seen to be nonsense from the fact that it fails to satisfy "the first requirement of logic": the requirement that one be able to specify how it occurs meaningfully in elementary statements of the form "x is a God." The diagnosis and cure of type (i) nonsense does not require any detailed attention to the *logical structure* of the speaker's propositions; and, indeed, strictly speaking, type (i) nonsense has no (fully) determinate logical syntax. All that is required to "overcome metaphysics" in such a case is to bring the speaker to realize that she is unable to provide a specification of the meaning of the word in question.

Carnap is of the view that an unwitting attraction to type (i) nonsense accounts for a certain portion of the pseudo-statements of metaphysicians. But, more often, a metaphysician does know what she means by each of her words. When a speaker is able to specify what each of her words mean (i.e. how it occurs in elementary propositions), and yet sense fails to result from the combination of her words, then the source of the failure is to be traced (not to an absence of meaning on the part of one of the constituents of her propositions, but rather) to the illicit character of the combination—to its being a case of type (ii) nonsense. Type (i) nonsense is mere nonsense; it is literally unintelligible: it contains (at a point where something with meaning should be) a void. Type (ii) nonsense is substantial nonsense; it is not literally unintelligible: we know what each of the parts of the proposition mean—the trouble lies with the composite which they form. Carnap thinks it is often not evident to speakers of a natural language that type (ii) sequences are meaningless because the sequences in question do not violate the excessively permissive combinatorial rules of ordinary grammar. Their accord with the rules of ordinary grammar *masks from view* their true underlying character. The point of translating a type (ii)

[13] Carnap is not of the view that *all* discourse involving the term 'God' is of this sort. He distinguishes (EMLAL, pp. 66–7) between four sorts of usage: (1) type (i) nonsense; (2) the *mythological* usage—in which 'God' has a determinate meaning, occurs in empirically verifiable statements, and refers to a kind of physical being with specifiable properties whose possibility and existence is a possible topic of scientific inquiry; (3) the *theological* usage which involves an oscillation between uses (1) and (2); and (4) cases in which a definition of 'God' is furnished but involves type (ii) nonsense.

sequence of words into logical notation is to bring to the surface what natural-language syntax obscures from view.

In the case of type (i) nonsense, what is classified as nonsense is, strictly speaking, not a grammatical or logical unit of a language, but a mere mark on paper (or noise) or sequence of marks (or noises). What about the case of type (ii) nonsense? *What* is here classified as nonsense—a string of marks (or noises) or what the string of words says (something with semantic content)? In the third paragraph of his essay, Carnap writes:

> In saying that the so-called statements [*Sätze*] of metaphysics are *meaningless*, we intend this word in its strictest sense . . . In the strict sense . . . a sequence of words [*Wortreihe*] is *meaningless* if it does not, within a specified language, constitute a statement [*gar keinen Satz bildet*]. It may happen that such a sequence of words looks like a statement [*Satz*] at first glance; in that case we call it a *pseudo-statement* [*Scheinsatz*]. Our thesis, now, is that logical analysis reveals the alleged statements [*Sätze*] of metaphysics to be pseudo-statements [*Scheinsätze*].[14]

There are two possible readings of this passage. I will call them the *weaker reading* and the *stronger reading* respectively. In the quotation above, I have presented the text of Arthur Pap's translation of this passage. Pap's translation, on the whole, encourages the weaker reading. Thus translated, the passage might appear to claim that the problem with metaphysical propositions is that, given what they mean, they fail to *assert* anything—they fall short of being *statements*. This would suggest that the class of ("sequences of words" properly classified as) "propositions" is wider than that of "statements." We see what the parts of the metaphysician's statement mean, but they do not add up to a coherent whole and *therefore* fail to state anything. Some propositions have what it takes to be a statement, some do not; metaphysical propositions are of this latter sort. Carnap's original German seems, however, to invite a stronger reading. Carnap (in the original German) appears to wish to claim that the so-called "propositions" (*Sätze*) of metaphysics are not even propositions; they are only apparent propositions (*Scheinsätze*)—mere strings of words masquerading as propositions. When Carnap says that they are meaningless, he "intend[s] this word in its strictest sense"; and the import of this would appear to be that, in the strict sense, only "a sequence of words" (*Wortreihe*) can be meaningless—not a proposition. A sequence of words is meaningless, if, within some specified language, it fails so much as to form a proposition (*gar keinen Satz bildet*). Metaphysics appears to consist of propositions, but they are only apparent propositions; and an apparent proposition is not a kind of proposition at all.

[14] EMLAL, p. 61.

This is one of a number of passages in (the original German version of) Carnap's essay that invite the stronger reading more readily than the weaker reading. If Carnap, in the course of his essay, resolutely adhered to what the stronger reading of this passage takes him to be saying, then he would be espousing the austere conception of nonsense. It is central to the teaching of the *Tractatus* that it is extraordinarily difficult to succeed in being resolute in this matter. Carnap does not succeed. His irresoluteness is, however, both philosophically instructive (about the shortcomings of any program of philosophical critique which resembles Carnap's) and exegetically illuminating (as to why Wittgenstein's own method of philosophical elucidation in the *Tractatus* differs so radically from that of Carnap).

This brings us to Carnap on *logical syntax*. The syntax of a language, for Carnap, specifies which combinations of words are admissible and which are not. The syntax of a natural language allows for the formation of type (ii) nonsense—sequences of words which are meaningless because of the incompatible meanings of the words involved. In the case of type (ii) nonsense, the meaninglessness of the combination is to be traced to what Carnap calls "a violation of *logical* syntax" or, alternatively, "*logically* counter-syntactic formation." Such formations can be demonstrated to be irremediably flawed as vehicles for the expression of thought. Now how is this to be understood? This, too, admits of a weaker and a stronger reading. On the weaker reading, there are certain kinds of thought—logically incoherent thoughts—which cannot be expressed in a proper logical syntax. These thoughts have a logical structure, but the sort of structure that they have renders them incapable of being either true or false. They therefore belong to a logically defective species of thought. On the stronger reading, there are no logically incoherent thoughts—a logically incoherent "thought" is not a kind of thought at all. Only that which can be represented in a proper logical syntax can be thought. What we (are tempted to) refer to as "a logically incoherent thought" is really a form of words that gives merely apparent expression to a thought.

Neither the weaker nor the stronger reading taken by itself can suffice as a reading of Carnap's essay. Carnap wants to be able—needs to be able—to have it both ways.

Carnap, in order further to clarify what kind of a thing "a violation of logical syntax" is, introduces (what is alleged to be) a concrete example of one. Here is Carnap's discussion of his example:

Let us take as examples the following sequences of words:

1. "Caesar us and"
2. "Caesar is a prime number"

The word sequence (1) is formed countersyntactically; the rules of syntax require that the third position be occupied, not by a conjunction, but by a predicate, hence by a noun (with article) or by an adjective. The word sequence "Caesar is a general", e.g., is formed in accordance with the rules of syntax. It is a meaningful word sequence, a genuine sentence. But, now, word sequence (2) is likewise syntactically correct, for it has the same grammatical form as the sentence just mentioned. Nevertheless (2) is meaningless. "Prime number" is a predicate of numbers; it can be neither affirmed nor denied of a person. Since (2) looks like a statement yet is not a statement, does not assert anything, expresses neither a true nor a false proposition, we call this word sequence a "pseudo-statement". The fact that the rules of grammatical syntax are not violated easily seduces one at first glance into the erroneous opinion that one still has to do with a statement, albeit a false one. But "a is a prime number" is false if and only if a is divisible by a natural number different from a and from 1; evidently it is illicit to put here "Caesar" for "a". This example has been so chosen that the nonsense is easily detectable. Many so-called statements of metaphysics are not so easily recognized to be pseudo-statements. The fact that natural languages allow the formation of meaningless sequences of words without violating the rules of grammar, indicates that grammatical syntax is, from a logical point of view, inadequate.[15]

We are offered two "sentences" here: (1) "Caesar us and" and (2) "Caesar is a prime number." The first is an example of something that is not even well formed by the lights of the syntax of natural language; the latter is well formed by those lights but nonetheless involves a violation of (the more stringent principles of a proper) logical syntax. In considering the example which Carnap himself here offers of a violation of logical syntax—"Caesar is a prime number"[16]—what kind of a thing are we meant to be considering? Are we meant to be considering a mere sequence of words or what this sequence of words says? Carnap's interest here is evidently not confined to the words considered as mere marks on paper. He wants us to consider this as a sequence each of whose constituents has a determinate meaning. He wants to say that in ordinary language it is possible to form the nonsensical sentence (c) by combining the underlined portions of the (meaningful) propositions (a) and (b) below:

[15] EMLAL, pp. 67–8.

[16] This is by no means an uncontroversial example of nonsense: Frege would have regarded it not as nonsensical, but as simply false.

(a) *Caesar* crossed the Rubicon (b) 53 *is a prime number*

(c) *Caesar is a prime number*

About this example Carnap wants to say that it is nonsense, but not that it is type (i) nonsense. The resulting nonsense is not due to the absence of meaning on the part of some word or words, but rather to precisely the meanings that the words already have: meanings which clash with one another when imported into this context. It is supposed to be an example of a kind of nonsense which is due to the way in which the meanings of the parts of the sentence fail to fit together so as to make sense.

What we have here is alleged by Carnap to be a case of *fully determinate* nonsense: (1) it is *logically distinct* from other fully determinate cases of substantial nonsense; (2) each of the "parts" of this proposition has a *fully determinate sense*; and (3) though the sense of the resulting whole is flawed, it is a flawed in a *determinately specifiable respect*—it involves a determinate kind of failure of significance (whereas other cases of substantial nonsense each involve some other equally determinate "violation" of the principles of logical syntax). That we have here to do with a logically determinate example of nonsense can be seen from the fact that the grammatical/syntactical formation-rules of other natural languages, unlike a properly logical syntax, are thought by Carnap equally to permit the construction of *this* substantially nonsensical sentence—that is, they permit the formation of a string which can be said to correspond in the sort of flawed sense it possesses to this one. Thus Carnap's German example of type (ii) nonsense can be translated into English in such a way that the English counterpart can be said to have the same (flawed) "sense" as Carnap's original German example. The determinately specifiable respect in which Carnap's case of substantial nonsense possesses a (flawed) "sense" is the following: it represents "an attempt" to put *that* proper name for a person into *that* argument place where only a numerical expression will fit. But it won't fit—thus we get nonsense; not mere nonsense, but a special variety of nonsense which arises from attempting to do something logically impossible. Carnap, in taking himself to be building upon the ideas of the *Tractatus*, here implicitly attributes to the *Tractatus* an idea which many others have explicitly attributed to it. Moreover, it is the very idea that, as we shall see, that work is most concerned to criticize: the idea that we can so much as try to put a logical item into an argument place in which it doesn't fit—the idea that we can have a proposition that has a fully determinate kind of sense but the kind of sense that it has is nonsense.

EARLY WITTGENSTEIN'S DISTINCTION BETWEEN SIGN AND SYMBOL

Here are the first two of Frege's three principles (which he presents at the beginning of his *Grundlagen der Arithmetik*):

[1] always to separate sharply the psychological from the logical, the subjective from the objective;

[2] never to ask for the meaning of a word in isolation, but only in the context of a proposition.

The methodological import of these principles is developed in the *Tractatus* through the claim that in ordinary language it is often the case that the same sign symbolizes in different ways. The distinction between sign and symbol as it is drawn in the *Tractatus* is introduced as part of the commentary on §3.3, which is the *Tractatus*'s reformulation of Frege's second principle.[17] Section 3.3 runs as follows: "Only the proposition has sense; only in the context of a proposition has a name meaning." Then, beginning immediately thereafter (with §3.31), comes the following commentary:

Every part of a proposition which characterizes its sense I call an expression (a symbol).

(The proposition itself is an expression.)

Everything essential to their sense that propositions can have in common with one another is an expression.

An expression is the mark of a form and a content.

An expression presupposes the forms of all propositions in which it can occur. It is the common characteristic mark of a class of propositions. (§§3.31–3.311)

An expression has meaning only in a proposition. (§3.314)

I conceive the proposition—like Frege and Russell—as a function of the expressions contained in it. (§3.318)

The sign is that in the symbol which is perceptible by the senses. (§3.32)

Two different symbols can therefore have the sign (the written sign or the sound sign) in common—they then signify in different ways. (§3.321)

[17] I say "reformulation of Frege's second principle" (rather than restatement of it) because the *Tractatus* is concerned to refashion Frege's distinction between *Sinn* and *Bedeutung*. Section 3.3 is worded as it is precisely in order to mark a departure from Frege in this regard. In the following discussion, I will ignore this difference in Frege's and Wittgenstein's understandings of the context principle.

It can never indicate the common characteristic of two objects that we symbolize them with the same signs but by different *methods of symbolizing*. For the sign is arbitrary.

We could therefore equally well choose two different signs [to symbolize the two different objects] and where then would remain that which the signs shared in common? (§3.322)

The point of the commentary is in part to clarify the notion of 'proposition' which figures in the context principle (only the *proposition* has sense; only in the context of a *proposition* has a name meaning).[18] The relevant notion is one of a certain kind of a symbol—not a certain kind of a sign—something which only has life in language.[19] The sign,

[18] A number of commentators have attributed to the *Tractatus* the view that a special mental act (of intending to mean a particular object by a particular word) is what endows a name with meaning (see e.g. P. M. S. Hacker, *Insight and Illusion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 73–80; Max Black, *A Companion to Wittgenstein's Tractatus* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1982), pp. 114–22; Norman Malcolm, *Nothing is Hidden: Wittgenstein's Criticisms of His Early Thought* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), pp. 63–82. There is, however, no reference anywhere in the *Tractatus* to a distinct act of meaning (through which a *Bedeutung* is conferred on a sign). The passage from the *Tractatus* most commonly adduced to provide a semblance of textual support for this psychologistic attribution is §3.11, which Pears and McGuinness translate as follows: "The method of projection is to think of the sense of the proposition." So translated, this remark can be taken to refer to an act of thinking and to ascribe an explanatory role to such an act. The Ogden translation is more faithful: "The method of projection is the thinking of the sense of the proposition." Rush Rhees glosses this (quite properly, I think) as: "The method of projection is what we mean by 'thinking' or 'understanding' the sense of the proposition." Rhees comments: "Pears and McGuinness read it [i.e. §3.11] . . . as though the remark were to explain the expression 'method of projection' . . . [On the contrary], 'projection', which is a logical operation, is . . . to explain '*das Denken des Satz-Sinnes*'. The '*ist*' after '*Projektionsmethode*' might have been italicized" (*Discussions of Wittgenstein* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970), p. 39). Rhees's point here is that the last sentence of §3.11 has the same structure as e.g. the last sentence of §3.316: the explanans is on the left and the explanandum on the right—not the other way around. (Acknowledging the justice of Rhees's criticism, and finding it more natural in English to place the explanandum on the left, McGuinness later recanted his and Pears's original translation of §3.11 and proposed the following translation instead: "Thinking the sense of the proposition is the method of projection." McGuinness then goes on to offer the following lucid summary of the actual point of the passage: "Thinking the sense into the proposition is nothing other than so using the words of the sentence that their logical behaviour is that of the desired proposition": "On the So-Called Realism of the *Tractatus*," in Irving Block, ed., *Perspectives on the Philosophy of Wittgenstein* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1981), pp. 69–70.) The point being made here in the work about "thinking" is an illustration of a general feature of Wittgenstein's method. What the *Tractatus* does throughout is explicate putatively psychological explananda in terms of logical explanantes. The Malcolm/Black/Hacker reading of §3.11 takes Wittgenstein to be explaining one of the central logical notions of the book in terms of a psychological notion, thus utterly missing the way Wittgenstein here takes himself to be elaborating and building upon Frege's first two principles.

[19] Although the notion of *Satz* which figures in the context principle (only the *Satz* has sense; only in the context of a *Satz* has a name meaning) is of a certain kind of a

Wittgenstein says, "is that in the symbol which is perceptible by the senses" (what is now sometimes called the sign design). The symbol is a logical unit, it expresses something which propositions—as opposed to propositional signs—have in common.[20] Once transposed into a proper logical notation, it would be manifest which of the following three propositions have a propositional symbol in common:

(a) Socrates was bald.
(b) Socrates, who taught Plato, was bald.
(c) A philosopher whose teacher was Socrates was bald.

It would become clear, from the manner in which these three propositional symbols were expressed in the notation, that (a) and (b) have a propositional symbol in common (though they have no three-word sequence in common), and that (a) and (c) have no propositional symbol in common (despite their having the sequence of words 'Socrates was bald' in common). Taken together, (a) and (b) furnish an example of how in ordinary language different sequences of signs can have the symbol in common; and, taken together, (a) and (c) furnish an example of how in ordinary language the same sequence of signs can have no symbol in common, and thus how the same signs can belong to different symbols. Wittgenstein comments on these features of ordinary language:

symbol, the term 'Satz' in the *Tractatus* floats between meaning (1) a propositional symbol (as e.g. in §§3.3ff and §§4ff) and (2) a propositional sign (as e.g. in §§5.473 and §6.54). It is important to the method of the *Tractatus* that the recognition that certain apparent cases of (1) are merely cases of (2) be a recognition that the reader achieve on his own. Consequently, at certain junctures, the method of the *Tractatus* requires that the reference of *Satz* remain provisionally neutral as between (1) and (2).

[20] Wittgenstein's notion of an expression or symbol (that which is common to a set of propositions)—as opposed to a sign (that which is common to what Frege calls forms of words)—builds on Frege's idea that what determines the logical segmentation of a sentence are the inferential relations which obtain between the judgment that the sentence expresses and other judgments. *Language* (*Sprache*) is Wittgenstein's term for the totality of such propositional symbols; and *logical space* is his term for the resulting overall network of inferential relations within which each of these propositional symbols has its life. Sections 4–4.001 build on the notion of *Satz* qua *propositional symbol* developed in §§3.31ff. ("The thought is the *sinnvolle Satz*. The totality of *Sätze* is the language.") *Language* (*Sprache*) in the *Tractatus* refers to the totality of *possible* propositional symbols. One might think of this as Wittgenstein's attempting to follow Frege's example (in his exchange with Kerry about concepts) by "keeping to the strictly logical use" of a word, here the word 'language'. It is trivially true, if one employs this idiom, that *there is only one language*—though there are, of course, countless alternative systems of signs which may differ widely from one another in their respective expressive powers (and thus in how much and which aspects of *die Sprache* they are each able to express).

In the language of everyday life it very often happens that the same word signifies in two different ways—and therefore belongs to two different symbols—or that two words, which signify in different ways, are apparently applied in the same way in the proposition.

Thus the word "is" appears as the copula, as the sign of equality, and as the expression of existence; "to exist" as an intransitive verb like "to go"; "identical" as an adjective; we speak of *something* but also of the fact of *something* happening.

(In the proposition "Green is green"—where the first word is a proper name and the last an adjective—these words have not merely different meanings but they are *different symbols*.) (§3.323)

It is worth elaborating how Wittgenstein's example in the last paragraph illustrates the point of the first paragraph of §3.323. The propositional sign "Green is green" can be naturally taken as symbolizing in any of three different ways[21]—and hence can be understood as an expression for any one of three different thoughts:

(a) Mr. Green is green	Gg
(b) Mr. Green is Mr. Green	g = g
(c) The color green is the color green	$(\forall x)\,(Gx \Leftrightarrow Gx)$

One way of noticing how the same sign symbolizes differently in each of these three cases is to focus on the word 'is'. In each of the propositions expressing each of these three different thoughts, the sign 'is' symbolizes a different logical relation. In (a), the sign 'is' symbolizes the copula (a relation between a concept and an object); in (b) we have the 'is' of identity (a relation between objects); in (c), we have the 'is' of coextensionality (a relation between concepts).[22] In the ordinary language

[21] The ensuing exposition of this example only really works if we assume all the letters of the sentence to be capitalized so that we have no orthographic clues as to when the expression 'GREEN' is being used as the proper name of a person and when as a concept expression.

[22] The sequence of (a), (b), and (c) nicely brings out a further asymmetry between sign and symbol. In the rendition of (b) into logical notation, we might think of the sign '=' as corresponding to the sign 'is' in the ordinary language version of (b); that is, we might think of these two signs ('=', 'is') as symbolizing the same relation (the relation of identity). But in the rendition of (a) into logical notation, there is no candidate for a sign that corresponds to 'is'—there is here nothing which is *the* sign which symbolizes the copula. The *Tractatus* draws five morals from this: (M_1) a method of symbolizing is not simply a matter of a sign *naming* an item of a particular logical category; (M_2) a symbol is expressed not simply through a sign but through *a mode of arrangement* of signs; (M_3) not every logically significant aspect of a mode of arrangement of signs corresponds to an argument place (into which a different sign can be substituted); (M_4) it is not the case that each method of symbolizing requires the employment of a distinct sign to express the method of symbolizing (a method of symbolizing can be expressed through a mode of arrangement of signs, such as the method of symbolizing the copula

version of (a)—"where the first word is a proper name and the last an adjective"—'green' can be seen to be not merely ambiguous with respect to its meaning (the way 'bank' is in "The bank is on the left bank"), but ambiguous with respect to its logical type: "these words have not merely different meanings but they are *different symbols*." The point of the example is to show us that we cannot gather from the notation of ordinary language how a given sign (e.g. 'green', or 'is') symbolizes in a given instance. Wittgenstein suddenly follows this example with the observation: "Thus there easily arise the most fundamental confusions (of which the whole of philosophy is full)" (§3.324). In a proper *Begriffsschrift*, a different sign would express each of these "different methods of symbolizing," thus enabling us to identify the sources of certain confusions. In §3.325, Wittgenstein immediately goes on to say that in order "to avoid such errors" we require a symbolism which obeys the rules of *logical* grammar.

In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein argues that there will always be room for a question as to whether a given sign, when it occurs in two different sentences of ordinary language, is symbolizing the same way in each of those occurrences. And this question cannot be settled simply by appealing to the fact that the same word (sign) ordinarily occurs (symbolizes) as a name;[23] nor by appealing to the fact that if I were asked what I meant when I uttered one of those sentences I would reply that I meant the word in the same sense as I have on other occasions; nor by appealing to the fact that I, on this occasion of utterance, exert a special effort to mean the word in the same way as before. How can this question be settled? Wittgenstein says: "In order to recognize the symbol in the sign we must consider the context of significant use" (§3.326). We must ask ourselves on what occasion we would utter this sentence and what, in that context of use, we would then mean by it.[24]

in modern logical notation); (M_5) for certain methods of symbolizing, the employment of a distinct sign is required.

[23] This is not to claim that it is possible to understand a sentence, if none of its constituent signs symbolize in the same manner in which they symbolize in other sentences. (Hence *Tractatus*, §4.03: "A proposition must use old expressions to communicate new senses.") It is only to claim that not *all* of the constituent signs must symbolize in a precedented fashion. But an unprecedented usage of a sign will only be intelligible if the constituent signs which symbolize in the "old" manner determine a possible segmentation of the propositional sign—where such a segmentation specifies both (1) the logical role of the sign which symbolizes in an unprecedented manner and (2) the position of the resulting propositional symbol in logical space.

[24] One standard way of contrasting early and later Wittgenstein is to say that later Wittgenstein rejected his earlier (allegedly truth-conditional) account of meaning—on which considerations of use have no role to play in fixing the meaning of an expression—in favor of (what gets called) "a use theory of meaning." Our brief examination of §3.326 should already make one wary of such a story. The popularity of this story rests largely on an additional piece of potted history, according to which the *Tractatus* advances the doctrine that it is possible (and indeed, according to most readings, semantically necessary) to fix the meanings of names prior to and independently of their use in propositions (either through ostensive definition or through some special mental act which endows a name with meaning; see n. 18). This putative teaching of the *Tractatus* is standardly taken to be the primary target of the opening sections of *Philosophical Investigations*. But the whole point of §3.3–3.344 of the *Tractatus* is that the identity of the object referred to by a name is only fixed by the use of the name in a set of significant (*sinnvolle*) propositions. An appeal to use thus already plays a critical role in Wittgenstein's early account of what determines both the meaning of a proposition as a whole and the meanings of each of its "parts." With respect to this topic, the opening sections of *Philosophical Investigations* are properly seen as recasting and extending a critique of Russellian doctrines already begun in the *Tractatus*.

CARNAP ON HEIDEGGER

We are now ready to look at Carnap's conception of *elucidation*. Carnap furnishes a detailed example of how the elucidation and elimination of metaphysical nonsense is supposed to proceed. Carnap takes a passage from Heidegger as his illustration. Heidegger's text allegedly furnishes a particularly vivid case of type (ii) nonsense. Indeed, it is adduced as a *typical* case of type (ii) metaphysical nonsense—one ripe for the application of Carnap's method. Hence Carnap remarks: "We could just as well have selected passages from any other of the numerous metaphysicians of the present or the past; yet the selected passages seem to us to illustrate our thesis especially well."[25] Could Carnap just as well have selected passages from any other of the numerous metaphysicians of the present or the past? And does the passage selected from Heidegger illustrate Carnap's thesis regarding the syntactically ill-formed character of metaphysical utterances?

Here is the text of the Heidegger passage as Carnap presents it:

> What is to be investigated is Being only and—*nothing* else; Being alone and further—*nothing*; solely Being, and beyond Being *nothing . . . Does the Nothing exist only because the Not, i.e. Negation, exists?* Or is it the other way around? *Does Negation and the Not exist only because the Nothing exists?* . . . We assert: *the Nothing is prior to the Not and the Negation* . . . Where do we seek the Nothing? How do we find the Nothing . . . We know the Nothing . . . *Anxiety reveals the Nothing* . . . That for which and because of which we were anxious, was 'really'—nothing. Indeed, the Nothing itself—as such—was present . . . *What about this Nothing?—The Nothing itself nothings.*[26]

[25] EMLAL, p. 69n.

[26] I have (except for capitalizing the word "Being") reproduced Pap's translation of this passage as it occurs in EMLAL, p. 69 (Carnap's emphases). For reasons which will become clear, it should be noted that Heidegger's last sentence contains a neologism and thus would be more faithfully rendered into English by something that contained an

What basis does Carnap have for suspecting these statements of Heidegger's of being nonsense? One suspects that what initially brought them under a cloud of suspicion is that they are not obviously even *grammatically* well formed. The same word ('nothing') which ordinarily signifies a particle (used to form negative existential statements) appears in this text sometimes in the grammatical role of a substantive, sometimes in that of a verb. Carnap introduces the example by saying: "Let us now take a look at some examples of metaphysical pseudo-statements of a kind where the violation of logical syntax is especially obvious, though they accord with historical-grammatical syntax."[27] This nicely summarizes the two features that Carnap wants his example simultaneously to possess: first, it is well formed by the lights of ordinary grammatical syntax; second, it is comparatively obvious nonetheless that it is ill formed by the lights of a proper logical syntax. But the worry that immediately comes to mind is that the example manages to possess the second feature to the conveniently glaring degree that it does precisely because it does not possess the first. Carnap therefore goes to some lengths to attempt to demonstrate that the word 'nothing' sometimes occurs in sentences of ordinary language in a manner which might lead one to mistake it for a noun. Carnap even furnishes the reader with an elaborate chart which purports to demonstrate how someone might be misled by features of surface grammar into thinking that he was employing the word 'nothing' in a grammatically unobjectionable manner when, in reality, employing it in the logically illicit manner of a Heidegger. To mention only one of the countless problems with this "demonstration," it overlooks the fact that the syntax of ordinary German marks the distinction Carnap claims it fails to track: in order to employ a term as a substantive in German one has to capitalize it (and thus employ a term which is orthographically distinct from a term which denotes a logical particle); and Heidegger, in the proper fashion, in accordance with ordinary grammatical syntax, clearly distinguishes between his substantival and non-

expression which is not itself an English word but which nonetheless manages to offer the appearance of being a verbal form of 'nothing' conjugated in the third person singular—e.g. "The nothing itself noths." Though Pap's translation of the Heidegger passage is also in other respects atrocious (failing, for example, even to distinguish between *Sein* and *Seiende*), I have left the passage in this form, as it is in this form that it has achieved its considerable notoriety among anglophone philosophers, and to make clear that my concern here is solely with Carnap's analysis of Heidegger's passage and not with the interpretation of Heidegger per se. Indeed, nothing I say in this essay should be taken to endorse a particular reading of any one of the passages from Heidegger quoted by Carnap.

[27] EMLAL, p. 69.

substantival uses of the terms 'nichts' and 'das Nichts' in his text. But even if one takes Carnap's analysis to be sound as far as it goes, it still remains hard to see how Heidegger's text is supposed to furnish an illustration of Carnap's theory. Reading through this remarkably peculiar passage from Heidegger, one ought to be moved to expostulate: *this* is supposed to be an example of how metaphysical nonsense remains *undetected* until brought to the surface through the application of the principles of logical syntax? Whatever one thinks of its independent merits, Carnap's elaborate analysis of the different contexts in which the term 'nothing' can occur in ordinary language is scarcely credible as an account of how Heidegger is led to employ the word 'nothing' as he does here. It won't do to say of Heidegger's sentences that "the fact that the rules of the grammatical syntax of ordinary language are not violated [is what] seduces one into the erroneous opinion that one still has to do with a statement."[28] Such a diagnosis would be blind to the stunningly virtuosic character of Heidegger's employment of the word, even when judged by the allegedly comparatively permissive lights of ordinary grammatical syntax. This virtuosity renders Heidegger's text utterly unsuitable as an example of that of which it was allegedly introduced as an example: the surreptitious misuse of language. It is hard to credit the hypothesis that the author of this text has been led astray by the surface grammar of ordinary language; for precisely what puzzles and challenges us in Heidegger's assertions is their peculiar surface grammar. The disclosure that language is under some extraordinary pressure in this text does not wait on the application of the principles of logical syntax. Heidegger is evidently speaking here in an unusual way: openly forcing his reader to reflect on how his words are meant.

Carnap's analysis clings nonetheless to the supposition that Heidegger's words are employed by him in nothing other than their usual senses. The problem then becomes one of seeing how it is that this author *could* imagine that he was employing the words in their usual senses. Carnap sees this problem. Here is his first line of response:

> In view of the gross logical errors which we find [in Heidegger's text] . . ., we might be led to conjecture that perhaps the word "nothing" has in Heidegger's treatise a meaning entirely different from the customary one. And this presumption is further strengthened as we go on to read there that anxiety reveals the Nothing, that the Nothing itself is present as such in anxiety. For here the word "nothing" seems to refer to a certain emotional constitution, possibly of a religious sort, or something or other that underlies such emotions. If such were the case, then the mentioned logical errors . . . would not pertain. But the

[28] EMLAL, p. 67.

first sentence of the quotation at the beginning of this section proves that this interpretation is not possible. The combination of "only" and "nothing else" shows unmistakably that the word "nothing" here has the usual meaning of a logical particle that serves for the formulation of a negative existential statement.[29]

If we were to adopt the assumption that "the word 'nothing' has in Heidegger's treatise a meaning entirely different from the customary one," then we would have to know what Heidegger means by the word 'nothing' before we could conclude that its occurrence here violated the principles of logical syntax. Carnap therefore needs to rule out the possibility that the meaning of 'nothing' here might be different from the customary one. How does Carnap know that Heidegger means the word 'nothing' throughout the course of his enigmatic assertions always in the same way and always only in its usual sense (and thus, in most of its occurrences, incoherently)? His evidence for this claim is that in the *first* sentence (of the sequence of sentences that Carnap has strategically chosen to excerpt from Heidegger's essay)[30] we find the author using the word 'nothing' in the usual way: "What is to be investigated is Being only and—*nothing* else; Being alone and further—*nothing*; solely Being, and beyond Being *nothing*." The employment of the word 'nothing' in this sentence is, by Carnap's lights, grammatically and logically unobjectionable. The sentence is nonetheless included as part of Carnap's extract from Heidegger because of the light it ostensibly sheds on the rest of the text. Its role is to show that the overall context of Heidegger's remarks supports Carnap's reading of them.[31] The occurrence of the word 'nothing' in this first sentence "shows unmistakably," says Carnap, that the word 'nothing' is used univocally in none other than its usual meaning throughout Heidegger's text. Both Frege and Wittgenstein would object: to imagine that an examination of Heidegger's first sentence suffices to establish that the word 'nothing' retains its usual meaning in its occurrences throughout the subsequent sentences just is to violate Frege's context principle (and with it, *Tractatus* §3.3). Moreover, Carnap's basis for his conclusion (i.e. the claim that Heidegger *intends* to continue to use the word the same way in the subsequent sentences) runs afoul of Frege's first principle: it

[29] EMLAL, p. 71.

[30] And which, moreover, do not occur consecutively in Heidegger's essay.

[31] "If it were possible to tell what Carnap says it is possible to tell from a consideration of the context of use, then any speaker of the language (regardless of their knowledge of the finer points of Carnapian logical syntax) has cause to charge Heidegger with a misuse of language. There would be no need for appeal to a higher court—for deferral of judgment until it was established that these sentences additionally drew the verdict: 'inadequate from a strictly logical point of view.'"

depends upon an appeal to Heidegger's psychological intentions in employing the sign. Carnap proceeds towards his conclusion in just the manner that Frege and Wittgenstein seek to expose as confused: first, Carnap notices how the sign is used in a previous context of use; then, secondly, he attempts to establish what is meant in a subsequent context of use by appealing to an intention to employ the same sign in the same way as in the original context; and finally, he imagines that the existence of the postulated intention can fix the meaning of the sign in the subsequent context, enabling it to continue to symbolize in the same way (regardless of its logical role within the subsequent context). Carnap here succumbs to (what Frege calls) *psychologism*. Psychologism? Carnap?

The putative achievement of the identification of cases of Carnapian type (ii) nonsense can be said to involve a lapse into psychologism in this sense: it takes the meaning of a word to be fixed by something independently of its logical role in a construction to which it makes a contribution. Admittedly, no part is played in Carnap's *theory* by a claim to the effect that the correct way to determine what someone means is to determine something about their psychological state of mind while writing or uttering a sequence of words. Nonetheless, when Carnap claims that he knows what Heidegger must want to mean—that is, when he claims that he knows that in Heidegger's case "the combination of 'only' and 'nothing else' shows unmistakably that the word 'nothing' here has the usual meaning of a logical particle that serves for the formulation of a negative existential statement"—his ability to know this rests on a tacit appeal to Heidegger *intending* the word 'nothing' here to have the meaning of a logical particle in each of its several occurrences throughout this sequence of sentences. Carnap's ability to know this about Heidegger's sentences cannot rest on anything that Carnap's theory officially sanctions as a method of determining the meaning of an expression: namely, the logico-syntactic behavior of the expression in the context of a proposition. Thus, to say that Carnap succumbs to psychologism, in this extended sense of the term, is not a matter of attributing to him a commitment to a certain kind of theory—say, a theory which accounts for what it is to mean a particular expression in a particular way by appealing to a psychological act performed by the speaker of that expression, or to the presence of certain psychological associations in the mind of the speaker, and so on. Carnap, who in this respect—as in so many others—is a faithful student of Frege's, would immediately repudiate any theory which rested on such an appeal. The formulation of the charge here as one of psychologism must seem perverse, if one fails to appreciate that this formulation

invokes a particular philosophical understanding of the realm of the psychological, and with it a peculiar (Fregean and early Wittgensteinian) employment of term 'psychological'—one which Carnap himself, following Frege, claims to adopt—in which the category of the *psychological* gets its content from its contrast with that of the *logical*.[32] All extra-logical determinants of (what the metaphysician mistakes for a kind of) "meaning" are, Carnap himself declares, merely psychological. (Thus Carnap concludes that, though metaphysical pseudo-propositions lack "theoretical content," they possess "psychological content" qua expressions of psychological feelings or attitudes.)[33] Precisely because he has deprived himself of any logical basis for a segmentation of Heidegger's sentences into their logical components, and yet persists in believing that he knows what Heidegger must mean (when he says things like "We know the nothing"), Carnap can be charged—in accordance with his own extended, Fregean use of the term 'psychological'—with lapsing into psychologism. In this extended sense of the term 'psychologism', one lapses into psychologism whenever one takes oneself to be able to settle the meaning a word imports into a construction independently of the word's *logical* contribution to that construction.

Even if an appeal to Heidegger's intentions could suffice to settle what Heidegger's sentences mean, how can Carnap be so sure that in Heidegger's passage the sign 'nothing' is "intended" by Heidegger to

[32] I do not mean to suggest that such an invocation of the category of the psychological is itself philosophically inconsequential. The extraordinarily inclusive, garbage-can conception of the nature and scope of the psychological that such an invocation presupposes in turn rests upon a correlatively narrow conception of the nature and scope of (what Frege and Wittgenstein call) the logical (which later Wittgenstein, in reconceiving the nature and scope of its provenance, will call the grammatical). The important break here between the philosophy of later Wittgenstein and that of Frege and early Wittgenstein is nicely captured in the following aphorism due to Stanley Cavell: as Kant sought to undo Hume's psychologizing of knowledge, and Frege and Husserl sought to undo the psychologizing of logic, so later Wittgenstein seeks to undo the psychologizing of psychology ("Aesthetic Problems of Modern Philosophy," in *Must We Mean What We Say?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), p. 91).

[33] It is, for Carnap, constitutive of *metaphysics* that it confuses these two kinds of content. (If the metaphysician merely gave expression to his psychological feelings or attitudes without mistaking his performance for one that had theoretical content, then he would not be open to the charge of "metaphysics.") It is, for Carnap, correlatively constitutive of art that it provides the forum in which the elaborate expression of psychological content may occur without pretense of traffic in theoretical content. (Thus, from among those philosophers commonly referred to as metaphysicians, Carnap singles out Nietzsche for praise on the ground that, when moved to give expression to his general attitude toward life, he abandons a theoretical mode of discourse and has recourse to art; EMLAL, p. 80.) The irony here is that—since the confusion of that which has logical with that which has psychological content defines metaphysics for Carnap—Carnap, in his method of identifying instances of substantial nonsense, opens himself up to the charge of metaphysics.

symbolize the same way throughout its successive occurrences? How can he be sure that Heidegger's later uses of the word do not represent the expression of an intention to employ the word 'nothing' in a linguistically innovative yet (potentially) intelligible manner?[34] Carnap recognizes that he needs to say more here; and his way of dispensing with this worry ought to come as a surprise. We can be sure, Carnap tells us, that Heidegger means to employ the word 'nothing' in the aforementioned self-defeating fashion because Heidegger is someone who *self-consciously* aspires to speak nonsense. It is actually Heidegger's *aim*, in these sentences, to (try to) jam the negative existential quantifier first into an argument place that can only accommodate an object expression, then into an argument place that can only accommodate an expression for a first-level function, and so on.[35] The attribution of such an intention would be uncharitable in the absence of any evidence suggesting that Heidegger does possess such an extraordinary aim. Carnap (imagines he) possesses a way of ruling out any alternative comparatively charitable construal.[36] He has *evidence* which shows that

[34] Indeed, Carnap himself concedes that Heidegger is no longer using the sign to symbolize in the same way as in the earlier sentences in the remarkable final sentence: "The Nothing itself nothings." In German, this sentence reads: "das Nichts selbst nichtet" (ÜMLAS, p. 229). There simply is no established usage, of *any* sort, for the sign 'nichtet'. Carnap remarks: "[H]ere we confront one of those rare cases where a new word is introduced which never had a meaning to begin with" (EMLAL, p. 71). Why not draw the same conclusion about 'das Nichts? Carnap never explains why the presence of the last sentence in Heidegger's text doesn't threaten his classification of the previous sentences as type (ii) nonsense. Presumably, he would want to try to claim that two distinct sorts of cases are to be distinguished here: the last sentence is type (i), whereas the others are all type (ii). But this raises the question: how does he know the other sentences aren't type (i)? In the absence of some criterion for distinguishing these cases, Carnap's chosen example threatens to fail to illustrate what it is supposed to illustrate: namely, how to identify real live cases of type (ii) metaphysical nonsense as simultaneously distinct from both cases of type (i) nonsense and *sinnvolle* sentences.

[35] Carnap's argument here still rests on the claim that Heidegger's intentions fix the meaning of the word 'nothing' in his sentences—only now the appeal is to a very different sort of intention on Heidegger's part: an intention to violate the logical structure of language on purpose.

[36] Someone might object that the claim that Heidegger intends to speak nonsense does not play a weight-bearing role in the argument of Carnap's essay, and that I am attaching too much significance to Carnap's observation (EMLAL, pp. 71–2) that Heidegger does so intend. It is true that the claim is not represented by Carnap as playing an important role in his argument. But his argument nonetheless requires it. Faced with the choice of (1) attributing to someone the intention to fail to make sense, and (2) attributing to him the intention to use words in an unprecedented but potentially intelligible manner, any sound theory of interpretation will prescribe that we settle for (1) only if we have excellent grounds for preferring it over (2). If Carnap is unable to rule out the possibility of a more charitable construal of Heidegger's sentences, then his entire analysis stands under threat of failing to make contact with Heidegger's text. He therefore needs an argument for why we should go with (1).

Heidegger intends to speak nonsense. Heidegger elsewhere in his work, Carnap tells us, explicitly avows the intention to speak nonsense that Carnap here attributes to him.

The evidence that Heidegger means to speak nonsense is drawn from the same essay of Heidegger's from which Carnap's original exhibit is drawn. Carnap quotes the following passage from Heidegger:

> Question and answer in regard to the Nothing are equally absurd in themselves . . . The fundamental rule of thinking commonly appealed to, the law of prohibited contradiction, general 'logic', destroys this question . . . If thus the power of the understanding in the field of questions concerning Nothing and Being is broken, then the fate of the sovereignty of 'logic' within philosophy is thereby decided as well. The very idea of 'logic' dissolves into the whirl of a more basic questioning.[37]

This evidence, Carnap claims, shows that "the author of the treatise is clearly aware of the conflict between his questions and statements and logic."[38] Carnap concludes: "Thus we find here a good confirmation of our thesis; a metaphysician himself states that his questions and answers are irreconcilable with logic and the scientific way of thinking."[39] Carnap here "confirms" his claim that Heidegger speaks nonsense by relying on statements of Heidegger's—statements which Carnap evidently takes himself to be able to understand (and hence which he presumably takes to make some sort of sense). Carnap needs this additional evidence to show that he is not reading Heidegger uncharitably. Unless he assumes that his additional evidence is reliable, Carnap is unable to evade the objection that Heidegger's use of the word 'nothing' might represent a linguistically innovative use of the word. But, once he has his additional evidence in hand and assumes it to be reliable (which he is obliged to assume if it is to serve its intended purpose), then, in response to the question "How do you know Heidegger speaks nonsense?" Carnap does not need to look beyond this one piece of evidence to settle the matter.

The presumption behind Carnap's procedures initially appeared to be that no one would intentionally speak nonsense. The original idea was supposed to be that if the nonsensical character of the metaphysician's utterances were made evident to him, he would no longer be attracted to them. It is hard to see how Carnap can attribute to the author of a purportedly typical case of metaphysical nonsense an intention to speak nonsense without abandoning his original claims concerning how to diagnose and cure metaphysical nonsense (or at least

[37] Quoted in EMLAL, pp. 71–2.
[38] EMLAL, p. 71.
[39] EMLAL, p. 72.

abandoning his claim that Heidegger is a representative example of the phenomenon that Carnap's essay seeks to bring to his reader's attention).[40] The advent of the cure was originally advertised as coinciding with the metaphysician's epiphany that his employment of words involved an illegitimate combination of meanings. It is difficult to see how, by Carnap's own lights, the application of the principles of logical syntax could ever lead to a cure of the philosopher who self-consciously aspires to produce nonsensical combinations of words.

It is no accident that Carnap has fixed upon an example which has the features exhibited by this passage from Heidegger. Though it fails to accord with his own description of metaphysical nonsense, Carnap needs to avail himself of an example with these features to be able so much as to appear to provide any sort of illustration of the practical application of his theory. Heidegger's text offers the appearance of simultaneously satisfying three conditions all of which an example must satisfy if Carnap is to seem to stand a chance of unmasking it as a case of metaphysical nonsense: first, it must consist of sequences of words that a human being might actually be moved to write with the intention of communicating a thought; second, it must be possible to identify it as a case of nonsense simply by attending to the words as they stand on the page; third, it must be possible to forestall the objection that the words have been construed in an uncharitable manner. If Carnap fixed upon an example in which the speaker did not exhibit the slightest paradoxical animus and uttered only statements which were by the lights of ordinary grammar apparently unimpeachable, the questions would always arise: is the speaker really speaking nonsense? How does the speaker mean her words? Is there a way to make sense of her words? (Is there a way to see the symbol in the sign?) Carnap does not want the application of his method to be forestalled by such preliminary inquiries. The only contexts in which such inquiries have a legitimate place, for Carnap, are ordinary non-metaphysical cases of obstructed comprehension—cases in which we encounter hermeneutic difficulties concerning the semantics of syntactically well-formed sentences. Carnap wants, in his application of the method of logical analysis, to be able to bypass such inquiries altogether—to eschew any consideration of the semantics of a metaphysician's utterances—by identifying metaphysical statements as cases of nonsense solely through

[40] The attribution also renders Carnap's chart on EMLAL, p. 70 (of misleading because grammatically superficially similar sentences) otiose, insofar as the chart aims to show how misleading features of the surface grammar of the word 'nothing' are what occasion someone like Heidegger *unwittingly* to stray into nonsense.

an attention to (what he calls) their syntax. He wants to apply his analytical tools directly to the metaphysician's words considered in isolation from possible contexts of use.

NONSENSE IN THE *TRACTATUS*

The following passage from Baker and Hacker offers a fairly standard story of how an appeal to the rules of syntax in the *Tractatus* gives way in the work of later Wittgenstein to an appeal to the rules of grammar:

> Wittgenstein had, in the *Tractatus*, seen that philosophical or conceptual investigation moves in the domain of rules. An important point of continuity was the insight that philosophy is not concerned with what is true and what is false, but rather with what makes sense and what traverses the bounds of sense . . . [W]hat he called 'rules of grammar' . . . are the direct descendants of the 'rules of logical syntax' of the *Tractatus*. Like rules of logical syntax, rules of grammar determine the bounds of sense. They distinguish sense from nonsense . . . Grammar, as Wittgenstein understood the term, is the account book of language. Its rules determine the limits of sense, and by carefully scrutinizing them the philosopher may determine at what point he has drawn an overdraft on Reason, *violated the rules for the use of an expression*, and so, in subtle and not readily identifiable ways, traversed the bounds of sense.[41]

I agree with Baker and Hacker that Wittgenstein's later conception of grammar is the heir to his earlier conception of logical syntax. But I disagree with their characterizations of these conceptions. Indeed, their characterizations fit Carnap's views far more comfortably than Wittgenstein's.[42] The idioms which Baker and Hacker employ in the above passage—"determining the limits or bounds of sense," "determining the point at which these bounds are traversed," "violating the rules for the use of an expression"—have, as we have seen, a natural

[41] Gordon Baker and Peter Hacker, *Wittgenstein: Rules, Grammar and Necessity*, vol. i (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985), pp. 39–40, 55 (their emphasis).

[42] It would be a mistake to think that the crucial difference between my interpretation of Wittgenstein and that of Baker and Hacker is that whereas they, on the one hand, think that when Wittgenstein wrote his early work he thought that there were ineffable truths that cannot be stated in language and later came to see that this is misconceived, I, on the other hand, think that already in his early work he thought this misconceived. The more important difference between their reading and mine is that I think that Wittgenstein (early and late) thinks that the view that they attribute to later Wittgenstein is a disguised version of the view that they attribute to early Wittgenstein. I take the continuity in Wittgenstein's thought to lie in his espousal of the austere conception of nonsense; they take it to lie in his espousal of the substantial conception.

place in the exegesis of Carnap's doctrines. Consider the following pair of passages from Baker and Hacker:

> Wittgenstein's 'rules of grammar' serve only *to distinguish sense from nonsense* . . . They *settle what makes sense*, experience settles what is the case . . . Grammar is a free-floating array of rules for the use of language. It *determines what is a correct use of language*, but is not itself correct or incorrect.

> What philosophers have called 'necessary truths' are, in Wittgenstein's view, typically rules of grammar, norms of representation, i.e., they fix concepts. They are expressions of internal relations between concepts . . . Hence they *license (or prohibit) transitions between concepts*, i.e. transitions from one expression of an empirical proposition to another.[43]

Each of the phrases italicized in the above passages marks a moment in which Baker and Hacker attribute to later Wittgenstein an instance of the sort of understanding of "the logic of our language" that he was already seeking to exorcise in his early work—one which conceives of the possibilities of meaningful expression as limited by "general rules of the language" (be they called "rules of logical syntax" or "rules of grammar") and which imagines that by specifying these rules one can identify in advance which combinations of words are licensed and which prohibited. And, indeed, not only much of Baker and Hacker's rhetoric but many of their attempts to apply (what they take to be) Wittgenstein's methods to particular examples of philosophical confusion are strikingly reminiscent of moments in Carnap's writings. Consider the following example:

> If someone (whether philosopher or scientist) claims that colours are sensations in the mind or in the brain, the philosopher must point out that this person is misusing the words 'sensation' and 'colour'. Sensations in the brain, he should remind his interlocutor, are called 'headaches', and colours are not headaches; one can have (i.e., it makes sense to speak of) sensations in the knee or in the back, but not in the mind. It is, he must stress, extended things that are coloured. But this is not a factual claim about the world (an opinion which the scientist might intelligibly gainsay). It is a grammatical observation . . . Such utterances are not false (for then they could be true) but senseless.[44]

Baker and Hacker's analysis of "Colors are sensations in the mind" here closely parallels Carnap's analysis of "Caesar is a prime number." Just as the expression 'prime number' cannot be predicated of an expression denoting a person, so 'color' cannot be predicated of an

[43] *Wittgenstein: Rules, Grammar and Necessity*, pp. 40, 269. I am indebted to Martin Gustafsson for drawing these two passages to my attention.

[44] Ibid. p. 53.

expression denoting a sensation. The nonsensicality of the statement is to be traced to an attempt to combine terms in an illegitimate manner and the nonsense is to be exposed by invoking a principle (now called a principle of "grammar") that forbids such a combination.

Baker and Hacker's understanding of such cases of *violating the rules for the use of an expression*—like Carnap's understanding of type (ii) nonsense—rests on affirming something that the *Tractatus* is centrally concerned to repudiate: the possibility of identifying the logical (or grammatical) category of a term outside the context of legitimate combination—of identifying the manner in which a sign symbolizes in a context in which the reference of the parts of a sentence does not determine the reference of the whole. This repudiation is explicit in the following series of remarks:

> Logic must take care itself.
>
> A *possible* sign must also be able to signify. Everything which is possible in logic is also permitted. ("Socrates is identical" means nothing because there is no property which is called "identical". The proposition is nonsensical because we have not made some arbitrary determination, not because the symbol itself is impermissible.)
>
> In a certain sense we cannot make mistakes in logic. (§5.473)
>
> We cannot give a sign the wrong sense. (§5.4732)
>
> Frege says: Every legitimately constructed proposition must have a sense; and I say: Every possible proposition is legitimately constructed, and if it has no sense this can only be because we have given no *meaning* to some of its constituent parts.
>
> (Even if we believe that we have done so.)
>
> Thus "Socrates is identical" says nothing, because we have given *no* meaning to the word "identical" as *adjective*. For when it occurs as the sign of equality it symbolizes in an entirely different way—the symbolizing relation is another—therefore the symbol is in the two cases entirely different; the two symbols have the sign in common with one another only by accident. (§5.4733)

These remarks express in an extremely compressed fashion some of the central ideas of the *Tractatus*. Let us begin by looking at the example ("Socrates is identical") and the commentary on it which Wittgenstein offers here. It is the sort of combination of words that Carnap would be tempted to analyze as an instance of type (ii) nonsense—as an attempt to employ the identity sign (i.e. an expression which symbolizes the relation of identity between objects) as if it were a concept expression. Wittgenstein says in this passage that the nonsensicality of the string is due not to an impermissible employment of a symbol, but rather to our failing to make a determination of meaning. Wittgenstein's refusal to accept a Carnapian analysis of the matter here is not due to some peculiarity of the example.[45] Wittgenstein says: "If it has no sense this can *only* be because we have given no meaning to some of its constituent parts." The "only" here signals that for Wittgenstein all apparent cases of type (ii) nonsense are (in the words of §6.54) "eventually to be recognized as" cases of type (i) nonsense. Carnap's own example could be substituted for Wittgenstein's without affecting the point of the passage. On the Tractarian view, if "Caesar is a prime number" has no sense, "this can only be because we have given no *meaning* to some of its constituent parts" (§5.4733)—regardless of how strong our inclination may be "to believe that we have done so."

LOGICAL SYNTAX IN THE *TRACTATUS*

Logical syntax, in the *Tractatus*, is concerned neither with what Carnap calls "logical syntax" nor with what Russell calls "a theory of types." To express the same point in the idiom of the *Tractatus*: logical syntax

[45] The following two excerpts from §§5.473–5.4733 are potentially misleading and might appear to conflict with what I say about the point of the passage:

(1) "'Socrates is identical' means nothing because there is no property which is called 'identical'" (§5.473).
(2) "'Socrates is identical' says nothing, because we have given *no* meaning to the word 'identical' as *adjective*" (§5.4733).

The point of remark (1)—about "identical" naming an unspecified property—is to offer a suggestion intended to enable us, based on the surface grammar of this peculiar string, to find a way to see a symbol in the sign. There is an invitation present in the pattern of ordinary language for us to try to read the sign in this way (on the model of "Socrates is happy"). But we can only go so far in this direction. We can assimilate "Socrates is identical" to an established pattern (and thereby recognize the symbol in the sign); but we still do not yet know *what* the sentence says, because there is no established use of "identical" as a concept expression. When Wittgenstein talks in remark (1) about a property, he is talking about a method of *symbolizing*. When he talks in remark (2) about "identical" as adjective, he is referring to a feature of the "external form" (§4.002) of certain sentences—a grammatical surface pattern—of ordinary language (a certain sort of configuration of signs). The term "adjective" in §3.323 and in §5.473 refers to a feature of the surface grammar (the sign-structure) of ordinary language—not a proper *logical* category. The point here is about the sign "identical," not the symbol. Consider sentences (a) and (b):

(a) Socrates and the teacher of Plato are identical.
(b) Socrates and the teacher of Aristotle are happy.

As it occurs in sentence (b), "identical" has the same surface grammar as an adjective such as "happy." This is what Wittgenstein means when he says in §3.323 that "'identical' sometimes appears as an adjective."

is concerned neither with the proscription of combinations of signs nor with the proscription of combinations of symbols. It is not concerned with the proscription of combinations of signs, because Tractarian logical syntax does not treat of (mere) *signs*; it treats of symbols—and a symbol only has life in the context of a significant proposition. It is not concerned with the *proscription* of combinations of symbols, because there is nothing to proscribe[46]—"Every possible proposition is legitimately constructed" (§5.4733). Tractarian logical syntax treats of the categorically distinct kinds of logically significant components into which *sinnvolle Sätze* can be segmented—such components being the sorts of components they are only in virtue of their participation in a *possible* proposition.

Two years after his "Elimination of Metaphysics" essay, in his book *The Logical Syntax of Language*, Carnap writes that logical syntax "should have no reference to the meaning of signs."[47] This means: logical syntax is concerned with strings of *uninterpreted* signs—that is, strings of (mere) marks on paper. In Carnap's work, from *The Logical Syntax of Language* on, "logical syntax" treats of a class of *formal* structures—combinatorial structures generated by sequences of signs—where "formal" means formal in the Hilbertian sense: void of semantic content or structure.[48] "Formal" for Wittgenstein means pertaining to

[46] There is therefore an asymmetry in the attitude of the *Tractatus* toward these two sorts of proscription. The latter sort (i.e. the proscription of combinations of symbols) rests on philosophical confusion; the former does not. The *Tractatus* clearly thinks it is desirable for certain purposes (and for systems of notation which facilitate those purposes) to introduce principles which proscribe combinations of signs (as e.g. a *Begriffsschrift* does). But there is reason to think the *Tractatus* would not look favorably upon a general reform of natural language based on principles that sought to proscribe sequences of natural language icons. (§§4.002 and 5.5563 taken in conjunction yield: "Our everyday language is part of the human organism and no less complicated than it . . . and in perfect logical order, just as it is.") It is important that natural languages be able to tolerate the sorts of innovative use of signs exemplified in a mild way by Frege's example about 'Vienna' (see "On Concept and Object," *Collected Papers* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984), p. 189), with a vengeance by Heidegger's employment of 'nothing', and by Wittgenstein's own remarks (in §§5.473, 5.4733) about the possibility of giving 'identical' an adjectival use.

[47] *The Logical Syntax of Language*, p. 282n. Carnap goes on to cite *Tractatus*, §3.33 as evidence that he and Wittgenstein are in agreement on this point. For an excellent discussion of what Wittgenstein does not and Carnap does think logic is, see Michael Friedman, "Carnap and Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*," in W. W. Tait, ed., *Early Analytic Philosophy* (New York: Open Court, 1996).

[48] This is not obviously what "logical syntax" means in EMLAL (most of what Carnap says about Heidegger's employment of *nothing*—see e.g. the passage from Carnap the reference for which is given in n. 29—makes no sense if he is only concerned with the sign 'nothing'); but it is not altogether clear what "logical syntax" means in this essay. The closest he comes in EMLAL to a definition of logical syntax is to say: "The syntax of a language specifies which combinations of words are admissible and which

that structure common to language and world (within which all semantic content has its life) considered in abstraction from any particular (true or false) content. Every state of affairs has a Tractarian logical form. The only parts of the *world* which can be said to have "formal" properties, for the Carnap of *The Logical Syntax of Language*, are mere marks on paper. The author of *The Logical Syntax of Language*, if he mistook Wittgenstein's notion of "formal" for his own, would be obliged to regard the *Tractatus*'s employment of the notion of "formal" or "logical" properties which are equally "properties of language" and "of the world" (§6.12) as an example of type (ii) nonsense. Wittgenstein's remark in the *Tractatus* that "in logical syntax the *Bedeutung* of a sign ought never to play a role" (§3.33) sounds just like Carnap's remark that logical syntax "should have no reference to the *Bedeutung* of signs." But Wittgenstein is not saying what Carnap is saying. Mere marks on paper have no Tractarian logical syntax. Only symbols—"the parts of a proposition which characterize its *Sinn*"—have logical syntax. In Tractarian logical syntax, the particular *Bedeutungen* of signs "never play a role" (not because logical syntax is concerned with *mere* signs, but) because logical syntax is concerned only with *how* signs symbolize—with what the *Tractatus* calls their *methods of symbolizing* (3.322)—while abstracting from *what* (i.e. which particular object, property, or relation) they denote. Logical syntax thus prescinds from all content and considers only the bare form of significant thought.

Though Wittgenstein never speaks in the *Tractatus* of "violations of logical syntax," he does remark on the ways in which a proper logical

inadmissible" (EMLAL, p. 67). This reference throughout Carnap's discussion to admissible and inadmissible combinations of *words* allows Carnap, from the point of view of the *Tractatus*, systematically to conflate questions concerning admissible combinations of signs with questions concerning admissible combinations of symbols. Carnap wavers, in this essay, between characterizing the principles of "logical syntax" as principles which govern combinations of symbols (as he needs to, if they are to isolate a flawed *Sinn* in the utterances of the metaphysician) and characterizing them as principles which govern the combinations of signs (as he would need to, if he wanted to maintain—as he does in his later work—that logical syntax is only concerned with "language" qua purely formal combinatorial syntactic object). EMLAL represents a transitional phase in Carnap's work in which he is moving towards his 1934 Hilbertian understanding of syntax (which eschews semantics), and away from a Tractarian understanding of logical syntax (the application of which presupposes semantic aspects of the structure of significant thought). The "logical analysis of language" practiced on many of the examples in EMLAL only makes sense if "logical syntax" refers to something akin to a Fregean/Tractarian *Begriffsschrift* which perspicuously exhibits the logical structure of *thoughts* (and not merely the sequence-structure of uninterpreted *signs*). (Some of the discussions of examples in the later portions of *The Logical Syntax of Language* (§§72–81), which seek to refine the EMLAL project of unmasking metaphysics through the logical analysis of language, continue—albeit in a subtler way—to equivocate between symbol and sign.)

grammar would enable us to see more clearly the logical structure of ordinary language—and thus the ways in which ordinary language itself fails to reflect its own logical structure in a perspicuous manner. These remarks occur in the context of his discussion of how ordinary language allows the same sign to symbolize in different ways and the same symbol to be expressed by different signs. He goes on to say:

> Thus there easily arise the most fundamental confusions (of which the whole of philosophy is full).
>
> In order to avoid these errors, we must employ a symbolism which excludes them, by not applying the same sign in different symbols and by not applying signs in the same way which signify in different ways. A symbolism, that is to say, which obeys the rules of *logical* grammar—of logical syntax. (§§3.324–3.325)

In order to understand this passage, we need to distinguish clearly between two different things one can mean by the expression "violation of logical syntax":

(1) *substantial nonsense*—the result of putting an item of one logical category in the place where an item of another category belongs;
(2) *cross-category equivocation*—the result of allowing different occurrences of the same sign to symbolize items of a different logical category.[49]

Carnap's appropriation of Tractarian logical syntax, in its talk of "violations of logical syntax," conflates these two kinds of "violation," as have many commentators after him. This allows §§3.324–3.325 to appear to offer textual evidence for the claim that the *Tractatus* holds that "the most fundamental confusions (of which the whole of philosophy is full)" (§3.324) are due to "violations" of the first kind, when all that is at issue are "violations" of the second kind. The point of a

[49] The following newspaper headlines offer examples of cross-category equivocation—cases in which there is an ambiguity (not just in the *Bedeutungen* of the words, but in the logical syntax of the string and thus) in the logical category of the symbol we should see in the sign:

(a) British Left Waffles on Falkland Islands
(b) British Push Bottles Up German Rear
(c) Potential Witness to Murder Drunk
(d) Legal Aid Advocates Worry
(e) Crowds Rushing To See Pope Trample 6 to Death
(f) Beating Witness Provides Names
(g) Nixon Stands Pat on Watergate Tapes
(h) University Studies Mushroom
(i) Carter Plans Swell Deficit.

proper logical symbolism for the *Tractatus* is only to exclude the latter kind of "violation," but not the former kind (because, according to the teaching of the *Tractatus*, there is no such kind). Theories of logic which seek to proscribe certain combinations of symbols seek to take care of that which "*must fall into place as a matter of course*" (§3.334). It is, Wittgenstein comes to think by the time he writes the *Tractatus*, the task of "a proper theory of symbolism" to show that all such theories are "superfluous."[50] ("Logic must take care itself," §5.473.) In rejecting such theories, the *Tractatus* rejects the project standardly attributed to it: one of demarcating the bounds of sense.[51] When, in the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein says you cannot give a sign a wrong sense, he is claiming that there is no such thing as infringing on the bounds of sense and thus no bounds of the sort that Carnap (or Wittgenstein, early or late, according to most readings of him) seeks to demarcate.[52]

The difference between an ideal logical symbolism and ordinary language, for the *Tractatus*, is that in the former—unlike the latter—one is able to read the symbol directly off the sign. Logical syntax for the *Tractatus* is not a combinatorial theory (which demarcates legitimate from illegitimate sequences of signs or symbols) but a *tool* of elucidation (which allows us to recognize the logical contributions of the constituent parts of a *Satz*, and the absence of such a contribution on the part of the constituents of a *Scheinsatz*). The kind of cross-category

[50] Some version of this thought—and, with it, the insight that this might be the way out of the problems that plagued Russell's philosophy—came to Wittgenstein remarkably early. Already in January 1913, he was writing Russell as follows: "[E]very theory of types must be rendered superfluous by a proper theory of the symbolism . . . What I am *most* certain of is not however the correctness of my present way of analysis, but of the fact that all theory of types must be done away with by a theory of symbolism showing that what seem to be *different kinds of things* are symbolized by different kinds of symbols which cannot possibly be substituted in one another's places." (Wittgenstein, *Notebooks, 1914–1916*, ed. G. H. von Wright and G. E. M. Anscombe, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), p. 121.)

[51] David Pears gives succinct expression to the standard reading of the *Tractatus* when he writes: "In the *Tractatus* a general theory of language is used to fix the bounds of sense" ("Wittgenstein," in Jonathan Dancy and Ernest Sosa, eds., *A Companion to Epistemology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), p. 524).

[52] When Wittgenstein argues in his later writings that we cannot give a word a "senseless sense" (e.g. *Philosophical Investigations*, §500), he is refashioning the Tractarian point that we cannot give a sign "the wrong sense." Not only does Wittgenstein never speak in the *Tractatus* of "violations of logical syntax," but later Wittgenstein only occasionally mentions the idea of "violations of grammar," and always in the service of encouraging the reader to be puzzled by what such a thing could be; e.g. "How can one put together *logically* ill-assorted concepts (in violation of grammar [*gegen die Grammatik*], and therefore nonsensically) and significantly ask about the possibility of the combination?" (*Philosophical Grammar* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1974), p. 392).

equivocation exhibited by an uncontextualized sentence of ordinary language such as "Green is green" is not possible in a *Begriffsschrift*. One can, of course, if one wants, call this sort of cross-category equivocation a "violation of logical syntax" (though Wittgenstein himself never speaks in this way) but, if one chooses to speak in this way, one should be clear that what is at issue in those passages where Wittgenstein alludes to the differences between ordinary language and "a logical grammar" (§3.325) are differences in notational perspicuity between various kinds of symbolism.[53]

The preceding conclusion (that the only "logical" defects of ordinary language to be corrected by "a proper logical syntax" are defects in its notational perspicuity) runs counter to the widespread assumption that the early Wittgenstein—like Frege, Russell and Carnap—is an ideal language philosopher. This assumption is encouraged by the Pears and McGuinness translation of §4.112:

> A philosophical work consists essentially of elucidations.
>
> Philosophy does not result in 'philosophical propositions', but rather in the clarification of propositions.
>
> Without philosophy thoughts are, as it were, cloudy and indistinct: its task is to make them clear and give them sharp boundaries.

It certainly sounds here as if the role of an elucidation is to introduce clarity into propositions which prior to elucidation lack clarity: elucidation renders what is logically cloudy and indistinct precise and sharp. The interpretative assumption underlying the standard reading of this passage is that this transformation of thoughts (that are initially cloudy and indistinct) is effected through their transposition into a medium which, unlike ordinary language, permits the expression of precise and sharp thoughts. But Wittgenstein repudiates just such an understanding of §4.112 in his correspondence with Ogden. Wittgenstein rejects "the clarification of propositions" as a translation of *das Klarwerden von Sätzen*,[54] and, after several exchanges, suggests instead: "the propositions *now have become clear* that they ARE clear."[55] This is such terrible English that Ogden decides simply to ignore the suggestion. But the point that is obscured by the existing translations (and which the young Wittgenstein's horrendous English seeks to bring out) is that the transition from unclarity to clarity (i.e. the kind of *Klarwerden*) that is at issue here is not one that is effected through a transformation in the logical character of the *propositions* of ordinary language, but rather through a transformation in the view that *we* command of their logical character. What is cloudy and indistinct—and is rendered transparent with the assistance of a logical syntax—is our view of the logical structure that is present in the proposition all along. The aim of elucidation is not "to clarify" in the sense of making that which is said or thought intrinsically clearer (in the sense of cleaning up and, to that extent, changing the logical character of what is said); but rather, "to clarify" in the sense of making that which is said or thought clear to us (in the sense of disencumbering our view of the logical character of that which we have been saying all along). It is a matter of making explicit the logical structure which had been implicit in our *Sätze* all along[56] (and, if our *Sätze* are *Unsinn*, it is a matter of making explicit that there has, all along, been no implicit logical structure but only the appearance of such structure).

In *Tractatus* §5.5563, we find:

> All propositions of our everyday language are actually, just as they stand, logically completely in order.

Commentators have found it difficult to reconcile Wittgenstein's comment in §3.325 that "we must employ a symbolism which excludes" certain possibilities which ordinary language permits with his respectful comment here in §5.5563 concerning the logical orderliness of the

[53] Wittgenstein's point in devising alternative logical notations in which certain signs (e.g. logical connectives (*logische Operationszeichen*)) are made to disappear is to devise a language which suits his elucidatory purposes in philosophy. Wittgenstein's aim is to free us from the philosophical confusions (which the outward form of our language leads us into) by showing us that we *can* dispense with such signs. It is not to encourage us, outside the context of philosophical elucidation, to prefer a language which dispenses with such signs. On the contrary, according to the *Tractatus*, the outward form of our language is already carefully designed to suit our everyday purposes in communication (see §4.002).

[54] Wittgenstein, *Letters to C. K. Ogden with Comments on the English Translation of the Tractatus-Logico-Philosophicus* (hereafter *LO*), ed. G. H. von Wright (Oxford and London: Blackwell and Routledge, 1973), p. 28.

[55] Ibid. p. 49. Ogden's translation, as published, has: "The result of philosophy is not a number of 'philosophical propositions', but to make propositions clear." This came about as a response to Wittgenstein's initial suggestion that *das Klarwerden von Sätzen* be rendered (instead of "the clarification of propositions") as "the getting clear of propositions" (ibid. p. 28). Ogden, having convinced Wittgenstein that this isn't much help, tries "to make propositions clear." Wittgenstein (in his annotations of Ogden's revisions) changes this to "that propositions become clear." But Ogden still finds this unclear and awkward English to boot, thus prompting Wittgenstein's more illuminating (though even more awkward) suggestion on *LO*, p. 49.

[56] The *Tractatus* articulates an *expressivist* conception of logic, in so far as it conceives of logical syntax as an instrument for (1) explicating the logical structure of thought and thus enabling (what the *Tractatus* calls) *das Klarwerden von Sätzen*, (2) revealing specifically logical vocabulary (such as the logical constants) to be linguistically optional and thus subject to "disappearance," and (3) perspicuously representing the inferential relations between thoughts.

propositions of ordinary language.[57] But there is no conflict. For, according to the *Tractatus*, it is the logical imperspicuity of ordinary language which leads us to believe that it is able to accommodate a kind of thought which is not, just as it is, logically completely in order. Section 3.325 recommends a notation which eliminates the sort of notational imperspicuity ordinary language tolerates in order to help us perceive how the logically imperspicuous character of ordinary language seduces us into thinking that ordinary language tolerates the expression of logically flawed thoughts. The *Tractatus* wants to show how Frege's theory of *Begriffsschrift*—his theory of a logically perfect language which excludes the possibility of the formation of illogical thought—is in fact the correct theory of symbolism *überhaupt*. Language itself, the *Tractatus* says, prevents the possibility of every logical mistake (§5.4731).[58] Ordinary language is in this respect already a kind of *Begriffsschrift*. What for Frege is the structure of an ideal language is for early Wittgenstein the structure of all language. In his remarks clarifying his emendations of Ogden's initial attempt to translate §5.5563, Wittgenstein explains:

> By this [i.e. §5.5563] I meant to say that the propositions of our ordinary language are not in any way logically *less correct* or less exact or *more confused* than propositions written down, say, in Russell's symbolism or any other *Begriffsschrift*. (Only it is easier for us to gather their logical form when they are expressed in an appropriate symbolism.)[59]

Already in the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein's interest in a logical symbolism is not that of someone who seeks to overcome an imprecision in ordinary thought through recourse to a more precise medium for the expression of thought.[60] The *Tractatus* is interested in successors to

[57] John Koethe, for example, writes: "[To] try to read . . . the *Tractatus* as urging to adopt an ideal language analogous to Frege's *Begriffsschrift* . . . seems at odds with Wittgenstein's insistence that 'all the propositions of our everyday language, just as they stand, are in perfect logical order'" (*The Continuity of Wittgenstein's Thought* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1996), p. 39).

[58] This, of course, does not mean that language itself prevents us from ever making "logical mistakes" in the ordinary (non-philosophical) sense of the expression "logical mistake"—i.e. that it keeps us from ever contradicting ourselves! Indeed, the possibility of forming contradictions is, according to the *Tractatus*, a constitutive feature of any symbolism (which, for the *Tractatus*, means any system capable of expressing thought). What this passage refers to rather is the prevention of the possibility of the (peculiarly philosophical) sort of "logical mistake" that Russell's theory of types or Carnap's theory of logical syntax sought to exclude. This latter notion of "a violation of logic" depends upon a philosophical *theory* (which seeks to draw a limit to the sorts of thoughts that are so much as possible).

[59] *LO*, p. 50. Emphases in the original.

[60] We see here yet another instance of how what is standardly put forward by commentators as a criticism later Wittgenstein directs against his earlier work is in fact already developed in the *Tractatus* as a criticism of Frege and Russell.

Frege's *Begriffsschrift* (in what the *Tractatus* calls "logical grammars") because such systems of notation exclude a multiplicity of kinds of use for individual signs, allowing one to see in a more perspicuous manner what kind of logical work (if any) a given term in a given sentence is doing.[61] It allows us to see *how*—and, most importantly, *whether*—the signs we call upon (in giving voice to the thoughts we seek to express) symbolize. The advantage of a logical symbolism, for the *Tractatus*, lies not in *what* it permits (or forbids) one to say, but in the perspicuity of its mode of representation: in how it allows someone who is drawn to call upon certain words to see what it is (if anything) he is saying.[62] The reason ordinary language can lead us philosophically astray is not to be traced to its (alleged) capacity to permit us to formulate illogical thoughts (i.e. to give a sign the wrong sense).[63] Rather, it is to be traced to the symbolic imperspicuity of ordinary language—our inability to read off from it what contribution, if any, the parts of a sentence make to the sense of the whole. It is this lack of perspicuity in our relation to our own words which allows us to imagine that we perceive a meaning where there is no meaning, and which brings about the need for a mode

[61] It is perhaps worth mentioning that this employment of *Begriffsschrift* (as a tool for the perspicuous representation of the logical structure of sentences of ordinary language) for the purposes of philosophical clarification—though by no means Frege's primary reason for developing his ideography—was nonetheless envisioned by him from the start as one of its possible applications: "If it is one of the tasks of philosophy to break the domination of the word over the human spirit by laying bare those misconceptions which through the use of language all but unavoidably arise, then my ideography, if it is further developed with an eye to this purpose, can become a useful tool for the philosopher." (*Begriffsschrift*, Preface, eighth paragraph; my translation.) And, when advertising the virtues of his *Begriffsschrift*, Frege not infrequently remarks upon the value it could have in this regard for philosophy: "We can see from all this how easily we can be led by language to see things in the wrong perspective, and what value it must therefore have for philosophy to free ourselves from the domination of language. If one makes the attempt to construct a system of signs on quite other foundations and with quite other means, as I have tried to do in creating my concept-script, we shall have, so to speak, our very noses rubbed into the false analogies in language." (*Collected Papers on Mathematics, Logic, and Philosophy*, ed. Brian McGuinness (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984), p. 67.)

[62] The *Tractatus* sacrifices all the other ends to which Frege and Russell sought to put a *Begriffsschrift* to the sole end of notational perspicuity. Early Wittgenstein champions a logical syntax which avoids a plurality of logical constants because such a plurality frustrates the sole application which the *Tractatus* seeks to make of a logical syntax: to allow the logical form of propositions to appear with "complete clarity." A plurality of logical constants frustrates this end in two ways: first, it permits the same thought to be rendered in diverse ways, and second, it obscures the logical relations between propositions.

[63] See also §3.03 and §5.4731.

of perspicuous representation of the possibilities of meaning available to us.[64]

"CAESAR IS A PRIME NUMBER" REVISITED

In the passage that Carnap quotes from Heidegger, Heidegger begins one of his questions by asking "Does the Nothing exist because . . .?" Carnap seizes on this talk about the Nothing existing as a particularly flagrant case of type (ii) nonsense. Carnap remarks:

> Even if it were admissible to introduce 'nothing' as a name or description of an entity, still the existence of this entity *would* be denied in its very definition . . . This sentence therefore *would* be contradictory, hence nonsensical [*unsinnig*] were it not already senseless [*sinnlos*].[65]

Carnap here implicitly distinguishes between two levels of nonsense: a sequence of words which is merely lacking in sense ("senseless") and one whose sense requires something which is logically prohibited ("nonsense"). Thus he seems to take himself here to be able to identify the kind of sense that the sequence of expressions "The Nothing exists"

[64] I have summarized the method of the *Tractatus* here in such a way as to highlight a further important continuity between early and later Wittgenstein. Both early and later Wittgenstein trace our philosophical failures of meaning to our tendency to transfer an expression without transferring its use (in the language of the *Tractatus*: to employ the same sign without transferring the method of symbolizing). Thus both have an interest in finding a mode of perspicuous representation—a mode of representation which makes perspicuous to a philosophical interlocutor (1) the contexts of use within which a word has a particular meaning (in the language of the *Tractatus*: the contexts within which a sign symbolizes in a particular way), (2) how the meaning shifts as the context shifts, (3) how "it very often happens" in philosophy that we are led into "confusions" by "the same word belonging to two different symbols" without our realizing it (§§3.323–3.234), and (4) how nothing at all is meant by a word—how one "has given no meaning to certain signs" (§6.53)—as long as one hovers indeterminately between contexts of use. The underlying thought common to early and later Wittgenstein is that we are prone to see a meaning where there is no meaning because of our inclination to imagine that a sign carries its meaning with it, enabling us to import a particular meaning into a new context merely by importing the sign.

Though the conception of philosophical elucidation remains in many respects the same (one of taking the reader from latent to patent nonsense), there are also important differences here between early and later Wittgenstein. To mention only one: on the later conception, once one has completed the work of perspicuously displaying the possible contexts of significant use, there is no elucidatory role left for a *Begriffsschrift* to come along and play. What the *Tractatus* sees as a preliminary task in the process of elucidation (namely, the consideration of contexts of significant use) becomes for later Wittgenstein a comparatively central exercise—one which usurps the role previously played by the rendition of sentences into a perspicuous logical symbolism.

[65] EMLAL, p. 65 (my emphases), UMLAS, p. 231; I have amended Pap's translation.

would have if it were the kind of thing which could have a sense. In his attempts, in moments like this, to make vivid the logically flawed character of the examples of type (ii) nonsense which (allegedly) occur in Heidegger's text, Carnap comes close to saying something patently incoherent: namely, that we know what each of the parts of one of Heidegger's sentences mean (including what the word 'nothing' here means), so we know what the resulting combination *would* mean, if such a combination were an admissible combination of meanings! (More briefly: we grasp what "it" *would* mean, if what "it" meant could be meant.) In §5.4733, Wittgenstein says: "if . . . [a proposition] has no sense this can only be because we have given no *meaning* to some of its constituent parts. (Even if we believe that we have done so.)" This last parenthetical remark of Wittgenstein's gently touches on the elucidatory aim of the work as a whole: to show us that we are prone to *believe* that we have given meaning to some of the constituent parts of a proposition when we have not done so. This remark highlights an important analogy between type (ii) nonsense such as "Caesar is a prime number" (as Carnap describes it) and an innocuously meaningful sentence such as "Caesar crossed the Rubicon": in each of these cases, we *believe* that we have already given a meaning to all of the constituent parts. In the former of these two cases, we undergo the phenomenology of meaning something determinate while failing to mean anything determinate by our words. Part of what causes us to hallucinate a meaning in sequences such as "Caesar is a prime number," according to Wittgenstein, is that there is more than one natural remedy for what ails the nonsensical linguistic string. (The greater the number of natural remedies which lie ready to hand for redeeming the sense of a string, the more powerful the illusion of meaning which that string is able to engender.) We could assign a meaning to 'Caesar' which would allow us to treat 'Caesar' as the kind of logical element which symbolizes a number; or, alternatively, we could assign a meaning to 'prime number' which would allow us to treat it as the kind of element which symbolizes a predicate which applies to persons. So there are two natural ways of making sense of this string: it can be taken as saying something it makes sense to say of a person—in which case it contains the proper name of a person but not a numerical predicate; or it can be taken as saying of a number something which it makes sense to say of a number—in which case it contains a numerical predicate but not a proper name for a person. But, according to the *Tractatus*, there isn't anything which is an instance of a proposition's containing two logical elements which are incompatible. What there can be is a case in which there are two natural directions in which to seek a sense for a sentence

whose sense is as yet undetermined (as is the case with Carnap's example). But each of the available readings of this sentence eclipses the other—as each reading of a duck-rabbit figure eclipses the other. There isn't anything which is having a part of the sentence as it is segmented on one reading illegitimately combined with a part of the sentence as segmented on the other reading—anymore than one can have only the eye of the rabbit taken from one reading of a duck-rabbit figure occur in combination with the face of the duck. To see the drawing as a picture of the face of a duck *is* to see the, as it were, argument place for an eye in the picture filled by the eye of a duck—that is what it is to see the dot (that sign) *as* an eye of a duck (*as* that kind of a symbol).

If we have not made the necessary assignments of meaning to cure Carnap's example of its emptiness then, according to the *Tractatus*, what we have before us is simply a string of signs—a string which has a surface resemblance to propositions of two distinct logical patterns: it has a sign but no symbol in common with propositions about the great Roman general Caesar, and it also has a sign but no symbol in common with sentences such as "53 is a prime number." Its nonsensicality is to be traced not to the logical structure of the sentence, but to *our* failure to mean something by it: to what the *Tractatus* calls our failure to make certain determinations of meaning. For Wittgenstein, the source of the clash is to be located in *our relation* to the linguistic string—not in the linguistic string itself. The problem, according to the *Tractatus*, is that we often believe that we have given a meaning to all of a sentence's constituent parts when we have failed to do so. We think nonsense results in such cases not because of a failure on our part, but because of a failure on the sentence's part. We think the problem lies not in an absence of meaning (in our failing to mean anything by these words) but rather in a presence of meaning (in the incompatible senses the words already have—senses which the words import with them into the context of combination). We think the thought is flawed because the component senses of its parts logically repel one another. They fail to add up to a thought. So we feel our words are attempting to think a logically impossible thought—and that this involves a kind of impossibility of a higher order than ordinary impossibility. Wittgenstein's teaching is that the problem lies not in the words, but in our confused relation to the words: in our experiencing ourselves as meaning something definite by them, yet also feeling that what we take ourselves to be meaning with the words makes no sense. "We . . . hover between regarding it as sense and regarding it as nonsense, and hence the trouble arises."[66] We are

[66] The quotation is from Wittgenstein's "Lectures on Personal Experience"

confused about what it is we want to say and we project our confusion onto the linguistic string. Then we look at the linguistic string and imagine we discover what *it* is trying to say. We want to say to the string: "We know what you mean, but 'it' cannot be said." The incoherence of our desires with respect to the sentence—wishing to both mean and not mean something with it—is seen by us as an incoherence in what the words want to be saying. We displace our desire onto the words and see them as *aspiring* to say something they never quite succeed in saying (because, we tell ourselves, "it" cannot be said). We account for the confusion these words engender in us by discovering in the words a hopelessly flawed sense.

The heart of the Tractarian conception of logic is to be found in the remark that "we cannot make mistakes in logic" (§5.473). It is one of the burdens of the elucidatory strategy of the *Tractatus* to try to show us that the idea that we can violate the logical syntax of language rests upon a conception of "the logical structure of thought" according to which the nature of logic itself debars us from being able to frame certain sorts of "thoughts." Wittgenstein says: "Everything which is possible in logic is also permitted" (§5.473). If a sentence is nonsense, this is not because *it* is trying but failing to make sense (by breaking a rule of logic), but because *we* have failed to make sense with it: "the sentence is nonsensical because *we* have failed to make an arbitrary determination of sense, not because *the symbol in itself* is impermissible" (§5.473; my emphases). The idea that there can be such a thing as a kind of proposition which has an internal logical form of a sort which is debarred by the logical structure of our thought rests upon what Wittgenstein calls (in the Preface) "a misunderstanding of the logic of our language."

(Michaelmas Term, 1935, recorded by Margaret MacDonald, ed. Cora Diamond; unpublished manuscript). Its context is as follows:

> *Different kinds of nonsense.* Though it is nonsense to say "I feel his pain", this is different from inserting into an English sentence a meaningless word, say "abracadabra" (compare Moore last year on "Scott kept a runcible at Abbotsford") and from saying a string of nonsense words. Every word in this sentence is English, and we shall be inclined to say that the sentence has a meaning. The sentence with the nonsense word or the string of nonsense words can be discarded from our language, but if we discard from our language "I feel Smith's toothache" that is quite different. The second seems nonsense, we are tempted to say, because of some truth about the nature of things or the nature of the world. We have discovered in some way that pains and personality do not fit together in such a way that I can feel his pain.—The task will be to show that there is in fact no difference between these two cases of nonsense, though there is a psychological distinction, in that we are inclined to say the one and be puzzled by it and not the other. We constantly hover between regarding it as sense and regarding it as nonsense, and hence the trouble arises.

Carnap mistakes this misunderstanding of the logic of our language for Wittgenstein's own understanding of the logic of language. Carnap, however, was well aware that Wittgenstein viewed most of what was said about the *Tractatus* in Carnap's published writings as shot through with misunderstanding, so he was careful merely to express a sense of indebtedness to Wittgenstein's work while directly attributing as little as possible of his own conception of logical syntax to the *Tractatus* itself.[67] Subsequent commentators on Wittgenstein's work have been less careful, thus bringing about the following historical irony: at the present time, when much is written about Wittgenstein's and relatively little about Carnap's philosophy by authors who allege that Carnap's doctrines have been surpassed through Wittgenstein's later criticisms of the views expressed in his *Tractatus*, the philosophical teaching they disseminate under the name of Wittgenstein resembles the very one that Carnap sought to champion in some of his writings and which Wittgenstein sought to criticize already in the *Tractatus*.

ELUCIDATION IN THE *TRACTATUS*

Carnap, in what he takes to be a departure from the teaching of the *Tractatus*, soon after writing "The Elimation of Metaphysics through the Logical Analysis of Language" gives up on the idea that the key to exposing metaphysical propositions as nonsense lies in unmasking the underlying violations of logical syntax they harbor. Rather he returns to a strategy of elucidation that he had already defended in a different form earlier in his career: one of specifying principles for the construction of alternative "linguistic frameworks" (i.e. frameworks within which it is possible to make cognitively significant statements) and insisting that all dispute be conducted with reference to such principles.[68] The speaker of metaphysical utterances is invited either to

[67] That Wittgenstein thought Carnap repeatedly and grossly misunderstood the *Tractatus* is evident from his irate correspondence with Schlick about Carnap's efforts to build on his ideas and from his brief correspondence with Carnap himself on the subject in 1932. (See, for example, the letters reprinted in M. Nedo and M. Ranchetti, eds., *Ludwig Wittgenstein: Sein Leben in Bildern und Texten* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1983), pp. 254–5, 381–2.) Passing remarks sprinkled throughout Carnap's letters and papers at the University of Pittsburgh Archives for Scientific Philosophy bear witness to Carnap's continued (and eminently justified) frustration concerning both the obscurity and the harshness of Wittgenstein's complaints about Carnap's (mis)appropriation of his work.

[68] *Philosophy and Logical Syntax*, pp. 80–1.

translate his propositions into a properly specified linguistic framework or to furnish principles which would allow a listener to translate between her own framework and that of the speaker. Carnap's picture here is the following: any dispute which can be adjudicated must turn on one of two factors—empirical factors (which can be adjudicated through observation) or linguistic factors (which can be adjudicated through appeal to the fundamental principles of the linguistic framework within which the dispute is conducted). Carnap anticipates that most metaphysical disputes will be unmasked (through a proper formalization of "the language" in which the dispute is conducted) as ones in which the parties to the "dispute" do not share a common language: the seemingly substantive matter over which the disputants appear to differ, though disguised so as to appear to be of a super-empirical nature, will be revealed to be of a merely verbal nature. However, considered as a strategy of philosophical elucidation, such a procedure is likely, as Carnap fully realizes, to fall short of its goal of assisting one's interlocutors to win their way through to clarity. Often the philosophical conversation will simply break off:

> If one partner in a philosophical discussion cannot or will not give a translation of his thesis into the formal mode, or if he will not state to which language-system his thesis refers, then the other will be well-advised to refuse the debate, because the thesis of his opponent is incomplete, and discussion would lead to nothing but empty wrangling.[69]

Faced with a Heidegger, once the conversation reaches the juncture described here, presumably a Carnap will politely take his leave. Carnap's method here runs out of steam, once again, just at the point at which Wittgenstein's seeks to enter the philosophical conversation.

The Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus*, faced with Heidegger's assertions, would neither have us conclude that a sign has been given a wrong use (e.g. that a logical particle that serves for the formulation of a negative existential statement has been illegitimately employed), nor that the conversation should be abandoned if the speaker refuses to specify the ground rules of the linguistic framework within which he is conducting his inquiry. Wittgenstein would instead have us first attempt to identify alternative ways of perceiving the symbol in the sign by reflecting upon its possible contexts of significant use.[70] Each alternative way of

[69] Ibid.

[70] In conversation with Carnap and other members of the Vienna Circle, Wittgenstein remarked: "To be sure, I can imagine what Heidegger means by Being [*Sein*] and Anxiety [*Angst*]" (*Ludwig Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle: Conversations*

perceiving the symbol in the sign yields a distinct segmentation of the propositional sign into symbolic constituents. In a symbolic notation of the sort which the *Tractatus* recommends (one "founded on the principles of logical grammar," designed expressly to serve the purposes of philosophical elucidation), there will correspond to each possible segmentation of the string a *unique* rendering of it in the notation. In Tractarian philosophical elucidation, the role of logical symbolism is to furnish a perspicuous means of representing alternative segmentations, thus perspicuously displaying to the speaker the range of available possibilities for meaning his words. Let us consider four possible outcomes such an elucidatory employment of logical notation might have. Let us begin with the two most straightforward possible outcomes. Faced with a perspicuous representation in logical symbolism of the possibilities for meaning his words, a speaker might:

(1) accept a particular rendition of his sentence into the symbolism; or
(2) not accept any proposed rendition of his sentence.

If the outcome is (1), then we have learned what the logical form of the speaker's statement is—we are furnished with a means for seeing the symbol in the sign. If (2), then it remains open what (if anything) he means—it remains open whether we are faced with a case of nonsense or have simply failed to discern his meaning. In both cases (1) and (2), a *Begriffsschrift* (i.e. a symbolic notation founded on the principles of logical grammar) serves a hermeneutic role. It helps us to see better what someone means by her words or what we mean by our own words. Let us now consider a third possible outcome. Faced with a perspicuous representation in logical symbolism of the possibilities for meaning his words, a speaker might:

(3) discover that he means nothing at all by his words, but rather has been unwittingly hovering between alternative possibilities of meaning his words, without determinately settling on any one.

Prior to a perspicuous overview of the available possibilities for meaning his words, the speaker in case (3) is under the impression of having conferred a method of symbolizing on each of his signs. But, confronted with the perspicuous overview which the symbolism furnishes, the

Recorded by Friedrich Waismann, ed. Brian McGuinness (Oxford: Blackwell, 1979), p. 68). Wittgenstein's response to Heidegger's remarks—in contrast with Carnap's—is to attempt to imagine what Heidegger might mean by his words. The task of philosophical elucidation, for Wittgenstein, always begins with such an attempt.

speaker discovers that he has been wavering between alternative possible methods of symbolizing.[71] The task of working through the options for how he *can* mean his words undermines his impression that there was something determinate that he did mean by them. His original conviction that there was such a "something" dissolves on him. (We will return to case (3).) We need to consider yet a fourth kind of case before we can see how a *Begriffsschrift* discharges the whole of its appointed task as an instrument of Tractarian elucidation. In this case, the speaker:

(4) refuses to countenance the possibility that the full meaning of his words could correspond to anything expressible in the symbolism.

Such a response signals that an interlocutor has placed his foot on the penultimate rung of the Tractarian ladder. Outcome (4) resembles each of the first two outcomes in a certain respect. It resembles (1) in that the speaker accepts *parts* of thoughts which can be expressed in the symbolism as corresponding to parts of his own thought—but only parts: alternative rendition(s) of his words into the symbolism are, in each case, at most partially expressive of that which he wants to mean by his words. Case (4) resembles (2) in that the speaker refuses to accept any single rendition as definitively capturing his meaning. "Alternative renditions can express a constituent aspect of the whole which I want to mean," the speaker in case (4) responds, "but no single rendition can express the whole of what I want to mean; because what I want to mean requires the conjunction of logical features that the symbolism does not permit me to conjoin."

The speaker in case (4) feels that that which he wants to mean by his words could never be expressed in a *Begriffsschrift*, for the very features of a *Begriffsschrift* which render it capable of perspicuously reflecting the logical structure of language simultaneously render it incapable of expressing that which he wants to mean by his words. It is here that Tractarian elucidation encounters its final hurdle—the case of a speaker who not only, as in case (2), rejects all of the alternative possible ways of meaning of his words expressible in a *Begriffsschrift*, but one who rejects any *possible* rendition of what he wants to mean by his words into a *Begriffsschrift* on a priori grounds—on the grounds that what he

[71] The *Tractatus* works through in (its characteristically compressed) detail a wide variety of such cases (of hovering between determinate possibilities of use) as they arise in connection with the philosophical employment of *Scheinbegriffe* such as "world," "fact," "essence," "logical form," "representation," "language," "thought," "concept," "object," "generality," etc.

wants to mean cannot be accommodated by the logical structure of language. (It is against just such a speaker, as we have seen, that Carnap's methods are powerless.) Such a speaker is perfectly willing to concede (as Heidegger is) that that which he wants to mean by his words runs up against the limits of what logic will permit us to say. Only he will insist that his nonsense is unlike the nonsense which figures in outcome (3): for his nonsense is substantial nonsense, and it is his aim to produce just this sort of nonsense. The task, when faced with such an interlocutor, for the *Tractatus*, is *not* one of demonstrating to the speaker that "the proposition is nonsensical because the symbol itself is impermissible" (§5.473). (This would hardly come as news; for this is just what the sort of interlocutor that is here in question will himself maintain about his own nonsense—"logically impermissible" nonsense is just what he aims to produce, and nothing other than such a sort of nonsense would serve his purpose.) The task for the Tractarian elucidator is rather "to demonstrate to [the interlocutor] that he has given no meaning to certain signs in his propositions" (§6.53), that the "proposition" is only apparently substantially nonsensical. The elucidation is only at an end when the interlocutor arrives at the point at which he is able of his own accord to acknowledge this. Thus it is only at an end when the interlocutor "recognizes" his propositions as *Unsinn*—in the sense of *Unsinn* specified in §5.4733—that is, in the only way, according to the *Tractatus*, anything can be *Unsinn*. The activity of elucidation which the *Tractatus* seeks to practice on its reader is only at an end when the reader of the work is able to "recognize" the propositions which figure in the work as *Unsinn,* not for the reason that the interlocutor in case (4) imagines (because of incompatible determinations of meaning he has already made), but rather because the reader now sees that *no* determination of meaning has yet been made.[72] The aim is to bring the reader to the point at which he himself is able to acknowledge that, in wanting to mean these forms of words in the apparently determinate way in which he originally imagined he was able to "mean" them, he failed to mean anything (determinate) at all by those forms of words.

The "problems of philosophy" that the *Tractatus* sets itself the task

[72] Thus Wittgenstein says in §6.53 that the aim is to demonstrate to the metaphysically inclined speaker that he has given "no meaning to certain *signs* in his *Sätze*." If the standard reading of the *Tractatus* were correct, this is not what Wittgenstein should be saying here. The complaint should be directed not at the (mere) *signs* in the metaphysician's *Sätze* (on the grounds that no meaning—i.e. no method of symbolizing—has been conferred upon them), but at the impermissible character of the propositional *symbols* which the metaphysician employs. (Hence also the danger of translating 'Satz' as 'proposition'.)

of "solving" are all of a single sort: they are all occasioned by reflection on possibilities (of running up against the limits of thought, language, or reality) which appear to come into view when we imagine ourselves able to frame in thought violations of the logical structure of language. The "solution" to these problems (as §6.52 says) lies in their disappearance—in the dissolution of the appearance that we are so much as able to frame such thoughts. The mode of philosophy which this work practices (as §4.112 says) does not result in "philosophical propositions": the "philosophical propositions" we come out with when we attempt to frame such thoughts are to be recognized as *Unsinn*. This process of recognition is an inherently piecemeal one: our inclination to believe that we can perceive the symbol in the sign, when no method of symbolizing has yet been conferred on it, is not one that is to be extirpated, at a single stroke, by persuading the reader of some "theory" of meaning. As is made clear in §6.53, the aim is to demonstrate to the metaphysically inclined speaker that he has given "no meaning to certain signs in his sentences" on a case by case basis.[73] The sign that one of the sentences of the *Tractatus* has achieved its elucidatory purpose comes when the reader's phenomenology of having understood something determinate by the form of words in question is suddenly shattered. The reader undergoes an abrupt transition: one moment, imagining he has discovered something, the next, discovering he has not yet discovered anything, to mean by the words. The transition is from a psychological experience of entertaining what appears to be a fully determinate thought—*the* thought apparently expressed by *that* sentence—to the experience of having that appearance (the appearance of there being any such thought) disintegrate. No "theory of meaning"

[73] "The only strictly correct method" of philosophy described in §6.53 is quite different from the one actually practiced in the *Tractatus*. The practitioner of the strictly correct method eschews nonsense, confining himself to displaying what can be said and to pointing out where the other has failed to give a meaning to one of his signs; whereas the elucidatory method of the *Tractatus* involves the production of vast quantities of nonsense. The former method depends on the elucidator always being able to speak second; the latter attempts to achieve the aims of the former but in a situation in which the interlocutor is not present. The actual method of the *Tractatus* is thus a literary surrogate for the strictly correct method—one in which the text invites the reader alternately to adopt the roles played by each of the parties to the dialogue in the strictly correct method. As the addressees of this surrogate form of elucidation, we are furnished with a series of "propositions" whose attractiveness we are asked both to feel and to round on. This raises the question: which of the *Sätze* of which the work is composed are *really* nonsense and which not?—which belong to the voice of temptation and which to the voice of correctness? The question is based on a confusion—on the idea that *Sinn* is the sort of property a *Satz* can possess on its own steam, apart from any relation that we, as users of it, enter into with it.

could ever bring about the passage from the first of these experiences (the hallucinatory one) to the second (the experience of discovering oneself to be a victim of a hallucination). As long as we retain the relevant phenomenology of meaning (as long as it appears to us that, by golly, we *do* mean something determinate by our words), our conviction in such an experience of meaning will always lie deeper than our conviction in anything we are told by a theory of meaning concerning what sorts of things we are and are not able to mean by our words. Hence the ineffectuality of Carnap's earlier methods. Carnap eventually gives up on the project of furnishing "a theory of meaning" of this sort, but in the process he gives up on the idea of an effective method of philosophical elucidation. The *Tractatus* aims to practice a method of elucidation which does not presuppose a theory of this sort. It does not aim to show us that certain sequences of words possess an intrinsically flawed sense by persuading us of the truth of some theoretical account of where to locate "the limits of sense." Any theory which seeks to draw such "a limit to thinking" commits itself, as the Preface says, to being "able to think both sides of the limit" and hence to being "able to think what cannot be thought." The Tractarian attack on substantial nonsense—on the idea that we can discern the determinately unthinkable thoughts certain pieces of nonsense are trying to say—is an attack on the coherence of any project which thus seeks to mark the bounds of sense.

The *Tractatus* seeks to bring its reader to the point where he can recognize sentences within the body of the work as nonsensical, not by means of a theory which legislates certain sentences out of the realm of sense, but rather by bringing more clearly into view for the reader the life with language he already leads—by harnessing the capacities for distinguishing sense from nonsense (for recognizing the symbol in the sign and for recognizing when no method of symbolizing has yet been conferred upon a sign) implicit in the everyday practical mastery of language which the reader already possesses. As the Preface says: "The limit . . . can only be drawn *in language* and what lies on the other side of the limit will be simply nonsense." Just as, according to the *Tractatus*, each propositional symbol—that is, each *sinnvoller Satz*—shows its sense (§4.022), so the *Tractatus* shows what it shows (i.e. what it is to make sense) by *letting language show itself*—not through "the clarification of sentences" but through allowing "sentences themselves to become clear" (through *das Klarwerden von Sätzen*, §4.112). The work seeks to do this, not by instructing us in how to identify determinate cases of nonsense, but by enabling us to see more clearly what it is we do with language when we succeed in achieving determinate forms

of sense (when we succeed in projecting a symbol into the sign) and what it is we fall short of doing when we fail to achieve such forms of sense (when we fail to confer a determinate method of symbolizing on a propositional sign). If and when we have failed to achieve sense, the acknowledgment that this is how things stand lies with us.

In the transition to Wittgenstein's later work the task of eliciting such acknowledgment plays an increasingly important role:

> The philosopher strives to find the liberating word . . . The philosopher delivers the word to us which can render the matter harmless . . . The choice of our words is so important, because the point is to hit upon the physiognomy of the matter exactly . . . Indeed, we can only convict someone else of a mistake if he . . . acknowledges the expression [we have chosen] as the correct expression . . . For only if he acknowledges it as such, is it the correct expression. (Psychoanalysis)[74]

The fundamental difference between Carnap's and Wittgenstein's approaches to philosophical elucidation might be summarized as follows: Carnap seeks a method that will furnish criteria that permit one to establish that someone else is speaking nonsense, whereas Wittgenstein (both early and late) seeks a method that ultimately can only be practiced by someone on himself. Wittgenstein's method only permits the verdict that sense has not been spoken to be passed by the one who speaks. The role of a philosophical elucidator is not to pass verdicts on the statements of others, but to help them achieve clarity about what it is that they want to say. Thus the conversation does not break off if the other cannot meet the demand to make himself intelligible to the practitioner of philosophical elucidation; rather the burden lies with the one who professes to elucidate—not to specify a priori conditions of intelligibility, but rather to find the liberating word: enabling the other to attain intelligibility, where this may require helping him first to discover that he is unintelligible to himself.[75]

[74] "The Big Typescript," sect. 87, in Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Occasions, 1912–1951*, ed. James Klagge and Alfred Nordmann (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993), p. 165.

[75] This essay borrows heavily from my "The Method of the *Tractatus*," in Reck, ed., *From Frege to Wittgenstein: Perspectives on Early Analytic Philosophy*.