

# The Philosophical Quarterly

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## DISCUSSIONS

### LOGICAL SYNTAX IN WITTGENSTEIN'S *TRACTATUS*

BY CORA DIAMOND

*P.M.S. Hacker has argued that there are numerous misconceptions in James Conant's account of Wittgenstein's views and of those of Carnap. I discuss only Hacker's treatment of Conant on logical syntax in the 'Tractatus'. I try to show that passages in the 'Tractatus' which Hacker takes to count strongly against Conant's view do no such thing, and that he himself has not explained how he can account for a significant passage which certainly appears to support Conant's reading.*

I take up one of the issues raised by P.M.S. Hacker in his 'Wittgenstein, Carnap and the New American Wittgensteinians',<sup>1</sup> namely, the role of the notion of logical syntax within the *Tractatus*. It seems to me that Hacker plays fast and loose with the text at a couple of significant points, and makes a questionable use of analogy. I shall explain these claims, and then say what I take to be the implications for our understanding of the *Tractatus*.

It will be useful if I summarize briefly the two contrasting accounts of logical syntax in the *Tractatus*, Hacker's, and the view he criticizes, that of James Conant. According to Hacker, Wittgenstein held in the *Tractatus* that we produce nonsensical pseudo-propositions when we use signs in ways which contravene the rules of logical syntax for the signs. The resulting pseudo-propositions are nonsensical because they use signs in ways which are excluded by the rules. The signs thus used do not indeed have their usual meaning, or any other meaning, but the source of the nonsensicality of the would-be propositions in which they occur is the use of signs in contravention of the rules. An important part of the *Tractatus* view, as Hacker sees it, is the idea that, in establishing permissible combinations of words, the rules of logical syntax exclude other combinations. It is possible to give new stipulations of rules, providing other allowable combinations, and giving to words which already have one use a new and different sort of use.<sup>2</sup> According to Hacker, Wittgenstein held

<sup>1</sup> *The Philosophical Quarterly*, 53 (2003), pp. 1–23, to which otherwise unidentified page numbers refer. See also Hacker's essay 'Was He Trying to Whistle It?' (hereafter WHT), in A. Crary and R. Read (eds), *The New Wittgenstein* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 353–88.

<sup>2</sup> Hacker, while plainly thinking Wittgenstein allows for such stipulations, also ascribes to him the view that giving multiple uses to signs contravenes logical syntax: see WHT, p. 366.

that it is incorrect to use a word in a way which is not covered by the previously established rules and stipulations, and the resulting combination of words is then nonsensical.<sup>3</sup> Conant denies that Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus* held that there is such a thing as using signs in contravention of logical syntax. Using signs in ways which differ from previously established uses of those signs may or may not result in nonsense; what produces nonsensicality is not departure from established uses but failure to give to the signs thus used a meaning.

*First bit of fast-and-loose play: Tractatus 3.325 and 'governance' by logical syntax*

I shall contrast what Hacker says Wittgenstein says with what Wittgenstein does say. Here, first, is Hacker (p. 13):

I agree with Conant that Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus* never speaks of 'violations of logical syntax'. He says only that in a logically correct notation, expressions will be used in accordance with logical syntax (*TLP* 3.325). But obviously there can be no such thing as using a sign in accordance with logical syntax if there is no such thing as using it in contravention of logical syntax.

That is part of Hacker's argument that Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus* works with the idea that a sign can be used in a way that contravenes logical syntax. In 3.325, Wittgenstein is speaking about the confusions of which philosophy is full:

In order to avoid such errors we must make use of a sign-language that excludes them by not using the same sign for different symbols and by not using in a superficially similar way signs that have different modes of signification: that is to say, a sign-language that is governed by *logical* grammar – by logical syntax.

Hacker writes as if we had in 3.325 a reference to expressions used in accordance with logical syntax, and hence an implicit reference to the possibility of using a sign in contravention of logical syntax. What we actually have is a reference to a sign-language's being in accordance with logical syntax, and an implicit reference to sign-languages which are not in accordance with logical syntax, in that they use the same sign for different symbols, or in that they use in superficially similar ways signs that signify quite differently (or in that they have both sorts of use). Thus ordinary language is not in the relevant sense 'governed by' logical syntax, since we have such pairs of sentences as 'An object fell' and 'An apple fell'. In that pair of sentences there are signs which have different modes of signification but which are used in superficially similar ways. (We can see the difference in mode of signification if we rewrite the sentences in logical notation.) Wittgenstein does not say in 3.325 (or anywhere else in the *Tractatus*) what Hacker says he says, namely, that expressions will be used in accordance with logical syntax in a logically correct notation. (Nor does he say it about signs or symbols.) It is indeed his view that in a logically correct notation, you will not have signs which look as if they functioned as concept-words but which do not do so. The designer or constructor of such a language may

<sup>3</sup> See especially pp. 13–17; cf. also WHT, pp. 364–7. This understanding of how general rules that permit various combinations thereby exclude others is very important for Hacker's view of how the *Tractatus* supposedly determines 'the bounds of sense'.

prohibit the introduction of new uses for the signs in that language; it is one of the important differences between ordinary language and a constructed notation that new uses of signs which already have a use may not be allowed in the latter. They presumably will not be allowed if the notation is to serve the clarificatory purposes which Wittgenstein envisaged for such a notation. The fact that our ordinary language is not 'governed by logical syntax' in the sense in which Wittgenstein uses that phrase in 3.325 means that it is easy for us to fall into certain sorts of philosophical confusion. The contrast which is central for 3.325 is between sign-languages that open up certain possibilities of philosophical confusion and sign-languages that close off such possibilities. The fact that ordinary language is not governed by logical syntax does not imply that the language, or the use of signs in multiple and possibly confusing ways, actually contravenes any rules of logical syntax.<sup>4</sup> Wittgenstein held that the sentences of ordinary language are 'in perfect logical order just as they stand' (5.563); thus even sentences which use the same sign in two different ways, or which use in a superficially similar way signs which signify differently, do not violate any prohibitions. The idea in 3.325 appears to be that a language can attend to, or hearken to or be governed by logical syntax, in the sense that linguistic distinctions run parallel to logical ones. There is a pattern of logical distinctions internal to logical syntax, and the pattern can be reflected clearly in a language or less obviously (as similarities and differences of sound in the spoken language may be reflected clearly in the pattern of spelling in the written language, which might in that case be said to be 'governed by' the sound pattern, or the similarities and differences may be reflected in a much less clear way). Though it reflects the distinctions internal to logical syntax in a way that may be difficult to grasp, ordinary language does not thereby violate the rules of logical syntax, nor does Wittgenstein's language in 3.325 imply that it does.

My main point in this section is that 3.325 does not, as Hacker claims, support the idea that Wittgenstein is committed, in the *Tractatus*, to the idea that expressions can be used 'in violation of logical syntax'. But there is a further point worth noting here, about sign-languages which are, in the relevant sense, governed by logical syntax, and which have a rule prohibiting new uses of signs that already have a use. If you had such a language and you then spoke in an innovative way using some existing sign, a sign which already had an established but different use, your sign-language would no longer be 'governed by logical syntax'. Such a use would violate the rule against using the signs of the sign-language in innovative ways. But the violation of that rule would not mean that the old sign, used in the new way, made nonsense of some or other would-be proposition of which it was part.<sup>5</sup> Such a use

<sup>4</sup> Contrast Hacker, WHT, p. 366. He takes *Tractatus* 3.325 to imply that logical syntax 'prohibits using the same sign for different symbols or using in a superficially similar way signs that have different modes of signification'; the rules of logical syntax are transgressed when one puts together words in ways prohibited by logical syntax.

<sup>5</sup> Compare Hacker's discussion, WHT, pp. 366–7, though what he says there is directly applicable not to sign-languages which are 'governed by logical syntax', but to ordinary language. He holds there that failure to comply with the rules of logical syntax results in nonsense (p. 367), and that these rules make it incorrect to use 'object' as a 'genuine name' if it already has a different use (p. 366).

could be said to be 'in contravention of logical syntax' in two senses. (a) One might introduce a somewhat misleading way of speaking, and say that signs were used in contravention of logical syntax if they had more than one use.<sup>6</sup> (b) One might speak of a sign as being used in contravention of logical syntax if it were used in a constructed notation, in a way explicitly prohibited by a rule excluding more than one use of any sign. But the fact that a sign was used in contravention of logical syntax in either of those two senses would by no means enable one to infer that a combination in which it occurred was nonsensical. If a sign has a determinately fixed use, we may go on to give it some different use. If we put it into a sign-combination other than those which belong to its original use, we may fail to provide a different but significant mode of use for it. If no meaning is given to the sign, the resulting combination will be nonsensical. But the reason why it will be nonsensical is that something has not been done, not that it is a wrong sort of combination. I shall return to the question of illegitimately combined signs. Here I should add that there are reasons why it would be misleading to speak, in the case of a constructed notation which had a rule prohibiting the introduction of new uses for any of the signs, of new introductions as 'violations of the rules of logical syntax', meaning by this that such uses violated the prohibition. When Wittgenstein speaks of 'rules of logical syntax', at 3.334, he specifies that all we need in order to be given such rules is knowledge of how the individual signs signify. A rule belonging to the notation as a whole, specifying that it was not to be mucked about by introduction of new uses, is not something 'given' with the use of the particular signs, and is quite different from what Wittgenstein meant by 'rules of logical syntax'.

*Second bit of fast-and-loose play: Tractatus 3.326–3.327, and Wittgenstein's letter to Ogden about 3.326.*

On p. 13, Hacker discusses a part of Conant's argument that logical syntax in the *Tractatus* does not proscribe combinations of signs or combinations of symbols; it proscribes nothing. Conant says, as part of his argument, that logical syntax is not concerned with the proscription of combinations of signs, because it does not treat of (mere) *signs*: it treats of symbols. Hacker says that Conant's claim is false. About it, he goes on to say

It is a confused statement of the correct point that, according to the *Tractatus*, there can be nonsensical signs, but not nonsensical symbols, since a symbol just is a sign used according to the rules for its correct use.

I shall focus here on Hacker's appeal to the notion of the rules for the correct use of a sign, and on the question whether there is, in Wittgenstein's remarks about signs and symbols in the *Tractatus* or in what he wrote at the same time, any support for a notion of 'correct use' such that the rules giving the correct use of a sign exclude or proscribe other ways of using the sign. (I shall not be directly concerned with questions about Conant's view of the relation between logical syntax and symbols.)

<sup>6</sup> Hacker seems to speak in this way in WHT, p. 366, where he takes *Tractatus* 3.325 to imply that the rules of logical syntax prohibit using the same sign for different symbols, or using in superficially similar ways signs that have different modes of signification.

Before turning to the relevant passages in the *Tractatus* and Wittgenstein's letter to Ogden concerning 3.326, I need to make a couple of points.

(1) Hacker goes on to quote a remark of Wittgenstein's from 1930. I believe that this remark is in fact compatible with the views that Conant ascribes to Wittgenstein, but it is in any case beyond my present concerns, which are limited to the *Tractatus*. Whether Wittgenstein had the same view of logical syntax in 1930 or not is another matter.

(2) We need to bear in mind that what is at issue in the debate about logical syntax in the *Tractatus* is whether logical syntax fixes rules for the use of a sign as its correct use, so that a sufficient condition for a sign's being used incorrectly, a sufficient condition for the use to be a proscribed use, is that the sign is not, in some combination, being used in accordance with those rules. What is also at issue is whether departing from some set of rules for the use of a sign can ever be a sufficient condition for the nonsensicality of the would-be proposition of which the sign, so used, is part. The points about 'sufficient conditions' are important, as we can see if we think about possible ways of using the expression 'correct use' in relation to a sign. There is no reason not to ascribe to Wittgenstein a notion of logico-syntactical correctness such that signs can have several uses, all of which are syntactically correct.<sup>7</sup> Wittgenstein's example of 'Green is green' (3.323) illustrates the point. The two occurrences of 'green' are occurrences of different symbols; both could be described as syntactically correct uses of the sign 'green'. This way of speaking of syntactical correctness will not yield any conclusions about the incorrectness of a use of some sign which departs from some specific set of rules for that sign. (Nor would it yield any conclusions about the syntactical incorrectness of a use of some sign which departs from all of the ways in which the sign had earlier been used, as for example a use of 'green' as a verb, on some occasion when it had not earlier been used as a verb.) This notion of correctness would go with a somewhat more complex notion of incorrectness: a use of a sign that departed from the established rules for that sign could be called 'incorrect' (if one wanted to speak in this way) if there were no *other* determinate use for the sign, so (on this way of speaking of incorrectness) a mere departure from some specific set of rules would not show incorrectness. On this way of speaking of incorrectness, there would be nothing, as it were, automatically incorrect about a use of signs that had departed from the only previously established rules and stipulations for the relevant signs.<sup>8</sup> I shall call the notion of 'correctness' and 'incorrectness' which allows for multiple correct uses and new correct uses the 'weak' sense.

<sup>7</sup> It is not clear whether Hacker wants to deny this in WHT, p. 366. He there reads 3.325 as implying that logical syntax prohibits multiple uses of signs.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Hacker, p. 16, and WHT, p. 366. He there claims that once we have assigned a use to the sign 'object' as a variable, it will be incorrect to use it in some other way, for no such use has been assigned to the term 'object', nor should it be. It is true that there may be some assignments of new uses to a word which already has a use which can create confusion, and so it might be advisable not to use the word in such ways. But there is no evidence that Wittgenstein took such uses to be in general incorrect or excluded by the rules. Such uses would presumably be excluded by the rules of a *Begriffsschrift*, given its purposes. But their exclusion from such a notation has no implications for their exclusion from ordinary language.

I can now turn to the *Tractatus* passages which are relevant to Hacker's claim about signs and symbols. Hacker is drawing on 3.326–3.327; I shall quote those sections and two earlier relevant sections (3.32 and 3.321):

A sign is what can be perceived of a symbol.

So one and the same sign (written or spoken, etc.) can be common to two different symbols – in which case they will signify in different ways.

In order to recognize a symbol by its sign we must observe its senseful use.

A sign does not determine a logical form unless it is taken together with its logico-syntactical employment.

The *Tractatus* text plainly allows for multiple symbols which have the sign in common. So a sign taken together with one mode of employment constitutes one symbol, and the same sign, taken with some other mode of employment, would constitute a different symbol. Hacker's playing fast and loose with the text comes out in his saying that a symbol is a sign used according to the rules for its correct use, so far as he wants this to imply that other ways of using the sign would be incorrect. There is no explicit reference to correctness of use in the relevant passages in the *Tractatus*. But even so, there would be nothing problematic about introducing a notion of correctness in explicating Wittgenstein's ideas about signs and symbols, if the notion in question were the weak notion. There is, indeed, a reference to syntactic correctness in Wittgenstein's gloss of 3.326, in his letter to Ogden about the translation of the *Tractatus*. On the basis of the letter, we can take him to hold that every senseful use of a sign is syntactically correct; every syntactically correct use is senseful.<sup>9</sup> But the weak notion of 'correct use' will not allow an inference from the fact that a sign was used in a way which departs from its hitherto sole 'correct use' (with no stipulations having been made about any other uses) to its having been used incorrectly or in such a way as to give rise to nonsense. These two cases illustrate the significance of the point here:

(i) A child is showing off. Someone says 'He thinks he's something!'. Suppose that no one has ever used the word 'something' in that way before. Suppose (that is) that it has hitherto always been used in ordinary language in a way that goes over to quantifier-with-variable in a formal notation, and that there has never been any other sort of employment of 'something'.

(ii) Someone says, in a philosophical tone of voice, staring at a book, 'That book is a something'. Again we suppose that no one has ever used the word 'something' in that way before. The word has always been used in ordinary language in the way described in (i).

In neither the first case nor the second is the sign 'something' used in accordance with the previously established mode of use of the sign, or any previous stipulations

<sup>9</sup> *Letters to C.K. Ogden*, ed. G.H. von Wright (Oxford: Blackwell, 1973), p. 59. Wittgenstein was commenting on Ogden's choice of 'significant' for 'sinnvoll' in 3.326 ('senseful' in my adaptation of the Pears–McGuinness translation). He says that the meaning of the proposition is 'that in order to recognize the symbol in a sign we must look at how this sign is used significantly in propositions. I.e., we must observe how the sign is used in accordance with the laws of logical syntax. Thus "significant" here means as much as "syntactically correct".'

governing the word. But that by itself does not enable us to tell whether ‘He thinks he’s something!’ or ‘That book is a something’ is nonsensical, whether both are nonsensical or neither is. What *Tractatus* 3.326 suggests is that we can recognize the symbol in ‘He thinks he’s something!’, in that we can observe how ‘something’ is used significantly in that proposition and could lay out its use in logically related ones. (We can see *that* syntactically correct use.) The attempt to show that the second case involves a nonsensical would-be proposition, that no use has been determined for ‘something’ in that context, could not proceed merely by pointing out the departure from the rules for ‘something’; more would need to be said. That ‘That book is a something’ is nonsense does not depend merely on our not having stipulated anything concerning such uses as that in (ii); in the case of ‘He thinks he’s something!’, nothing had previously been stipulated about such a use, but it is not on that account nonsensical.<sup>10</sup> (My pair of examples has been deliberately chosen to connect with questions about the proper reading of *Tractatus* 4.1272. I cannot, though, discuss that section here.<sup>11</sup>) Wittgenstein’s explanations of ‘sign’ and ‘symbol’ do not imply that a sign is used incorrectly if not used in accordance with the only set of rules for the use of that sign established earlier.<sup>12</sup>

I can now return to Hacker’s appeal to the point that a symbol just is a sign used according to the rules for its correct use. This is not wrong if taken to allow for multiple correct uses and for new correct uses as in example (i) above; but in that case there is no implication that any uses are excluded by the laying down of some correct use; it provides no support, thus understood, for Hacker’s argument against Conant. What Hacker does not provide is evidence that the discussion of signs and symbols in the *Tractatus* is tied to a notion of there being, for some or any or many or all signs in our language, some single correct use or some set of correct uses, such that other uses are *excluded*. The appeal to the *Tractatus* on signs and symbols provides no grounds for taking rules of logical syntax to attach to signs in a way which would allow us to say that thus and such is the correct use of the sign, and that *therefore* such and such use of the sign is incorrect.

#### *A problematic use of analogy*

The analogy in question comes in Hacker’s discussion of whether a use of ‘object’ or ‘number’ can be a *transgression* of the rules of logical syntax for formal-concept words. Conant had denied that the nonsensicality of ‘One is a number’ and other nonsensical would-be propositions arises from such combinations being transgressions of logical syntax; Conant takes the nonsensicality of such combinations to arise solely

<sup>10</sup> For Hacker on the absence of prior stipulations, see p. 16. Everything Hacker says there about the philosophical departure from the established use of ‘object’ would imply that case (i) above is nonsensical; but it is not.

<sup>11</sup> I do discuss that question in ‘Criss-Cross Philosophy’, in E. Ammereller and E. Fischer (eds), *Wittgenstein at Work: Method in the Philosophical Investigations* (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 201–20, at pp. 201–6. See also my ‘Saying and Showing: an Example from Anscombe’, in B. Stocker (ed.), *Post-Analytic Tractatus* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), pp. 151–66.

<sup>12</sup> For a statement of Hacker’s opposed view, see WHT, p. 366: once a use of a particular sort has been assigned to ‘object’, then (assuming no prior stipulations governing some other use) it will be incorrect to use it in a different way.

from the presence in them of a sign or signs which have no meaning in the particular sort of context. Hacker does not wish to deny that such combinations do contain a sign or signs with no meaning, but criticizes Conant's denial that there is such a thing as a transgression of a rule of logical syntax. In the case of 'One is a number', Hacker says, we have the word 'number', which has a use as a bound variable, but we use it in a quite different way, as if it were a genuine predicate. This, he says, is to misuse it: it is a transgression of logical syntax; and he adds that it is not helpful to say, as Conant would have us do, that 'One is a number' is not a transgression of the rule which fixes the use of 'number', since there is no such thing as 'violating' the rules of logical syntax. Here Hacker appeals to the analogy with the rules of a game (p. 16):

Conant's view is akin to claiming that the pawn in chess cannot be moved three squares at a time, since if one were to move a piece thus, it would not be a pawn – a transcendental argument to prove that one cannot cheat in chess. One *could* speak thus, but would it make any difference? Is it any *cleaver* than the way we ordinarily speak?

Hacker's point is that we have a violation-concept of the rules of games like chess and bridge, which hangs together with the way in which the rules fix valid moves within the game, and enable us to identify some would-be moves, like moving the pawn three squares forward, as infringements of the rules, as non-moves through invalidity. We could give up talking in that way: we could give up speaking of moving the pawn illegitimately, or playing the two of hearts illegitimately, and speak instead as if, in such cases, no identification of the piece as a piece-in-the-game, being mis-played, were possible; but it would be unhelpful, Hacker suggests, to speak in such a way. Better to leave our way of speaking as it is and recognize that the games in question leave conceptual room for violation of the rules, i.e., for mis-moves, through cheating or inadvertence (as one might violate the rules of golf by inadvertently playing the wrong ball). How then is the analogy supposed to work, in Hacker's case of sentences like 'One is a number'? If (according to him) the sentence can properly be regarded as involving a violation of rules, what is the relevant 'game' the rules of which we violate by such sentences? 'One is a number' involves a would-be use of 'number' as a genuine predicate, not as a formal-concept-word, and Hacker's point is not that the sentence is merely a mis-move in the 'game' of the formal-concept-use of 'number'. One is not playing or attempting to play that game, but playing it wrong, if what one is attempting to do is to use 'number' as a predicate. The rules that Hacker takes to be violated by the use of 'number' as a predicate are rules that supposedly fix the allowable use of 'number' in the language, and exclude other uses. His point is that just as revoking is a transgression of the rules of bridge, which rule out as a legitimate bridge-move the playing of the two of hearts in such and such circumstances, so 'One is a number' is a violation of the rules of logical syntax of the language, which fix the use of 'number' as a formal-concept word and rule out other uses. The analogy is meant to be between the way in which the constitutive rules of games like bridge and chess specify valid moves, thereby *excluding* (not allowing as valid moves within the games) other ways of

moving the pieces or playing the cards, and the way in which the rules of logical syntax of the language fix the uses of the 'pieces' (fix what is an allowable use of the signs) and thereby exclude other uses as illegitimate.

(I have been helped, in thinking about the matters in this section, by the comments of an anonymous referee for *The Philosophical Quarterly*. That Hacker takes the rules of logical syntax to play a role within language comparable to the role of those constitutive rules of chess which define valid moves, i.e., that the analogy he wants is between a game like chess and language, not between a game like chess and a particular use of a word, is, I think, plain in his essay in the *Quarterly*.<sup>13</sup> Even on Hacker's view of the analogy, there is an important difference between the case of the rules of a game and the case of the rules of logical syntax, since on Hacker's account of logical syntax, there appears to be room for the possibility of providing new rules of logical syntax, room (that is) for the stipulation of further uses of words which already have an established use. But the point would then be that the game is thereby in a sense reconstituted with the newly stipulated rules; the set of rules still excludes (does not allow as valid moves within the language) any uses of any words not in accordance with those rules. The fact that Hacker's analogy does leave room for some modification of language by newly stipulated rules does not alter the fact that the analogy is meant to make clear that uses of a word not in accordance with the established rules of logical syntax of the language are thereby identifiable as illegitimate. The analogy, thus understood, fits closely with Hacker's account of how rules of logical syntax determine the 'bounds of sense'.)

The idea that we should take Hacker's analogy to be a helpful one presupposes what is at stake, namely whether it is a sufficient condition for a would-be move in language to be illegitimate that one's use of a sign departs from the established rules fixing the use of that sign. We can say that it is a sufficient condition for what purports to be a chess move to be illegitimate that one has moved one's pawn three squares forward. That is indeed a violation of the rules (though see (b) below for a qualification). But what is at stake in the argument between Conant and Hacker is whether it would be a sufficient condition for the nonsensicality of a combination of signs like 'One is a number' that 'number', in that combination, is not being used in accordance with what is so far (let us say) its only established use (which is its use as a formal-concept word). But when I make a move in language that no one has ever made before, in accordance with no prior rules or stipulations, what I say may be perfectly intelligible and in order; it may be a perfectly good move. Conant is arguing that whatever rules there already are for the use of a word, the word may be given some other employment. Whether anything determinate is being said when it is given that new employment then needs to be looked at in the individual case. This is not analogous to giving a transcendental argument to the impossibility of violating the rules of chess; it is to argue that rules of logical syntax are unlike the rules of a game like chess, which do establish that certain sorts of things one might

<sup>13</sup> See pp. 13, 15–16; cf. also WHT, especially pp. 366–7, where Hacker's view is even clearer. For a different analogy between rules of language and rules of a game, see A.W. Moore, 'Ineffability and Nonsense', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Supp. Vol. 77 (2003), pp. 169–95, at pp. 186–7.

do as would-be moves are out of order. Hacker's appeal to the analogy presupposes that rules of language are analogous to the rules of a game, and thus presupposes a view of language different from Conant's, and different from the view Conant ascribes to Wittgenstein. Conant is not putting forward a view which would imply that would-be chess moves like moving one's pawn three squares were not out of order. (There is a detailed argument concerning the failure of analogy between rules of games like chess and soccer and rules of language in Martin Gustafson, *Entangled Sense*.<sup>14</sup>) The analogy between rules of a game and rules of logical syntax might be pressed for rules of a constructed notation, in which giving new uses to the signs whose use has previously been fixed may be ruled out. But uses that are not in accordance with previously established rules are not excluded in ordinary language, nor did Wittgenstein suggest that they were, and that wrecks the supposed analogy. (Even in the case of a constructed notation, the analogy is not exact, but I do not have space to consider why the analogy is problematic even in that case.)

My argument in the last paragraph is oversimplified in two respects.

(a) It is not actually true that 'number' has only the use of a formal-concept word and no use as an ordinary concept-word; among the (numerous) uses of 'number' is its use to refer to particular issues of a journal. I do not think a fair reading of the *Tractatus* would involve any ascription to Wittgenstein of the view that 'number', as used to refer to the January 2003 number of *The Philosophical Quarterly*, is in any way improper. Such a use would indeed have been immediately intelligible on its first appearance. For the purposes of discussion of the specific issues raised by Hacker, we can, however, ignore the fact that there already are such uses of signs like 'number' which also have a use as formal-concept words. The crucial issues are whether, whatever uses are in place and correct for a sign, a use of the sign which is not identifiable as one of the established uses is a misuse, and whether such a use must yield nonsense.

(b) In the absence of a spare queen, a pawn that has reached the eighth rank may be promoted to queen and the pawn-piece may then be taken to have the role and legal moves of a queen. So *its* moving three squares forward is no violation of the rules.<sup>15</sup> How such cases can be accommodated within Hacker's view is a question I cannot discuss. The issues here do not, it seems to me, affect the point about the question-begging use by Hacker of the analogy between the rules of games like chess as he conceives them and the rules of logical syntax in relation to language.

It may be useful here to add a few words about a different sort of linguistic rule. 'I am work hard all my life' does involve a violation of the rules of English grammar. It is not a violation of the rules of logical syntax, in Wittgenstein's sense of 'logical syntax' as we see it in the *Tractatus*. We can 'observe the senseful use' of 'am' as auxiliary and 'work' as participle in the law-breaking English spoken by an immigrant,

<sup>14</sup> Gustafson, *Entangled Sense: an Inquiry into the Philosophical Significance of Meaning and Rules* (Uppsala: Universitetsstryckeriet, 2000). See especially ch. 1. The points about 'misleading use of analogy' apply also to Hacker's use of a related analogy, that of a contract which is void for failure to adhere to the rules for valid contracts: WHT, p. 367.

<sup>15</sup> For discussion of this and related cases, I am indebted to Michael Kremer and James Conant.

say.<sup>16</sup> The employment of the sign ‘am’ as auxiliary-used-in-forming-the-present-perfect could be laid out; the sign, taken with that employment, is a symbol different from any of the symbols of standard English. Using that symbol will indeed mark the immigrant as someone who does not know how to use standard English or who refuses to do so. But this sort of violation of the rules of English does not lead to nonsensicality; there is nothing in the text of the *Tractatus* to suggest that Wittgenstein had any different view of the matter. The existence of this sort of violation of the rules of English and other languages does not imply that rules of logical syntax exclude any combinations of signs, for they are rules of a different sort.

I have not discussed every one of Hacker’s arguments for the view that Wittgenstein, in the *Tractatus*, held that the rules of logical syntax license some combinations of signs and exclude others. In particular, I have not discussed *Tractatus* 5.5351, a passage cited by Hacker, in which Wittgenstein criticizes Russell’s treatment of signs of the ‘wrong kind’ for the place where they are put. Here I shall just briefly summarize some ideas of Michael Kremer’s about that passage. His reading starts from the idea that the passage is not about ordinary language but about Russell’s *Begriffsschrift*. The basic reason why we get nonsense when certain arguments are put into Russell’s propositions is that they are arguments for which no meaning has been given in the context into which we have put them. But because we are here considering a constructed notation which can serve its philosophical purpose only if we do not allow new uses to be given to signs which already have a use, we properly should *exclude* such uses, despite the fact that we could give meaning to the signs in such new uses. As Kremer notes, the purpose of such a notation leads us to treat it as more akin to a game like chess. The fact that we treat it so does not imply that what makes a combination of signs nonsensical is that it violates some rules. So although 5.5351 can be read as making some trouble for Conant’s view, it can easily be read differently.<sup>17</sup>

Hacker himself does not discuss in ‘Wittgenstein, Carnap and the New American Wittgensteinians’ a much more serious difficulty for his own reading. He refers to, but does not discuss, *Tractatus* 5.4733, where Wittgenstein says that the reason why ‘Socrates is identical’ means nothing is that we have given no meaning to ‘identical’ as an adjective. Wittgenstein’s point is that we should not think as follows: that it means nothing because we have already determined the correct use for ‘identical’, which does not allow ‘Socrates is identical’. (Thus 5.4733 can be read as a rejection by Wittgenstein of the analogy between rules of a game and rules of logical syntax.) He also says there that any possible proposition is legitimately constructed, and, if it has no sense, that is only because we have failed to give a *Bedeutung* to some of its constituents. That was what he illustrated with ‘Socrates is identical’, which uses ‘identical’ in a different way from the employment it has in statements of the form ‘*a* is identical with *b*’, where ‘*a*’ and ‘*b*’ are different signs, and what does the symbolizing is that two different signs flank ‘identical’. Even if that sort of employment is

<sup>16</sup> I take the example from Evelyn Nien-Ming Ch’ien, *Weird English* (Harvard UP, 2004), p. 5; she takes the example from Gish Jen, ‘Who’s Irish?’, *Beacon Best of 1999* (Boston: Beacon, 1999). On the meaningfulness of ungrammatical English, see also Gustafson, pp. 31–2.

<sup>17</sup> Kremer, correspondence.

the only employment that has been given to the sign 'identical', there is nothing illegitimate, Wittgenstein says, about departing from that use. (This section immediately precedes Wittgenstein's discussion of signs and symbols in the pencil draft of the *Prototractatus*.)

That part of the *Tractatus* can therefore be read as reflecting the view that no sentence-construction is illegitimately put together, that the rules establishing ways of using signs do not make any combinations of signs into a would-be proposition a violation of what is allowed. If one reads 5.4733 in that way, it follows that Wittgenstein held that there is no such thing as a sentence which is nonsensical in virtue of use of the signs in it in ways which are excluded, because no ways of using signs are excluded. 5.4733, thus understood, is incompatible with Hacker's reading of the *Tractatus* on logical syntax, a main point of which is that some combinations of signs are excluded by the rules of logical syntax. He must therefore either interpret 5.4733 differently (for example, by making out some significant distinction between 'A is an object', which on his view the *Tractatus* takes to be an illegitimate use of the sign 'object', and 'Socrates is identical', which Wittgenstein does not take to be an illegitimate use of the sign 'identical'), or maintain that there is, on this matter, a plain inconsistency in the *Tractatus*; but he has done neither. Because of the presence in the text of 5.4733, there is a strong *prima facie* case against Hacker's reading, a case strengthened by 6.53. In the 'correct method' of philosophy we demonstrate to those who say something metaphysical that they have failed to give a meaning to certain signs in their propositions. It is not very clear why, if Wittgenstein held that their propositions were nonsensical because some sign or signs were used in violation of logical syntax, he did not take the correct method to involve demonstrating to people that they had used certain signs in violation of the rules for them. 6.53 supports Conant's understanding of 5.4733 and related passages as showing that no proposition is nonsensical in virtue of using signs in some unlicensed way. To overcome the *prima facie* case against his reading, Hacker would need to show that despite the absence of references to violation of logical syntax, and despite the explicit statement that no possible propositions are illegitimately constructed, Wittgenstein really held that some combinations of signs into would-be propositions are excluded from our language, are not licensed, are illegitimate. And he would need to do this without playing fast and loose with the text, and without presupposing an analogy between rules of a game and rules of logical syntax.<sup>18</sup>

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