Wittgenstein in America

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Introduction
dichotomy between science and interpretation, which allows each way
of speaking to realize the possibilities of clarity and perspicuity appro-
priate 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 philoso-
pher... 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 fol-
lows 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.\(^7\)
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, through-
out much of his writing. With affection and respect, we dedicate this
volume to his memory.

\(^7\) Winch, The Idea of a Social Science and Its Relation to Philosophy (London:

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 funda-
mental 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,
than Carnap is a far more important philosopher (and one whose
thought is far closer to that of Wittgenstein) than is generally acknowl-
edged 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; 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; third, to suggest that the Tractatus seems to expose as a misunderstanding the very "understanding of the logic of our language" most commonly attributed to it.

CARNAP ON THE OVERTAKING 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

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3 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 expositing 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. The three most important publications in this phase of Carnap's thought are "The Elimination of Metaphysics through the Logical Analysis of Language," "Philosophy and Logical Syntax," 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 "Überwinden," 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—the sen-

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1 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. 120).


3 Carnap thus, interestingly, scores upon and takes up into the title of his essay the word (from the closing lines of the Tractatus) which—once translated into English or French—has often been seized upon by commentators to advance 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 metonymy interpretation of the work—an interpretation which is reinforced through their translation of schwieg 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
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 infection 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 unwarranted 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 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 unwarranted 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)
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 [Wortreihen] 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 [Scheinsätze]. Our thesis, now, is that logical analysis reveals the alleged statements [Sätze] of metaphysics to be pseudo-statements [Scheinsätze].

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 fail 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" (Wortreihen) 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 proposi-

\[^{11}\text{EMLAL, p. 63.}\]
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 "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.11

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"—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:

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11 EMLAL, pp. 67-8.

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

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):

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

[ii] 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).

(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 which symbol which is perceivable by the senses. (§3.33)

Two different symbols can therefore have the sign (the written sign or the sound sign) in common—they then signify in different ways. (§3.312)

17 I say "formulation 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.
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. 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 §§5.17 and §5.171) and (2) a propositional sign (as e.g. in §§5.4-5 and §5.42). It is important to the method of the Tractatus that the recognition that certain apparent cases of (1) are merely cases of (1) 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). 

21 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) in 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 *2-301* build on the notion of Satz qua propositional symbol developed in §§5.117. (*The thought is the simples Satz. The totality of Satz is the language.*) Language (Sprache) in the Tractatus refers to the totality of possible propositional symbols. One might think of this as Wittgenstein's attempt to follow Frege's example (in his exchange with Berry about concepts) by "keeping to the strictly logical use" of a word, here the word 'language'. It is crucially 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).
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!" (§3.34). In a proper *Begriffschrift*, a different sign would express each of these "different methods of symbolizing," thus enabling us to identify the sources of certain confusions. In §3.34, 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;24 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" (§5.116). 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.25

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

24 This is not to claim that it is possible to understand a sentence, if none of its constituents 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 proceeded 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.

25 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 §5.328 should already make one wary of such a story. The popularity of this story rests largely on an additional piece of pointed 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 extensive definition or through some special mental act which endows a name with meaning, see n. 48). 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 §5.328-344 of the *Tractatus* is that the identity of the subject referred to by a name is only fixed by the use of the name in a set of significant (annulable) propositions. As an appeal to this 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 reasserting and extending a critique of Romanelian doctrines already begun in the *Tractatus*.

26 EMAL, p. 606.

27 I have (except for capitalizing the word "Being") reproduced Pap's translation of this passage as it occurs in EMAL, p. 69 (Carnap's emphasis). For reasons which will become clear, it should be noted that Heidegger's last sentence contains a zeugma 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 pre-statements of a kind where the violation of logical syntax is especially obvious, though they accord with historical-grammatical syntax." 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" constrained in the third person singular—e.g. "The nothing itself not." Though Pap's translation of the Heidegger passage is also in other respects stodgy (failing, for example, even to distinguish between Sense and Seiendes), 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 paragraph 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.

15 EMLAL, p. 69.

16 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.

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)26 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.27 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 3.1.3). 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

26 EMLAL, p. 71.
27 And which, moreover, do not occur consecutively in Heidegger's essay.
28 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."
invokes a particular philosophical understanding of the realm of the psychological, and with it a peculiar (Fregian 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. 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.) 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 sure that in Heidegger's passage the sign 'nothing' is 'intended' by Heidegger to 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? 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.

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. He has evidence which shows that

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 ficional sentence: "The Nothing itself nothing." In German, this sentence reads "das Nichts selbst nichts" (EMAL, p. 114). There simply is no established usage, of any sort, for the sign 'nothing'. Carnap remarks: "Here we confront one of those rare cases where a new word is introduced which never had a meaning to begin with" (EMAL, p. 77). 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 (ii)? In the absence of some criterion for distinguishing these cases, Carnap's 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 Matt We Mean What We Say! (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), p. 91).

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 "metaphysical nonsense," for Carnap, correctly constitutive of all that it provides the forum in which the elaborate expression of psychological content may occur without pretense of truth 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; EMAL, p. 41.) The irony here is that—since the confusion of that which has logical with that which has psychological content defines metaphysics for Carnap, in his method of identifying instances of substantial nonsense, opens himself up to the charge of metaphysics.
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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... A further 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.14

This evidence, Carnap claims, shows that "the author of the treatise is clearly aware of the conflict between his questions and statements and logic."15 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."16 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 this 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 14 The attribution also renders Carnap's chart on EMLAL, p. 20, (of misleading because grammatically superficially similar sentences) enforces, instead 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... 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.

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 exercise in his early work—one that 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 missing 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 maintain). It is a grammatical observation... Such utterances are not false (for then they could be true) but senseless.

Baker and Hacker’s analysis of “Colours 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 ‘colour’ cannot be predicated of an

44 Gordon Baker and Peter Hacker, Wittgenstein: Rules, Grammar and Necessity, vol. 1 (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), pp. 295-301 (emphasis), and "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 inessential 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 difference is this: their reading of Wittgenstein’s early work leaves their view of Wittgenstein’s work largely unaltered; mine suggests 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 as 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."

46 Wittgenstein, Rules, Grammar and Necessity, pp. 40, 169. I am indebted to Martin Gustafsson for drawing these two passages to my attention.
expression denoting a sensation. The nonsensicality of the statement is to be traced to an attempt to combine things 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. (§5.4733)

We cannot give a sign the wrong sense. (§5.4733)

We cannot give a sign the wrong sense. (§5.4733)

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. Wittgen-
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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 prescribe for Carnap’s 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” (§5.33) 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. More 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 (§5.34)—while abstracting from what (i.e. which particular object, property, or relation) they denote. Logical syntax thus preceds 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
grammar would enable us to see more clearly the logical structure of ordinary language—and thus the way 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.

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.

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 §§3-314-3-315 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)" (§3-314) are due to "violations" of the first kind, when all that is at issue are "violations" of the second kind. The point of a

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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: "Every 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, 1996), 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. 154).

52 When Wittgenstein argues in his later writings that we cannot give a word a "senseless" sense (e.g. Philosophical Investigations, §550), he is rehashing 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), and therefore nonsensically and significantly ask about the possibility of the combination?" (Philosophical Grammar (Oxford: Blackwell, 1974), p. 395).
equivocation exhibited by an uncontextualized sentence of ordinary language such as "Green is green" is not possible in a *Begriffschrift*. 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" (§3.35) 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 Peirce 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 proposi-

53 Wittgenstein's point in devising alternative logical notations in which certain signs (e.g. logical connectives (logische Operationssymbole)) 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 §3.224).


The Tractatus articulates an expressing conception of logic, in so far as it conveys of logical syntax as an instrument for (i) 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 (1) perspicuously representing the inferential relations between thoughts.
propositions of ordinary language. 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 3.255 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 (§ 4.471). 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 Oden’s initial attempt to translate § 5.5565, Wittgenstein explains:

By this [i.e. § 5.5565] 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.)

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

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84 John Koethe, for example, writes: “[T]o try to read... the Tractatus as urging to adopt an ideal language analogous to Frege’s Begriffsschrift... seems at odds with Wittgenstein’s assurance 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, 1990), p. 39).

85 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).

86 L&O, p. 90. Emphasis in the original.

87 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.

88 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, eight paragraphs; 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.)

89 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.

90 See also § 5.453 and § 4.475.
of perspicuous representation of the possibilities of meaning available to us."

"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 seizees 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 [meaning] were it not already senseless [sensum].

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"

I have summarized the method of the Tractatus here in such a way as to highlight a further important continuity between early and late 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 (i) 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), (ii) how the meaning shifts as the context shifts, (iii) how "as very often happens" in philosophy that we are led into "confusions" by "the same word belonging to different symbols" without our realizing it (§§5.152-5.154), and (iv) how nothing at all is meant by a word—how one "has given no meaning to certain signs" (§6.51)—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 use 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 Regelfreiheit 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.

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EMLAL, p. 56 (my emphases), UMLAB, p. 33, I have amended Page's translation.
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—anywhere 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 "33 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 incompatiblesenses 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 we take ourselves to be meaning with the words makes no sense. "We...lover between regarding it as sense and regarding it as nonsense, and hence the trouble arises."

*The quotation is from Wittgenstein's "Lectures on Personal Experience"*
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.\(^\text{54}\) 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.\(^\text{55}\) The speaker of metaphysical utterances is invited either to

\(^{55}\) That Wittgenstein thought Carnap repeatedly and grossly misunderstood the Tractatus is evident from his state correspondence with Schlick about Carnap's efforts to build on his ideas and from his brief correspondence with Carnap himself on the subject in 1936. (See, for example, the letters reprinted in M. Nedo and M. Raschetti, eds., Ludwig Wittgenstein: Sein Leben in Bildern und Texten (Frankfurt am Main: Mainz: Subkamp, 1985), pp. 344-7, 360-2.) 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 obtuseness and the harshness of Wittgenstein's complaints about Carnap's (mis)appropriation of his work.

\(^{56}\) Philosophy and Logical Syntax, pp. 80-7.

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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 superempirical 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.\(^\text{56}\)

\(^{55}\) Ibid.

\(^{56}\) 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 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 speaker discovers that he has been wavering between alternative possible methods of symbolizing. 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 (1).) 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 what 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...
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 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" (§ 4.473). 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" (§ 5.61), that the "proposition" is 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 Un Sinn—in the sense of Un Sinn specified in § 4.473—that is, in the only way, according to the Tractatus, anything can be Un Sinn. 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 Un Sinn, 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. 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 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 § 6.541 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 § 5.613 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 Un Sinn. This process of recognition is an inherently piece-meal 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 extrapolated, at a single stroke, by persuading the reader of some "theory" of meaning. As is made clear in § 5.63, 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. 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"
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 legisates 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 sinvolle Satz—shows its sense (§4.012), 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 klarwollen von Sätzen, §4.1212). 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)\[14\]

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.\[15\]


\[15\] This essay borrows heavily from my “The Method of the Tractatus,” in Reck, ed., From Frege to Wittgenstein: Perspectives on Early Analytic Philosophy.