

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') that ordinarily signifies a logical 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 furnishes the reader with an elaborate chart that 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. But it is hard to see how Heidegger's text is supposed to furnish an illustration of Carnap's theory: *This* is supposed to be an example of how metaphysical nonsense remains *undetected* until brought to the surface through the application of the principles of logical syntax? Carnap's elaborate analysis is scarcely credible as an account of how Heidegger is led to employ the word 'nothing' as he does here. It will not do to say of Heidegger's sentences that "the fact that the rules of the grammatical syntax of ordinary language are not violated [is what seduces one into the erroneous opinion that one still has to do with a statement" (p. 67). Such a diagnosis would be blind to the stunningly virtuosic character of Heidegger's employment of the word, even when judged by the allegedly comparatively permissive lights of ordinary grammatical syntax. This virtuosity renders Heidegger's text utterly unsuitable as an example of that which it was allegedly introduced as an example of: the surreptitious misuse of language. It is hard to credit the hypothesis that the author of this text has been led astray by the surface grammar of ordinary language: for precisely what puzzles and challenges us in Heidegger's assertions is their peculiar surface grammar. The disclosure that language is under some extraordinary pressure in this text does not wait on the application of the principles of logical syntax. Heidegger is evidently speaking here in an unusual way: openly forcing his reader to reflect on how his words are meant (on what symbol we are to see in the sign).

Carnap's analysis rests on the supposition that Heidegger's words are employed by him in nothing other than their usual senses. But the problem with the example is that it is hard to see how this author *could* imagine that he was employing the words in their usual senses. Carnap sees this problem. Here is his first line of response:

In view of the gross logical errors which we find [in Heidegger's text] . . . we might be led to conjecture that perhaps the word "nothing" has in Heidegger's treatise a meaning entirely different from the customary one. And this presumption is further strengthened as we go on to read there that anxiety reveals the Nothing, that the Nothing itself is present as such in anxiety. For here the word "nothing" seems to refer to a certain emotional constitution, possibly of a religious sort, or something or other that underlies such emotions. If such were the case, then the mentioned logical errors . . . would not pertain. But the 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. (Carnap, 1959, p. 71)

If we adopted 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. On what basis does Carnap rule out the possibility that its meaning 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 chosen to excerpt from Heidegger's essay¹⁰⁵) 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. 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. 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 second principle (and with it, *Tractatus*, §3.3). Moreover, Carnap's basis for his conclusion (i.e., the claim that Heidegger *intends* to continue to use the word the same way in the subsequent sentences) runs afoul of Frege's first principle. Carnap proceeds toward his conclusion in precisely the way we saw Kerry proceed: namely, first, by noticing how a sign is used in one context of use; then, second, by attempting to establish what is meant in a subsequent context of use by appealing to an intention to employ the same sign in the same way as in the original context; and then, finally, by imagining that the existence of the postulated intention can fix the meaning of the sign in the subsequent context, enabling it to continue to symbolize in the same way (regardless of its logical role within the subsequent context).

As §3.323 of the *Tractatus* says: "In the language of everyday life it very often happens that the same word [sign] signifies in two different ways—and therefore belongs to two different symbols." It also happens, as demonstrated by Benson's use of 'FK' and Frege's example of 'Vienna,' that a word that has a conventionally established usage is suddenly, yet (potentially) intelligibly employed in an unprecedented manner. How can Carnap be sure that in Heidegger's passage the sign 'nothing' always symbolizes in the same way? How can he be sure that Heidegger's later uses of the word do not represent an attempt to employ the word 'nothing' in a linguistically innovative yet (potentially) intelligible manner? Carnap answers: Heidegger *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.¹⁰⁶ The attribution of such an intention would be uncharitable in the absence of any evidence suggesting that Heidegger does pos-

sees such an extraordinary aim. Carnap (imagines he) possesses a way of ruling out the alternative charitable construal.¹⁰⁷ He has *evidence* which shows that Heidegger intends to speak nonsense. Heidegger elsewhere in his work, Carnap tells us, explicitly avows the intention that Carnap here attributes to him.¹⁰⁸

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 abandoning his claim that Heidegger is a representative example of the phenomenon that Carnap's essay seeks to bring to his reader's attention). The advent of the cure was originally advertised as coinciding with the metaphysician's epiphany that his employment of words involved an illegitimate combination of meanings. It is difficult to see how, by Carnap's own lights, the application of the principles of logical syntax could ever lead to a cure of the philosopher who self-consciously aspires to produce nonsensical combinations of word. Frege (as Geach and Wittgenstein read him) in "On Concept and Object," however, is just such a philosopher. It is this sort of philosopher—against whom Carnap's methods are impotent—that the *Tractatus* is, above all, concerned to wean from nonsense.

It is no accident that Carnap has fixed upon an example that has the features exhibited by this passage from Heidegger. Though it fails to accord with his own description of metaphysical nonsense, Carnap needs to avail himself of an example with these features to be able so much as to appear to provide any sort of illustration of the practical application of his theory. Heidegger's text offers the appearance of simultaneously satisfying three conditions all of which an example must satisfy if Carnap's methods are to seem to stand a chance of unmasking it as a case of metaphysical nonsense: (1) it must consist of sequences of words that a human being was actually moved to write with the intention of communicating a thought, (2) it must be possible to identify it as a case of nonsense simply by attending to the words as they stand on the page, (3) it must be possible to forestall the objection that the words have been construed in an uncharitable manner. If Carnap fixed upon an example in which the speaker did not exhibit the slightest paradoxical animus and uttered only statements that were by the lights of ordinary grammar apparently unimpeachable, the question would always arise: Is the speaker really speaking nonsense? How does the speaker mean her words? Is there a way to make sense of her words? (Is there a way to see the symbol in the sign?) Carnap does not want the application of his methods to be forestalled by such preliminary inquiries. The only contexts in which such inquiries have a legitimate place, for Carnap, are ordinary nonmetaphysical cases of obstructed comprehension—cases in which we encounter hermeneutical difficulties concerning the semantics of syntactically well-formed sentences. Carnap wants, in his application of the method of logical analysis, to be able to bypass such inquiries altogether—to eschew any consideration of the semantics of a metaphysician's utterances—identifying metaphysical statements as cases of nonsense solely through 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.

XI. We Cannot Give a Sign the Wrong Sense

This familiarity with wrong meanings puzzles one.

Marianne Moore, "Picking and Choosing"

Carnap's understanding of type (ii) nonsense rests on affirming precisely the possibility that the *Tractatus* is concerned to repudiate: the possibility of identifying the logical 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 perhaps most explicit in the series of remarks that lead up to the passage in which Wittgenstein locates the difference between his own conception of nonsense and that of Frege. Here is the full context of that passage:

Logic must take care of itself.

A possible sign must also be able to signify. Everything which is possible in logic is also permitted. ("Socrates is identical" means nothing because there is no property which is called "identical." The proposition is nonsensical because we have not made some arbitrary determination, not because the symbol itself is impermissible.)

In a certain sense we cannot make mistakes in logic. (§5.473)

We cannot give a sign the wrong sense. (§5.4732)

Frege says: Every legitimately constructed proposition must have a sense; and I say: Every possible proposition is legitimately constructed, and if it has no sense this can only be because we have given no *meaning* to some of its constituent parts.

(Even if we believe that we have done so.)

Thus "Socrates is identical" says nothing, because we have given *no* meaning to the word "identical" as *adjective*. For when it occurs as the sign of equality it symbolizes in an entirely different way—the symbolizing relation is another—therefore the symbol is in the two cases entirely different; the two symbols have the sign in common with one another only by accident. (§5.4733)

These remarks express in an extremely compressed fashion some of the central ideas of the *Tractatus*. Let us begin by looking at the example of Unstina ("Socrates is identical") and the commentary on it that 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 that symbolizes the relation of identity between objects) as if it were a concept-expression. Wittgenstein says in this passage that the nonsensicality of the string is due not to an impermissible employment of a symbol, but rather to our failing to make a determination of meaning. Wittgenstein's refusal to accept a Carnapian analysis of the matter here is not due to some peculiarity of the example.¹⁰⁹ Wittgenstein says: "If it has no sense this can *only* be because we have given no

meaning to some of its constituent parts." The "only" here signals that for Wittgenstein all apparent cases of type (ii) nonsense are (in the words of §6.54) "eventually to be recognized as" cases of type (i) nonsense. Carnap's own example could be substituted for Wittgenstein's without affecting the point of the passage. On the Tractarian view, "Caesar is a prime number" suffers, from a logical point of view, from the same deficiency as "Caesar is black": "If it has no sense this can only be because we have given no meaning to some of its constituent parts" (§5.4733), regardless of how strong our inclination may be "to believe that we have done so."

The Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus*, faced with Heidegger's assertions, would not have us conclude that a sign has been given a wrong use—for example, that a logical particle that serves for the formulation of a negative existential statement has been illegitimately employed. Wittgenstein would instead have us first attempt to identify alternative ways of perceiving the symbol in the sign by reflecting upon its possible contexts of significant use.¹⁰ Each alternative way of 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:

- (a) accept a particular rendition of his sentence into the symbolism or
- (b) not accept any proposed rendition of his sentence.

If the outcome is (a), 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 (b), 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 (a) and (b), 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:

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

Prior to a perspicuous overview of the available possibilities for meaning his words, the speaker in case (c) 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.¹¹ 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 (c).) 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:

- (d) 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 (d) resembles each of the first two outcomes in a certain respect. It resembles (a) in that the speaker accepts *parts* of thoughts that can be expressed in the symbolism as corresponding to his own thought—but only parts: alternative rendition(s) of his words into the symbolism are, in each case, at most partially expressive of that which he wants to mean by his words. Outcome (d) resembles (b) 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 (d) 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 (d) 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* that 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 (b), rejects all of the alternative possible ways of meaning 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 is Frege, according to Geach, in "On Concept and Object") that that which he wants to mean by his words is fully nonsensical. Only he will insist that his nonsense is unlike the nonsense which figures in outcome (c): for his nonsense is substantial nonsense, and it is his aim to produce just this sort of nonsense. The task, when faced with such an interlocutor, for the *Tractatus*, is not one of demonstrating to the speaker that "the proposition is nonsensical because the symbol itself is impermissible" (§5.473). (This would hardly come as news; for this is just what the sort of interlocutor that is here in question will himself maintain about his own nonsense. "Logically impermissible" nonsense is just what he aims to produce, and nothing other than such a sort of nonsense would serve his purpose.) The task for the Tractarian elucidator is rather "to demonstrate [to the interlocutor] that he has given no meaning to certain signs in his propositions" (§6.53), that the "proposition" is only apparently substantially nonsensical. The elucidation is only at an end when the interlocutor arrives at the point at which he is able of his own accord to acknowledge this. Thus it is only at an end

when the interlocutor "recognizes" his propositions as Unsinm—in the sense of Unsinm specified in §5.4733—that is, in the only way, according to the *Tractatus*, anything can be *Unsinm*. 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 that figure in the work as Unsinm, not for the reason that the interlocutor in case (d) 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.¹¹² 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 (which make up the body of the work) 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.

XII. Logical Syntax in the *Tractatus*

You cannot prescribe to a symbol what it *may* be used to express. All that a symbol CAN express, it MAY express.

Wittgenstein, *letter to Russell*, 19.8. 1919

Logical syntax, in the *Tractatus*, is concerned neither with what Carnap calls "logical syntax" nor with what Russell calls "a theory of types." To express the same point in the idiom of the *Tractatus*: logical syntax is concerned neither with the proscription of combinations of signs nor with the proscription of combinations of symbols. It is not concerned with the proscription of combinations of signs, because Tractarian logical syntax does not treat of (mere) signs; it treats of symbols—and a symbol only has life in the context of a significant proposition. It is not concerned with the proscription of combinations of symbols, because there is nothing to proscribe.¹¹³ "Every possible proposition is legitimately constructed" (§5.4733). Tractarian logical syntax treats of the categorially distinct kinds of logically significant components into which *sinnvolle Sätze* can be segmented—such components being the sorts of components they are only in virtue of their participation in possible propositions.

Two years after his essay "Elimination of Metaphysics," in his book *The Logical Syntax of Language*, Carnap writes: logical syntax "should have no reference to the meaning of signs" (Carnap, 1937, p. 282 n).¹¹⁴ This means: logical syntax is concerned with strings of uninterpreted signs—that is, strings of (mere) signs on paper. In Carnap's work, from *The Logical Syntax of Language* on, "logical syntax" treats of a class of formal structures—combinatorial structures generated by sequences of signs—where "formal" means formal in the Hilbertian sense: void of semantic content or structure.¹¹⁵ "Formal" for Wittgenstein means pertaining to that structure common to language and world (within which all semantic content has its life) considered in abstraction from any particular (true or false) content. Every state of affairs has a Tractarian logical form. The only parts of the world that can be said to have "formal" properties, for the Carnap of *The Logical Syntax of Language*, are mere marks on paper: spoken words, etc. 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 that are equally "properties of language" and "of the world" (§6.12) as an example of type (f1) nonsense. Wittgenstein's remark in the *Tractatus* that "in logical syntax the Bedeutung of a sign ought never to play a role" (§3.33) sounds just like Carnap's remark that logical syntax "should have no reference to the Bedeutung of signs." But Wittgenstein is not saying what Carnap is saying. Mere marks on paper have no Tractarian logical syntax. Only symbols—the parts of a proposition which characterize its *Sinn*"—have logical syntax. In Tractarian logical syntax, the particular Bedeutungen of signs "never play a role" (not because logical syntax is concerned with mere signs, but) because logical syntax is concerned only with how signs symbolize—with what the *Tractatus* calls their *methods of symbolizing* (§3.322)—while abstracting from what (i.e., which particular object, property, or relation) they denote. Logical syntax thus prescindis from all content and considers only of 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 ways in which ordinary language itself fails to reflect its own logical structure in a perspicuous manner. These remarks occur in the context of his discussion of how ordinary language allows the same sign to symbolize in different ways and the same symbol to be expressed by different signs. He goes on to say:

Thus there easily arise the most fundamental confusions (of which the whole of philosophy is full).

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

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

- (1) substantial nonsense
 - the result of putting an item of one logical category in the place where an item of another category belongs
- (2) cross-category equivocation
 - the result of allowing different occurrences of the same sign to symbolize items of different logical categories¹¹⁶

Carnap's appropriation of Tractarian logical syntax, in its talk of "violations of logical syntax," conflates these two kinds of "violation," as have many commentators after him. This allows §§3.324–3.325 to appear to offer textual evidence for the claim that the *Tractatus* holds that "the most fundamental confusions (of which the whole of philosophy is full)" (§3.324) are due to "violations" of the first kind, when all that is at issue are "violations" of the second kind. The point of a proper logical symbolism for the *Tractatus* is only to exclude the latter kind of "violation," but not the former kind (because, according to the teaching of the *Tractatus*, there is no such kind). Theories of logic that seek to proscribe certain combinations of symbols seek to take care of that which must fall into place of its own

accord: "If everything in the symbolism functions as if the sign had a meaning, then it has a meaning As long as one knows how each individual sign symbolizes, then the rules of logical syntax must fall into place as a matter of course" (§§3.328, 3.334). It is, Wittgenstein comes to think by the time he writes the *Tractatus*, the task of "a proper theory of symbolism" to show that all such theories are "superfluous."¹¹⁷ ("Logic must take care itself"; §5.473.) In rejecting such theories, the *Tractatus* rejects the project standardly attributed to it: one of demarcating the bounds of sense.¹¹⁸ When in the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein says you cannot give a sign a wrong sense, he is claiming that there is no such thing as infringing on the bounds of sense and thus no bounds of the sort that Carnap (or Wittgenstein, early or late, according to most readings of him) seeks to demarcate.

The difference between an ideal logical symbolism and ordinary language, for the *Tractatus*, is that in the former—unlike the latter—one is able to read the symbol directly off the sign. Logical syntax for the *Tractatus* is not a combinatorial theory (which demarcates legitimate from illegitimate sequences of signs or symbols) but a *tool* of elucidation (which allows us to recognize the logical contributions of the constituent parts of a *Satz*, and the absence of such a contribution on the part of the constituents of a *Scheinsatz*). The kind of cross-category equivocation exhibited by an uncontextualized sentence of ordinary language such as "Green is green" is not possible in a *Begriffsschrift*. One can, of course, if one wants, call this sort of cross-category equivocation a "violation of logical syntax" (though Wittgenstein himself never speaks in this way), but if one chooses to speak in this way, one should be clear that what is at issue in those passages where Wittgenstein alludes to the differences between ordinary language and "a logical grammar" (§3.325) are differences in notational perspicuity between various kinds of symbolism.¹¹⁹

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

A philosophical work consists essentially of elucidations.

Philosophy does not result in "philosophical propositions," but rather in the clarification of propositions.

Without philosophy thoughts are, as it were, cloudy and indistinct: its task is to make them clear and give them sharp boundaries.

It certainly sounds here as if the role of an elucidation is to introduce clarity into propositions that 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 translation 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* (Wittgenstein, 1973, p. 28) and, after several exchanges, suggests instead: "the

propositions *now have become clear* that they are clear" (p. 49).¹²⁰ This is such terrible English that Ogden decides simply to ignore the suggestion. But the point that is obscured by the existing translations (and which the young Wittgenstein's horrendous English seeks to bring out) is that the transition from unclarity to clarity (i.e., the kind of Klarwerden) that is at issue here is not one that is effected through a transformation in the logical character of the propositions of ordinary language, but rather through a transformation in the view that we command of their logical character. What is cloudy and indistinct—and is rendered transparent with the assistance of a logical syntax—is our view of the logical structure that is present in the proposition all along. The aim of elucidation is not "to clarify" in the sense of making that which is said or thought intrinsically clearer (in the sense of cleaning up and, to that extent, changing the logical character of what is said), but rather "to clarify" in the sense of making that which is said or thought clear to us (in the sense of disencumbering our view of the logical character of that which we have been saying all along). It is a matter of making explicit the logical structure that had been implicit in our Sätze all along!¹²¹ (and, if our Sätze are Unsin, it is a matter of making explicit that there has, all along, been no implicit logical structure but only the appearance of such structure).

In *Tractatus*, §5.5563, we find: "All propositions of our everyday language are actually, just as they stand, logically completely in order." Commentators have found it difficult to reconcile Wittgenstein's comment in §3.325 that "we must employ a symbolism which excludes" certain possibilities which ordinary language permits with his respectful comment here in §5.5563 concerning the logical orderliness of the propositions of ordinary language.¹²² 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 that is not, just as it is, logically completely in order. Section 3.325 recommends a notation that 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 that excludes the possibility of the formation of illogical thought—is in fact the correct theory of symbolism *überhaupt*. Language itself, the *Tractatus* says, prevents the possibility of every logical mistake (§5.4731).¹²³ Ordinary language is in this respect already a kind of *Begriffsschrift*. What for Frege is the structure of an ideal language is for early Wittgenstein the structure of all language. In his remarks clarifying his emendations of Ogden's initial attempt to translate §5.5563, Wittgenstein explains: "By this [i.e., §5.5563] I meant to say that the propositions of our ordinary language are not in any way logically *less correct* or *less exact* or *more confused* than propositions written down, say, in Russell's symbolism or any other *Begriffsschrift*. (Only it is easier for us to gather their logical form when they are expressed in an appropriate symbolism.)" (Wittgenstein, 1973, p. 50, emphasis in the original). Already in the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein's interest in a logical symbolism is not that of someone who seeks to overcome an imprecision in ordinary thought through recourse to a more precise medium for the expression of thought. The *Tractatus* is interested in successors to Frege's *Begriffsschrift* (in what the *Tractatus* calls "logical grammars") because such systems of notation exclude a

multiplicity of kinds of use for individual signs, allowing one to see in a more perspicuous manner what kind of logical work (if any) a given term in a given sentence is doing. It allows us to see how—and, most important, whether—the signs we call upon (in giving voice to the thoughts we seek to express) symbolize. The advantage of a logical symbolism, for the *Tractatus*, lies not in what it permits (or forbids) one to say, but in the perspicuity of its mode of representation: in how it allows someone who is drawn to call upon certain words to see what it is (if anything) he is saying.¹²⁴ The reason ordinary language can lead us philosophically astray is not to be traced to its (alleged) capacity to permit us to formulate illogical thoughts (i.e., to give a sign the wrong sense).¹²⁵ Rather, it is to be traced to the symbolic imperspicuity of ordinary language—our inability to read off of it what contribution, if any, the parts of a sentence make to the sense of the whole. It is this lack of perspicuity in our relation to our own words which allows us to imagine that we perceive a meaning where there is no meaning, and which brings about the need for a mode of perspicuous representation of the possibilities of meaning available to us.

XIII. The Illusion of Sense

Appearances too, like other things, must have a cause, and that which can cause anything, even an illusion, must be a reality.

J. S. Mill, "What Is Poetry?"

In his attempts to make vivid the logically flawed character of the examples of type (ii) nonsense that (allegedly) occur in Heidegger's text, Carnap occasionally comes close to saying something patently incoherent: namely, that we know what each of the parts of one of Heidegger's sentences mean, including what the word 'nothing' here means, so we know what the resulting combination *would* mean, if such a combination were an admissible combination of meanings!¹²⁶ (More briefly: we grasp what "it" *would* mean, if what "it" meant could be meant!) In §5.4.733, Wittgenstein says: "if [a propositional] has no sense this can only be because we have given no *meaning* to some of its constituent parts. (Even if we believe that we have done so.)" This last parenthetical remark of Wittgenstein's gently touches on the elucidatory aim of the work as a whole: to show us that we are prone to *believe* that we have given meaning to some of the constituent parts of a proposition when we have not done so. This remark highlights an important analogy between type (ii) nonsense such as "Caesar is a prime number" (as Carnap describes it) and an innocuously meaningful sentence such as "Caesar crossed the Rubicon": in each of these cases, we *believe* that we have already given a meaning to all of the constituent parts. In such cases, we undergo the phenomenology of meaning something determinate while failing to mean anything determinate by our words. Part of what causes us to hallucinate a meaning in instances such as "Caesar is a prime number," according to Wittgenstein, is that there is more than one natural remedy for what ails the nonsensical linguistic string. (The greater the number of natural remedies that lie ready to hand for redeeming the sense of

a string, the more powerful the illusion of meaning which that string is able to engender.) We could assign a meaning to 'Caesar' that would allow us to treat 'Caesar' as the kind of logical element that symbolizes a number; or, alternatively, we could assign a meaning to 'prime number' that would allow us to treat it as the kind of element that symbolizes a predicate which applies to persons. So there are two natural ways of making sense of this string: it can be taken as saying something it makes sense to say of a person—in which case it contains the proper name of a person but not a numerical predicate; or it can be taken as saying of a number something which it makes sense to say of a number—in which case it contains a numerical predicate but not a proper name for a person. But, according to the *Tractatus*, there isn't anything which is an instance of a proposition's containing two logical elements that are incompatible. What there can be is a case in which there are two natural directions in which to seek a sense for a sentence whose sense is as yet undetermined (as is the case with Carnap's example). But each of the available readings of this sentence eclipses the other—as each reading of a duck-rabbit figure eclipses the other. There isn't anything which is having a part of the sentence as it is segmented on one reading illegitimately combined with a part of the sentence as segmented on the other reading—any more 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 that has a surface resemblance to propositions of two distinct logical patterns: it has a sign but no symbol in common with symbols in common with sentences such as "53 is a prime number." Its nonsensicality is to be traced, not to the logical structure of the sentence, but to *our* failure to mean something by it: to, what the *Tractatus* calls, our failure to make certain determinations of meaning. For Wittgenstein, the source of the clash is to be located in *our relation* to the linguistic string—not in the linguistic string itself. The problem, according to the *Tractatus*, is that we often believe that we have given a meaning to all of a sentence's constituent parts when we have failed to do so. We think nonsense results in such cases not because of a failure on our part, but because of a failure on the sentence's part. We think the problem lies not in an absence of meaning (in our failing to mean anything by these words), but rather in a presence of meaning (in the incompatible senses the words already have—senses which the words import with them into the context of combination). We think the thought is flawed because the component senses of its parts logically repel one another. They fail to add up to a thought. So we feel our words are attempting to think a logically impossible thought—and that this involves a kind of impossibility of a higher order than ordinary impossibility. Wittgenstein's teaching is that the problem lies not in the words, but in our confused relation to the words: in our experiencing ourselves as meaning something definite by them, yet also feeling that what we take ourselves to be meaning with the words makes no sense. "We . . . hover between regarding it as sense and regarding it as nonsense, and

hence the trouble arises."¹²⁷ We are confused about what it is we want to say, and we project our confusion onto the linguistic string. Then we look at the linguistic string and imagine we discover what it is trying to say. We want to say to the string: "We know what you mean, but 'it' cannot be said." The incoherence of our desires with respect to the sentence—wishing to both mean and not mean something with it—is seen by us as an incoherence in what the words want to be saying. We displace our desire onto the words and see them as *aspiring* to say something they never quite succeed in saying (because, we tell ourselves, "it" cannot be said). We account for the confusion these words engender in us by discovering in the words a hopelessly flawed sense.

XIV. The Method of the *Tractatus*

There is nothing which requires such gentle handling as an illusion—that is, if one wishes to dispel it. If anything prompts the captive of the illusion to set his will in opposition, then all is lost. . . . So one must approach him from behind. . . . This requires. . . a kind of deception in which one deceives a person for the truth's sake. . . . "To deceive" in such a case means to begin by accepting the other man's illusion as good money.

Søren Kierkegaard, *The Point of View for My Work*
as an Author (translation emended)

Recall how Fregean elucidation is supposed to work. The aim of Fregean elucidation is to help us to understand the principles of construction that underlie Frege's Begriffsschrift. The mark of our having grasped his elucidations is that we have mastered his symbolism and are able properly to use it to express thoughts. Frege's elucidatory "propositions" cannot be expressed in Begriffsschrift, but the logical distinctions which they attempt to convey—such as the distinction between concept and object—show themselves through the difference in the signs of Begriffsschrift whose employment we have mastered. Frege, in offering his elucidations, self-consciously employs a kind of nonsense in order to bring out the confusions of people like Kerry. But—according to the interpretation of Frege that Geach favors—for Frege, that is only part of the purpose of the activity of elucidation. Frege takes his elucidations also to convey insights into necessities founded "deep in the nature of things" (Frege, 1984, p. 156). Though his expressions, through a kind of necessity of language, misfire, the insights they seek to impart can be latched onto by the reader who meets him halfway and does not begrudge him a pinch of salt. This additional positive role (of imparting a kind of inexpressible insight) that Geach ascribes to Fregean elucidation corresponds to the central purpose ascribed to Tractarian elucidation by proponents of the ineffability interpretation of the *Tractatus*.¹²⁸ The ascription of such a conception of elucidation (to either Frege or Wittgenstein) presupposes the prior ascription of the substantive conception of nonsense.

But, as we have seen, it is possible to find in certain of Frege's doctrines a ground for hostility toward the substantive conception and for hospitality toward the austere conception of nonsense. Moreover, as we have also seen, there is ample textual evidence that the *Tractatus* seeks to erect its teachings on just those doctrines of Frege's. But if one attempts to credit this textual evidence, and thus ascribe to the *Tractatus* the austere conception, what then should one take the aim of Tractarian elucidation to be? How, according to such a reading, are we to make sense of the fact that the *Tractatus* takes itself to be engaged in an activity which is properly termed one of "elucidation"—an activity, that is, which is able to achieve or confer some form of clarity, enlightenment, or insight? To understand how the *Tractatus*'s own Unsmn is supposed to elucidate (when that of other philosophers mostly only misleads), some distinction between misleading nonsense and illuminating nonsense is evidently required; but on the austere reading, illuminating nonsense is no longer a vehicle for a special kind of thought. If the aim of elucidation, according to the ineffability interpretation, is to reveal (through the employment of substantial nonsense) that which cannot be said, then, according to the austere reading, the aim of Tractarian elucidation is to reveal (through the employment of mere nonsense) that what appears to be substantial nonsense is mere nonsense. While the aim of the former sort of elucidation was supposed to be the conferral of insight into inexpressible features of reality, the aim of the latter is not insight into metaphysical features of reality, but rather insight into the sources of metaphysics. The premise underlying the procedure of the *Tractatus* (and this is connected to why the point of the work is an ethical one) is that our most profound confusions of soul show themselves in—and can be revealed to us through an attention to—our confusions concerning what we mean (and, in particular, what we fail to mean) by our words.

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

The *Tractatus* aims to show that (as Wittgenstein later puts it) "I cannot use language to get outside language" (Wittgenstein, 1975, §6).¹²⁹ It accomplishes this aim by first encouraging me to suppose that I can use language in such a

way, and then enabling me to work through the (apparent) consequences of this (pseudo)supposition, until I reach the point at which my impression of there being a determinate supposition (whose consequences I have throughout been exploring) dissolves on me. So on the reading of the *Tractatus* suggested here, what is to happen, if the book succeeds in its aim, is *not* that I (1) succeed in conceiving of an extraordinary possibility (illogical thought), (2) judge "it" to be impossible, (3) conclude that the truth of this judgment cannot be accommodated within (the logical structure of) language because it is about (the logical structure of) language, and (4) go on to communicate (under the guise of only "showing" and not "saying" "it") what it is that cannot be said. Rather, what is to happen is that I am lured up all four of these rungs of the ladder and then: (5) throw the *entire* ladder (all four of the previous rungs) away. On this reading, first I grasp that there is something that *must* be: then I see that it cannot be said; then I grasp that if it cannot be said it cannot be thought (that the limits of language are the limits of thought); and then, finally, when I reach the top of the ladder, I grasp that there has been no "it" in my grasp all along (that that which I cannot think I cannot "grasp" either). In order for a reader to pass through the first four stages of ascent up this Tractarian ladder, he must take himself to be participating in the traditional philosophical activity of argument, to be inferring conclusions from premises (as, e.g., Frege appears to be doing when he reasons from a pair of premises concerning (a) the nature of *Begriffe* and (b) the logical structure of certain propositions—such as "The concept *horse* is not a concept"—to the conclusion that his words "miss his thought"). A reader of the *Tractatus* only ascends to the final rung of the ladder when he is able to look back upon his progress upward and "recognize" that he has only been going through the motions of "inferring" (apparent) "conclusions" from (apparent) "premises". Thus the elucidatory strategy of the *Tractatus* depends on the reader's provisionally taking himself to be participating in the traditional philosophical activity of establishing theses through a procedure of reasoned argument; but it only succeeds if the reader fully comes to understand what the work means to say about itself when it says that philosophy, as this work seeks to practice it, results not in doctrine but in elucidations. And the attainment of this recognition depends upon the reader's actually undergoing a certain *experience*—the attainment of which is identified in §6.54 as the sign that the reader has understood the author of the work: the reader's experience of having his illusion of sense (in the "premises" and "conclusions" of the "argument") dissipate through its becoming clear to him that (what he took to be) the *philosophische Sätze* of the work are *Unsinn*.

Thus what happens to us as readers of the *Tractatus*—assuming the work succeeds in its aim—is that we are drawn into an illusion of occupying a certain sort of a perspective. From this perspective, we take ourselves to be able to survey the possibilities that undergird how we must represent things as being, fixing what is "logically" necessary and what is merely contingent. From this perspective, we contemplate the logical structure of thought as it is and imagine that we are also able to contemplate the possibility of its being otherwise. We take ourselves to be occupying a perspective from which we can view the logical structure of language "from sideways on."¹³⁰ This illusion of perspective is engendered by the perception of a flawed sense in certain nonsensical propositions; we take these substantially nonsensical propositions to be attempting to express a state of affairs that

cannot be—and thereby to be disclosing the limits of possibility. Tractarian elucidation aims to show us that these sentences that apparently express substantially nonsensical thoughts actually express no thoughts. 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) that appear to come into view when we imagine ourselves able to frame in thought violations of the logical structure of language. The "solution" to these problems (as §6.52 says) lies in their disappearance—in the dissolution of the appearance that we are so much as able to frame such thoughts. The mode of philosophy that this work practices (as §4.112 says) does not result in "philosophical propositions"; the "philosophical propositions" we come out with when we attempt to frame such thoughts are to be recognized as *Unsinn*.

This process of recognition is an inherently piecemeal one: our inclination to believe that we can perceive the symbol in the sign, when no method of symbolizing has yet been conferred on it, is not one that is to be extirpated, at a single stroke, by persuading the reader of some "theory" of meaning. As is made clear in §6.53, the aim is to demonstrate to the metaphysically inclined speaker that he has given "no meaning to certain signs in his sentences" on a case-by-case basis.¹³¹ 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 methods.) The *Tractatus* 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 that 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 that 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 that legislates certain sentences out of the realm of sense, but rather by bringing more clearly into view for the reader the life with language he already leads—by harnessing the capacities for distinguishing sense from non-

sense (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 that the reader already possesses. As the preface says: "The limit . . . can only be drawn *in language* and what lies on the other side of the limit will be simply nonsense." Just as, according to the *Tractatus*, each propositional symbol—that is, each *sinnvoller Satz*—shows its sense (§4.022), so the *Tractatus* shows what it shows (i.e., what it is to make sense) by *letting language show itself*, not through "the clarification of sentences," but through allowing "sentences themselves to become clear" (through *das Klarwerden von Sätzen*, §4.112). The work seeks to do this, not by instructing us in how to identify determinate cases of nonsense, but by enabling us to see more clearly what it is we do with language when we succeed in achieving determinate forms of sense (when we succeed in projecting a symbol into the sign) and what it is we fall short of doing when we fail to achieve such forms of sense (when we fail to confer a determinate method of symbolizing on a propositional sign).

The assumption underlying Tractarian elucidation is that the only way to free oneself from such illusions is to fully enter into them and explore them from the inside. This assumption—one that underlies both Wittgenstein's early and later work—is nicely summarized in the following remark (from a 1931 manuscript of Wittgenstein's): "In philosophy we are deceived by an illusion. But this—an illusion—is also something, and I must at some time place it completely and clearly before my eyes, before I can say it is only an illusion" (Wittgenstein, 1997, quoted in Stern 1995, p. 194).¹³² The illusion that the *Tractatus* seeks to explode, above all, is that we can run up against the limits of language. The book starts with a warning about a certain kind of enterprise—one of attempting to draw a limit to thought. In the body of the text, we are offered (what appears to be) a doctrine about "the limits of thought." With the aid of this doctrine, we imagine ourselves to be able both to draw these limits and to see beyond them. We imagine ourselves able to do what the preface warns we will fall into imagining ourselves able to do (once we imagine ourselves able to draw a limit to thought): we imagine ourselves able "to think both sides of the limit" (and hence "able to think what cannot be thought").¹³³ The aim of the work is to show us that beyond "the limits of language" lies, not ineffable truth, but rather (as the preface cautions) *einfaeh Unsinn*.¹³⁴ At the conclusion of the book, we are told that the author's elucidations have succeeded only if we recognize what we find in the body of the text to be nonsense. In §6.54, Wittgenstein does not ask his reader here to "grasp" the "thoughts" that his nonsensical propositions seek to convey. He does not call upon the reader to understand his sentences, but rather to understand *him*, namely, the author and the kind of activity in which he is engaged—one of elucidation. He tells us in §6.54 how these sentences serve as elucidations: by enabling us to recognize them *as nonsense*.¹³⁵ One does not reach the end by arriving at the last page, but by arriving at a certain point in an activity—the point when the elucidation has served its purpose: when the illusion of sense is exploded from within. The sign that we have understood the author of the work is that we can throw the ladder we have climbed up away. That is to say, we have finished the work, and the work is finished with us, when we are able to *throw* the sentences in the body of the work—sentences about "the limits of language" and the unsayable things that lie beyond them—*away*.

Notes

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1. By this I mean to refer, above all, to a set of interpretative assumptions concerning the *Tractatus* that first came into currency through the Vienna Circle.

2. Here I have in mind what has essentially become the standard reading of the *Tractatus*. Its most lucid exponents are, in my estimation, Peter Geach and Peter Hacker.

3. On the question of the exegetical erroneousness of (1) and (2), the reading I favor is in agreement with the (now standard) ineffability interpretation. The differences between that reading and my own arise over the characterization of how and what illuminating nonsense illuminates.

4. I am using the word 'show' here *not* in the sense that the *Tractatus* itself reserves for this term (which, as we shall see, is not applicable to nonsense), but rather (as it is often used by proponents of the ineffability interpretation) to refer to the activity of "hinting" or "gesturing" at ineffable truths by means of nonsense. Whenever I employ the word in this latter sense I will place it in scare quotes. I am here adopting the idiom of many of the commentators with whose work I wish to take issue. But I hereby invite confusion in two ways; so let me just say for now: (1) that, in adopting this idiom, I do not take myself to be making any contact with the (factual) Tractarian notion of *zeigen*, and (2) that any commentator who holds that the sentences of the *Tractatus* aspire to hint or gesture at ineffable truths counts, by my lights, as a proponent of the ineffability interpretation, even if he or she (unlike most proponents of the ineffability interpretation) is textually scrupulous enough carefully to refrain from ever employing the term 'showing' to designate the activity of so hinting or gesturing.

5. The words 'special kind of' occur three times in this sentence. The (I am inclined to think, insuperable) challenge facing the ineffability reading is to find a way to dispense with the occurrences of these words (or equivalents thereof) without lapsing into unintelligibility: i.e., to characterize coherently what kind of nonsense this special kind of nonsense is, what sort of violation this special kind of violation (of the rules of logic) is, and what kind of thought this special kind of thought is.

6. The interpretative claim that the *Tractatus* espouses a thesis concerning the priority of thought to language—according to which our capacities for thinking, meaning, and understanding precede and outrun our capacities for the linguistic expression of thought—was first systematically defended by Norman Malcolm (1977, esp. pp. 137-41; 1986, esp. pp. 63-82). Anthony Kenny, Peter Hacker, David Stern, and Hans-Johann Glock have all subsequently defended some version of this interpretative claim. Indeed, some such claim—although often not explicitly defended—is presupposed by any interpretation that ascribes to the work the view that it is possible to *grasp* thoughts

thesis to (even) early Wittgenstein. I am following the lead of Peter Winch (in "Language, Thought and World in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*" 1987), and of Cora Diamond (1991b, chap. 6). I do not (nor, I take it, does either Winch or Diamond) mean to be arguing that one should attribute to the *Tractatus* a thesis concerning the priority of language to thought. The *Tractatus*—as, e.g., in §4 ("The thought is the significant proposition")—studiously avoids a claim of priority in either direction. The goal of the work as a whole is to show that either of these priority claims, once strictly thought through, collapses into the other.

7. Wittgenstein, in his correspondence about the *Tractatus*, repeatedly insists on the importance of the form of the book to the aim of the work as a whole. He writes Ludwig von Ficker (Wittgenstein, 1971, p. 15): "The work is strictly philosophical and at the same literary." (Indeed, Frege is quite alarmed by the stress Wittgenstein is prepared to lay on this aspect of the work: "The pleasure one is to have in reading your book can therefore not have its ground in the . . . content, but only in the form. . . . In this way the book becomes really more of an artistic than a scientific [*wissenschaftliche*] achievement; that which is said in it takes second place to how it is said." (letter to Wittgenstein, September 16, 1919, my translation; Frege, 1989, p. 21).) Commentators on Wittgenstein's work, however, generally adopt an exegetical procedure, which presupposes an affirmative answer to the question "Is the form of the work merely an optional decorative feature of the work?" Insofar, that is, as they take themselves to be able to tell us outright (in a piece of writing that has the form, say, of a journal article) what the *Tractatus* is laboring to "show" in its (putatively necessarily indirect) way, their expository practice would appear to rest on the belief that there is no great difficulty in prying the jewel loose from its setting. They seldom fail, along the way, to pay homage to the remarkable "style" of the work. Wittgenstein is praised for being "a great writer." (It is difficult, after all, simply to overlook what Ogden, in his "Translator's Note" to the *Tractatus*, calls "the peculiar literary character of the whole.") But if one looks at Wittgenstein's philosophical work and then looks at what commentators tell us his work is trying to say, it is hard to see how the usual deferential nod to Wittgenstein's literary talents amounts to more than a gesture of piety. As a literary endeavor, the work (if it is trying to say what contemporary commentary says it is trying to say) does not appear to be an interesting or subtle failure, but an abject failure. To be fully entitled to the claim that Wittgenstein is "a great writer," one must be able to make out how his laboriously crafted work serves—rather than frustrates—his philosophical ends.

8. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, §6.54, my emphases. All subsequent unspecified references to a section number are to the *Tractatus*. Quotations from the *Tractatus* are drawn from either the Pears and McGuinness translation (Wittgenstein, 1963) or the Ogden translation (Wittgenstein, 1922), or some emendation or (as in this case) combination thereof.

9. "I cannot imagine that Carnap should have so completely and utterly misunderstood the last sentences of the book—and therefore the fundamental conception of the whole book"; Wittgenstein, letter to Moritz Schlick, August 8, 1932; quoted in Nedo and Ranchetti, 1983, p. 255. For further discussion of this remark, see Conant, 1995.

10. Wittgenstein's letter continues: "To let you print the *Ergänzungen* would be no remedy. It would be just as if you had gone to a joiner and ordered a table and he had made the table too short and now would sell you the shavings and sawdust and other rubbish along with the table to make up for its shortness. (Rather than print the *Ergänzungen* to make the book fatter, leave a dozen white sheets at the end for the reader to swear into when he has purchased the book and can't understand it!)"

11. I have made a start on trying to offer a reading that meets this criterion of adequacy in Conant, 1991a. This essay is intended as a sequel to that paper.

12. That the notion of *Erläuterung* figures centrally in both Frege and the *Tractatus* is also the topic of Weiner, forthcoming; and that an understanding of the notion of

Erläuterung is central to an understanding of Wittgenstein's aim in the *Tractatus* is also the topic of McGuinn, 2000.

13. In commenting on Ogden's translation of §6.54, Wittgenstein writes: "*Here you misunderstand my meaning entirely*. I didn't mean to use 'elucidate' intransitively: what I meant to say was: My propositions elucidate—whatever they do elucidate—in this way, etc. Similarly, I might have said: 'My propositions clarify in this way . . . meaning. My propositions clarify whatever they do clarify . . . in this way: . . .'. Here clarity is *not* used intransitively although the object is not mentioned. You may put it thus: 'My propositions elucidate philosophic matters in this way. . . . This is something like the right meaning' (Wittgenstein, 1973, p. 51, emphases in the original). The accompanying editor's note by G. H. von Wright reads as follows:

The original translation of this passage (6.54) had been "My propositions are explained in that he who understands me." When returning the typescript Wittgenstein changed this to "My propositions elucidate in this way that he who understands me." As seen from the Questionnaire, Ogden suggested "My propositions are elucidated in this way; he who understands me." Wittgenstein convinced Ogden that this was a misunderstanding and Ogden then changed "are elucidated" to "are elucidatory" and this is how the passage is printed. (pp. 53–54)

14. I have alluded to the standard answer to this question—the ineffability interpretation. But a word should be said about a much less promising (but surprisingly popular) alternative answer to this question—which might be called the formal (or cop-out) interpretation—an answer encouraged by a mistranslation of Ogden's (later corrected in the Pears and McGuinness translation). Ogden mistranslates *unsinnig* in §6.54 as "senseless" and indeed throughout conflates the distinction between *unsinnig* and *sinnlos*. (When I refer in this essay to Wittgenstein on nonsense, my topic throughout will be—unless otherwise stated—what is treated in the *Tractatus* under the rubric of *Unsinn*.) If the propositions of the work were only *sinnlos*, then they would have the same logical status as the propositions of logic (rather than having the same logical status as the "pseudopropositions" of the philosophers). This would (somewhat) mitigate the puzzle posed by §6.54 and allow for the sort of rescue operation one finds, for example, in Max Black: "We shall go wrong at once if we fail to remember that 'sense,' in Wittgenstein's use of that word, has two opposites (*sinnlos* and *unsinnig*), not one. . . . There remains the alternative of treating many of his remarks as formal statements, 'showing' something that can be shown. Then they will be in no worse case than logical and mathematical statements and there will be no theoretical barrier to their use in rational communication. A great many of Wittgenstein's remarks can be salvaged in this way" (Black, 1982, pp. 378–81). Here, briefly, are three (of the many) problems with Black's interpretation of the *Tractatus*:

(1) The claim that "there remains the alternative of treating many of his remarks as formal statements," insofar as it pretends to exploit the Tractarian notion of "formal," misses the point of that notion (as it is employed, e.g., in §§4.1212–4.1274). Wittgenstein does talk about "formal properties" and "formal concepts" but never about "formal propositions." Indeed, Wittgenstein says: "the holding of such internal properties cannot be asserted by propositions" (see, e.g., §§4.122 and §§4.124). (He does say that they can be shown through propositions, but this is of no help, for the relevant notion of *zeigen* applies only to propositions that are not *unsinnig*.) The propositions we come out with when we attempt to assert "the holding of such internal properties" are said to be *unsinnig*. The *Tractatus* therefore allows neither for "formal philosophical propositions" (in Black's sense of "formal") nor for ones that (attempt to) talk about "formal properties" (in Wittgenstein's sense of "formal") but are not *unsinnig*. (This entails that §§4.1212–4.1274 are themselves *unsinnig*—a matter we will come to.)

(2) Black's argument that the propositions of the work are only nonsensical in an innocuous sense pretends to exploit the fact (overlooked by Ogden) that 'sense,' in

Wittgenstein's employment of the term, has two opposites (similos and unsinnig). But Black's interpretation can only retain a semblance of viability through systematically failing to respect the distinction between *Unsinn* and *Simlosigkeit* as it is actually drawn in the text. Black seeks to narrow the scope of *Unsinn* (so that it does not apply to the bulk of the propositions that comprise the book) and expands that of *Simlosigkeit* (so that it does). What Ogden's translation originally managed to obscure continues to be obscured by Black: namely, that *Simlosigkeit* is, in fact, a comparatively minor topic in the book, treated explicitly only in §§4.461, 5.132, 5.1362, and 5.5351 (thus preparing the way for §§6.1-6.111). Ogden's translation made *Simlosigkeit* appear a far more pervasive topic by mistranslating *unsinnig* throughout the critical discussions in §§4.003, 4.1212-4.1274, 5.473-5.4733 and elsewhere as "senseless." Black claims to be cognizant of this oversight, but he, too, simply ignores that *unsinnig* is the term employed in the *Tractatus* to characterize the "propositions" of the work that are to serve as elucidations. Perhaps, if this were brought to his attention, he might try pleading that—at least as far as the pertinent passages of the work are concerned—Ogden got it right and Wittgenstein got it wrong; that Wittgenstein inadvertently used the incorrect word every once in a while (including in the crucial penultimate section!). But this still does not get Black very far: only tautologies and contradictions meet the specifications for *Simlosigkeit* set forth in the work, and the bulk of the "propositions" of the work are clearly neither tautologies nor contradictions.

(3) If Black is right that the "propositions" of the work are merely *similos* (as are the propositions of logic), then the good news is that they involve no violations of logical syntax (and this is the conclusion that Black labors to secure); but the bad news is that there is then no reason to throw them away. Thus this interpretation saves one half of the text of §6.54 (the declaration that the propositions of the work are in some way lacking in sense), only at the cost of cutting loose the other half of the text: the declaration that the propositions of the work are to be "overcome" by the reader and that they form a ladder that is to be thrown away. Black (to his credit) admits that at this point he is simply giving up on the text and that, on his reading, "We need no mystifying addendum about the need to 'overcome' the remarks and to 'reject' . . . [them]—here is one 'ladder' that need not be thrown away" (1982, p. 381).

15. For Frege's own formulation, see Frege, 1967a, §32.

16. It is Wittgenstein acknowledges in his preface to the *Tractatus*, "to the great works of Frege and the writings of my friend Bertrand Russell that I owe in large measure the stimulation of my thoughts." (Anscombe comments: "Wittgenstein's relative estimate of Frege and Russell comes out in the acknowledgment he makes in the preface to the *Tractatus*" [Anscombe, 1971, p. 12]. The relative estimate comes out in the rest of the work as well.) Shortly after the *Tractatus* began to assume its final version, Wittgenstein wrote (on March 25, 1918) Frege of the great debt that he owed him; and Frege (in his reply of April 9, 1918) writes back: "Sie schreiben von einer grossen Dankeschuld, die sie mir gegenüber drückt. Ich weiss nichts von einer solchen [!]" (Frege, 1989, p. 16).

17. See Glock, 1996, pp. 259-60, for a helpfully explicit attribution of the substantial conception of nonsense to the *Tractatus*.

18. In claiming that the *Tractatus* is to be seen as resolving a tension in Frege's thought (between these two different conceptions of nonsense), I raise interpretative questions about how Frege is to be read—questions which I do not hope to resolve in this essay. I mean to take sides on this question only insofar as it bears on the claim that Wittgenstein can be fruitfully read as having read Frege in certain ways. I do not wish to deny that Frege can be fruitfully read as adhering to either one of these two conceptions of nonsense, and as having faced up to the implications of such a commitment. (Peter Geach reads Frege as an adherent of the position that there are certain truths that can be "shown" but cannot be said; Cora Diamond [1991b, chaps. 2, 4] reads Frege as having already anticipated the conception of nonsense which I attribute in this essay to the *Tractatus*.) I am inclined to think that each of these readings of Frege

has its exegetical advantages; each has moments where it stumbles over the text, and both are able to account for most of the texts (which, depending on the angle from which they are viewed, can assume the gestalt of either a substantial rabbit or an austere duck). My concern here will not be to referee such a dispute about Frege, but rather only to advance a claim about Wittgenstein and how he read Frege: namely, in a way that assigns to each of these readings half of the truth about Frege.

19. The positivist interpretation is all for showing that some sentences are nonsensical, but it wants no truck with the idea of philosophically illuminating nonsense. It wants to hold onto the substantial conception of nonsense (the idea that metaphysical nonsense arises through violations of logical syntax), while eschewing the idea that there are things that can be "shown" but not said.

20. I distinguish between these two variants because proponents of the substantial conception tend to present themselves as *prima facie* distinct in this respect. As we shall see, however, these variants cannot in the end be clearly distinguished from one another in the manner I am here pretending that they can be.

21. In fact, the interpretative options available in connection with this dimension of Frege's thought perfectly parallel those available in connection with the *Tractatus*. Some commentators have ascribed to Frege the positivist variant of the substantial conception (e.g., Dummett), others (as mentioned in the previous note but two) the ineffability variant (e.g., Geach) or the austere conception (e.g., Diamond). I repeat: this paper is agnostic as to which of these readings represents the true Frege.

22. Contrary to the assumption implicit in most of the secondary literature on it, the *Tractatus* itself scrupulously marks this distinction (between what I misleadingly refer to here as two senses of 'show') by reserving *zeigen* to refer only to the first notion and using *erläutern* to refer to the second. Both of these notions are, in turn, to be distinguished from the notion of "showing" that figures in the ineffability interpretation (see note 4).

23. The widespread assumption in the scholarly literature that this distinction (between saying [*sagen*] and showing [*zeigen*]) is crucial for understanding §6.54 arises from the conflation of the two distinctions I am trying to disentangle here. The distinction between *sagen* and *zeigen* has no application to *Ursinn*. A proposition that is *sinnvoll* shows that it is the case and shows its sense (§§4.021-4.022). A proposition that is *similos* shows that it says nothing (§4.461). A "proposition" that is *unsinnig* (contrary to the ineffability interpretation) neither says nor shows anything (which is not to say that it cannot elucidate). Section 6.54 is concerned with those sentences of the work that are (to be recognized as) *unsinnig*.

24. I speak here of different "kinds of use of language"—instead merely of different "uses of language"—to note a distinction that must be respected if we are to avoid confusion later when we turn to the topic of what §3.326 of the *Tractatus* calls "significant use." To distinguish (what I here call) "kinds of use" is to distinguish the different sorts of things one can do with language over and above putting it to the use of saying something. Later on in this essay, when I turn to the point of §3.326, I will employ the expression "uses of language" to discriminate *within* the (primary) field of the assertoric employment of language different ways to use language to say things. Whenever the *Tractatus* itself speaks of the "use" (*Gebrauch*) of a sign, it is always in this latter sense.

25. I borrow this useful term from Austin, 1962.

26. The early Wittgenstein did not think these two kinds of use of language (the constative and the elucidatory) constituted an exhaustive classification—he thought there was also a distinct ethical employment of language. (What Wittgenstein thinks comprises an ethical use of language needs to be understood before one can approach the question of what Wittgenstein means when he says that "the point of the *Tractatus* is ethical"; see Diamond, 1991b, chap. 8; 1991a, 1996 and Conant, 2002b.) There is therefore good reason to be wary of an oft-repeated textbook platitude concerning the fundamental difference between the thought of the early and the later Wittgenstein:

that early Wittgenstein thought that language can only be put to *one* kind of use, whereas later Wittgenstein demystified his earlier doctrine by pointing out that language has a multiplicity of kinds of use. A way to put what is sound in the textbook platitude would be to say: for early Wittgenstein, nonconstative kinds of use of language (1) come in only two flavors (elucidatory and ethical), and (2) are not, properly speaking, employments of *language per se* (see §§4–4.001) but rather employments of *language-like* structures; whereas for later Wittgenstein, the category of nonconstative kinds of use (1) subsumes many more kinds of use than ever dreamed of in the philosophy of early Wittgenstein (expressive uses of language, performative uses of language, etc.), and (2) represents not a mutually exclusive alternative to the constative employment of language, but rather a pervasive dimension of all language use.

27. The kind of *showing* that is at issue in the first half of this passage (one according to which logical category distinctions show themselves in a well-constructed formalized language) is a kind of showing that the Tractarian notion of *zeigen* aims to accommodate (though in this sense of 'show', according to the *Tractatus*, logical category distinctions only show themselves in *sinnvolle* sentences); Geach speaks of the nonsensical "sentences" that form the subject of the latter half of this passage (sentences in the vernacular that "are logically improper and admit of no translation into well-formed formulas of symbolic logic") as seeking to "convey" these same distinctions of logical category. Such sentences, according to Geach, seek to convey something that cannot be said. The idea that the latter sort of "sentences" intend to convey what the former sort show might invite the idea that it ought to be possible to formulate a more inclusive notion of "showing"—one that construes as a single sort of activity something that logically proper sentences (of either a natural language or a well-constructed formalized language) and certain logically improper sentences (of ordinary language which admit of no translation into a well-constructed formalized language) are both able to engage in. Some commentators on the *Tractatus* employ the term "showing" in this (by my lights, hybrid) way to encompass both these sorts of cases. Most commentators on the *Tractatus* however seem to have only the latter sort of case in view when they employ the term. Geach himself, however, is careful to employ the term to refer only to the former sort of case.

28. See, for example, Wittgenstein, 1980b, §42.

29. For further discussion of why logic, for Frege, does not stand in need of psychology, see Ricketts, 1986; and Weiner, 1990, chap. 2. For further discussion of why logic, for Frege, does not stand in need of metaphysics, see Ricketts, unpublished; and Weiner, 1995a, 1995b.

30. What Frege has done for Kerry (not to mention Schubart, Thomae, and others) brings to mind Heinrich Heine's remark (from Part 2 of *Religion and Philosophy in Germany*) à propos Lessing's polemics against Götz, Reimarus, and others: "He has snatched many a name from a well-deserved oblivion . . . and preserved it for posterity like an insect trapped in amber."

31. This charge is expressed more emphatically in the unpublished version of "On Concept and Object": "In my view the reason for the sorry state of affairs we find in Kerry, where the distinctions between concept and object, characteristic mark and property, are effaced is that logical and psychological questions and viewpoints are scrambled together. . . . He will speak now of the idea of a concept, now of an object, then of the idea of it, without its ever being wholly clear whether it is one or the other that is in question, whether we are engaged in a logical or psychological inquiry. . . . Here Kerry has simply succumbed to a widespread sickness" (Frege, 1979, pp. 104–5). Here early Wittgenstein both use the expression 'concept' in the same ("strictly logical" non-surface-grammatical) way. What Frege calls a concept ("in the strictly logical sense") is what Wittgenstein in *The Blue Book* calls a nongrammatical kind (Wittgenstein, 1968, p. 19). Frege and Wittgenstein differ, however, about which kinds are nongrammatical kinds—e.g., "number" is for Frege a nongrammatical kind; for (both early and later) Wittgenstein it is merely a grammatical kind.

32. In *The Foundations of Arithmetic*, Frege takes his second principle (or context principle) to apply to (what he, in this work, calls) either the *truth* or the *Bedeutung* of an expression, failing to distinguish—as he did from 1891 on—between *Sinn* and *Bedeutung*. Some commentators have argued that once this distinction is drawn, the context principle breaks down; others that the context principle applies only to the *Sinn* of an expression. I disagree with these commentators. I take it that the context principle continues to figure in Frege's later work as a pair of principles: one for *Sinn* and one for *Bedeutung*. Once these principles are separately articulated, however, it is not clear what their relations of dependence are. One could argue that first comes (1) the context principle for *Sinn*, then (2) the principle that *Sinn* determines *Bedeutung* ("It is via a *Sinn*, and only via a *Sinn*, that a proper name is related to an object"; (Frege, 1979, p. 124), and that (1) and (2) together imply (3), a context principle for *Bedeutung*. (See, e.g., Reck, 1997, p. 142n for such a reading of Frege.) Alternatively, it is possible to argue that, at least with respect to the expressions of Frege's symbolic language in the *Grundgesetze*, the relation of dependence between the two principles is the reverse. One could argue that in *Grundgesetze*, Frege first introduces (in vol. 1, §§10, 29, 31) what is in effect a context principle for *Bedeutung* and then (in §32) claims that the *Sinn* of every expression of his symbolic language is fixed by the stipulations specifying its *Bedeutung*.) But the *Grundgesetze* procedure for fixing *Sinn* requires that a *Bedeutung* for every expression of the language has already been secured. It might therefore appear to have no bearing on Frege's views concerning natural language, since there are passages in Frege which suggest that he holds that there are expressions of natural language that have *Sinn* but lack *Bedeutung*. Perhaps most telling, in this regard, are those passages in which Frege affirms the existence of sentences that lack *Bedeutung* but nonetheless express a thought ("without *Bedeutung*, we could indeed have thought. . . without a *Sinn*, we could have no thought"; Frege, 1980, p. 80), and those in which he affirms, moreover, that "the thought remains the same" whether or not the proper name which such a sentence contains has *Bedeutung* (Frege, 1984, p. 163; see also Frege, 1979, p. 191). But, such passages notwithstanding, it can be argued that this is either not Frege's considered view or at least not the view that some of his own doctrines, resolutely thought through, commit him to. If a *Sinn* is the mode of presentation of a *Bedeutung*, how can there be a *Sinn* if there is no "it" presented? (Frege also sometimes suggests that the identity of a thought depends on its inferential relations, which in turn depend on its having *Bedeutung*; see, e.g., Frege, 1980, p. 70). Moreover, Frege characterizes a proper name lacking *Bedeutung* as a "mock proper name" and the *Sätze* that contain such mock proper names as expressing "mock thoughts" [*Scheingedanken*] (see Frege, 1979, p. 130)—thus suggesting that we are only apparently able to grasp the *Sinn* of such *Sätze*. This appears to imply that (what we take to be) the constituents of such a *Satz* only make an apparent contribution to the determination of its *Sinn*. This opens the door for a Tractarian reading of Frege on *Scheingedanken*, parallel to the *Tractatus* on *Scheinsätze*: *Scheinsätze* are *Sätze* which have no *Sinn* but which occasion the illusion that one is able to grasp their *Sinn*. (For such a reading of Frege, see Evans, 1982, pp. 14–30.) I believe that Wittgenstein saw a profound tension in Frege's views here concerning the degree of independence that *Sinn* can attain from *Bedeutung*. (Evans's interpretation of Frege, followed up in McDowell, 1977, 1982, 1984, points in the direction in which the *Tractatus* itself goes on to resolve this tension.) The *Tractatus* resolves it in the direction of denying that "without *Bedeutung*, we could indeed have thought." The *Tractatus* argues for a mutual interdependence of sentential *Sinn* and substantival *Bedeutung*, holding (1) that a *Satz* only has *Sinn* if its expressions have *Bedeutung* (§§5.473, 5.4733, 6.53), and (2) that a substantival expression only has *Bedeutung* in the context of a *sinnvoller Satz* (§3.3). (Though, since Wittgenstein accepts Russell's theory of descriptions, some of Frege's examples of names lacking *Bedeutung* would not count for the *Tractatus* as examples of terms that require *Bedeutung* in order for the *Satz* in which they occur to have *Sinn*.)

33. In conformity with this doctrine of the primacy of judgment, Frege's concept-script forbids the isolated occurrence of designations for the various possible components of a judgment:

Instead of putting a judgment together out of an individual as subject and an already previously formed concept as predicate, we do the opposite and arrive at a concept by splitting up the content of possible judgment. . . . But it doesn't follow from this that the ideas of these properties and relations are formed apart from their objects: on the contrary they arise simultaneously with the first judgment in which they are ascribed to things. Hence in the concept-script their designations never occur on their own, but always in combinations which express contents of possible judgment. . . . A sign for a property never appears without a thing to which it might belong being at least indicated, a designation of a relation never without indication of the things which might stand in it. [Frege, 1979, pp. 15-17]

34. Frege does, of course, speak of a thought's having "parts" out of which it is "built up" (see, e.g., Frege, 1979), and of how we can "distinguish parts in the thought corresponding to parts of a sentence, so that the structure of the sentence can serve as a picture of the structure of the thought" (Frege, 1984, p. 390). But Frege immediately follows this latter remark with the observation: "To be sure, we really talk figuratively when we transfer the relation of whole and part to thoughts; yet the analogy is so ready to hand and so generally appropriate that we are hardly bothered by the hitches that occur from time to time" (Frege, 1984, p. 390). What kind of hitches? Hitches, for example, of the sort Kerry fails to notice when he imagines that he can get hold of a concept merely by employing an expression that elsewhere, in its usual employment, is able to symbolize a concept. Frege thus worries that the all but unavoidable (and in itself potentially innocent) locution of a thought's having "parts" or "components" will mislead one into attributing a false independence to the parts of a thought—so that we imagine that the parts could retain their identity apart from their participation in a whole of the appropriate structure: "But the words 'made up of,' 'consist of,' 'component,' 'part' may lead to our looking at it the wrong way. If we choose to speak of parts in this connection, all the same these parts are not mutually independent in the way that we are elsewhere used to find when we have parts of a whole." (Frege, 1984, p. 386). Frege's context principle—and the correlative doctrine of the primacy of judgment (which refuses to allow that the parts of the whole are "mutually independent in the way that we are elsewhere used to find when we have parts of a whole")—in thus insisting upon the unity of a thought or a proposition, in no way denies the compositionality of either thought or language. It insists only upon the mutual interdependence of compositionality and contextuality. (Diego Marconi [unpublished] nicely summarizes the position in the slogan "Understanding without contextuality is blind; understanding without compositionality is empty.") Frege's view of natural language—upon which the *Tractatus* builds its "understanding of the logic of language"—affirms both (1) that it is in virtue of their contributions to the senses of the whole that we identify the logical "parts" of propositions, and (2) that it is in virtue of an identification of each "part" as that which occurs in other propositional wholes that we segment the whole into its constituent parts (see note 37).

35. Gilbert Ryle attempted to summarize this "difficult but crucial point" of Frege's by saying that the meanings of words "are not proposition components but propositional differences": "Frege's difficult but crucial point . . . [is] that the unitary something that is *said* in a sentence or the unitary sense that it expresses is not an assemblage of detachable sense atoms: of, that is, parts enjoying separate existence and separate thinkability, and yet that one truth or falsehood may have discernible, countable, and classifiable similarities to and dissimilarities from other truths and falsehoods. Word meanings or concepts are not proposition components but propositional

differences. They are distinguishables, not detachables; abstractables, not extractables" (Ryle, 1971, p. 58). As this essay goes on, it will prove to be a matter of some interest that Gilbert Ryle—the man who made the notion of a category-mistake famous as a term of philosophical criticism—should have (at least occasionally) had such a firm grip on "Frege's difficult but crucial point."

36. It has been thought by some commentators that Frege's claim that objects—unlike concepts—are "self-subsistent" should be interpreted to mean that the context principle does not apply to object-expressions: that object-expressions mean—or name—objects prior to and apart from any contribution they make to the sense of (whole) propositions. Frege explicitly repudiates such an interpretation: "The self-subsistence which I am claiming for number is not to be taken to mean that a number word signifies something when removed from the context of a proposition, but only to preclude the use of such words as predicates or attributes" (Frege, 1968, p. 72). For a thorough vindication of the claim that Frege's context principle is meant to apply to object-expressions, not just concept-expressions, see Reck, 1997.

37. How do we find this out? What determines the logical segmentation of a sentence, for Frege, are the inferential relations that obtain between the judgment the sentence expresses and other judgments. Identifying an expression as a logical unit and determining its logical role consequently turn on appreciating the inferential relations that obtain between the judgment in which the expression occurs and other judgments.

38. The sorts of "working parts of the proposition" at issue here cannot be identified as the sorts of parts they are simply through reference to a theory of the workings of the grammar of the natural language to which they belong. For Frege, we may not take the surface grammar of an ordinary-language sentence to be a strictly reliable guide to the logical structure of the proposition expressed by it. "Instead of following grammar blindly the logician ought to see his task as that of freeing us from the fetters of language" (Frege, 1979, p. 143). Frege is, of course, interested in formulating generally reliable guides to the logical structure of ordinary-language sentences (based on the surface structure of ordinary language)—guides such as "the singular definite article indicates an object," "the indefinite article indicates a concept," etc. But these remarks are intended to formulate rules of thumb, not sets of necessary and sufficient conditions. The surface-grammatical rules of thumb that Frege furnishes ("the singular definite article indicates an object," "the indefinite article indicates a concept," etc.) are intended to help his audience latch onto the logical distinctions he is after—they are themselves intended as elucidatory hints. Such rules of thumb are available for any language in which there is "a good accord between the linguistic distinction and the real one" (Frege, 1984, p. 185), but the linguistic distinction cannot serve as a substitute, and must not be mistaken, for the "real" logical distinction that Frege is after—not merely because of the differences between natural languages (different languages employ different linguistic markers for parallel kinds of logical structure; Japanese has no indefinite article, etc.), but because of the grammatical plasticity within any natural language (any natural language is sufficiently *unbegreifsschriftlich* to permit the same proposition to be expressed through distinct sorts of grammatical form and the same grammatical form to express propositions of distinct logical structure). As regards the rule "the indefinite article indicates a concept," Frege goes so far as to venture that "there are probably no exceptions" to it, but the efficacy of his elucidation of his use of the term "concept" does not depend on the claim that his surface-grammatical rule for the German language has no exceptions (nor does it depend on the claim that there is some depth-grammatical rule of the natural language in question that has no exceptions); and he readily admits that in the case of the rule "the singular definite article indicates an object," indeed, "the matter is not so simple"—there are exceptions—but these do not impair "the value of the rule" (p. 185). The value of the rule lies in its capacity to lead us to grasp the real logical distinction in question. Once we have grasped this distinction, we will have the ability to discern cases

in which the surface grammar of ordinary language misleads us into treating sentences of like surface grammar as having like logical structure (thus helping, as Frege puts it in the preface to *Begriffsschrift*, "to break the domination of the word over the spirit.") Surface grammar is never the *sole* guide to the logical segmentation of a sentence of ordinary language for Frege. In a number of places, for example, Frege takes which inferences a given sentence licenses and which propositions it itself can be inferred from as a more reliable guide to logical structure than surface grammar. (This is evidenced, for example, by his treatment of the example of "The horse is a four-legged animal" (1984, p. 185).)

39. The only way to refer to a concept, for Frege, is to use a concept expression: i.e., to employ it predicatively within the context of a judgment. Thus his argument against Kerry can be rephrased as a substitutional argument. Two expressions mean the same thing (have the same *Bedeutung*) only if the new expression can be substituted for the original expression without changing the truth-value of any judgment in which the original expression occurred. Whenever we attempt, however, to substitute an object-expression (such as 'the concept-horse') for a concept-expression (such as '—is a horse'), not only do we not get a new sentence with the same truth-value, we get nonsense. See Weiner, 1990, pp. 251ff., for an excellent discussion of this point.

40. The sign that such a Fregean elucidation has been successful—that the desired "meeting of minds" between the elucidator and his audience has been achieved—is that the other person is able to go on as a user of *Begriffsschrift* on his or her own in the right way. Frege therefore has an answer to an obvious objection (voiced by some commentators on the *Tractatus*) to the doctrine that there are fundamental logical distinctions that underlie but cannot be expressed in language. The objection goes as follows: there is no way to adjudicate the success of an attempt to communicate such distinctions—for there is no way for someone who has grasped such a distinction to exhibit his mastery of the distinction. But Frege furnishes a touchstone of success: the sign that we have grasped his elucidations is that we emerge masters of his symbolism. A reader can be said to have grasped one of Frege's elucidations (e.g., his elucidation of the distinction between concept and object) if he is able to employ the appropriate elements of the symbolism (the symbol for an object only if an object is denoted, etc.) when segmenting judgments and translating them from ordinary language into *Begriffsschrift*. His segmentation of the judgment can, in turn, be checked by making sure that the translation of the judgment into *Begriffsschrift* preserves the appropriate inference and substitution licenses between the judgment in question and other judgments.

41. This and related aspects of Frege's conception of elucidation are discussed in illuminating detail in the final chapter of Weiner, 1990.

42. Geach is one of the few commentators who sees a connection between this moment in Frege's work and the concerns of both the *Tractatus* and Wittgenstein's later work:

One thing I learned from Wittgenstein, in part from the *Tractatus* but still more from personal contact, is that philosophical mistakes are often not refutable falsehoods but confusions; similarly the contrary insights cannot be conveyed in proper propositions with a truth-value. I offer as [an] instance . . . of such [an] insight . . . Frege's distinction between concept and object ("No concept is an object" has no translation into a well-constructed symbolism). . . . Such insights cannot be demonstrated as theses, but only conveyed dialectically; the dialectic process largely consists in the art, whose practice I have perhaps learned in some measure from Wittgenstein, of reducing to patent nonsense the buried nonsense that is found in attempts to reject these insights. We cannot refute nonsense by a straightforward process: as Frege said, logic cannot deal with nonsense, but only characterize it as being nonsense.

Having come to Frege by way of the *Tractatus*, I could see that his difficulties in expressing himself about function, concept, and object were not from a muddled self-bemusement but from the nature of the case. (Geach, 1991, pp. 13–14, 16)

It is remarkable, with a few notable exceptions (Anscombe, Diamond, Geach, Ricketts, and Weiner) how little of the secondary literature on the *Tractatus* has interested itself in this moment in Frege's thought. The contrast Max Black draws in the following passage between Frege (who has no use for the idea that nonsense can be illuminating) and Wittgenstein (who does have a use for the idea) is typical of the sort of contrast between Frege and Wittgenstein one finds throughout the secondary literature on the *Tractatus*:

Is the *Tractatus* self-defeating? Nothing in the book has aroused more interest or provoked more scandal than its concluding remarks. . . . The very words in which our predecessors' errors were castigated have to be acknowledged as nonsensical. . . . With what relish Frege would have assailed this position. One can imagine him smacking his lips over the delightfully absurd notion that "nonsense" can be understood: "If we understand the conclusion," he might well have said, "then it cannot be nonsensical. Since it implies its own lack of sense it must at best be false. For, if it were true, it would have to be nonsensical and hence without truth-value, which is a contradiction. So, the supposed conclusion is at best necessarily false. But all this is unnecessary—we can't begin to take seriously a statement that claims to imply its own absurdity" (Black, 1982, pp. 378–79)

This stock contrast of Frege and Wittgenstein renders the topic of this essay invisible: namely, how Wittgenstein's notion of elucidation inherits, reshapes, and ultimately repudiates Frege's notion of elucidation.

43. Henceforth, whenever it is employed in connection with Frege, the term 'elucidation' will be used only to refer to the species of elucidation at issue in "On Concept and Object" (in their original context, some of the passages from Frege's work I cite below are concerned in the first instance with the broader genus, but pertain a fortiori to the species, and are adduced below solely to illuminate the nature of the species.)

44. Contrary to what some commentators have claimed, this is an oft-repeated refrain in Frege's work. Here are some representative passages:

The question arises what it is that we are here calling an object. I regard a regular definition as impossible, since we have here something too simple to admit of logical analysis. (Frege, 1984, p. 147)

It is not possible to give a definition of what a function is, because we have here to do with something simple and unanalysable. (Frege, 1979, p. 235, emphasis in the original)

If . . . the meaning to be assigned is logically simple, then one cannot give a proper definition. (Frege, 1980, p. 37)

To this difference in the signs there of course corresponds an analogous one in the realm of meanings: to the proper name there corresponds the object; to the predicative part, something I call a concept. This is not supposed to be a definition; for the decomposition into a saturated and an unsaturated part must be considered to be a logically primitive phenomenon which must simply be accepted and cannot be reduced to something simpler. (Frege, 1984, pp. 281–82, my emphasis)

The peculiarity of functional signs, which we here called "unsaturatedness," naturally has something answering to it in the functions themselves. They too may be called "unsaturated" Of course this is no

definition: but likewise *none is here possible*. (Frege, 1984, p. 292, my emphasis)

It is indeed not the least of the logician's tasks to indicate the pitfalls laid by language in the way of the thinker. After refuting errors, it may be useful to trace the sources from which they have flowed. One source, I think, in this case is the desire to give definitions of the concepts one means to employ. It is certainly praiseworthy to try to make clear to oneself as far as possible the sense one associates with a word. But here we must not forget that *not everything can be defined*. If we insist at any price on defining what is essentially indefinable, we readily fasten upon essential accessories, and thus start the inquiry on a wrong track at the very outset. (Frege, 1984, p. 381, my emphasis)

This difference between the signs must correspond to a difference in the realm of meanings. . . . The analysis of the proposition corresponds to an analysis of the thought, and this in turn to something in the realm of meanings; and I should like to call this a primitive logical fact. This is precisely why *no proper definition is possible here*. (Frege, 1980, pp. 141–42, my emphasis)

45. The word "categories" will not really do here. But, as we shall see, there is, according to Frege, no word that will do. I shall continue, throughout the rest of this essay, to finessé this problem by pretending that talk of "logical categories" is able to possess greater referential powers than Frege thinks it can.

46. Here, again, are some representative passages:

The question arises what it is that we are here calling an object. . . . It is only possible to gesture towards [hinzuweisen] what is meant. (Frege, 1984, p. 147)

If . . . the meaning to be assigned is logically simple, then one . . . must confine oneself to warding off the unwanted meanings among those that occur in linguistic usage and to pointing to the wanted one, and here one must always rely on being met half-way by an intelligent guess. (Frege, 1980, p. 37)

It is not possible to give a definition of what a function is. . . . It is only possible to hint at what is meant and to make it clearer by relating it to what is known. Instead of a definition we must provide elucidations [Erläuterungen]: here of course we must count on a meeting of minds. (Frege, 1979, p. 235, emphasis in the original)

I must confine myself [in attempting to explain the "unsaturatedness" of functional signs] to hinting at what I have in mind by means of a metaphorical expression, and here I must rely on my reader's meeting me half-way. (Frege, 1984, p. 292)

47. "I am well aware that expressions like 'saturated' and 'unsaturated' are metaphorical and only serve to indicate what is meant—whereby one must always count on the co-operative understanding of the reader" (Frege, 1984, pp. 281–82).

48. It is only this species of elucidation that Frege thinks compels us to traffic in nonsense. Within the broader genus of elucidation, elucidations will generally take the form of perfectly meaningful propositions (such as, e.g., elucidations of geometrically primitive terms). It is worth noting, however, that a parallel distinction between a generic and a specific notion of elucidation must also be drawn if one seeks to understand the different occurrences of the term *Erläuterung* in the *Tractatus*. In §3.263 what is at issue is the species of the genus pertaining to the elucidation of primitive signs

(which I will not explore further here, other than to remark that perfectly meaningful propositions can serve as elucidations of this sort), whereas an understanding of §6.54 is unattainable apart from an understanding of what is peculiar to that species of the genus that aims to elucidate "philosophic matters" (and which proceeds through the employment of Sätze that the reader is to recognize as Unsinn).

49. Closer inspection of this passage and its context reveals that on *CP*, p. 300, Frege speaks of elucidation in connection with the Bedeutung of a term, and on *CP*, p. 301, in connection with its Sinn. I agree with Weiner (see 1990 p. 235 n) that as this passage suggests, Frege wants elucidations to secure both the Sinn and the Bedeutung of a term.

50. Here are two representative passages:

We must admit logically primitive elements that are indefinable. Even here there seems to be a need to make sure that we designate the same thing by the same sign (word). . . . Since definitions are not possible for primitive elements, something else must enter in. I call it elucidation [Erläuterung]. It is this, therefore, that serves the purpose of mutual understanding among investigators. . . . We may relegate it to a propaedeutic. It has no place in the system of a science; in the latter, no conclusions are based on it. (Frege, 1984, pp. 300–301, translation emended)

I should like to divide up the totality of mathematical propositions into definitions and all the remaining propositions (axioms, fundamental laws, theorems). . . . One can also recognize a third kind of proposition.

elucidatory propositions, but I would not want to count them as part of mathematics itself but refer them to the antechamber, the propaedeutics. (Frege, 1980, p. 37)

51. "We cannot come to an understanding with one another apart from language, and so in the end we must always rely on other people's understanding words, inflexions, and sentence-construction in essentially the same way as ourselves. As I said before, I was not trying to give a definition, but only hints; and to this end I appealed to the general feeling for the German language" (Frege, 1984, pp. 184–85).

52. The final hedge here—first he says "impossible" and then "senseless"—occurs frequently in Frege's discussion of this topic and can be taken to be indicative of a profound ambivalence on his part. The ambivalence is tied to the tension the *Tractatus* discerns in Frege's thought: a tension between (a) wanting to say that there are inexpressible thoughts which certain forms of words attempt to express, and (b) wanting to say that the distinction between what can and what cannot be rendered in Begriffsschrift provides a precise logical demarcation of what is and what is not a thought (and hence that there is no thought expressed by forms of words which cannot be so rendered). The differences in various interpretations of Frege can be traced in part to how this hedge is resolved—whether the accent is placed on "impossible" or on "senseless" (and if the former, then that accordingly determines how the notion of "senselessness" in play here ends up being construed)—which, in turn, determines whether one takes Frege to be committed (as Geach, Weiner, and Dummett, in their very different ways, do) to a substantial conception or (as Diamond does) to an austere conception of nonsense.

53. In order to avoid a possible confusion, I should remark that although I have followed the practice of translating Frege's term *sinnlos* as "senseless," I think it could equally well be rendered as "nonsense." In similar contexts, Frege sometimes employs the term *unsinnig* instead in order to make the same sort of point. Unlike Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus*, in his alternating between these terms, Frege does not have any systematic distinction in view.

54. Throughout Frege's corpus we find numerous remarks that appear to be defective in just the way he takes Kerry's remark to be—remarks in which Frege employs

expressions of the form 'the concept *X*' and in which he wants to put forward this or that claim either about the nature of concepts *überhaupt* or about some particular concept (most famously, for example, the concept of number). Frege seems to be committed to the claim that these remarks (in which expressions of the form 'the concept *X*' figure) have the status of elucidations. I only mean here to be pointing out an apparent consequence of Frege's doctrines. (I am not committed to defending the claim that Frege himself faced up to this implication of his views.) See Weiner 1990, chap. 6, for a spirited defense of the claim that Frege's doctrines do indeed have this consequence (though Weiner herself is careful to insist that the views that she thus attributes to Frege—on the grounds that they are the only views that she thinks can make sense of the relevant portions of Frege's writings—may well be views that "Frege-the-historical-person" would have disavowed).

55. There is that hedge again: "it requires something contradictory, . . . or perhaps better still, . . . something nonsensical."

56. Frege actually goes so far as to argue that the terms 'function' and 'concept' even when they occur *predicatively* are defective (because they function in ordinary language as names of first-level functions rather than themselves ranging over first-level functions) and thus "should properly speaking be rejected": "The words 'function' and 'concept' should properly speaking be rejected. Logically, they should be names of second-level functions; but they present themselves linguistically as names of first-level functions. It is therefore not surprising that we run into difficulties in using them" (Frege, 1980, pp. 141–42).

57. The claim that "concepts cannot stand in the same relations as objects" might strike one as false. What about the relation of identity, cannot both concepts and objects stand in that relation? Frege thinks not: "The relation of equality between objects cannot be conceived as holding between concepts too, but . . . there is a corresponding relation for concepts. It follows that the word 'the same' that is used to designate the former relation between objects cannot properly be used to designate the latter relation as well. If we try to use it to do this, the only recourse we really have is to say 'the concept ϕ is the same as the concept ψ ' and in saying this we have of course named a relation between objects, where what is intended is a relation between concepts" (Frege, 1984, pp. 121–22). If by "the relation of identity" we mean a relation in which objects can stand to one another, then it is not a relation in which concepts can stand to one another. We can of course say that this object is "the same" as that one; and we can also say that this concept is "the same" as that one. But Frege's thinks there is no univocal notion of "sameness" here. We are misled by the fact that in ordinary language we use the same sign to express two logically distinct kinds of relation into thinking that there is some overarching mode of relation into which both concepts and objects can enter. The difference between these two cases is rendered manifest in a proper Begriffsschrift: a different arrangement of signs expresses each of these distinct kinds of logical relation—in modern logical notation: $x = y$ and $(\forall x)(\forall y \leftrightarrow Gx)$. There is no way in a proper Begriffsschrift to express the (by Frege's lights, philosophically confused) thought that these two logically distinct kinds of relation are both species of a single genus (say, the genus *ways of being the same*). An attempt to express such a (pseudo-)thought in a proper Begriffsschrift can help to make manifest the confusion that (its apparent expressibility in) ordinary-language disguises. This is a nice example of the feature of a proper Begriffsschrift that interests early Wittgenstein most: its potential as a tool for making latent nonsense patent.

58. The *Tractatus* will seek to press the question: To what extent is Frege, by his own lights, entitled to look upon that which his words here intend (but fail) to express as a *thought*?

59. The conclusion of this passage—the idea that what matters in such cases (where we are forced to make use of such inappropriate forms of expression) is that "we know we are doing it and how it happens"—parallels the conclusion of "On Concept and

Object': "Over the question of what it is that is called a function in Analysis, we come up against the same obstacle; and on thorough investigation it will be found that the obstacle is essential, and founded on the nature of language; that we cannot avoid a certain inappropriateness of linguistic expression; and that there is nothing for it but to realize this and always take it into account" (Frege, 1984, p. 194).

60. "Something" is again, a weasel word here. *Tractatus*, §§4.126–4.1272 rework the same sort of example which figures in Frege's correspondence with Russell:

We can speak of formal concepts. . . . I introduce the expression in order to make clear the confusion of formal concepts with proper concepts. . . .

That anything falls under a formal concept as an object belonging to it, cannot be expressed by a proposition. But it is shown in the symbol for the object itself. (The name shows that it signifies an object, the numerical sign that it signifies a number, etc.) (§4.126)

So the variable name "*x*" is the proper sign of the pseudo-concept *object*.

Wherever the word "object" ("thing," "entity," etc.) is rightly used, it is expressed in logical symbolism by the variable name.

For example in the proposition "there are two objects which. . . ." by " $(\exists x, y) . . .$ "

Wherever it is used otherwise, i.e., as a proper concept word, there arise nonsensical pseudo-propositions.

So one cannot, e.g. say "There are objects" as one says "There are books."

The same holds of the words "Complex," "Fact," "Function," "Number," etc.

They all signify formal concepts and are presented in logical symbolism by variables. (§4.1272)

Wittgenstein's way of putting the point in this passage (about '*X* is an object') appears at first blush to parallel Frege's discussion of '*X* is a function': what an object is can only be "shown in the symbol for the object itself" and if we try to say what an object is by employing the word 'object' as a proper concept word, then "there arise nonsensical pseudo-propositions." Thus Peter Hacker, for example, summarizes the point of the passage in a way that parallels Geach's reading of Frege: "An attempt to describe the essence of things will unavoidably violate the bounds of sense . . . and produce nonsense. Thus, for example, that *A* is or is not an *object* cannot be said because 'object' is a formal concept" (Hacker, 1986, p. 21). On Hacker's view, "A is an object" is nonsense, but we know *what* it is trying to say and we know that "it" cannot be said.

There is this much of a disanalogy between Geach's reading of Frege and Hacker's reading of Wittgenstein: Hacker talks as if the invocation of "formal concepts" allowed for the introduction of a device for *saying* why the sentences in question are nonsense (as opposed to one that simply enables the production of more nonsense). On Geach's reading, to grasp the teaching of the *Tractatus* as a whole is to grasp why a passage such as §4.126 is nonsense. (Geach's view is nicely summarized by Anscombe's remark in her book on the *Tractatus*: "Sentences . . . cannot represent, and nothing in them can stand for, the logic of the facts: they can only reproduce it. An attempt to say what they so reproduce leads to stammering"; Anscombe, 1971, p. 164.) On Hacker's reading, on the other hand, §4.126 seems to succeed in *saying* why certain subsequent passages in the book are nonsense by specifying the "it" which cannot be spoken about. But this (by Geach's lights) is to miss the point of §4.1272. If it were possible thus to refer to that which allegedly cannot be spoken about, then there would be no problem about putting "it" into words. Hacker's reading threatens to leave Wittgenstein in the

position of a fool—one who first says that there are these things that cannot be spoken about and who then proceeds to *tell* what they are.

61. How one reads this pivotal passage of "On Concept and Object" will, of course, be a function of how one reads the rest of the essay and the rest of Frege. I am offering here a reading of the passage—in line with my overall exposition of Frege on elucidation—in the spirit of Geach (on the hypothesis that such a reading parallels Wittgenstein's own reading of Frege on these matters). Such a reading of the passage, however, would appear to presuppose a (very un-Wittgensteinian, and in certain ways un-Fregean) separation of the conditions of thought from the conditions of language. That is, it would appear to presuppose a conception of thought according to which a thought can figure as a target one is able to keep in one's sights without the aid of any linguistic medium—a target that one can hit or miss, and which one can tell one is hitting or missing, without reliance on language. More drastically still, it looks as if a thought can figure as the target of one's thinking, and that there is something that can count as one's having taken aim at *that* thought, though there is nothing in one's speaking that can ever count as one's having hit the target. On such a reading of the passage, Frege—when he says "by a kind of necessity of language, my expressions, taken literally, . . . miss my thought; I mention an object when what I *intend* is a concept"—takes himself to be able to take aim at (to "intend") the thought, even though his words necessarily "miss" the target. What Frege says here (that his words miss his thought if "taken literally") suggests that it is by taking his words nonliterally that we are to be *guided* to his thought; but it would seem that no such ("nonliteral") way of taking his words can ever, by his own lights, be taken to count as an *expression* of his thought (as a way of taking the words which hits the target). Rather his words, which taken literally miss his thought, are to *evoke* in us the thought which they are necessarily unable to express. We are, in our thinking, asked to hit the target which his ways of speaking necessarily miss. Thus Frege, in this passage, provides a paradigmatic example of someone trying "to use language to get outside language" (Wittgenstein, 1975 §6).

62. I hear a reader grumbling: "What about Russell? Isn't the *Tractatus* as much a response to Russell as to Frege?" Of course. But the relation to Frege is more instructive for seeing how the *Tractatus* is (and especially for seeing how it is not) to be read—for seeing, that is, what the method of the *Tractatus* is. I have thus confined myself in this essay to showing how the problematic of the *Tractatus* can be seen to parallel the problematic of elucidation in Frege's work. I take the (for Wittgenstein) generous acknowledgment to Frege in the preface to the *Tractatus* to suggest—and to invite the reader to look for—some parallel of this general sort. That acknowledgment leaves no doubt that Wittgenstein thought (1) that his work was indebted to the works of Frege, and (2) that he thought those works were "great", and it would seem to imply (3) that what is of most value in the *Tractatus* is especially indebted to what is comparatively "great" about "the great works of Frege." But even if one grants (1), (2), and (3), this still leaves wide open the question to what extent the presence of such a parallel is *directly* a product of Frege's influence on the *Tractatus* and to what extent it is the product of Wittgenstein's having worked through the stages of a *dialectic* common to both Frege and Russell to the point where Wittgenstein's path through these issues converges for a stretch with Frege's. (For further discussion of Wittgenstein's respective debts to Frege and Russell, see Conant 2002a.)

63. And, surely, it is right to think a viable reading of §6:54 requires such a distinction. The question is: How is it to be drawn?

64. That their account of Unshin should be thus distributed over these two variants is, as we shall see, unsurprising. It is not uncommon, however, for commentators to hover between the variants even within their characterizations of misleading and illuminating nonsense, respectively. Consequently, my working criterion for what qualifies a commentator on the *Tractatus* as a proponent of the ineffability interpretation is merely that the commentator at least so hover—i.e., that he at least intermit-

tently evince a hospitable attitude toward the ineffability variant of the substantial conception (and not that he elaborate it in a consistent manner).

65. Few proponents of the ineffability interpretation succeed in resolutely adhering to such an account of misleading nonsense. They tend to stray into maintaining that when the metaphysician comes out with misleading nonsense he is not merely mousing (linguistically defective) words, but also giving voice to a kind of (logically flawed) thought. But as soon as such a description of misleading nonsense is allowed, a problem arises for such readings of the *Tractatus*: How are we in the end to distinguish between misleading and illuminating nonsense? The usual answer (when the problem is faced) is to stick to the ineffability variant for both kinds of nonsense and to say that there is no difference (in the kinds of things that are respectively thought or said by a speaker of misleading nonsense and by a speaker of illuminating nonsense). The difference lies merely in the speaker's self-conscious appreciation of the logical character of that which he is trying to say: the speaker of illuminating nonsense is fully aware that that which he is thinking is unseizable, the speaker of misleading nonsense (while thinking the same thought and coming out with the same words) is not thus aware. The problem with this answer is that it reduces Wittgenstein's objection to philosophical nonsense merely to an objection to the spirit in which one comes out with certain "philosophical" utterances. There is no longer anything wrong with the metaphysician *thinking* a nonsensical metaphysical thought—just with his believing that such a thought is (correctly classified as belonging to the species of thought which is) expressible.

66. This will not deter Hacker and many other commentators from saying that they agree that, for the *Tractatus*, "the limits of language are the limits of thought." They may attempt to remove the apparent contradiction by explaining that what is thus meant or intended by nonsense is not, strictly speaking, a "thought"—and thus is not, strictly speaking, "meant" or "intended" either. On the use, on the part of commentators, of such devices for begging the question, see Conant, 1991a, pp. 154–55.

67. Some proponents of the ineffability interpretation advance readings of the *Tractatus* according to which it would appear that there is really very little difficulty, at least if you are a commentator on the *Tractatus*, in just coming out and saying what it is that Tractarian nonsense seeks to "show"; they thus implicitly answer this question (of how we are to discern the presence of meaning in the absence of meaning) with the straightforward proposal that we understand Tractarian (so-called) nonsense simply in virtue of understanding what it says! John Koethe is that rare example of a commentator who is willing to be explicit about this implication of such an exegetical procedure: "Showing, in my view, . . . is a kind of second-rate saying" (Koethe, 1996, p. 39). If such an admission remains out in the open, then, of course, it no longer remains appropriate to characterize the commentator who makes it as a proponent of an *ineffability* interpretation.

68. Thus Hacker: "Categorical necessities are reflected in the formation-rules of language. Any attempt to express them involves . . . the violation of rules of logical syntax" (Hacker, 1986, p. 106). The idea that the *Tractatus* seeks to specify "violations of logical syntax" (either effable or ineffable) will be taken up later when we look more closely at what is meant by "logical syntax" in the *Tractatus*.

69. I use this term here in accordance with the definition provided in note 4. Hacker himself does not speak of "showing" in this connection, but rather of (the illuminatingly nonsensical sentences of the *Tractatus*) "hinting" or "gesturing" at ineffable truths. (Hacker, quite properly, reserves "showing" as a translation for the Tractarian notion of *zeigen* introduced in §4:022 and §§4:121–4:126.)

70. More precisely: the parallel is with Frege's conception of what is involved in the elucidation of the meaning of a term that denotes something logically primitive.

71. Dummett himself never, in his discussion of Frege on nonsense, makes an explicit connection between the conception of nonsense he ascribes to Frege and the

doctrine that there are things that can be "shown" but not said. But Dummett's remarks elsewhere (in particular, his responses to related aspects of Geach's work on Frege, his vehement attribution to Frege of the thesis of the priority of thought over language, and his occasional asides about the "self-refuting" character of "the Tractarian doctrine" that there are inexpressible thoughts (see, e.g., Dummett, 1992) leave little doubt that he would not favor the attribution of an ineffability variant of the substantial conception to Frege.

72. The ensuing discussion of this example is indebted to Diamond, 1991, chap. 2. 73. As, e.g., in §51 of *The Foundations of Arithmetic*: "With a concept the question is always whether anything, and if so what, falls under it. With a proper name such questions make no sense. We should not be deceived by the fact that language makes use of proper names; for instance Moon, as concept words, and vice versa: this does not affect the distinction between the two" (Frege, 1968, p. 64).

74. This is not to say that, in general, any proposal that yields a possible segmentation of a string is equally tenable. In real-life cases of interpretation, we are obliged, on the one hand, to make sense of the way a sentence occurs within a larger stretch of discourse ("Understanding without contextuality is blind.") To commit oneself to a segmentation of the string, on the other hand, is to commit oneself to patterns of inference (see note 88) that are a function of how these words (of which the string is composed) occur in other propositions. ("Understanding without contextuality is empty.") The attribution of the endorsement of inferences of certain patterns to a speaker is governed by those considerations of charity and relevance that govern all aspects of interpretation. These considerations generally uniquely determine a segmentation (and, where not, they at least severely constrain the range of reasonable proposals).

75. For purposes of simplifying the exposition, I have restricted my definition to (what the *Tractatus* calls) "written signs"—the *Tractatus* explicitly allows for "sound signs" (see §3.321) and implicitly for other sorts.

76. My self-defeating exposition of the alleged distinction between the two variants of the substantial conception mirrors, albeit in a highly summary fashion, the first half of the elucidatory strategy of the *Tractatus*. Half of the central point of the *Tractatus*, on my reading, is to show that once one has bought into the substantial conception, one has implicitly committed oneself to a conception, on which there are ineffable thoughts—thoughts which we can gesture at (with the aid of nonsensical language) but cannot express in language. (A central part of the interest of Frege's work for Wittgenstein, as he read him, is that Frege recognized and drew this consequence.) The second half of the point of the work is to show that the way to escape this consequence is to abandon the substantial conception of nonsense altogether (not, according to Wittgenstein, an easy thing to do). As will become clear, my exposition of the alleged distinction between the substantial and austere conceptions of nonsense aims to mirror, in equally summary fashion, this second (and largely unnoticed) half of the elucidatory strategy of the *Tractatus*.

77. I say "reformulation of Frege's second principle" rather than restatement of it) because the *Tractatus* is concerned to refashion Frege's distinction between Sinn and Bedeutung (for reasons touched on in note 32). §3.3 is worded as it is precisely to mark a departure from Frege in this regard. Just what sort of departure from Frege is here being marked, however, is far less clear (at least to me). At the level of the proposition, the departure from Frege is presumably tied to a further consideration (which Wittgenstein thought Frege failed to appreciate): the essential bipolarity of the proposition. In the "Notes on Logic," Wittgenstein equates a proposition's being "essentially true-false" with "the sense of a proposition" (which, in turn, is apparently meant to contrast with "the meaning of a proposition" which he equates with "the fact that actually corresponds to it"; Wittgenstein, 1979a, p. 94). In Friedrich Waismann's *Thesen* (which is an attempt to furnish the members of the Vienna Circle with an overview of the main ideas of the *Tractatus*; based on detailed conversations with Wittgenstein), we find the following: "A proposition has Sinn, a word has Bedeutung"

(Waismann, 1979, p. 237). Should this be taken to mean that words do not have Sinn or that propositions do not have Bedeutung? Enigmatic as this remark may seem, it is straightforward compared with anything to be found anywhere in the *Tractatus* itself on the subject. Section 3.3 (along with §3.144) does appear to seek to exclude the applicability of Sinn to any kind of symbol other than a Satz. When read in the light of §3.3, a number of earlier passages (§§3.142, 3.144, 3.203, 3.22) also appear to be worded in a manner suggesting that the overall doctrine of the work indeed is that (at least) names—i.e., the constituent parts of a fully analyzed sentence—do not have Sinn. The corresponding principle in regard to Bedeutung does not obviously hold, however: the application of Bedeutung in the *Tractatus* does not appear to be restricted (as the passage from Waismann's *Thesen* might seem to imply) to the sublinguistic components of propositions. Throughout the *Tractatus*, the term *Bedeutung* is employed in a (relatively non-technical) manner so as to suggest that any sign (including a Satz, i.e., a propositional sign) with a determinate linguistic function can be said to have a *Bedeutung* (see, e.g., §5.451 for the claim that the negation sign has a *Bedeutung*), and, as such, is to be contrasted only with a sign that has no *Bedeutung* or (as the *Tractatus* prefers to say) to which no *Bedeutung* has been given (see, e.g., §§5.473, 6.53). What *Tractatus* §3.3 is concerned to withhold endorsement from is—not the bare idea that Sätze can be said to have *Bedeutungen*, but rather—"Frege's theory of the *Bedeutung* of Sätze and *Funktionen*" (§5.02), i.e., Frege's assimilation of sentences and functions to the category of proper names (and especially his doctrine that the *truth-value* of a sentence is its *Bedeutung*). For useful discussion touching on this extraordinarily obscure region of the *Tractatus*, see Diamond, forthcoming; and Hylton, 1997.

78. A number of commentators have attributed to the *Tractatus* the view that a special mental act (of intending to mean a particular object by a particular word) is what endows a name with meaning (see, e.g., Hacker 1986, pp. 73-80; Black, 1982, pp. 114-22; Malcolm, 1986, pp. 63-82). If textual support for this attribution is adduced at all, it is usually through appeal to texts outside of the *Tractatus*—usually passages from the *Notebooks* (Wittgenstein, 1979a, e.g., pp. 33-4, 99, 129-30), or corresponding passages from Wittgenstein's correspondence with Russell. (When a passage from the *Tractatus* is adduced, it usually requires (i) a contrived song and dance to explain how it is supposed to support the attribution, and (ii) reliance on the assumption that the *Tractatus* is in no way concerned to criticize or distance itself from the doctrines of the *Notebooks*. For discussion of (i), see Winch, 1987; for discussion of (ii), see Kremer, 1997. According to commentators who argue for the attribution, the *Tractatus* holds that the connection between a name and its meaning can only be fixed by a mental act that confers upon an initially semantically impotent sign the power to signify the object "one has in mind." To think that one can fix the meanings of names by means of such an act just is to think that one can fix their meanings prior to and independently of their use in propositions; and it is just this psychologistic conception of meaning that Frege's and early Wittgenstein's respective versions of the context principle are concerned to repudiate.

79. Although the notion of *Satz* that figures in the context principle (only the *Satz* has sense; only in the context of a *Satz* has a name meaning) is of a certain kind of a symbol, the term '*Satz*' in the *Tractatus* floats between meaning (1) a propositional symbol (as, e.g., in §§3.3ff. and §§4ff.) and (2) a propositional sign (as, e.g., in §§5.473 and §6.54). It is important to the method of the *Tractatus* that the recognition that certain apparent cases of (1) are merely cases of (2) be a recognition that the reader achieve on his own. Consequently, at certain junctures, the method of the *Tractatus* requires that the reference of '*Satz*' remain provisionally neutral as between (1) and (2). At the corresponding junctures in my own discussion, I leave '*Satz*' untranslated.

80. Wittgenstein's distinction between *propositional sign* and *propositional symbol* parallels the distinction between *string of words* and *proposition* that Geach draws in the following passage: "Recognizing repeated occurrences of the same proposition is not merely mechanical; the identity of a proposition is not the identity of a string of

words. The proposition 'Socrates was bald' occurs over again in 'Socrates, who taught Plato, was bald' but does not occur in 'A philosopher whose teacher was Socrates was bald' (Geach, 1979: p. 221–22). A version of this distinction (between sign [*Zeichen*] and symbol [*Symbol*]) is implicit in Frege's work: for example, in his "Introduction to Logic," Frege writes: "The same thought cannot be true at one time, false at another The reason . . . [people] believe the thought to be the same is that in such cases what is the same is the form of words; the form of words [which is said to both true and false] will then be a counterfeit (non-genuine) proposition [*wird dann ein unechtlicher Satz sein*]. We do not always adequately distinguish the sign [*Zeichen*] from what it expresses" (Frege, 1979, p. 186, translation emended). 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 here calls, forms of words)—builds on Frege's idea that what determines the logical segmentation of a sentence are the inferential relations that obtain between the judgment that the sentence expresses and other judgments. *Language (Sprache)* is Wittgenstein's term for the totality of such propositional symbols; and *logical space* is his term for the resulting overall network of inferential relations within which each of these propositional symbols has its life. Sections 4–4.001 build on the notion of Satz qua *propositional symbol* developed in §§3.31ff. ("The thought is the *sinvolle Satz*. The totality of *Sätze* is the language.") *Language (Sprache)* in the *Tractatus* refers to the totality of possible propositional symbols. One might think of this as Wittgenstein's attempting to follow Frege's example (in his exchange with Kerry about concepts) by "keeping to the strictly logical use" of the word 'language'. It is trivially true, if one employs this idiom, that *there is only one language*—though there are, of course, countless alternative systems of signs that 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).

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

82. The sequence of (a), (b), and (c) nicely brings out a further asymmetry between sign and symbol. In the rendition of (b) into logical notation, we might think of the sign "=" as corresponding to the sign 'is' in the ordinary-language version of (b): i.e., we might think of these two signs ("=", 'is') as symbolizing the same relation (the relation of identity). But in the rendition of (a) into logical notation, there is no candidate for a sign that corresponds to 'is'—there is here nothing which is *the* sign which symbolizes the copula. The *Tractatus* draws five morals from this: (M1) a method of symbolizing is not simply a matter of a sign *naming* an item of a particular logical category; (M2) a symbol is expressed not simply through a sign but through a *mode of arrangement* of signs; (M3) not every logically significant aspect of a mode of arrangement of signs corresponds to an argument place (into which a different sign can be substituted); (M4) it is not the case that each method of symbolizing requires the employment of a distinct sign to express the method of symbolizing (a method of symbolizing can be expressed through a mode of arrangement of signs, such as the method of symbolizing the copula in modern logical notation); (M5) for certain methods of symbolizing the employment of a distinct sign is required.

(M4) is of great importance. The *Tractatus* distinguishes between kinds of symbol by distinguishing degrees of "dispensibility" of signs for different kinds of symbol. The degree of the "dispensibility" of a sign depends on how easy it is to express the symbolic function of the sign while making the sign itself (as the *Tractatus* puts it) "disappear." (My appreciation of the importance of this point for the *Tractatus* is indebted to discussion with Michael Kremer.) (M4) sets up two further doctrines that play a central role in the *Tractatus*: (i) that any sign which symbolizes a *relation* can in principle be dispensed with and expressed instead through a mode of arrangement

of signs (§§3.1431–3.1432): (ii) that this shows us something about such symbols: they are not (in the Tractarian sense) *names* (§§3.1432–3.22).

In ascribing these two doctrines to the *Tractatus*, I am here parting company with highly entrenched assumptions in the secondary literature (and am here, to some extent, following the lead of Sellars, 1962). I therefore should make three of my own interpretative assumptions in this connection explicit: (1) *name* and *relation* refer, in the idiom of the *Tractatus*, to distinct modes of symbolizing; what is common to "aRb" and "cRd" symbolizes a relation, but in these propositions 'R' does not name anything, and thus (pace Copi, 1956, and others) in "aRb" there occur only two names; (2) only those symbols that are absolutely indispensable (in the sense sketched above) count in the idiom of the *Tractatus* as names; (3) not all non-name symbols are relations—logical constants, for example, are neither names nor relations.

In connection with (3), it should be noted that signs for logical constants—or, as the *Tractatus* calls them, *logische Operationszeichen*—count for the *Tractatus* only in a very degenerate sense as symbols. The *Tractatus* says that a symbol characterizes everything essential to their Sinn that propositions can have in common (§3.31), and that the occurrence of a logical operation does not characterize the Sinn of a proposition (§§4.0621, 5.25). The failure of Operationszeichen to characterize the Sinn of a proposition is connected with their being dispensable in a yet more radical sense than signs denoting relations. Section 5.4611 puts Operationszeichen in a box with punctuation marks. Such signs can easily be made to "vanish" (*verschwinden*) (§§5.254, 5.441). Their function can be taken over by (something which is undeniably akin to) punctuation. The negation sign is Wittgenstein's favorite candidate for replacement in this connection: it could be replaced by a convention governing the manner in which (negated) propositions are written (e.g., in boldface).

83. This is not to claim that it is possible to understand a sentence, if *none* of its constituent signs symbolize in the same manner in which they symbolize in other sentences. (Hence *Tractatus* 4.03: "A proposition must use old expressions to communicate new senses.") It is only to claim that not *all* of the constituent signs must symbolize in a precedented fashion. But an unprecedented usage of a sign will only be intelligible if the constituent signs that symbolize in the "old" manner determine a possible segmentation of the propositional sign—where such a segmentation specifies both the logical role of the sign that symbolizes in an unprecedented manner and the position of the resulting propositional symbol in logical space (see note 86).

84. In the absence of any familiarity with the way words (signs) ordinarily occur (symbolize) in propositions, we would have no basis upon which to fashion possible segmentations of propositional signs, and hence no way to *recognize* (rather than simply fantasize) the symbol in the sign. (This is the situation we find ourselves in when faced with a sentence of a language which we do not know and which does not in the least resemble any which we do know.)

85. So, on this reading of Dummett's example, the sentence might mean something like "The kind of exemplary statesmanship Chairman Mao exhibited is rare."

86. The second reading is more readily available in this case than it might otherwise be for a reason to which Dummett is strangely oblivious: there is already an established English usage in which 'rare' expresses a first-level function (as in "That piece of meat is rare!"). Admittedly, it still requires a bit of a stretch to bring Chairman Mao under *that* concept. But one might try to prepare the way for such a use with: "Chairman Mao is going to get a terrible sunburn [i.e., will soon be well-done] if he doesn't come in out of the sun soon!"

87. Our familiarity with previous occurrences of the expressions 'Chairman Mao' and '___ is rare' furnishes two alternative, equally natural and equally awkward proposals for conferring sense upon the propositional sign 'Chairman Mao is rare'; but, according to the *Tractatus*, we only determine the sense of these expressions in a particular occurrence of the propositional sign 'Chairman Mao is rare' when we adopt

one of these proposals for determining a *possible* method of logically segmenting the string. Thus, as they stand, our established conventions for employing signs *underdetermine* the segmentation of the propositional sign 'Chairman Mao is rare': there is no *single* reading that our established conventions (for employing the signs 'Chairman', 'Mao', 'is', and 'rare') naturally favor. That our established conventions favor to an equal degree two alternative readings (based on two logically distinct segmentations) plays a crucial role in the Tractarian account of what is (not logically, but) psychologically distinctive about the sort of phenomenology of meaning we undergo in (attempting to understand) cases of apparently substantial nonsense.

88. The segmentation of a propositional sign, for Frege and Wittgenstein, is a function of its position (or better: the position of the proposition it symbolizes) in a network of inferential relations—its position in (what the *Tractatus* calls) logical space. To fix the position of a proposition in logical space is to fix how its logical constituents occur in other propositions. To segment 'Chairman Mao is rare' in accordance with the first proposal is to take it to express a judgment that licenses certain inferences of certain patterns; e.g., the inference from the conjunction of (1) 'Chairman Mao is rare' and (2) 'The sort of politician that Dan Quayle is (an example of) is not rare' to (3) 'Dan Quayle is no Chairman Mao.' To segment 'Chairman Mao is rare' in accordance with the second proposal is, again, to take it to express a judgment that licenses certain inferences of certain patterns; e.g., the inference from the conjunction of (1) 'Chairman Mao is rare' and (2) 'This steak is rare' to (3) 'There are (at least) two things that are rare!.' The conjunction of (1) and (2), on the other hand, is logically inert: it licenses no inference because these two propositions have no symbol in common. All (1) and (2) have in common are the signs 'is' and 'rare'. The 'is' of (1) is the 'is' of predication; the 'is' of (2) is the 'is' of (conceptual) subordination. The 'rare' of (1) is a first-level function; the 'rare' of (2) is a second-level function. In most cases, recourse to the hypothesis that constituents of a propositional sign are employed in a logically unprecedented fashion yields a segmentation of the string that renders the proposition (which the sign symbolizes) logically inert with respect to its context. When a propositional sign (such as 'Chairman Mao is rare') admits of more than one natural segmentation, its context within a larger stretch of discourse should specify which of its possible segmentations is the logically relevant one (as was originally the case, for example, with all of the newspaper headlines in note 116).

89. Or, to put the point in a way that brings out the incoherence in question more vividly—in Frege's idiom: there isn't anything which is a proposition's simultaneously standing in two logically distinct sets of inferential relations with respect to other propositions—in the idiom of the *Tractatus*: there isn't anything which is a proposition's occupying two different positions in logical space at the same time. "The proposition determines a place in logical space; the existence of such a place is secured through the existence of its constituent parts alone, through the existence of the significant [*sinntvoll*] proposition" (§3.4). The determination of the logical segmentation of a propositional sign (and thus the conferral of a method of symbolizing on each of its constituent signs) is the specification of a determinate position in logical space. If the "proposition" in question is not *sinntvoll*, then it determines no place in logical space. Thus one way of putting the illusion that underlies the substantialist conception would be to say that it imagines that logical segmentation can proceed outside logical space.

90. Both the positivist and the ineffability readings of the *Tractatus* require that these two forms of recognition be mutually compatible: that we be able to recognize the symbol in the sign *and* that we recognize his propositions as nonsensical because the symbols clash with one another.

91. We can now begin to see how misleading is the standard attribution to early Wittgenstein of (what gets called) a "logical atomist theory of meaning." It is just such a theory that is under indictment in passages such as §§3.3, 3.314, 3.341, and 3.344. Gilbert Ryle noticed that already early Wittgenstein had been concerned to attack

Russell's atomism; and he offered a rather eloquent summary of Wittgenstein's criticisms of an atomistic theory of meaning:

It was . . . Wittgenstein who, developing arguments of Frege, showed that the sense of a sentence is not, what had hitherto been tacitly assumed, a whole of which the meanings of the words in it are independently thinkable parts but on the contrary, that the meanings of the parts of a sentence are abstractible differences and similarities between the unitary sense of that sentence and the unitary senses of other sentences which have something but not everything in common with that given sentence. To put it in epistemological terms, we do not begin with the possession of concepts and then go on to coagulate them into thoughts. We begin and end with thoughts, and by comparative analysis we can discriminate ways in which something is constant *vis-à-vis* what else is varied between different unitary things we think. . . . [A]n assertion is not a molecule of which the meanings of the words in which it is worded are the atoms. . . . Concepts are not things that are there crystallized in splendid isolation; they are discriminable features, but not detachable atoms, of what is integrally said or integrally thought. They are not detachable parts of, but distinguishable contributions to, the unitary senses of completed sentences. To examine them is to examine the live force of things we actually say. It is to examine them not in retirement, but doing their co-operative work. (Ryle, 1971, pp. 184–85)

Aside from a few notable exceptions, hardly anyone writing on the *Tractatus* over the subsequent several decades seems to have either noticed early Wittgenstein's repudiation of an atomist theory of meaning or noticed that Ryle noticed it.

92. This is the point of the 'only' in "If [a proposition] has no sense this can only be because we have given no meaning to some of its constituent parts" (§5.4733, my emphasis). Most commentary on the *Tractatus*, in attributing to that work the substantialist conception of nonsense, leaves that 'only' here looking as if it must be a slip of the pen. Hans-Johann Glock is exceptional in allowing the 'only' some weight here; but, once having done so, it is difficult to see how he can go and say what he does. In the entry entitled "Nonsense" in *A Wittgenstein Dictionary*, Glock writes:

The *Tractatus* features two accounts of nonsense. One is that the nonsensicality of . . . "Socrates is identical" is a matter of deprivation, that is, due to the fact that we have failed to give 'identical' an adjectival meaning. . . . If a proposition "has no sense this can only be because we have given no meaning to some of its constituent parts" (§5.4733). . . . At the same time, the *Tractatus* espouses a form of compositionality: the sense of elementary propositions is determined by the meanings of their constituent names, that is, by what objects they stand for. In the case of a meaningful proposition, to grasp the meaning and logical form of its names is to grasp the possible combination of objects it depicts. . . . while in the case of . . . "Point x,y is C-flat" it is to grasp that this combination of names does not depict a possible combination of objects precisely because the constituents have incompatible meanings. (Glock, 1996, pp. 259–60)

Glock quotes §5.4733 as evidence of the first of Wittgenstein's two "accounts" of nonsense. But the presence of the 'only' would seem explicitly to preclude the second account. I take it that this is Glock's point in speaking of two accounts of nonsense—rather than of two *kinds* of nonsensical pseudostatement as, say, Carnap does (see, e.g., the quotation from Carnap in note 100). Rather than taking austere and substantial Unsinn to represent two *species* of nonsense (as most standard readings of the *Tractatus* do), Glock seems to take the *Tractatus* to be committed to offering a unitary

account of the genus *Unsinn*. So far, so good, by my lights. This way of reading Glock accords well with the opening sentence of his next paragraph: "Wittgenstein's later work undermines both sides of this antinomy" (p. 260). "Antinomy," again, suggests that what must be at issue is two conflicting accounts of the *entire* genus (rather than two mutually compatible species). It looks as if the only way Glock can see how to acknowledge the force of the "only" is to conclude that \$5.4733 introduces an independent "account of nonsense" that is at odds with the one advanced elsewhere in the book. This adds up to a very unflattering reading of the book. Are we to imagine that the author simply failed to notice that he was offering two such flagrantly incompatible accounts of nonsense? (This is supposed to be the result of all those years of hard reflection that went into the *Tractatus*?) One would want very compelling textual grounds for concluding that an author of such a short book is so completely unable to keep track of his own views. The evidence licensing the attribution of the first "account" to the *Tractatus* is clear enough and, moreover, is supplied in the paragraph from Glock above. What is the textual evidence for the second account?

93. In order to count as *sinnvoll*, a Satz has to be able to serve as a vehicle of communication: it has to make a statement about how things are—it has to assert what is the case (*der sinnvolle Satz sagt etwas aus*) (§6.1264). Such a Satz is characterized by both a form (*Form*) and a content (*Inhalt*) (§3.31). A Satz that is *sinnlos* possesses a (logical) form but no content. *Unsinn*, on the other hand, possesses neither a form nor a content.

A Satz that is *sinnlos* does not make a claim on reality: it has no bearing on how things are. There is no need to consult how things stand in order to determine its truth-value—mere "inspection of the sign" is sufficient to determine its truth-value. The *Tractatus* therefore distinguishes between the broader genus of Sätze (*sinnlos* or *sinnvoll*) characterized by a logical form (i.e., in which we can recognize the symbol in the sign) and the narrower genus of genuine (*legentliche*) Sätze. The latter sort of Satz asserts, "This is how things stand" (*Es verhält sich so und so*) and thus is characterized by "the general form of a proposition" (cf. §4.5)—where this latter phrase should be understood to mean: "the general form of a genuine proposition." In saying that a "proposition" of logic is *sinnlos*, the *Tractatus* is identifying it as belonging to a degenerate species (or "limiting case"; cf. §4.466) of the genus proposition—it has the logical form of a proposition without its being *geheiltvoll* (§6.111): "the representational relations it subtends cancel one another out, so that it does not stand in any representational relation to reality" (§4.462).

To say of a Satz (a propositional sign) that it is *Unsinn* is to say that it is a mere sign: no determinate method of symbolizing has yet been conferred on it. Whereas to say of it that it is *sinnlos* is to affirm that a method of symbolizing has been conferred on it, but that the method of symbolizing in question fails to yield a proper proposition. A Satz that is *sinnlos* is unlike a genuine proposition (and like *Unsinn*), in that it fails to express a thought (it does not restrict reality to a yes or no and hence does not represent a state of affairs): it says nothing. Yet it is like a genuine proposition (and unlike *Unsinn*), in that we are able to recognize the symbol in the sign and hence are able to express it in the Begriffsschrift—it forms, as the *Tractatus* puts it, "part of the symbolism" (§4.4611). Thus what logic is, for the *Tractatus*, is internal to what it is to say something, and hence which Sätze are logical Sätze (and thus form part of the symbolism) only shows itself (*zeigt sich*) in language—i.e., in the meaningful employment we already make of (what the *Tractatus* calls) "our everyday language" (*unsere Umgangssprache*).

According to a widely accepted reading of the *Tractatus*, the so-called propositions of logic represent a set of a priori "conditions on the possibility of thought"—a set of requirements laid down in advance on what can and cannot be said. Yet it is, in fact, just such a Fregean/Russellian conception of the "substantiality" of logic that is under indictment in the *Tractatus* on the grounds that (a) the so-called truths of logic are not only not prior to, but rather parasitic on ordinary garden-variety truths; (b) logic

therefore cannot be abstracted from language so as to form a body of independently thinkable or assertable truths; (c) the "propositions" of logic (because they are void of content [*inhaltlos*]) cannot be construed as forming a body of truths at all (let alone, as Frege and early Russell would have it, a body of maximally general truths); and (d) (because they say nothing) they cannot require anything and hence cannot be construed as "laws of thought"; so (e) there is no (Fregean/Russellian) science of logic. For more on (c)-(e), see Conant, 1991a.

94. I have occasionally amended Pap's translations. References to the original German are to Carnap, 1932, pp. 219–41. Carnap's views underwent a considerable and rapid evolution, as did also his understanding of the views of the *Tractatus*. My references to Carnap pertain only to his views in this essay, unless otherwise noted. For a more extended treatment of the differences between Wittgenstein and Carnap, see Conant 2001a.

95. Indeed, it is largely in honor of Carnap's comparatively lucid account of it that I have dubbed the variant in question as "the positivist variant." The label is in one respect misleading, inasmuch as many who qualify by my lights as (at least tentative) proponents of the variant in question favor interpretations of the *Tractatus* that stress Wittgenstein's hostility to other aspects of logical positivism.

96. Carnap thus, interestingly, seizes upon and takes up into the title of his essay the very word (from the closing lines of the *Tractatus*) that—once translated into English or French—has often been seized upon and made much of by proponents of the diametrically opposed reading of the *Tractatus*: Pears and McGuinness translate *überwinden* as "transcend," thus inviting the ineffability interpretation—an invitation that is reinforced through their translation of *schweigen* in the next sentence (which calls merely for silence) as an injunction to the reader to "to pass over [*some- thing*] in silence." These mistranslations are mirrored in Gilles-Gaston Granger's French translation of the *Tractatus* (Wittgenstein, 1993), in which *überwinden* is rendered *dépasser* (to go beyond) and *schweigen* is rendered *garder le silence* (to keep silent [in the sense of observing a rule of silence]). These translations are philosophically consequential: talk of "transcending" or "going beyond" only makes sense where there is a *beyond*, and talk of "passing [*something*] over in silence" or "guarding one's silence [with respect to something]" only makes sense where *breaking* one's silence is a possibility.

97. As intimated earlier, it is instructive to look at Carnap for a second reason as well: he is not someone who wishes to have any truck with the idea that there are ineffable thoughts (that can be "shown" but not said); nonetheless, he, too, can be seen to adhere to a version of the substantial conception of nonsense.

98. That Carnap took his views on what metaphysics is and how it is to be overcome to be influenced by Wittgenstein is evident from his generous references and acknowledgments to the *Tractatus* both before and after he wrote Carnap, 1932. (See, e.g., Carnap, 1967, esp. pp. 290–92, 297–98; 1937, esp. pp. 282–84; 1963, esp. pp. 24–29, 45).

99. That Wittgenstein thought Carnap repeatedly and grossly misunderstood the *Tractatus* is evident from his irate correspondence with Schlick about Carnap's efforts to build on his ideas and from his brief correspondence with Carnap himself on the subject in 1932. (See, e.g., the letters reprinted in Nedo and Rancheitl, 1983, pp. 254–55, 381–82.) Passing remarks sprinkled throughout Carnap's letters and papers at the University of Pittsburgh Archives for Scientific Philosophy bear witness to Carnap's continued (and eminently justified) frustration concerning both the obscurity and the harshness of Wittgenstein's complaints about Carnap's (mis)appropriation of his work.

100. Here is Carnap on the two kinds of pseudostatement: "There are . . . those pseudo-statements which contain a meaningless word. But there is also a second kind of pseudo-statement. They consist of meaningful words, but the words are put together in such a way that nevertheless no meaningful results. The syntax of a language specifies which combination of words are admissible and which inadmissible. The gram-

mathcal syntax of natural languages, however, does not fulfill the task of elimination of senseless combinations of words in all cases" (Carnap, 1959, p. 67).

101. Carnap is not of the view that *all* discourse involving the term 'God' is of this sort. He distinguishes (1959, pp. 66–67) between four sorts of usage: (1) type (i) non-sense; (2) the *mythological* usage—in which 'God' has a determinate meaning, occurs in empirically verifiable statements, and refers to a kind of physical being with specifiable properties whose possibility and existence is a possible topic of scientific inquiry; (3) the *theological* usage, which involves an oscillation between uses (1) and (2); and (4) cases in which a definition of 'God' is furnished but involves type (ii) nonsense.

102. The example is in the present context in one respect an unhappy one: Frege would have regarded it as not nonsensical, but simply false.

103. Carnap, 1959, pp. 67–68

104. I have (except for capitalizing the word "Being") reproduced Pap's translation of this passage. It should be noted, however, that Heidegger's last sentence contains a neologism, and thus, for reasons that will become clear, would be more faithfully rendered: "The nothing itself noths."

105. And which, moreover, do not occur consecutively in Heidegger's essay.

106. Carnap's argument here still rests on the claim that Heidegger's intentions fix the meaning of the word 'nothing' in his sentences—only now the appeal is to a very different sort of intention on Heidegger's part: an intention to violate the logical structure of language on purpose. The postulation of this more baroque intention saves Carnap from Frege's objections to Kerry by casting Heidegger in the role of someone who shares the linguistic intentions of (Geach's) Frege in "On Concept in Object"; but it still leaves Carnap open to the *Tractatus's* objections to Frege.

107. Someone might object that the claim that Heidegger intends to speak nonsense does not play a weight-bearing role in the argument of Carnap's essay, and that I am attaching too much significance to Carnap's observation (1959, pp. 71–72) that Heidegger does so intend. It is true that the claim is not represented by Carnap as playing an important role in his argument. But his argument nonetheless requires it. Faced with the choice of (1) attributing to someone the intention to fail to make sense, or (2) attributing to him the intention to use words in an unprecedented but potentially intelligible manner, any sound theory of interpretation will prescribe that we settle for (1) only if we have excellent grounds for preferring it over (2). If Carnap is unable to rule out the possibility of a more charitable construal of Heidegger's sentences, then his entire analysis stands under threat of failing to make contact with Heidegger's text. He therefore needs an argument for why we should go with (1).

108. 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. This evidence, Carnap claims, shows that "the author of the treatise is clearly aware of the conflict between his questions and statements and logic" (1959, p. 72). But we have already seen Frege acutely aware of such a conflict in his writings; and such a conflict lies just below the surface of much of Russell's work (see Conant 2002a), and bubbles increasingly to the surface in the period 1913–14; consider, e.g., the following remarks from Russell's 1914 lectures at Harvard: "A fact is not a thing. When I say that I am talking nonsense. Nevertheless, I want you to take it as a profound truth" (Russell, 1914, pp. 4–5). Indeed, a careful reading of Heidegger's essay suggests that it is, in fact, for considerations not altogether dissimilar from those that move Frege and Russell to query the logical integrity of some of their sentences that Heidegger pauses over the logical standing of remarks, such as his own, which seek to turn (that which corresponds to the meaning of the word) "nothing" into a logical subject. Thus, though Carnap's concluding observations about Heidegger (e.g., "the metaphysician himself states that his questions and answers are irreconcilable with logic"; Carnap, 1959, p. 71) are evidently meant to be scathing, they are equally applicable to moments that occur in the writings of his heroes, Frege and Russell.

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

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

One might think that the reason Wittgenstein thinks that his example 'Socrates is identical' is not a case of the symbol being "in itself impermissible" is merely because he (somehow) knows that 'identical' in this context is functioning as an adjective. (Though this still leaves the question: How does he know this?) The problem with this way of taking what Wittgenstein means (when he says "we have given no meaning to the word 'identical' as adjective") is that it leaves it a mystery why the example is taken by Wittgenstein to illustrate the general point of the whole passage: i.e., "we cannot give a sign the wrong sense" (§5.4732).

So what are we to make of Wittgenstein's talk of "'identical' as adjective" and of there being "no property which is called 'identical'"?

In ordinary contexts (ones in which we are able to see the symbol in the sign), the sign 'identical' symbolizes a relation of identity between two objects. Given the absence of a second (candidate for an) object-expression, the present example does not admit of such a reading. Our ordinary strategy for seeing the symbol in the sign 'identical' comes to grief in the case of "Socrates is identical." The point of remark (1)—about 'identical' naming an unspecified property—is to offer an alternative reading of the string: a suggestion intended to enable us, based on the surface grammar of this peculiar string, to find a way to begin to see a symbol in the sign. There is an invitation present in the pattern of ordinary language for us to try to read the sign in this way (on the model of "Socrates is happy"). But we can only go so far in this direction. We can assimilate "Socrates is identical" to an established pattern (and thereby recognize the symbol in the sign); but we still do not yet know *what* the sentence says, because there is no established use of 'identical' as a concept-expression. On such a reading of the string (which, without further contextual clues, is as far as we are able to go in trying to make sense of it), we know that we are predicating some concept of Socrates, but not *which* concept: "because there is no property which is called 'identical'."

But this only clears up half the mystery: What does Wittgenstein mean by the term "adjective" in remark (2)? When Wittgenstein talks in remark (1) about a property, he is talking about a method of *symbolizing*. When he talks in remark (2) about "'identical' as adjective, he is referring to a feature of the "external form" (§4.002) of certain sentences—a grammatical surface pattern—of ordinary language (a certain sort of configuration of signs). Recall §3.323: "In the language of everyday life it very often happens that the same word signifies in two different ways—and therefore belongs to two different symbols—or that two words, which signify in different ways, are apparently applied in the same way in the proposition. Thus the word 'is' appears as the copula, as the sign of equality and as the expression of existence; 'to exist' as an intransitive verb like 'to go'; 'identical' as an adjective; we speak of something but also of the fact of something happening." The term "adjective" here and in §5.473 refers to a feature of the surface grammar (the sign structure) of ordinary language—not a proper *logical* category. The point here is about the sign 'identical', not the symbol. What does Wittgenstein mean here by saying that 'identical' sometimes *appears* as an adjective? The point is that this sign figures in sentences of ordinary language in such a way as to mimic the surface grammar of signs that symbolize concepts. Consider sentences (a) and (b):

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

The words 'happy' and 'identical' as they occur in sentences (a) and (b) provide an example of the point of the above passage: how "two words, which signify in differ-

ent ways, are apparently applied in the same way." These two sentences appear to have the same logical form. But, if we reflect upon our understanding of what each of them says and what sorts of inferences each of them licenses, it becomes immediately apparent that this appearance is deceptive. Consider the following inferences:

- (a) *Socrates and Aristotle are happy.* (b) *Socrates and the teacher of Plato are identical.*
 (a') *Socrates is happy.* (b') *Socrates is identical.*

The inference from (a) to (a') is a felicitous one, the pseudo-inference from (b) to (b')—though (as indicated by the italicized portions) superficially patterned on that from (a) to (a')—is from a meaningful statement to a piece of nonsense. 'Identical,' as it occurs in sentence (b), appears to symbolize in the same way as 'happy,' as it occurs in sentence (a), though it does not do so, and that it does not do so would be rendered perspicuous by a proper Begriffsschrift. As it occurs in sentence (b), 'identical' has the same surface grammar as an adjective such as "happy." This is what Wittgenstein means when he says that "'identical' sometimes appears as an adjective."

110. 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*] (1979b, p. 68). Wittgenstein's response to Heidegger's remarks—in contrast with Carnap's—is to attempt to *imagine* what Heidegger might mean by his words: The task of philosophical elucidation, for Wittgenstein, always begins with such an attempt.

111. The *Tractatus* works through in (its characteristically compressed) detail a wide variety of such cases (of hovering between determinate possibilities of use) as they arise in connection with the philosophical employment of *Scheinbegriffe* such as "world," "fact," "essence," "logical form," "representation," "language," "thought," "concept," "object," "generality," etc. The opening sentences of §4.1272 furnish a relatively straightforward example of such a case: the "use" of (the philosophical Scheinbegriff) "object" wavers between wanting 'object' to symbolize a variable and wanting it to symbolize a Begriff. For a nice discussion of such wavering in connection with this example (following up §4.1272), see Diamond, 1997, esp. pp. 79-80, and in connection with "generality" (following up §4.0411), see Kremer, 1992, esp. pp. 411-16.

112. Thus Wittgenstein says in §6.53: the aim is to demonstrate to the metaphysically inclined speaker that he has given "no meaning to certain signs in his *Sätze*." If the standard reading of the *Tractatus* were correct, this is not what Wittgenstein should be saying here. The complaint should be directed not at the (mere) signs in the metaphysician's *Sätze* (on the grounds that no meaning—i.e., no method of symbolizing—has been conferred upon them), but at the impermissible character of the propositional symbols which the metaphysician employs. The reason most commentators on the *Tractatus* fail to be struck by such textual anomalies is that they themselves run roughshod over the distinction between symbol and sign. One finds a great deal of this sort of thing: "For early Wittgenstein . . . logic is concerned with the . . . question what strings of signs are propositions capable of representing reality at all" (Clock, 1996, p. 258).

113. There is therefore an asymmetry in the attitude of the *Tractatus* toward these two sorts of proscription. The latter sort (i.e., the proscription of combinations of symbols) rests on philosophical confusion; the former does not. The *Tractatus* clearly thinks it is desirable for certain purposes (and for systems of notation that facilitate those purposes) to introduce principles that proscribe combinations of signs (as, e.g., a Begriffsschrift does). But there is reason to think the *Tractatus* would not look favorably upon a general reform of natural language based on principles that sought to proscribe sequences of natural language icons. (§§4.002 and 5.563 taken in conjunction yield: "Our everyday language is part of the human organism and no less complicated than it . . . and in perfect logical order, just as it is.") It is important that natural lan-

guages be able to tolerate the sorts of innovative use of signs exemplified in a mild way by Frege's example about Vienna, with a vengeance by Heidegger's employment of 'nothing,' and by Wittgenstein's own remarks (in §§5.473, 5.4733) about the possibility of giving 'identical' an adjectival use.

114. Carnap goes on to cite *Tractatus*, §3.33 as evidence that he and Wittgenstein are in agreement on this point. For an excellent discussion of what Wittgenstein does not and Carnap does think logic is, see Friedman, 1997.

115. This is not obviously what "logical syntax" means in Carnap, 1959 (most of what Carnap says about Heidegger's employment of *nothing* makes no sense if he is only concerned with the sign 'nothing'); but it is not altogether clear what "logical syntax" means in this essay. The closest he comes in Carnap, 1959, to a definition of logical syntax is to say: "The syntax of a language specifies which combination of words are admissible and which inadmissible" (p. 67). This reference throughout Carnap's discussion to admissible and inadmissible combinations of words allows Carnap, from the point of view of the *Tractatus*, systematically to conflate questions concerning admissible combinations of signs with questions concerning admissible combinations of symbols. Carnap wavers, in this essay, between characterizing the principles of "logical syntax" as principles that govern combinations of symbols (as he needs to, if they are to isolate a flawed *Sinn* in the utterances of the metaphysician) and characterizing them as principles that govern the combinations of signs (as he would need to, if he wanted to maintain—as he does in his later work—that logical syntax is only concerned with "language" qua purely formal combinatorial syntactic object).

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

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

117. 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 (see Conant 2002a)—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 . . . 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, 1995, pp. 24-25). This way of attempting to formulate his insight still involves Wittgenstein in attempting to say what the "it" is here that "cannot possibly" be. The road from the early insight ("every theory of types must be rendered superfluous by a proper theory of the symbolism") to the later insight (the task of "a proper theory of symbolism" is to self-destruct in a manner that shows all theories of symbolism to be "superfluous") is not a short one. One might think of it as the distance that needs to be traveled by a reader of the *Tractatus* who imagines he understands the propositions in §§3.331-3.334 but has not yet understood the author in the manner called for in §6.54. One can see the subsequent five years of Wittgenstein's work, culminating in §6.54 of the *Tractatus*, as a process of gradually climbing up this ladder, by teasing out the implications of his early insight, to the

point where the illusion that there is an "it" (whose impossibility needs to be shown) vanishes—and, along with it, the necessity of formulating (something properly described as) "a theory of symbolism" which demonstrates that such things cannot possibly be. Such forms of "theory" give way to the "activity" of elucidation (§4.112).

118. It is worth noting that what the *Tractatus* thus rejects has become, quite literally, the textbook account of its own project. The idiom of "drawing [or fixing] the bounds of sense" has come to be an indispensable shorthand in thumbnail sketches of the project of the *Tractatus*. Thus we find in the "Wittgenstein" entry of Blackwell's *A Companion to Epistemology*: "In the *Tractatus* a general theory of language is used to fix the bounds of sense" (Pears, 1992, p. 524). And in *A Wittgenstein Dictionary*, we find: "The early Wittgenstein . . . is concerned with the . . . question what strings of signs are . . . capable of representing reality. . . . He combined this with Kant's idea that philosophy is a critical activity which draws the bounds between legitimate discourse . . . and illegitimate speculation. . . . While Kant draws limits to knowledge, Wittgenstein draws limits to meaningful discourse" (Clock, 1996, p. 258).

119. Wittgenstein's point in devising alternative logical notations in which certain signs (e.g., logical connectives [*logische Operationszeichen*]) are made to disappear is to devise a language that 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 that dispenses with such signs. On the contrary, according to the *Tractatus*, the outward form of our language is already exquisitely tailored to suit our everyday purposes in communication (see §4.002).

120. Ogden's translation, as published, has: "The result of philosophy is not a number of philosophical propositions, but to make propositions clear." This came about as a response to Wittgenstein's initial suggestion that *das Klarwerden von Sätzen* be rendered (instead of "the clarification of propositions") as "the getting clear of propositions" (Wittgenstein, 1973, p. 28). Ogden, having convinced Wittgenstein that this is not much help, tries "to make propositions clear." Wittgenstein (in his annotations of Ogden's revisions) changes this to "that propositions become clear." But Ogden still finds this unclear and awkward English to boot, thus prompting Wittgenstein's more illuminating (though even more awkward) suggestion on page 49.

121. The *Tractatus* articulates what Robert Brandom calls an *expressivist* conception of logic (Brandom, 1986, 1988, 1994), insofar as it conceives of logical syntax as an instrument for (1) explicating the logical structure of thought and thus enabling (what the *Tractatus* calls) *das Klarwerden von Sätzen*, (2) revealing specifically logical vocabulary (such as the logical constants) to be linguistically optional and thus subject to possible "disappearance" (see note 82), and (3) perspicuously representing the inferential relations between thoughts (see note 124).

122. 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 insistence that 'all the propositions of our everyday language, just as they stand, are in perfect logical order'" (Koethe, 1996, p. 39).

123. This, of course, does not mean that language itself prevents us from ever making "logical mistakes" in the ordinary (nonphilosophical) 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).

124. 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 that 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: it permits the same thought to be rendered in diverse ways, and it obscures the logical relations between propositions. The first of these points is introduced in §3.325: the logical symbolisms of Frege and Russell do not sufficiently minimize the possibility of the same propositional symbol being expressed by two distinct propositional signs. (§6.1203 offers an ingenious partial notation that seeks to render maximally perspicuous certain sorts of cases in which distinct propositional signs express the same symbol.) The second of these points is first touched on in §§5.13–5.1311. Consider the following inferences:

- (a) $(p \vee q) \wedge \neg p$, therefore: q
 (b) $\neg(\neg p \wedge \neg q) \wedge \neg p$, therefore: q

Statements (a) and (b) appear here to be two distinct inferences, although they are logically equivalent. A notation system with three different connectives (negation, disjunction, and conjunction) allows what, for the *Tractatus*, is one logical operation (see §§5.21–5.23) to appear here as two distinct operations, thereby obscuring the manner in which "the structures of propositions stand in internal relations (if it is to another" (§5.2) and thus the lines along which each individual proposition (if it is to license inferences of the appropriate patterns) is to be segmented. This is an example of the kind of thing Wittgenstein says a "proper logical syntax" (i.e., one that exclusively serves his idiosyncratic elucidatory purpose!) ought to exclude. A helpful discussion of this and related matters is to be found in Mounce, 1981.

125. See also §3.03 and §5.4731.

126. Here is my favorite example: "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 [*nunsinnig*] were it not already senseless [*sinnlos*]" (Carnap, 1959, p. 65, my emphases; Carnap, 1932, p. 231; I have emended Pap's translation).

127. The context of the quotation is as follows:

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

Although this passage is from 1935, in its insistence upon an austere conception of nonsense, it is equally pertinent to an understanding of Wittgenstein's early and his later teaching. For further discussion, see Conant 2001b.

128. Except that proponents of the ineffability interpretation of the *Tractatus* pretend, unlike Geach, to be able to see how to go on and adapt the guiding idea of his interpretation—i.e., that attempts to formulate propositions that violate the logical structure of language are able to convey insights into *logical* features of reality—so that it extends to the possibility of conveying additional insights into other apparently quite different, yet equally ineffable (usually ethical, aesthetic, and/or religious) features of reality.

129. Or to put the same point differently: it aims to show us that we cannot use language as Geach reads Frege as supposing we can and as proponents of the ineffability interpretation read the *Tractatus* as supposing we can. For example, Peter Hacker, as we saw in note 60, takes §§4.126 and 4.1272 of the *Tractatus* to be concerned with showing how a certain sort of attempt to "violate the bounds of sense"—in the case in question, the violation (allegedly) incurred by a certain employment of the expression 'object'—enables us to hint at something that cannot be said. Hacker and I agree that these sections of the *Tractatus* do not succeed in *saying* anything. But Hacker takes these passages of the book to be *trying* to say what cannot be said but only "shown." He implicitly attributes to the *Tractatus* the doctrines (a) that there is something which is a piece of nonsense's trying but failing to say something, and (b) that there is something which can count as one's knowing what the nonsense in question would be saying if it were something that could be said. Thus, on Hacker's interpretation, the whole point of the book is to show us how to employ language (or at least language-like structures) to get outside language (to what cannot be said but only "shown"). On my interpretation, the whole point of the *Tractatus* is—not to get us to see the truth of (a) and (b), but rather—to get us to see that (a) and (b) rest upon the (only apparently intelligible) notion that nonsense can so much as try to say something.

130. I am here borrowing a phrase of John McDowell's (1981, 1994).

131. "The only strictly correct method" of philosophy described in §6.53 is quite different from the one actually practiced in the *Tractatus*. The practitioner of the strictly correct method eschews nonsense, confining himself to displaying what can be said and to pointing out where the other has failed to give a meaning to one of his signs; whereas the elucidatory method of the *Tractatus* involves the production of vast quantities of nonsense. The former method depends on the elucidator always being able to speak second: the latter attempts to achieve the aims of the former but in a situation in which the interlocutor is not present. The actual method of the *Tractatus* is thus a literary surrogate for the strictly correct method—one in which the text invites the reader alternately to adopt the roles played by each of the parties to the dialogue in the strictly correct method. As the addressees of this surrogate form of elucidation, we are furnished with a series of "propositions" whose attractiveness we are asked both to feel and to round on. This raises the question: Which of the Sätze of which the work is composed are *really* nonsense and which not? Which belong to the voice of temptation and which to the voice of correctness? The question is based on a confusion—on the idea that Sinn is the sort of properly a Satz can possess on its own steam, apart from any relation that we, as users of it, enter into with it. (See note 135.)

132. *Manuscript 110, Handschriftlicher Nachlass*, p. 239. When the aim of a work is "to place an illusion before one's eyes," the task of offering an exegesis of the work becomes a delicate one. Much of what proponents of the ineffability interpretation write often amounts to little more than a paraphrase of things Wittgenstein himself (apparently) says in the *Tractatus*. How can a commentator who furnishes us with a seemingly faithful paraphrase of Wittgenstein's own words be leading himself or his readers astray as to the point of the passage in question? Well, it depends on the sort of use to which one wants to put such a paraphrase. It depends on whether the paraphrase is adduced as a transitional remark (whose sense is subsequently to be queried) or as an explanation of the meaning of the passage. What is it to exemplify an understanding of the point of those passages from the *Tractatus* which the reader is to recognize as Unsinn? Here are two possible answers: (a) one exemplifies one's

understanding of the passages in question through a faithful paraphrase of them, where what one says makes explicit what these passages (are at least trying to) say; (b) one exemplifies one's understanding of the passages in question by bringing out how they are to serve as expressions of philosophical temptations which are eventually to be recognized as *Unsinn* and to be thrown away. Answer (a) is quite properly presupposed in most expositions of most philosophical works; but to presuppose (a) in an exposition of the point of the relevant passages from the *Tractatus* is inevitably to fall into the very confusions which the passages in question seek to expose. An undue confidence on the part of a commentator in the reliability of paraphrase as a method of explicating the point of a passage will lead to a complete missing of its point if the point is to carry the reader along a movement of thought that culminates in an undermining of its credentials as thought (if it is latent nonsense which is to be recognized as patent nonsense). To think that one can faithfully exhibit an understanding of those passages of the *Tractatus* that are to be recognized by the reader as *Unsinn* by offering (what one takes to be) a faithful paraphrase of them is to fail (to do what §6.54 calls upon the reader to do: namely) to understand the author of the book and the character of the project of elucidation in which he is engaged.

133. "The book will, therefore, draw a limit . . . not to thinking, but to the expression of thoughts; for, in order to draw a limit to thinking we should have to be able to think both sides of this limit (we should therefore have to be able to think what cannot be thought)" (*Tractatus*, preface).

134. "The limit can, therefore, only be drawn in language and what lies on the other side of the limit will be *simply nonsense*" (*Tractatus*, preface, my emphasis).

135. In §6.54, Wittgenstein draws the reader's attention to a kind of employment of linguistic signs that occurs within the body of the work. Commentators fail to notice that what Wittgenstein says in §6.54 is not: "all of my sentences are nonsensical" (thus giving rise to the self-defeating problematic Geach has nicely dubbed *Ludwig's self-mate* (1980, p. 265). Section 6.54 characterizes the way in which those of his propositions which serve as elucidations elucidate. He says: "my sentences serve as elucidations in the following way: he who understands me recognizes them as nonsensical"; or better still, to quote from the English translation of §6.54 that Wittgenstein himself proposed to Ogden: "my propositions elucidate—*whatever they do elucidate*—in this way, he who understands me recognizes them as nonsensical" (Wittgenstein, 1973, p. 51). The aim of the passage is (*not* to propose a single all-encompassing category into which the diverse sorts of propositions that comprise the work are all to be shoehorned, but rather) to explicate how those passages of the work that succeed in bearing its elucidatory burden are meant to work their medicine on the reader.

Question: Which sentences are (to be recognized as) nonsensical? Answer: those that elucidate. Section 4.112 does not say: "A philosophical work consists *entirely* of elucidations." It says: "A philosophical work consists *essentially* of elucidations." Not every sentence of the work is (to be recognized as) nonsense. For not every sentence serves as an elucidation. Some sentences subserve the elucidatory aim of the work by providing the framework within which the activity of elucidation takes place. Some of them do this by saying things about the work as a whole (and offering instructions for how the work is to be read); others by saying things with the aim of helping us to see what is going on in some part of the work (i.e., within a particular stretch of elucidation). Many of the sections of the *Tractatus* to which this essay has devoted most attention—e.g., the preface, §§3.32–3.326, 4–4.003, 4.111–4.112, 6.53–6.54—belong to the frame of the elucidatory aim and are only able to impart their instructions concerning the nature of the elucidatory aim and method of the work if recognized as *sinnvoll*. (Indeed, what I have just done in this note is offer a partial explanation of what §4.112 and §6.54 say.)

Question: What determines whether a remark belongs to the frame of the work (preparing the way for those remarks that do serve as elucidations) or to the (elucidatory) body of the work? Answer: its role within the work. The distinction between what is

part of the frame and what is part of the body of the work is not, as some commentators have thought, simply a function of where in the work a remark occurs (say, near the beginning or the end of the book). Rather, it is a function of how it occurs.

Question: How are we to tell this? What criteria govern whether a given remark is Unsinn or not? This question presupposes that certain strings of signs are intrinsically either cases of Unsinn or cases of Sinn. But the *Tractatus* teaches that this depends on us: on our managing (or failing) to perceive (*erkennen*) a symbol in the sign. There can be no fixed answer to the question what kind of work a given remark within the text accomplishes. It will depend on the kind of sense a reader of the text will be tempted to make of it. Many of the remarks are carefully designed to tempt a reader to find a (substantially) "nonsensical sense" in them. In order to ascend the ladder, a reader must yield to (at least some of) these temptations.

Certain remarks in the *Tractatus* can be seen to have a triple-aspect structure: I-able to flip-flop between (1) (apparently) substantial nonsense, (2) mere Sinn, and (3) (what the *Tractatus* calls) Unsinn—i.e., between (1) a remark in which the reader (imagines she) is able to perceive a symbol in each sign but is unable to attach Sinn to the resulting combination; (2) a remark in which the reader is able to perceive a logically unproblematic proposition in the propositional sign; and (3) a remark in which the reader perceives (*erkenn*) a mere string of signs upon which no determinate method of symbolizing has been conferred. Some remarks—including the final remark (read, e.g., as the tautology: "We must be silent [i.e., say nothing] where there is nothing to say.")—can present yet a fourth aspect: that of *Sinnlosigkeit*. What sort of foothold(s) a given remark provide(s) a given reader in her progress up the ladder thus depend(s) upon the sort(s) of aspect it presents to her, and that will depend on her—on the use(s) to which she is drawn to put it in the course of her ascent.

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