

The *Tractatus* Paradox

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**A thesis submitted to the University of Birmingham for the degree
of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

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May 2013

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Abstract

In the penultimate remark of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* Wittgenstein declares that anyone who understands him judges the book to be nonsense. The immediate reaction to this paradoxical statement is to reject the insights of the book that this assessment is based on; that is, to reject the book's theories of logic and language. Commentators have tried to save the book's fundamental philosophical ideas by blocking this immediate response. In this thesis I characterise and explore different attempts to do so. I discuss attempts of Russell, Carnap, Max Black, Malcolm, Hacker's Ineffability interpretation and Conant's (and Diamond's) Therapeutic interpretation.

I argue that the Therapeutic reading is the most promising attempt in its main ideas. Nonetheless, current versions of the Therapeutic readings do not seem successful. I borrow ideas from Grice's pragmatic theory of conversation and Davidson's account of metaphor to explain how the book is to be read therapeutically. I argue that the book is a long conversation between Wittgenstein and his audience which eventually turns out to be a pointless series of remarks. The book, however, works metaphorically in such a way that it affects its readers and helps them to divest themselves of the inclination to do philosophy.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisors Alex Miller (2009-2012), Jussi Suikkanen and Darragh Byrne (2012-2013). This thesis would not have been possible without their patience, generous help and encouragement. I will always be grateful that I have had this opportunity to learn from them. I would also like to thank my committee members Scott Sturgeon, Denis McManus and Nikk Effingham. I would like to dedicate this thesis to my parents Azizeh Hajefeizi and Habib Mosmer who have supported me endlessly.

Contents

Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1: Historical background.....	12
1.0 Introduction.....	12
1.1. Kant on Logic and Mathematics.....	15
1.2 Criticisms of Kant's Concept of Logic.....	18
1.3 Function-argument Analysis.....	20
1.4 The Theory of Descriptions.....	23
1.5 Frege and Russell on Analyticity.....	25
1.6 Frege's Concept of Numbers.....	29
1.7 Russell's Paradox	32
1.8 Russell's Theory of Types.....	33
1.9 Frege's and Russell's Theories of Language.....	36
1.9.1 The Context Principle and the Sense-Reference distinction.....	37
1.9.2 Russell's theory of judgement.....	42
Chapter 2: Logic, Metaphysics and Language in the <i>Tractatus</i>.....	45
2.0 Introduction.....	45

2.1 Logic.....	48
2.1.1 Wittgenstein's conception of logic.....	48
2.1.2 An Argument against logical objects.....	51
2.1.3 The significance of the concept of logic	53
2.2 Metaphysics.....	55
2.3 Language.....	68
2.3.1 The General Theory of Depiction.....	68
2.3.1 (a) Depiction and Representation.....	70
2.3.1 (b) The Logical Form of Depiction and the Pictorial Relationship.....	71
2.3.1 (c) Bipolarity and Bivalence.....	73
2.3.1 (d) Depicting and Displaying.....	74
2.3.2 Transcendental Argument for Simple Objects.....	76
2.3.3 Language as a Depiction.....	79
2.3.4 The Sentence-Name Distinction and the Context Principle.....	81
2.3.5 Inferential Role Semantics and the Notion of Senselessness.....	90
Chapter 3: The <i>Tractatus</i> Paradox and the Reductio Response.....	98
3.0 Introduction.....	98

3.1 Wittgenstein's Criticisms of Russell's Theory of Types.....	100
3.1 (a). Russell's Theory of Types is Nonsense.....	105
3.1 (b). Russell's Appeal to the Theory of Types is Unnecessary.....	106
3.2 The Saying-Showing Distinction.....	107
3.3 The <i>Tractatus</i> Paradox.....	112
3.4 The Reductio Response.....	117
Chapter 4: Early Attempts to Block the Reductio Response; Russell, Carnap and Black.....	122
4.0 Introduction.....	122
4.1 Russell's Metalinguistic Solution.....	124
4.2 Carnap's Metalinguistic Solution.....	129
4.2.1 The Argument for Meta-language.....	132
4.2.2 The Argument for Senselessness.....	135
4.2.3 The Relation Between Two Arguments.....	140
4.3. Objections to Metalinguistic Solutions.....	143
4.3.1 External Evidence.....	144
4.3.2 Internal Evidence.....	145
4.4 Black's Two Arguments.....	147

4.4.1 The Book-as-Tautology Argument.....	149
4.4.2 The Mental Labour Argument.....	155
4.5 Conclusion.....	161
Chapter 5: The Ineffability Attempt to Block the Reductio Response; the case of Hacker.....	162
5.0 Introduction.....	162
5.1 Malcolm's Reading.....	165
5.1.1 Objections to Malcolm's Reading.....	167
5.2. Hacker's Reading.....	170
5.2.1 The Negative Programme	174
5.2.2 The Positive Programme	182
5.2.2.1 Communicating Ineffable Truths.....	182
5.2.2.1(a) The What-question.....	183
5.2.2.1(b) The How-question.....	188
5.2.2.2 Recognition of Nonsensicality.....	189
5.2. 3 Motivations and Textual Evidence.....	194
5.3 Assessment of Hacker's Reading.....	199
5.3.1 The 'Showing' Objection.....	201

5.3.2 The ‘Implication’ Objection.....	207
5.3.3 The Therapeutic Reading’s Objections.....	214
5.3.3 (a) The Phenomenology of Reading the <i>Tractatus</i> from an Ineffability Perspective.....	216
5.3.3 (b) The Core Commitments of the Ineffability Reading.....	219
Chapter 6: The Therapeutic Attempt to Block the Reductio Response; the case of Conant and Diamond.....	222
6.0 Introduction.....	222
6.1 Two core commitments of the Therapeutic reading.....	226
6.2 The Meanings of “Piecemeal”	232
6.2.1 What “Piecemeal” does not mean.....	232
6.2.2 What “Piecemeal” means.....	235
6.2.2 (a) A Normative Account.....	235
6.2.2 (b) A Descriptive Account.....	236
6.2.3 The Imaginative Piecemeal Process of Reading: Goldfarb and Conant.....	237
6.3 Motivations for the Core Commitments.....	241
6.3.1 Philosophical Motivations.....	242
6.3.1 (a) The Context Principle.....	244

6.3.1 (b) The Gricean Conception of Meaning.....	245
6.3.1 (c) A Development in the Concept of “use”	249
6.3.2 Exegetical motivations.....	253
6.4 The Purpose of the <i>Tractatus</i>	257
6.5 Response to the Reductio Response.....	261
6.6 Objections.....	264
6.6.1 The Schroeder-White Objection.....	264
6.6.2 The Framework Objection.....	268
6.6.3 The Context Principle Problem.....	271
6.6.4 The Ladder Problem and Understanding the Author.....	275
6.7 Conclusion.....	276
Chapter 7: A New Attempt to Block the Reductio Response.....	278
7.0 Introduction.....	278
7.1 The Pathology of the Therapeutic Reading.....	281
7.2 Textual Analysis.....	283
7.3 Grice’s Account of Communication.....	287
7.3.1 Speaker-side.....	288

7.3.2 Hearer-side.....	289
7.3.3 Understanding the Speaker and Nonsense.....	290
7.4 The Core Commitments.....	293
7.5 Four Stages in Reading the <i>Tractatus</i>	295
7.6 The Meaning of “Obvious”	304
7.7 The Purpose of the <i>Tractatus</i>	311
7.7.1 Davidson on Metaphor.....	312
7.7.2 The <i>Tractatus</i> as a Metaphorical Work.....	317
7.7.3 White’s Reading of the <i>Tractatus</i>	320
Conclusion.....	327
References.....	329

Introduction

In the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein followed Frege and Russell's general concern with language as a target of philosophical study. In the Preface to the book he claimed that he had succeeded in finding final answers to philosophical problems; answers whose truth is definitive. The book ends with an evidently paradoxical statement that once the reader has understood the author she will recognise the propositions of the book to be entirely nonsense (6.54§). The goal of this dissertation is to investigate different approaches that philosophers and commentators have taken towards this paradox and to suggest a somewhat new way to understand Wittgenstein's self-assessment. Methodologically, I aim to evaluate alternative readings in terms of their exegetical evidence and philosophical plausibility. The goal is not to find an all-embracing interpretation of the book, but to identify which reading is least vulnerable to criticism, and to try to strengthen it in some ways.

The thesis will consist of seven chapters: (1) Historical Background: Frege and Russell (2) Logic, Metaphysics and Language in the *Tractatus* (3) The *Tractatus* Paradox and the Reductio Response (4) Early Attempts to Block the Reductio Response; Russell, Carnap and Black (5) The Ineffability Attempt to Block the Reductio Response; the case of Hacker (6) The Therapeutic Attempt to Block the Reductio Response; the case of Conant and Diamond (7) A New Attempt to Block the Reductio Response.

Wittgenstein's self-confessed debt to Russell and Frege (TLP, p.4) must be seen in the context of his critical confrontation with their theory of logic and language

because he thought of his work as mainly an investigation into the nature of logic (4.0312) and language (NB, p.39). In the first chapter I will explore aspects of Frege and Russell's philosophy of logic and language which are significant to understanding the main themes of the *Tractatus* in the second chapter. To do so I will illustrate Frege's and Russell's conception of logic and contrast it with Kant's account of logical judgements. As will be explained, while Kant saw logical truths as analytic judgements whose truth is independent of the world (since they do not speak about the world), Frege and Russell argued that logical truths are about logical objects and facts, which are the most general abstract features of the world. This was supplemented by Frege's innovations in logic. Inspired by mathematics, Frege replaced Aristotelian subject-predicate analysis of sentences with his function-argument analysis. The famous application of Fregean analysis of sentences is in Russell's Theory of Descriptions, where he argued that the grammatical forms of sentences are distinct from the logical forms of propositions that they express.

Unlike Kant, who thought of mathematical judgements as synthetic and a priori, Frege and Russell believed that arithmetic is reducible to logic. This logicist programme was mainly introduced by defining numbers in terms of concepts (which are objects of logic). The definition, however, was found by Russell to be paradoxical: he found the definition paradoxical and suggested his well-known Theory of Types as a way to solve the problem. The theory, however, was assumed to have significance for our theory of language too. Frege and Russell generated different theories of language. I will discuss Frege's Context Principle, his Sense-Reference distinction and Russell's 1913 Multiple-relation Theory of Judgement.

The second chapter consists of three main parts: logic, metaphysics and language. The chapter begins with a discussion of Wittgenstein's philosophy of logic. Wittgenstein followed the Russell-Frege dichotomy of grammatical form-logical form through accepting Frege's function-argument analysis of language and Russell's theory of descriptions. However, Wittgenstein's account of logic, as will be seen, was a retreat to Kant's account. Like Kant, Wittgenstein argued that logical truths do not speak about the world (they are just tautologies). This is a straightforward attack of Russell's and Frege's ontological commitment to logical objects and facts. Wittgenstein expressed this view as the fundamental idea of his book (4.0312). In this chapter I will confine myself to exploring just one of Wittgenstein's arguments against logical objects.

In the second part of the chapter I will discuss the metaphysics of the *Tractatus*. The *Tractatus* begins with a rather compressed discussion of the nature of the world. The opening remarks that the world is a totality of facts or existing states of affairs composed of objects are qualified by the thought that the world must ultimately consist of logically simple objects. These simple objects form the substance of the world. Wittgenstein's argument for the necessity that the world has substance (that is, it is composed of simple objects) is a transcendental argument from the possibility of language.

I will finally discuss Wittgenstein's theory of language in the third part of the chapter. Wittgenstein presented a general theory of depiction, applicable to all possible communicative media, and used it as a model for understanding language. According

to him, in language (sentences) we depict the world (possible states of affairs). Sentences of language are in the final analysis composed of simple names (which in turn refer to simple objects). The possibility of language demands that there be simple names, and in consequence there are simple objects. Sentences that are not composed of simple names (compound sentences) can be analysed into elementary sentences. Elementary sentences, however, are not analysable into simpler sentences. Unlike elementary sentences whose truth-value is directly measured against reality, compound sentences are truth-functions of elementary sentences. According to Wittgenstein, logical truths are those compound sentences whose truth is independent of the world since they do not speak about the world. Despite this, they are not nonsense. Wittgenstein distinguished logical truths from nonsense (*Unsinn*) sentences by calling them senseless (*Sinnlos*).

The *Tractatus* theory of language will be characterised in terms of its relation to Frege and Russell's theories of meaning. As will be seen, Wittgenstein accepted Frege's Contextualism (which says that words do not have meaning outside of sentential contexts) and he extended this to cover sentences too (which entails that the senses of sentences are their roles in chains of inference between meaningful sentences). Wittgenstein's account of logic has a significant role in this inferential Role Semantics. Unlike Frege's context principle, his distinction between sense and reference was not accepted uncritically in the *Tractatus*. Wittgenstein suggested a modified version of this distinction. His reaction to Russell's Theory of Types and Multiple-relation Theory of Judgement, as will be seen in Chapter Three, was more critical.

In the Chapter Three I will examine Wittgenstein's criticisms of Russell's theories. Russell's Multiple-relation Theory of Judgement relies on his Theory of Types in order to distinguish sentences with logical forms (meaningful sentences) from sentences without them (nonsense sentences). But Wittgenstein argued that the Theory of Types is either nonsense or absolutely unnecessary. He suggested that what the Theory of Types is expected to say about linguistic expressions is already shown by them. With this criticism Wittgenstein generated his famous showing-saying distinction, according to which it is impossible to speak about the logical forms of sentences - they just show their logical forms.

Wittgenstein's showing-saying distinction has a significant consequence for the *Tractatus*. If the *Tractatus* theory of language and its showing-saying distinction is true, then the *Tractatus* itself must be nonsense since it speaks about the logical forms of linguistic expressions. I call this the "*Tractatus* Paradox" and formulate it as follows:

1. If the *Tractatus* theory of meaning is true, then what the sentences of *Tractatus* seem to say cannot be said at all. (Premise)
2. If what sentences of the *Tractatus* seem to say cannot be said at all, then the sentences of the *Tractatus* are nonsense. (Premise)
3. The *Tractatus* theory of meaning is true. (Assumption)
4. What sentences of the *Tractatus* seem to say cannot be said at all. (from 1, 3 MP)

5. The sentences of the *Tractatus* are nonsense (from 2, 4 MP)

6. If the *Tractatus* theory of meaning is true then sentences of the *Tractatus* are nonsense.

(The *Tractatus* Paradox, from 3 and 5 by conditional proof)

One way of responding to the paradox would be to use it to undermine the *Tractatus* theory of language and logic via a reductio ad absurdum argument as follows:

7. If the *Tractatus* theory of meaning is true, then what sentences of the *Tractatus* seem to say cannot be said at all. (Premise)

8. If what sentences of the *Tractatus* seem to say cannot be said at all, then the sentences of the *Tractatus* are nonsense. (Premise)

9. The *Tractatus* theory of meaning is true. (Assumption for Reductio Argument)

10. What sentences of the *Tractatus* seem to say cannot be said at all. (from 7, 9 MP)

11. The sentences of the *Tractatus* are nonsense. (from 8, 10 MP)

12. It is not the case that the *Tractatus* theory of meaning is true. (from 9, 11 Reductio ad Absurdum)

The argument which I call the “Reductio Response” is best expressed by Scott Soames (2003). The following four chapters will be about different attempts to block the Reductio Response and avoid its conclusion that the book’s theory of language is just false.

In Chapter Four I will discuss Carnap’s (as a representative of positivist reading of the book) and Russell’s reaction to the Reductio Response as early attempts to block it. This will be supplemented with a discussion of Max Black’s attempt as a transformation stage from early reactions to later readings, that is, the Ineffability and Therapeutic interpretations. Russell and Carnap suggested a metalinguistic solution according to which what cannot be said in the *Tractatus* can be said in a meta-language to it. The target of this solution is obviously premise 7 of the argument. This argument is supplemented by a further attempt in Carnap to show that sentences of the *Tractatus* are not nonsense, but that they are just senseless analytic syntactic sentences. This second argument, which I call “Argument for Senselessness”, tries to undermine the premise 8 of the Reductio Response. Carnap’s second argument is an instance of a reconstructive reading of the *Tractatus* in the sense that it tries to save the book’s theory of language at the cost of contradicting the explicit statement of remark 6.54 that the book is nonsense.

Black represented a shift away from the positivist readings. He suggested two solutions to the Reductio. His first solution is just a version of Carnap’s Argument for Senselessness. The second suggestion, however, is a hypothetical argument that if the book is nonsense, it is not useless nonsense. Accordingly recognising the

nonsensicality of the book is not in its surface: it requires mental labour on the part of its readers. This argument, which I call the “Mental Labour Argument”, is an attack on premise 8 of the Reductio. I argue that the metalinguistic solutions (of Russell and Carnap), reconstructive interpretations (of Carnap and Black) and the Mental Labour Argument fail philosophically and/or exegetically to block the Reductio.

In Chapter Five I will examine Malcolm’s and Hacker’s readings. Malcolm represents those philosophers who believe that Wittgenstein was not fully aware of the metaphysical nature of his book. These philosophers rely on the idea of accepting the philosophical insights of the book without accounting for Wittgenstein’s own assessment of it. The idea is rejected by Hacker. According to him, the book is written in full awareness of its nonsensicality and with two intentions: communicating ineffable truths about the world and leading the reader to recognise the book’s nonsensicality. These two ideas frame what is known as the Ineffability reading of the book. Similar to Black’s Mental Labour Argument, the ineffability reading is based on arguing that though the book is nonsense, it is not pejoratively nonsense (it attacks premise 8). Accordingly, the book is a series of “illuminating nonsense sentences”.

I will argue that the reading is best understood in terms of a Gricean idea of *implicature*. Nonetheless, as will be seen, Hacker does not provide a clear account of how *nonsense* sentences implicate what they fail to say explicitly. This discussion will be followed by a short section on the Therapeutic commentators’ criticism of the ineffability reading. They accuse the ineffability interpreters of “chickening out” in the

sense that they just pretend to throw away the ladder, whereas in fact they stand on its final step as firmly as one can (see Diamond 1991, 194).

In Chapter Six I will focus on Conant's (and somewhat Diamond's) works to give an account of the Therapeutic reading. The reading, as will be explained, is based on two core commitments: the idea that there is no significant nonsense (the Austere Conception of Nonsense) and the idea that the recognition of nonsensicality is the result of a piecemeal process of reading (the Piecemeal Process of Recognition of Nonsense). According to this reading, as opposed to the ineffability one, the *Tractatus* is plain nonsense and recognition of its nonsensicality is not a result of the application of an ineffable theory of meaning (communicated by the book) on itself. I will explain the philosophical and exegetical motivations for these two commitments. I will characterise three philosophical motivations behind the core commitments: Fregean contextualism, the Gricean conception of meaning, and a developed notion of "use". The commitments are exegetically supported by remarks from the *Tractatus* itself. These core commitments are considered by the Therapeutic readers as the framework of the book and as methodological instructions on how to read the body of the book.

With above commitments in mind, the Therapeutic reading's reply to the Reductio Response is this: the Reductio Response is an unreal argument since it assumes that the book presents a theory of meaning, whereas in fact the book is just plain nonsense. Thus, while positivists and ineffability readers try to prove the falsity of the

Reductio, the Therapeutic readers argue for its nonsensicality. This solution, however, is vulnerable to criticisms:

1. The framework of the book is motivated by the remarks from the body, which are expected to be plain nonsense
2. The philosophical motivation for the austere conception of nonsense, i.e. the context principle, is itself a theory of meaning and also motivated by remarks from the body
3. It is impossible to climb a ladder of plain nonsense sentences, even through the imaginative understanding of the author of the book

The objections are pressing and demand responses. This leads us to the final chapter of the thesis.

In Chapter Seven I propose a new way to block the Reductio Response. I suggest a reading which is committed to the two core ideas of the Therapeutic reading. I use Grice's theory of communication, that is, his maxims of successful conversation and the Cooperative Principle, to explain how the *Tractatus* falls into nonsensicality. My explanation is that the book must be regarded as a long conversation between Wittgenstein and his reader. Though the remarks of the book are literally meaningful, they fail to follow maxims of conversation and as a result the whole conversation falls into a pointless series of literally meaningful sentences. Once the reader realises that the author is not communicating anything to him, she judges the book to be nonsense.

I will supplement my pragmatic reading with ideas from Davidson's account of metaphor to explain the purpose of the book. I argue that although the book is a metaphorical work in a Davidsonian way, it *affects* its readers to the point that they lose their inclination to do philosophy. Nonetheless, this therapeutic piecemeal process of revealing that the book is just plain nonsense is a cognitive process too. It helps the reader to recover her linguistic competence and causes her to cease speaking improperly (that is, philosophically). In consequence, at the end of reading the *Tractatus* the reader gets practical knowledge (as opposed to the ineffable or sayable theoretical knowledge) of how to use language.

Chapter 1

Historical Background

1.0 Introduction

In his preface to the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein named Frege and Russell as philosophers who had a significant influence on his thoughts (TLP, p.4). In this chapter I will try to give a snapshot of some of the main ideas which attracted Wittgenstein's positive or negative reactions in the *Tractatus*. The chapter is built around Frege and Russell's philosophy of logic and its tracks in their philosophy of language. The reason for establishing this historical background on their philosophy of logic rather than their theory of language, for instance, is just its practical value in understanding the *Tractatus*. Wittgenstein highlighted his fundamental idea as a concern in philosophy of logic:

My fundamental idea is that the 'logical constants' are not representatives; that there can be no representatives of the *logic* of facts (4.0312).

and he contrasted this with Frege and Russell's conception of logic:

At this point it becomes manifest that there are no 'logical objects' or 'logical constants' (in Frege's and Russell's sense) (5.4).

For this reason, it seems at least pragmatically more useful to base the historical background around an explanation of their philosophy of logic. For this purpose I will follow two general programmes: a negative programme (Sections 1.2-1.4) and a positive programme (Section 1.5).

In the negative programme I try to show what logic is *not*, according to Frege and Russell. To do so, I will discuss Kant's (Section 1.1) and the Empiricists' (Lock, Berkeley and Mill's) conceptions of logic (Section 1.5). The discussion of Kant's philosophy of logic will be more prominent than that of the empiricists' account.

Kant took logical judgements to be analytical, which is to say vacuous and not informative about the world. Analytic judgements, according to him, were such that the meanings of their predicates were contained in meanings of their subjects. As a result they were dismissed from the body of our knowledge about the world. On the other hand, he thought of mathematical judgements as being ampliative, that is, providing knowledge about the world. These two claims were objected by Russell and Frege. I shall base the negative programme on following the denial of these two claims.

At the first step I discuss Frege and Russell's arguments against Kant's account of logic (Section 1.2). This involves showing how and in what ways Kant's conception of analyticity is wrong or misleading. Frege and Russell, as will be explained, argued that to define a logical notion such as analyticity we need to look at something beyond the grammatical subject-predicate form of sentences. They proposed that we

need to look at the logical forms of sentences, instead of their grammatical forms (Sections 1.3-1.4).

With this suggestion we will be in a position to see what logic, according to Frege and Russell, is (the positive programme). This will involve explaining their account of analyticity (Section 1.5). As will be explained, they thought of logic as a discipline which deals with logical facts and objects. Accordingly, logical judgements are about logical truths and logical truths are in the world. As a result, contra Kant, logic could be considered a discipline about the world.

My next step is to discuss Frege and Russell's logicist reductive account of arithmetic. This part will supply us with background information necessary for understanding Wittgenstein's showing-saying distinction in Chapter Three. I will first explain Frege's appeal to logical concepts to give a definition of number (Section 1.6), and then discuss the paradox that Russell found in Frege's definition (Section 1.7). This will be supplemented with Russell's suggestion of the Theory of Types as a solution (Section 1.8).

Frege's and Russell's commitment to ontology of logical objects has a strong link to their theories of language (see Section 1.9). They recognised three types of logical objects: logical constants, truth-values and logical forms of expressions. Frege believed in the first and second of these. Russell took the first and third types. Their different accounts of logical objects corresponded to their different theories of language. While Frege's distinction between sense and reference was the reason behind his considering truth-values to be logical objects (Section 1.9.1), Russell's

1913 theory of judgement was the motivation for his taking logical forms of expressions as logical objects (Section 1.9.2). These two last sections provide us with a better background from which to understand Wittgenstein's fundamental idea in the *Tractatus* in the succeeding chapters.

1.1. Kant on Logic and Mathematics

In his *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant introduces three actual modes of knowledge (see Kant 1998, A 6-7): (1) Synthetic a posteriori judgements. These are judgements whose justification relies on experience. To know their truth we need to compare them to reality. These judgments are what are commonly known as “scientific empirical judgements”. The sentence “The Sun is at the centre of solar system” is an instance of such a judgement. Its truth can only be asserted after comparing it to reality. Also, the meaning of its predicate is not contained in the meaning of the subject.

(2) Analytic a priori judgements. These judgements do not need to be measured against the world in order to be justified. Moreover, their truth is a function of the meanings of their constituents. The sentence “All bachelors are unmarried” is an example from this category. Anyone who knows the meaning of its constituents knows that it is true. Analytic a priori judgments are obviously vacuous judgements since they do not contribute to our knowledge about the world. They are just silent about the world. Kant considers logical truths to be analytic a priori truths.

(3) Synthetic a priori judgements. These are judgements whose justification is independent of experience, but unlike analytic a priori truths their truth is not the result of their constituents' meaning. Kant holds that judgements of mathematics, geometry, foundations of physics and metaphysics are of this category. Take a statement " $5+7=12$ ". The concept of twelve is not contained in either of the concepts of five or seven. However, this judgement amplifies our knowledge by adding a new concept which was not thought in " $5+7$ ".

Analytic a priori judgements, Kant says, "are merely *explicative*, adding nothing to the content of the cognition". On the contrary, synthetic (a priori or a posteriori) judgements are "*ampliative*, increasing the given cognition" (Kant 1997, §2). Our synthetic judgements have content and develop our knowledge, whereas our analytic judgements do not say anything about the world and consequently do not add to our knowledge. The reason is that the truth of an a priori analytic judgement is an outcome of the meanings of its constituents, not the result of a comparison of it with reality.

To sum up, we have ampliative judgements (including empirical, mathematical and geometrical truths) which contribute to our knowledge of the world, and explicative judgements (including logical truths) which are simply vacuous judgements about the world. The issue here is clearly the distinction between a judgement being "analytic" or "synthetic" (the distinction between a priority and a posteriority does not play a significant role since all synthetic judgements, no matter whether a priori or a posteriori, are considered ampliative). Kant seems to hold the definitions below:

(Analyt-SP) A judgement is analytic if and only if its predicate is (covertly) contained in its subject

(Synth- SP) A judgement is synthetic if and only if its predicate is outside of its subject

Both definitions are in terms of the relation between subjects and predicates of judgements. Take the analytic judgement “Bachelors are unmarried”. Anyone who knows what the subject part of the judgement, that is, “bachelor” means knows that the judgement is true since the meaning of “unmarried” is contained in the meaning of “bachelor”. This is not the case with synthetic judgments. Nothing in the meaning of “bachelor” indicates that bachelors are bald, so “All bachelors are bald” is not analytic.

Kant suggested a second definition of analyticity. In *Prolegomena* he stipulates that “All analytic judgments rest entirely on the principle of contradiction... [T]he predicate of an affirmative analytic judgment is already thought beforehand in the concept of the subject, it can't be denied of the subject without contradiction (Kant 1997, §2).”

This could be formulated as follows:

(Analyt-Cont) A judgment is analytic if and only if its negation is self-contradictory

This definition of analyticity, as we shall see later, plays a crucial role in Frege and Wittgenstein's concept of logic (see Sections 1.5 and 2.1.1).

The exclusion of logical truths from the body of human knowledge and using a pejorative term “vacuous” to describe them was objected to by Russell and Frege. It

was on the ground of Kant's epistemological project of delimiting human knowledge that Frege and Russell suggested that the epistemological status of logical truths needed to be re-evaluated.

1.2 Criticisms of Kant's Concept of Logic

Frege attacked Kant's account of analyticity in terms of containment, which is the heart of Kant's account of logic. Take a statement "Triangles are three sided" (Kant 1998, A303/B359). This is an example of containment of the predicate in the subject. Once we know the meaning of "triangle", we will at the same time know that they are three-sided. However, there are sentences which do not fit Kant's definition of analyticity even though they are intuitively analytic. Think of a conditional "If A is married to B, then B is married to A" and a singular sentence "This animal is either rational or irrational". Though they are analytically true, they cannot be explained in terms of Kant's (Analyt-SP) definition of analyticity, since they are not grammatically speaking in subject-predicate form. Frege argues that not all sentences are in subject-predicate form. Consequently he holds that "the division of judgements into analytic and synthetic is not exhaustive" (Frege, 1884, §88).¹

Kant's reliance on Aristotelian grammatical analysis of propositions into subject and predicate parts in his definition of analyticity imports all of the defects of Aristotelian

¹ Here I do not discuss Frege's other objections to the notion of "containment". For a discussion of problems with this notion see (Juhl and Loomis 2010, 6-7).

logic onto his definition. The subject-predicate analysis had already been shown by many to be unable of displaying real logical forms of propositions. Sentences containing terms such as “all”, “no”, “some” are typical instances of where Aristotelian logic is incapable of unveiling logical forms. Take the sentences below:

(1) London is the capital of UK

(2) Everybody has a friend

Sentence (1) could be simply analysed into a subject “London” and a predicate “...is the capital of UK”. Sentence (2), however, could not be analysed in Aristotelian subject-predicate way. “Everybody” cannot be regarded as the subject of (2). The subject-predicate analysis of sentences is unable to show quantifications and especially multiple quantifications. Such troubles, among many others, motivated Frege to think of an alternative logical analysis of propositions. This was a goal of his *Begriffsschrift*. He wrote:

The very invention of this *Begriffsschrift*, it seems to me, has advanced logic ... [Begriffsschrift's] deviations from what is traditional find their justification in the fact that logic hitherto has always followed ordinary language and grammar too closely (Frege 1997a, vii/51).

and added:

A distinction between subject and predicate finds no place in my representation of a judgement (Frege 1997a, §3/53).

It seemed to Frege that to give an exclusive conception of analyticity, an alternative to the subject-predicate analysis of sentences was needed. This is the task to which Frege committed himself. In the next section I will discuss Frege's alternative analysis of sentences.

1.3 Function-argument Analysis

In *Begriffsschrift* Frege borrows two notions of “function” and “argument” from arithmetic and applies them as alternatives to Aristotelian logic's subject and predicate (Frege 1884, vii and 3§). Take a mathematical function “ $y=2x$ ”. Here x is our “variable” and “2” our only “constant”. Numbers that we substitute for x are “arguments” of the function. Y is the “function” of x in the sense that its value is determined by the argument we put for x . Frege applies this apparatus to analyse propositions. Consider again our previous statement (1). According to Frege, (1) is the result of slotting the argument “London” into the functional expression “...is the capital of UK”. The domain of arguments in (1) is the set of cities. What the function “...is the capital of UK” does in (1) is to map an argument, namely London into a truth-value, which is True in this case. The same function maps Paris into the truth-value False.

Frege's substitution of function-argument analysis is completed by his characterisation of quantification. He introduces a concept-script in his *Begriffsschrift*

to display the logical form of propositions in a more lucid way. Take the statement below:

(3) Socrates is a mammal.

Frege's function-argument analysis reveals that the above statement is the result of placing a proper name, 'Socrates', in the functional expression '...is mammal'. Let 'a' stand for Socrates and 'Mx' for being mammal. The logical form of (3) is this:

Ma

Now consider the sentences below:

(4) All human beings are mammals.

(5) Some human beings are mammals.

Given that the additional functional expression '...is human being' is symbolised by 'Hx', the real logical forms of these are, respectively:

$(\forall x) (Hx \rightarrow Mx)$

$(\exists x) (Hx \ \& \ Mx)$

Though functions and quantifiers are equally parts of Frege's concept-script, they play different roles. Consider again the functional expression "...is a mammal", i.e. Mx. It stands for, in Frege's terminology, a first-level function; it maps objects onto

truth-values.² Now think of the functional expression “there are some”, i.e. $(\exists x)()$. This is a second-level function. It takes first-level functions such as “...is a mammal” (Mx) and “...is a human being” (Hx) as its arguments and maps them to truth-values. The notations of negation, conjunction, disjunction and conditional also stand for functions. Unlike quantifiers (which are second-order functions) and first-order functions, these notations work on sentences and map truth-values into truth-values. Applications of the negation sign, for instance, take us from truth to falsehood.

The logical forms of the sentences above consist of constants and variables. The sign x represents the variable part of these logical forms. It varies over all individuals that could be predicated of being human or being mammal. The logical constants include logical connectives such as “&”, “ \vee ”, “ \rightarrow ” etc. and quantifiers like “ \exists ” and “ \forall ”. Kant’s failure to present an adequate definition of analyticity led Frege to claim that:

Languages are not made so as to match logic’s ruler. Even the logical element in language seems hidden behind pictures that are not always accurate. ...The main task of the logician is to free himself from language and to simplify it. Logic should be the judge of languages. We should either tidy up logic by throwing out subject and predicate or else restrict these concepts to the relation of an object’s falling under a concept (subsumption) (Frege, 1906, 303).

Grammar is not the best way to uncover “logical elements” of propositions and is not legitimate to make a logical categorisation of different types of judgement. This idea

² Russell (and as we shall see Wittgenstein too) holds that first-level functions map arguments to propositions as their values.

receives special attention by Russell, who subsequently makes a distinction between the logical forms of propositions and their grammatical forms (Russell 1903, §52). “[T]he great majority of those logicians,” Russell claimed, are “misled by grammar... They have regarded grammatical form as a surer guide in analysis than, in fact, it is” (Russell 1919, 168). Grammatical surface of propositions is deceiving and ambiguous. The logical form of a proposition, accordingly, can only be revealed through the application of a concept-script to individual sentences.

1.4 The Theory of Descriptions

Consider these two sentences:

(6) Napoleon was the emperor of the French.

(7) The present king of France is bald.

Intuitively we find both sentences meaningful. We easily understand them. Grammatically speaking, both sentences have a subject and a predicate. But the subject part of (7), that is “The present king of France”, does not stand for any individual. Therefore, while (6) can be claimed confidently to have a truth-value, it is not clear whether (7) has a truth-value. In his paper “On Denoting” Russell (1905) argued that we need to distinguish between the grammatical form of sentences and logical forms of the proposition that they express. The logical form of a sentence could be revealed via Fregean function-argument analysis of expressions.

Using Frege's function-argument analysis we have a function "...is bald" and an argument "The present king of France". Russell suggested that the statement whose subject part is a phrase of the form "the such and such" should be analysed differently from sentences which have proper names as their subject. He named the phrases in the form "the such and such" 'definite descriptions' and argued that they do not denote individuals, but are in effect quantifiers. He applied Frege's function-argument analysis to display the real form of the statement. Here is Russell's analysis:

1. There is at least one present king of France, and
2. There is at most one present king of France, and
3. Anything that is a present king of France is bald.

This conjunction can be translated into function-argument apparatus as follows:

$$(\exists x)((Kx \& Bx) \& (\forall y)(Ky \rightarrow x = y))$$

Where "Kx" symbolises the predicate being a present king of France and "Bx" stands for the predicate being bald. The truth-value of the original statement is thus false, because at least the first conjunct, i.e. "There is at least one present king of France", is false. This is Russell's Theory of Descriptions. Frege and Russell's argument that the logical form of sentences is not necessarily identical to its grammatical form, of the proposition that they express plays a significant role in the formation of their concept of logic and mathematics (see Section 1.5).

In addition to this characterisation of logic, Frege and Russell suggested what a logically perfect language should be like. Frege's introduction of his *Begriffsschrift* and Russell's *Principia Mathematica* are not only two conceptual notations in service of logical analysis of ordinary statements, but also two new languages whose grammatical surface is the same as their logical form. According to the views defended in these books, ordinary languages are logically defective for the scientific purpose of expressing the truth. A logically perfect language must be such that in it every single sign has a unique denotation, and as a result, its sentences have sharp and determinate meanings. Such a language exhibits no ambiguity or vagueness.

1.5 Frege and Russell on Analyticity

We saw that Kant's (Analyt-SP) definition of analyticity was attacked by Frege and Russell arguing that the definition is not exhaustive and cannot explain all intuitively analytic truths. Frege, however, endorses Kant's (Analyt-Cont) conception of analyticity (Frege 1884, §14/p.20). Committed to (Analyt-Cont), Frege revises Kant's account of analyticity, and proposes that analyticity is to be defined in terms of derivability from general logical laws and definitions (Frege, 1884, §3). This can be formulated as follows:

(Analyt-GL) A judgement is analytic if and only if it is derivable from general logical laws and definitions

Frege's account does not seem exhaustive because, although it states that what can be proved from laws of logic and definitions is analytic, it fails to cover laws of logic and definitions themselves. Are logical laws themselves analytically true or synthetically so? This raises a problem for Frege's definition of analyticity, since it appears incapable of determining whether logical statements are analytic or not.³

Frege and Russell's way out is to adopt a Euclidian axiomatic approach towards logic and to hold that any system of logic needs to rely on some numerable axioms and definitions. Axioms of logic are, they proposed, those logical truths "for which no proof is given in our system and for which no proof is needed" (Frege 1914, 311). Theorems of the system, on the contrary, need to be proved by other theorems which do not need proof. Thus, theorems are those logical truths which can be derived from axioms and definitions. Frege's (Analyt-GL) definition of analyticity succeeds in explaining the way in which a logical theorem is analytic. He establishes his system of logic on two connectives (negation and the conditional), two rules of inference (*modus ponens* and an implicit principle of substitution), and six axioms (Beaney 1996, 42).⁴

Frege and Russell's (Analyt-GL) definition of analyticity has two significant features. First, it motivates the idea that logic, contrary to Kant, is an ampliative branch of knowledge in the sense that it speaks about the world. According to Frege and Russell logical truths are the most general laws of the world:

³ For a discussion of this issue see (Beaney 1996, 127).

⁴ Russell speaks of ten axioms (See Russell 1903, 18§).

[L]ogic is concerned with the real world just as truly as zoology, though with its more abstract and general features (Russell 1919, 169).

They govern “not only the actual... but everything thinkable” (Frege 1884, §14/p.21). In this sense, analytic truths are as valuable parts of our knowledge about the world as synthetic truths.

Frege and Russell’s account of logic should be distinguished from the Empiricists’ conception. Unlike Kant, the Empiricists thought that logic is concerned with facts in the world and that logical statements are as synthetic as scientific empirical statements. Empiricists before Kant (Locke and Berkeley) and after him (Mill) proposed that logic and mathematics should be seen as reducible to psychology. According to them, laws of logic should be considered psychological laws of thinking.

Mill said:

Logic is not the theory of Thought as Thought, but of valid Thought; not of thinking, but of correct thinking. It is not a Science distinct from, and co-ordinate with Psychology. So far as it is a science at all, it is a part, or branch, of Psychology (Mill 1865, 359).

Logical truths, accordingly, should be seen as synthetic psychological truths about thinking. Accordingly they are just psychological laws. As a result, unlike Kant, the Empiricists thought that logical statements are not vacuous, since they speak about the world. Though Russell’s and Frege’s conception of logic is analogous to the Empiricist conception in the sense that they hold that logic is ampliative (i.e. it speaks

about the world), it is a long way from judging that logic is synthetic. Contra the Empiricists, the subjects of logical judgements are the *most abstract* and *general* truths about the world. Logical judgements, according to Frege and Russell, are about logical objects and facts, whereas the Empiricists assumed that they are general judgements about concrete objects and empirical facts.

The second feature of the (Analyt-GL) definition of analyticity is that general laws of logic do not need proofs. They are such that their negation is self-contradictory. We cannot deny them “without involving ourselves in any contradictions when we proceed to our deductions” (Frege 1884, §14/p.20)⁵. This second feature is itself an obvious application of Kant’s (Analyt-Cont) definition of analyticity which demands that a judgment is analytic if and only if its negation is self-contradictory. To sum up, Frege and Russell rejected Kant’s (Analyt-SP) definition of analyticity, but accepted his other definition (Analyt-Cont) in order to establish their own axiomatic conception of logic.

Take the sentence “Every object is identical with itself”. It says something informative and substantial about the world. It states a logical truth which is not derived from other logical truths. The statement, therefore, describes an axiom which governs every object in the world. Consequently, Russell and Frege are ontologically committed to logical objects and facts.

⁵ I have used Joan Weiner’s elucidation of the issue. See (Weiner 2010, 34-35).

With this new definition of analyticity and its capacity to allow that analytic truths contribute to our knowledge of the world, Frege and Russell are able to re-consider the epistemological status of judgments of arithmetic. Remember that Kant argued that mathematical judgements are synthetic a priori judgements. Furthermore he took it that the reason they add to our knowledge about the world (that is, they are ampliative) is that they are synthetic. Frege and Russell's new definition of analyticity provides the possibility of securing the ampliative feature of arithmetic without appealing to the notion of the "synthetic". This is the issue that I discuss in the next section.

1.6 Frege's Concept of Number

Frege and Russell thought that arithmetic could be explained in terms of logic, that is, arithmetical truths could be reduced to logical truths and concepts of arithmetic could be defined in terms of logical concepts. Therefore, we have an explanatory project of reducing arithmetic to logic. In order to ground arithmetic on logic, Frege tries to define numbers in purely logical terms (See Frege, 1884, §55-70). Frege uses logical notions such as "concept", "extension" and "falling under" (which are common in logic talk when we say that an object like the sun falls under a concept like *being a star*) to give a definition of arithmetic's fundamental concept, that is "number". Here I use the notions of "class" and "membership" to explain how Frege defines numbers. The change of terminology does not harm Frege's definition since an object which falls under a concept can be seen alternatively as a member of a class of objects.

Recall the logical axiom that every object is identical with itself. Frege bases his definition of numbers on this logical axiom. Take the class of all objects which are not identical with themselves. Obviously there is no object that is not self-identical. This class does not have any member and so is a null class. Let's symbolise it with \emptyset . Now we can define number 0:

Number 0 is the class of all classes with as many members as \emptyset

Other numbers are defined as successors of number 0. Given a class x , we get to its first successor by adding one more element to x , that is, x itself. So number 1 as the first successor of 0 is defined as a class with as many members as 0 and 0 itself. So we have the series of natural numbers:

Number 1 is the class of all classes that have as many members as $\{0\}$, i.e. $\{\emptyset\}$

Number 2 is the class of all classes that have as many members as $\{0, 1\}$, i.e. $\{\emptyset, \{\emptyset\}\}$

etc.

By using a logical axiom in defining arithmetic's fundamental concept, i.e. "number", Frege introduces a conception of arithmetic distinct from Kant's. According to Frege and Russell, arithmetic judgements are as analytic as logical statements. But, contra Kant, this does not preclude them from being ampliative parts of knowledge. They speak about the world as much as analytic truths of logic do.

The significance of Frege's definition of numbers can only be understood when it is compared to Mill's concept of numbers. According to Mill, numbers are aggregates of physical objects. Think of a mathematical statement " $5+7=12$ ". Numerals "5", "7" and "12" in this statement stand for collections of five, seven and twelve objects. The statement, consequently, expresses collecting five physical objects with seven more to get 12 physical objects. The statement " $5+7=12$ ", thus, is to be regarded as a generalisation from our various experiences. From this perspective, numbers are not abstract objects; they are just properties of aggregates of physical objects, similar to being a dog which is the property of some aggregates of objects (animals). This account reduces truths of arithmetic to empirical contingent truths (albeit general truths) about the world. This account does not explain how " $5+7=12$ " is a timeless eternal truth about the world.

Unlike Mill, Frege takes numbers to be second-order concepts, that is, classes of classes. He uses the second-order predicate "being identical with itself" to define numbers. This level of abstractness secured that his definition of numbers was based firmly on purely abstract, logical grounds.

Frege's definition of numbers is not unproblematic. Russell found a fatal paradox in the definition. Subsequently, Russell tried a way out of the paradox by introducing his famous Theory of Types. These will be the issues of the succeeding two sections.

1.7 Russell's Paradox

Russell realised that Frege's definition of numbers faced a paradox, which is called after Russell, "Russell's Paradox" (Russell 1903, Chapter 10 and Appendix B). The paradox is as follows. Take a set R . It is either a member of itself or not a member of itself. Sets like sets of horses are clearly not horses, but sets of sets are themselves sets, i.e. they are members of themselves. Now consider the set of those sets that are not members of themselves. Let's call it $@$. The question is whether $@$ is a member of itself or not. If $@$ is a member of itself, since it is the set of all sets that are not members of themselves, it follows that it is *not* a member of itself. Alternatively, if $@$ is *not* a member of itself, again since it is a set of all sets that are not member of itself, it follows that it is member of itself. So, $@$ is a member of itself if and only if it is not a member of itself. Frege's definition of numbers as classes of classes, thus, leads to a contradiction.

Russell suggests that if we are allowed to form sets of things without restrictions on set membership, then there is nothing to prevent us falling into contradiction by forming the set of sets that are not members of themselves. To prevent this result Russell introduces his Theory of Types. The theory appeared in different forms in different publications of Russell. In the next section I shall explain a simple version of it.

1.8 Russell's Theory of Types

The theory proposes a hierarchy of logical types. At the first level, there are objects or individuals. At the second level, there are classes or sets of objects. Above that, there are classes of classes of objects, and so on. Every level consists of items of a different logical type. Russell suggests that a class is not the right type to be a member of itself because classes are not to be considered objects; second order classes too are not classes of objects and so cannot be members of themselves, and so on. The ascription of the predicate "being a member of itself" to a class is, therefore, an illegitimate predication. The paradox of Frege's definition is the result of such an illegitimate prediction.

Russell's theory of types spreads its significance far beyond logic and arithmetic to semantics. Interestingly Russell's formulation of the theory in *Principles of Mathematics* has a strong semantic force. He articulates the theory as follows:

Every propositional function $\phi(x)$ —so it is contended—has, in addition to its range of truth, a range of significance, i.e. a range within which x must lie if $\phi(x)$ is to be a proposition at all, whether true or false. This is the first point in the theory of types; the second point is that ranges of significance form *types*, i.e. if x belongs to the range of significance of $\phi(x)$, then there is a class of objects, the *type* of x , all of which must also belong to the range of significance of $\phi(x)$, however ϕ may be varied; and the range of significance is always either a single type or a sum of several whole types (Russell 1903, Appendix B, 534).

Russell steps forward and argues that his Type Theory is a theory of meaning which determines how to avoid producing nonsense sentences. The theory sets the limits to the “range of significance” of propositional functions such as $\phi(x)$. The range of significance of $\phi(x)$ is all objects that *could* fall under the predicate $\phi(x)$. To sum up, the theory is expected to distinguish meaningful sentences from nonsense strings of words. The source of nonsense, accordingly, is attributing an incorrect property (which is referred to by the function-expression) to a type (which is referred to by the argument-expression).

Consider sentences below:

(8) Woody Allen is a director.

(9) The class of directors is a director.

(10) The class of directors is not a director.

(11) The class of classes that are not members of themselves is a member of itself.

Sentence (8) is a meaningful empirical sentence, whose truth-value can be determined by empirical inquiry into the world. Sentences (9) and (10) are meaningful but we do not need to investigate the world in order to determine their truth-values. Their truth-values are determined by their meanings. Sentence (9) is obviously false and (10), which is its negation, is true. These sentences do not cause any trouble for Frege (they do not lead to self-contradiction).

The origin of the paradox is the sentence (11). In his discussion of the paradox in *Principles of Mathematics*, Russell argues that “a class as one may be a term of itself as many. Thus the class of all classes is a class; the class of all the terms that are not men is not a man, and so on” (Russell, 1903, §102). This is an affirmation that the sentence below is meaningful:

(12) The class of men is not a man

And consequently its negation too is meaningful:

(13) The class of men is a man

Sentences (9) and (10) which are respectively similar to sentences (12) and (13) must in consequence be considered to be meaningful.

Russell’s paradox is created at the level of the second order concepts/classes, while (8) and (9) are about a first order class, i.e. “class of directors”. It is sentence (11) which raises the problem. It is about the *second-order* concept “class of classes that are not members of themselves”. According to Russell (11) ascribes an incorrect property to its subject. Elsewhere he had highlighted this semantic force of the theory of types:

[E]very propositional function has a certain *range of significance*, within which lies the argument for which the function has values. Within this range of arguments, the function is true or false; outside this range, it is nonsense (Russell, 1908, 72-3).

The range of significance of a function is the set of arguments for which the function has meaning. This theory of logical types prohibits us from forming sentences which ascribe a property of one logical type, say individuals, to a different logical type, say classes. Such ascriptions result in nonsense sentences.

1.9 Frege's and Russell's Theories of Language

Frege and Russell's invention of the formal system of predicate logic provided a sign-language in which thoughts and truths could be expressed in a more explicit and unambiguous way. Such a formal language consists of two types of signs: constants and variables. Logical truths are expressed in that system too. It was noted that Russell and Frege took them as ontologically speaking committed to "logical facts" and "logical objects". Take the logical statement " $((P \rightarrow Q) \cdot \neg Q) \rightarrow \neg P$ ". It is composed of variables "P" and "Q", and constants " \rightarrow ", " \cdot " and " \neg ". Logical constants, according to Frege and Russell, stand for logical objects. This entails that, on their view, logical connectives such as " \exists ", " \forall ", " \vee ", " \cdot ", " \neg ", " \rightarrow " and " $=$ " stand for further logical objects. This ontological commitment secures the idea that logical truths and consequently arithmetical statements have content (i.e. are ampliative). They speak about facts and objects in the world, though the abstract ones.

The list of logical objects in Frege and Russell is not limited to logical connectives. Truth-values of propositions and logical forms of expressions were included, respectively, by Frege and Russell in the list of logical objects. The idea of "logical

objects” has a strong link with Frege’s Context Principle. Moreover, Frege’s and Russell’s different lists of logical objects have different functions in their theories of language. Frege’s distinction between sense and reference entails that all expressions have references. Accordingly truth-values are references of sentences. Sentences refer to logical objects True or False in the world. Russell’s view that logical forms of expressions are logical objects too is a significant part of his 1913 Multiple-relation theory of judgement. In following two sections I will explore these issues.

1.9.1 The Context Principle and the Sense-Reference distinction

Frege finds the Empiricist’s approach to mathematics and logic as erroneous as Kant’s conception. He recognises a presumption in the Empiricist account according to which words have meaning outside of the context of the arithmetical sentence in which they occur. Compare the sentence “ $5+7=12$ ” with a nonsense string of signs “ £+/ ”. The Empiricists would argue that the reason that the former sentence is meaningful is that it is composed of meaningful numerical expressions (expressions which recall ideas or stand for sets of physical objects in the world), whereas the second one is just a blend of nonsense signs. Berkeley, as an empiricist, wrote in his *The Principle of Human Knowledge* that:

The number is entirely the creature of the mind, even though the other qualities be allowed to exist without, will be evident to whoever considers, that the same

thing bears a different denomination of number, as the mind views it with different respects. Thus, the same extension is one or three or thirty six, according to the mind considers it with reference to a yard, a foot, or a inch. Number is so visibly relative, and dependent on men's understanding, that it is strange to think how anyone should give it an absolute existence without the mind. We say one book, one page, one line; all these are equally units, though some contain several of the others. And in each instance it is plain, the unit relates to some particular combination of ideas arbitrarily put together by the mind (Berkeley 1995, §12).

Accordingly mathematical objects are no more than psychological entities subject to psychological inquiry.⁶ Consequently a mathematical statement " $5+7=12$ " is to be regarded as a composition of numeral expressions "5", "7" and "12" which stands for our particular ideas of five, seven and twelve objects. This view was rejected by Frege. In his preface to *The Foundations of Arithmetic*, he listed three guiding principles of his thought:

In the enquiry that follows, I have kept to three fundamental principles:

Always to separate sharply the psychological from the logical, the subjective from the objective;

⁶ For the purpose of this chapter I uncritically borrow Frege's reading of Berkeley in regard to psychologism. Berkeley's philosophy of mathematics, however, is indeed a formalist account. See (Jesseph 1993).

Never to ask for the meaning of a word in isolation, but only in the context of a proposition;

Never to lose sight of the distinction between concept and object (Frege 1884, xxii).

Of these three principles, the first one represents Frege's hostility against the empiricists' account of arithmetic and numbers. He believed that logic and arithmetic should be separated sharply from psychology. His argument for this idea comes from his second principle. According to this principle signs do not have meaning in isolation from the context in which they are used. A sign "dog" does not stand for anything in isolation - it is meaningful only when used as a functioning part of a meaningful sentence, say, "The dog always barks at strangers". This principle, which is known as the Context Principle, motivates the idea of the semantic priority of sentences over words. It is sentences and their context which determine if a word is meaningful, not the other way around.

This top-down theory of meaning was augmented in his later works (Frege 1997d) by the Sense-Reference distinction. The distinction, however, is fully committed to the sharp distinction between psychology and logic/arithmetic (expressed in his first guiding principle). Take the following sentence:

(14) Odysseus was set ashore at Ithaca while sound asleep

This sentence is, intuitively speaking, meaningful. According to the psychologist conception of meaning its meaning comprises the ideas it calls to our minds. The

meaning of “Odysseus” is the idea behind it, even though it does not stand for anything in the external world. Frege argues that the ideas that the above sentence would call to our minds do not have anything to do with its logical characteristics. He thinks that we need to distinguish between psychological features of linguistic expressions and their logical features.

Frege’s conception of meaning is based on a presumption about the character of linguistic expressions. He thinks of linguistic expressions as uniformly belonging to a logically unique category:

(UCLE) All linguistic expressions are, logically speaking, names

I call this approach to language the “Unitarian Characterisation of Linguistic Expressions”. It does not make any distinction between sentences and their constituents. Though they seem different, logically speaking they belong to the same category; they are all names. This conception of language has significant logical consequences. Names have three features: (a) They represent or fail to represent individuals or objects in the world. (b) They also call some ideas to our minds. (c) They have a property which is independent of our minds and is commonly understood by all language-users. These three features play roles in Frege’s conception of meaning.

The object to which a name might refer is its “reference” (*Bedeutung*) (feature a). A proper name “London” has a reference in the world, whereas a fictional name “Odysseus” lacks it. Both names, however, call an idea to our minds (feature b). But

these ideas are not logical properties of them. They change from one speaker to another. The common logical feature of a name is its “sense” (*Sinn*) (feature c). It is the same story for sentences. Take the sentence below:

(15) Napoleon was defeated in the battle of Waterloo.

This sentence might call different ideas to different minds, whereas it communicates the same thought to the minds of all language-users. It has the same sense, no matter by who it is grasped by. Furthermore, the sentence has a reference. The reference of a sentence is its truth-value (True or False).

A significant presumption behind the relation between sense and reference is the idea below:

(S-R) The sense of a linguistic expression determines its reference

This explains the determination relation between sense and reference. Anyone who knows the sense of the name “Napoleon” knows to whom in the world it refers. Likewise, anyone who knows the sense of “Napoleon was defeated in the battle of Waterloo,” knows that it has a truth-value. Obviously there is a difference between knowing the sense of a name and the sense of a sentence. Knowing the sense of “Napoleon” is sufficient to know its reference, but knowing the sense of “Napoleon was defeated in the battle of Waterloo,” is not sufficient to know if its reference is True or False. We need to compare the sentence to reality to know its specific reference.

Now let's consider the application of Frege's sense-reference distinction to logical sentences. Think of a logical truth, such as " $((P \rightarrow Q) \cdot \neg Q) \rightarrow \neg P$ ". Its constituents have senses and references. The sense of the logical constant " \neg " is *negation* and its reference is a monadic function. The sense of " \rightarrow " is the *conditional* and its reference is a dyadic function. The same applies to quantifiers too. The sense of " \forall ", for instance, is the *universal quantifier* and it refers to a second-level function. The whole sentence too has a sense and reference. Its sense is that for a conditional to be false it is enough that its consequent is false. The reference of the sentence, however, is its truth-value, True. Frege included truth-values of sentences in his list of logical objects. Therefore, not only do logical connectives refer to logical objects, but also the whole sentence refers to a logical object.

1.9.2 Russell's theory of judgement

Russell added a different dimension to the discussion of logical objects. We saw that Frege presumed that truth-values as well as logical connectives are logical objects. Russell proposed a different list of logical objects: logical connectives and logical forms of sentences. This version of logical objects is developed in Russell's 1913 unpublished theory of knowledge. Though the manuscript was published posthumously, Wittgenstein was aware of it (due to his discussions with Russell) and his saying-showing distinction was partly his response to Russell's theory of knowledge. For this reason here I discuss this theory.

Take the following sentence:

(16) Brutus killed Julius Caesar

This sentence contains two proper names standing for two individuals and a verb standing for a relation. However, the sentence is not just a random combination of its constituents. Russell claims that the whole sentence refers to a fact composed of referents of constituents of the sentence, so that we need to be acquainted with the referents of the constituents of the sentence in order to understand the sentence. Here I am not going to discuss the nature of acquaintance other than to say that it involves immediate and direct knowledge of the object at issue. To know the meaning of an expression, say, "Brutus" we need to have acquaintance with the individual that it stands for. Obviously sentence (16) is different from the following combination of words whose referents are the same objects of our acquaintance as in (16):

(17) Killed Julius Caesar Brutus

Unlike sentence (16), (17) is total nonsense. Russell suggests that for a sentence to be meaningful its constituents need to be in a logically legitimate combination, i.e. the sentence has to have an appropriate logical form. The logical form of a proposition is not another constituent of that sentence, since otherwise the sentence would need an extra logical form to ensure that the logical form is in logically legitimate combination with other constituents. This would lead to an "endless regress" (Russell 1913, 98).

A logical form, Russell thinks, is a logical object that can be accessed through our logical intuition (Russell 1913, 99 and 101) and experiences:

There certainly is such a thing as 'logical experience', by which I mean that kind of immediate knowledge, other than judgment, which is what enables us to understand logical terms. . . [such as] for instance as particulars, universals, relations, dual complexes, predicates. Such words are no doubt, somewhat difficult, and are only understood by people who have reached a certain level of mental development. Still, they are understood, and this shows that those who understand them possess something which seems fitly described as 'acquaintance with logical objects' (Russell 1913, 97).

For a person S to understand sentence (16) not only does he need to have acquaintance with Brutus, Julius Caesar and killing, but also he is required to have logical acquaintance with the logical form $x \text{ kills } y$. This fourth element is not a constituent of the sentence, but is a logical element that guarantees the meaningfulness of (16). To conclude, a meaningful sentence demands that its constituents are meaningful and are in logically legitimate form (combination). This logical form, according to Russell, is a logical object with which we have logical acquaintance. This is Russell's multiple relation theory of judgement since it requires that we, as subjects of judgment, have different relationships to the judgement.

Chapter 2

Logic, Metaphysics and Language in the *Tractatus*

2.0 Introduction

This chapter is designed with a limited goal. It is not intended to provide an exhaustive account of the *Tractatus* philosophical ideas. Rather it is a preliminary chapter which paves the way to explaining the book's paradox in the succeeding chapter. In light of this, I will only discuss the points that contribute most centrally to explanation of the paradox.

The fundamental idea of the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein says, is its claim about the nature of logic. Wittgenstein took a Kantian approach to logic and held that sentences of logic are tautologies, that is, they do not add to our knowledge of the world (logic is not ampliative). Wittgenstein's philosophy of logic, however, provides philosophical motivations for the book's theory of language and metaphysics. For this reason, I will divide the chapter into three main parts. I start with an outline of Wittgenstein's philosophy of logic (Section 2.1). Then I will discuss the book's metaphysics (Section 2.2) and finally I illustrate Wittgenstein's theory of language (Section 2.3).

As will be explained in the first part (Section 2.1), Wittgenstein's account of logic is in sharp contrast to Frege and Russell's ontological commitment to logical objects and

logical facts. Their logical objects, as was discussed in the previous chapter, included truth-values, logical constants and logical forms. Wittgenstein argued against all of them. In this chapter, however, I confine myself to explaining his argument that truth-values are not logical objects (Section 2.1.2). In the next chapter I will discuss his disagreement with Russell over the idea that logical forms are logical objects. The conflict, as will be explained, is a source of the *Tractatus* saying-showing distinction.

In the second part I will try to give a brief explanation of the book's metaphysical ideas (Section 2.2). Though the book starts with a discussion of the metaphysical grounds of Wittgenstein's theory of language, as will be explained, the ontology of the book is motivated by a transcendental argument from possibility of language. In discussing the ontology of the *Tractatus* I will deliberately abstain from speculation over the nature of objects.⁷ In the next section, however, I will touch the issue through explaining what Tractarian "names" cannot be.⁸ The goal of the chapter is to highlight the book's distinction between facts and objects. The distinction, as will be seen in the third part of the book, is reproduced in terms of the distinction between sentences and names.

The third part is a long discussion of Wittgenstein's theory of meaning. I will start with his so-called general "theory of depiction" (Section 2.3.1). This corresponds to the part of the book which follows its discussion of metaphysics. Wittgenstein considers

⁷ For instance Hintikka and Hintikka (1986) consider the *Tractatus* objects to be Russellian sense-data, whereas Malcolm (1986) treated them as physical objects.

⁸ I will argue that they cannot be representatives of sense-data or individuals (as physical things) in the world.

depictions as facts and takes them to exhibit various features (Sections 2.3.1(a)-(d)). E.g. he contends that depictions are representations of possible states of affairs, that they have logical forms which secure their unity, that they must be bivalent and bipolar, and finally that they cannot depict their logical forms. These are the features that I will use in discussing his theory of language. As part of the discussion of the nature of depiction, Wittgenstein provides a transcendental argument for the necessity of (simple) objects (Section 2.3.2). I confine myself to a standard account of the argument and stay away from the exegetical debates over it.

Language, as a verbal realisation of the general theory of depiction, will be the issue of subsequent sections (Sections 2.3.3-2.3.5). To explain Wittgenstein's theory of language I will make use of Frege's ideas as a background to which early Wittgenstein's thoughts were positive or negative. I will contrast Wittgenstein's characterisation of linguistic expressions with Frege's Unitarian characterisation. As it will be explained, contra Frege, Wittgenstein endorsed a logical distinction between sentences and names (Section 2.3.4). He adopted Frege's sense-reference distinction, but in consequence to his bipartite characterisation of linguistic expressions, he used it in his own way. Also he adopted Frege's context principle, but developed it into an implicit version of Inferential Role Semantics. I discuss this latter issue in the final part of the chapter (Section 2.3.5).

2.1 Logic

2.1.1 Wittgenstein's conception of logic

Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy and logic has similarities and dissimilarities with Russell's and Frege's conception. Like them, Wittgenstein believed that the grammatical form of language is not trustworthy:

"Distrust of grammar is the first requisite for philosophizing." (NB, p.93)

For philosophical purposes we need to scrutinise sentences' logical forms. Moreover, similarly to Frege and Russell, Wittgenstein distinguishes logic and philosophy from psychology. "Psychology," he argued "is no more closely related to philosophy than any other natural science" (4.1121). No logico-philosophical investigation into the real form of propositions could have anything in common with psychological investigations into our thinking (4.1121).⁹ He adopts Frege's innovation of the function-argument analysis of language. He is convinced by Russell's Theory of Descriptions and its motivating idea that the grammatical form of a sentence can be distinct from its real logical form (4.0031). This, he wrote is "*quite undoubtedly right*" (NB, p.128).¹⁰

Nonetheless, Wittgenstein took a radically opposite view to Russell and Frege on the subject of analyticity. Recall Kant's two definitions of analyticity:

⁹ Wittgenstein's distinction of philosophy and logic from psychology is part of his distinction between logic and natural sciences (See NB, 119).

¹⁰ Wittgenstein's endorsement of the theory of Descriptions is more obvious in his *Notebooks*.

(Analyt-SP) A judgement is analytic if and only if its predicate is (covertly) contained in its subject

(Analyt-Cont) A judgment is analytic if and only if its negation is self-contradictory

According to Kant, logical judgements are vacuous and do not convey information about the world. We saw that Frege and Russell replaced the first definition with their account:

(Analyt-GL) A judgement is analytic if and only if it is derivable from general logical laws and definitions (see Frege, 1884, §14, p.20)

They argue that logic has an ampliative value in the sense that it adds to our knowledge about the world. Logical statements, according to them, are about logical facts and logical objects. So we have an ontological commitment to logical objects. Wittgenstein emphasises that the fundamental idea of his book is an attack on this ontological commitment:

There are no 'logical objects' (4.441).¹¹

This is accompanied by an utterance with a semantic tone:

My fundamental idea is that the 'logical constants' are not representatives; that there can be no representatives of the *logic* of facts (4.0312)¹²

¹¹ Also see 5.4

Unlike Frege's and Russell's axiomatic account of logic which presumes logical truths/axioms in the world (as the most general features of the world, as Russell considers them), Wittgenstein reasons that there are no logical facts and logical objects. This is a radical rejection of their (Analyt-GL) definition of analyticity. His remark 4.0312 signals a return to the Kantian tradition of seeing logical judgements as vacuous statements. Like Kant, Wittgenstein argues that logical truths are just tautologies:

The propositions of logic are tautologies (6.1).

Therefore the propositions of logic say nothing. (They are the analytic propositions.) (6.11).

Sentences of logic, Wittgenstein believes, do not speak about the world and as a result cannot be taken as contributing to our knowledge. Wittgenstein's Kantian account of logic, however, is in a way perfectly un-Kantian. Unlike Kant who introduced (Analyt-SP) notion of analyticity, Wittgenstein merely defends the (Analyt-Cont) account of analyticity. He holds that the "opposite pole" (NB, 45) of a tautology, i.e. its negation, is a contradiction (See 4.46-4.5). Frege and Russell's appeal to "generality" in the (Analyt-GL) definition of analyticity is replaced in the *Tractatus* by the notion of "necessity".¹³ Tautologies are sentences whose truth-value is necessarily true (they are not the most general truths about the world). Their truth-

¹² Wittgenstein uses "logical constant" to refer to logical objects and logical signs interchangeably (See remark 5.4).

¹³ For a discussion of the significance of the notion of "necessity" in contrast to "generality" in the *Tractatus* see (Floyd, 2005).

value is independent of how the world is (5.52) and nothing in the world is capable of affirming or refuting them (6.1222). It is in this sense that Wittgenstein concludes that:

Logic must look after itself (5.473).

Nothing in the world, even the most abstract fact, could support the truth of a tautology.

The *Tractatus*' fundamental idea has apparently three distinct targets: (1) Frege's belief that truth-values are logical objects, (2) Frege's and Russell's common belief that logical connectives and quantifiers are representatives of logical objects, and (3) Russell's idea that pure (i.e. logical) forms stand for objects in the world.¹⁴ Wittgenstein argues that neither logical connectives nor logical forms or sentences stand for objects in the world. Here I do not have space to go through all of his arguments against logical objects. So, I will confine myself to a discussion of his argument against taking truth-values as logical objects.

2.1.2 An Argument against logical objects

Wittgenstein's criticism of Frege over the idea that truth-values are logical objects True and False is spelled out in following remark:

¹⁴ Baker & Hacker (2000, 101-102) and Glock (1996, 209) do not distinguish between targets (1) and (2) and write of just two targets.

(Thus Frege was quite right to use them as a starting point when he explained the signs of his conceptual notation. But the explanation of the concept of truth that Frege gives is mistaken: if 'the true' and 'the false' were really objects, and were the arguments in $\neg p$ etc., then Frege's method of determining the sense of ' $\neg p$ ' would leave it absolutely undetermined.) (4.431).

Here Wittgenstein argues that truth-values cannot be objects because understanding the sense of the negation of a sentence is not independent of understanding the sense of the sentence itself. Think of two names "Plato" and "Socrates". To know who "Plato" refers to, we do not need to know who "Socrates" refers to. There is nothing in the reference of "Plato" which determines the reference of "Socrates".

Now assume that "P" stands for a meaningful sentence. To know what " $\neg P$ " means, we need to know what "P" means first. Suppose that the truth-value of "P" is true. Frege would say that "P" refers to the object True and " $\neg P$ " to the object False (remember that Frege claimed that, like names, sentences have references). Wittgenstein's argument is that, in the same way as there is no relation between references of "Plato" and "Socrates", there is no relation between the objects True and False. If this is right, then from the fact that "P" is true we cannot infer that " $\neg P$ " is false.

This indicates that, if the reference of a sentence were an object, then there would be no way to determine what " $\neg P$ " meant. "P" and " $\neg P$ ", as names, would "have no representational structure; they do not say anything. Not agreeing or disagreeing with

reality, they do not oppose, do not contradict each other (Ricketts, 2002, 243).”¹⁵ This, however, conflicts with our understanding of the notion of “negation”. This shows that truth-values cannot be logical objects. It also entails that sentences do not belong to the same logical category as names. Only names refer. The distinction between sentences and names will be discussed in more detail in due course (Section 2.3.4) but before that we need to see how and in what way Wittgenstein’s account of logic is fundamental to the book’s metaphysics and philosophy of language. This is the task of the next section.

2.1.3 The significance of the *Tractatus*’ philosophy of logic

Logic in the *Tractatus* has connections with three domains: thought, language and metaphysics. In what follows I will try to show how and in what way Wittgenstein’s philosophy of logic relates to each of above-mentioned domains.

With a rather Kantian tone Wittgenstein determines the aim of the book as “to draw a limit to thought” (TLP, p.3). This task can only be done, according to him, by thinking on both sides of the limits of thought, that is, by thinking what is thinkable and also what is unthinkable. He sees this as impossible, since only what is thinkable is possible (3.02) and illogical thought can never be thought at all (3.03). It turns out that to draw limits of thought we need to draw limits of logic. Wittgenstein says that

¹⁵ For elaborate discussions of the remark 4.431 see (McGinn 2006, 44-50) and (Ricketts 2002).

setting limits of thought can only be done through setting limits to the expression of thoughts, that is, to language (TLP, p.3). Therefore it is argued that it is only through a critique of language that we can undertake the philosophical task of delimiting thought (cf. 4.0031).

To determine the limits of logic we need to examine logical sentences, that is, tautologies. Therefore, in order to understand the nature of logic and its limits, we need to have a good deal of understanding of the nature of its medium, that is, language. Wittgenstein's claim that logical constants are not representatives crystallises the relation between the *Tractatus* philosophy of logic and semantics. His arguments for this fundamental idea, which are indispensable to his account of logic, are based on criticising the idea that logic speaks about the world. The main theme in these arguments, as will be explained in section 2.3.4, is to prove that sentences differ from names. This is obviously a doctrine about the nature of language. It then seems like the critique of logic and thought can be accomplished only through a philosophical critique of language (See 6.124). As a result, Wittgenstein declares that "My *whole* task consists in explaining the nature of the proposition (NB, 39)".

Logic has a relation to metaphysics as well. This relation, however, is secured through language. Logical sentences, i.e. tautologies, explain the relation between logic and language, on the one hand, and the relation between logic and the world, on the other. In a note in *Notebooks* dated 1916 Wittgenstein had made it clear that:

My work has extended from the foundations of logic to the nature of the world (NB, 79).

This relation is emphasised in the *Tractatus* too:

Logic pervades the world: the limits of the world are also its limits (5.61).

Following Wittgenstein's own order of discussing metaphysics before the theory of language, I will first explore his metaphysics (Section 2.2.). Then, in the third part (Section 2.3), his theory of language will be investigated.

2.2 Metaphysics

The *Tractatus* starts with a series of rather dogmatic remarks about the nature of the world and its constituents. These remarks are hardly supported by arguments. It looks as if the author here assumes a lot of common background knowledge from his readers. This indeed is the case. The opening sentences of the preface read:

Perhaps this book will be understood only by someone who has himself already had the thoughts that are expressed in it—or at least similar thoughts.—So it is not a textbook (TLP, p.3).

This was criticised by Frege who argued that with this expectation “the book becomes an artistic rather than a scientific achievement; that which is said therein steps back behind how it is said. I had supposed in my remarks that you wanted to communicate a new content. And then the greatest distinctness would indeed be the greatest beauty” (Frege 2011, 57). In the last chapter of this dissertation I will come back to this objection.

The book begins with a compressed account of what the world consists of:

The world is all that is the case (1).

The world is the totality of facts, not of things (1.1).

The world divides into facts (1.2).

These remarks can't be really useful until we are told what the facts are and in what respects they differ from things. Wittgenstein continues:

What is the case—a fact—is the existence of states of affairs (2).

A state of affairs (a state of things) is a combination of objects (things) (2.01).

Facts, we are told here, are combinations of things or objects. They are existing configurations of things. Wittgenstein's description of what he means by 'fact' introduces another new notion: the state of affairs (*Sachverhalt*). States of affairs, as 2.01 suggests, are combinations of objects. Facts are *existing* states of affairs, that is, those combinations of objects that obtain. It follows that the world is the totality of existing configurations of objects:

The totality of existing states of affairs is the world (2.04).

In order to grasp what the world is, we need to understand what objects are. Moreover, we need to know in what respects objects differ from facts. Below I deal with these concerns.

A clarificatory comment on the notion of “object” is given in the remark:

Objects are simple (2.02).

Objects are thus irreducible to anything simpler. The simplicity of objects could be read in two ways: (1) one might think of an object as a “simple” if it cannot be empirically analysed. Take a chemical compound H_2O . According to this criterion, the chemical elements oxygen and hydrogen, for instance, are simple, whereas H_2O is a complex of them. Oxygen and hydrogen cannot be decomposed into simpler substances, whereas H_2O is analysable into the elements hydrogen and oxygen. (2) Alternatively one could understand simplicity in logical terms. Accordingly, an object is simple if it does not have an internal structure. Take the chemical fact that a H_2O molecule is composed of one oxygen atom and two hydrogen atoms. This fact cannot be regarded as an example of a simple object because it is composed of some simple elements that are placed in a relation to each other. The above fact has, thus, an internal structure.

Wittgenstein’s concept of simplicity is the logical notion of simplicity. Philosophy, and logic, does not have anything to do with empirical investigation (4.111). This theme, as will be explained in due course, also plays an important role in answering questions about the identity of simple objects. Only states of affairs and facts have a structure. Objects occur in those structures; they lack internal complexity (cf. remarks 2.03-2.034). This notion of simplicity distinguishes objects from facts. Facts have complexity, whereas objects are simple.

Facts are not just agglomerations of simple or complex things. Facts, which are existing states of affairs, and states of affairs, in general, are ultimately determinate configurations of simple objects:

In a state of affairs objects fit into one another like the links of a chain (2.03).

In a state of affairs objects stand in a determinate relation to one another (2.031).

The determinate way in which objects are connected in a state of affairs is the structure of the state of affairs (2.032).

Existing states of affairs are, accordingly, logically structured. In this respect, facts are similar to complexes. This feature of facts has misled many into taking facts to be complexes. Russell was one of them. We read in *Principia Mathematica* that:

The universe consists of objects having various qualities and standing in various relations. Some of the objects which occur in the universe are complex. When an object is complex, it consists of interrelated parts. Let us consider a complex object composed of two parts a and b standing to each other in the relation R . The complex object "a-in-the-relation- R -to- b " may be capable of being *perceived*; when perceived, it is perceived as one object...when we judge " a has the relation R to b " our judgment is said to be *true* when there is a complex " a-in-the-relation- R -to- b ," and is said to be *false* when this is not the case (Russell 1910-13, 43).

This passage suggests that the world is composed of objects. Objects are, however, either complexes or parts of complexes. These two sorts of objects do not seem to exhibit any ontological difference. They are, equally, constituents of the world. The only difference between them is in the epistemological service they provide for our knowledge. Complexes are what our judgements correspond or fail to correspond to. They are the truth-makers, so to speak, of our judgements. This is obviously not the case with components of complexes. Russell's complexes are what are commonly called "facts".

The *Tractatus* opening remarks should be read in contrast to this Russellian background. Wittgenstein suggests that the world ought to be seen as composed of facts, and facts must be distinguished from complexes. Facts are not simple or complex things.¹⁶ They are logically different from objects. Facts, therefore, appear to have two major features: (a) They have a (logical) structure and (b) they are not things (neither simple nor complex), or to use the *Tractatus* terminology, they are not objects. Like facts, the world too is not an agglomeration of contents:

"There cannot be an orderly or a disorderly world, so that one could say that our world is orderly. In every possible world there is an order even if it is a complicated one, just as in space too there are not orderly and disorderly distributions of points, but every distribution of points is orderly." (NB, 83)

¹⁶ I use the term "thing" to refer to (simple) objects and complexes in general. The term "object" is reserved for Tractarian (simple) objects.

The world has a logical structure (See NB, 14). In a conversation sometime in 1930-1931 Wittgenstein made a comment on remark 1.1 that the world is not a catalogue of objects or even facts; it is rather a structured net of facts:

“The world does not consist of a catalogue of things and facts about them (like the catalogue of a show) ...What the world is, is given by description and not by a list of objects.”(Wittgenstein 1980, 119)

To explain the logical order of the world and how it consists of facts, Wittgenstein introduces the notion of “logical space”:

“The facts in logical space are the world.” (1.13)

In a different context Wittgenstein states:

“Each thing modifies the whole logical world, the whole of logical space, so to speak.” (NB, 83)

That the world is the whole of logical space simply indicates that the world is logically structured. Though the world consists of certain existing states of affairs, it could have involved different states of affairs. In other words, it is contingent that the world consists of certain facts rather than others. Unlike physical space which merely contains facts, i.e. existing states of affairs, logical space is the space of all existing and non-existing states of affairs. It contains all possibilities. Logic is the province of all possibilities (2.012-2.0121).

Though different possible worlds include different facts from the actual world, they all share the same form (2.022). Wittgenstein said:

“It is obvious that an imagined world, however different it may be from the real one, must have *something*—a form—in common with it.”

That the actual world has logical space says that the world is not a mere catalogue of facts. It guarantees that the world has a logical structure. That the actual world has a common form with all possible worlds is a feature which says the actual world is a world with logical with logical space. Logical space was discussed above. I discuss the logical form below.

Imagine a world which contains only two things: a monkey and a coconut tree. The monkey could have different spatial relations relative to the tree. All those possible relations form the logical space in which different facts could obtain and different worlds could exist. All actualisations of the possible worlds have something in common. They are worlds in which we have a monkey and a coconut tree and nothing more. So a world with an extra thing, say, a chair will be excluded from the list of possible worlds of our two-thing actual world. Thus, what ensures that possible worlds and the actual one have a common form is that they are composed of the same things (2.023).

The things that are common between worlds cannot be complexes since complexes are capable of being decomposed into their constituents, that is, they can be demolished in some possible worlds. Complexes are not unchangeable. Because of

this, what is common between all worlds is the (simple) objects. They do not change, nor are they decomposable. (Simple) objects endure and subsist through all changes. In this way, Wittgenstein held that, they form the “substance” of the world:

“Substance is what subsists independently of what is the case.” (2.024)

“There must be objects, if the world is to have an unalterable form.” (2.026)

“Objects, the unalterable, and the subsistent are one and the same.” (2.027)

“Objects are what is unalterable and subsistent; their configuration is what is changing and unstable.” (2.0271)

The necessity of (simple) objects seems to be motivated by the idea of possible worlds. Accordingly the reason that there must be (simple) objects is that the (actual) world could have been in a different way. The argument which is presented in remarks 2.022 and 2.026 is as follows:

P₁ If the world has an unalterable form, then there must be (simple) objects.

P₂ The world has an unalterable form.

C There must be simple objects. (Modus Ponens)

Wittgenstein’s reason for thinking that the world has an unalterable form is that the world could have consisted of different facts (i.e. it could have been a different possible world). This, in turn, is related to counterfactual thinking. In other words, premise P₂ is motivated by the possibility of counterfactual thinking. Wittgenstein

spoke of an “imagined world” (2.022) and the possibility of imagining counterfactuals (that is, imagining an empty logical space) (2.013) and he identified thinking with “imagining” (NB, 24). It thus looks like Wittgenstein’s argument for the necessity of simple objects runs from the possibility of counterfactual thinking/imagination to the necessity of simple objects.

However, Wittgenstein pushes his argument a step further by emphasising that “what cannot be imagined cannot even be talked about” (NB, 84). The latest version of this can be seen in the *Tractatus*:

We cannot think what we cannot think; so what we cannot think we cannot say either (5.61).

Recall that Wittgenstein presented his programme in the preface of the book as a critique of thought through the critique of language. His argument for simple objects too is originally an argument from the possibility of describing situations which could possibly be different (in the case that our description was false). Transcendental arguments are attempts to present necessary conditions for the possibility of something. Wittgenstein’s argument for the necessity of simple objects is a transcendental argument from the possibility of meaningful description of the world, i.e. the possibility of language. I shall discuss this argument in Section 2.3.2.

We saw that simple objects are constituents of facts and simultaneously parts of the substance. But what makes them be parts of all possible existing affairs (i.e. the substance) and simultaneously parts of some existing states of affairs (i.e. of the

facts)? The answer is that (simple) objects have two distinct properties: Formal (or internal) properties and Material (or external) properties. Internal properties are those without which an object would not be what it is:

A property is internal if it is unthinkable that its object should not possess it.

(This shade of blue and that one stand, eo ipso, in the internal relation of lighter to darker. It is unthinkable that *these* two objects should not stand in this relation.) (4.123).

Formal properties are essential to an object. External properties, in contrast, are those that are not essential to it. Before discussing formal properties one should note that in the *Tractatus*, the notion “formal” stands in sharp contrast with “genuine” or “proper”. In the light of this, a formal property must be understood as a property which strictly speaking is not a property at all. The same thing is seen in phrases such as “formal concept” which are contrasted with “concepts proper” (See remark 4.126). It is worthwhile to use an example to elucidate the notion of formal property.

Consider H₂O again. The property of *being H₂O*, for instance, is essential for anything to be H₂O. Obviously ascribing this property to H₂O is not an informative ascription because it doesn't give any information about H₂O. *Being H₂O* is a formal (i.e. not genuine) property of H₂O. The property *being used as a green fuel for automobiles*, however, is an accidental (external) property for H₂O, since H₂O could remain H₂O even if it failed to be a green fuel. Thus, *being used as a green fuel for automobiles* is an external property of H₂O. Formal properties are logical properties

(since they are essential to the object), whereas material properties are, in a sense, empirical properties.

Formal/internal properties of objects are their logical forms. The logical form of a (simple) object consists in its being a part of the substance. Taking part in forming the unalterable form, that is, the substance of the world is the essential property of an object. Clearly, this is a formal property. The external property of an object, however, is its actual occurrence in such and such an existing states of affairs.

There is a problem with Wittgenstein's presentation of formal properties. It was mentioned that formal properties are internal and essential to objects (see 4.123). That is to say, objects could not fail to have them. This implies that knowing the internal properties of an object does not give us any information about what that given object is. Imagine that we have two (simple) objects *a* and *b*. Knowing that *a* is an object doesn't give us any clue about what *a* is, since *b* has the same internal/ formal/ logical property of being an object. Therefore, in order to know an object, we need more information than the information that it is an object.¹⁷ This seems to conflict with Wittgenstein's remark below:

If I am to know an object, though I need not know its external properties, I must know all its internal properties (2.01231).

¹⁷ It is similar with knowing a tautology. Wittgenstein wrote: "('A knows that *p* is the case', has no sense if *p* is a tautology.) (5.1362)."

This remark says that knowing the external properties of an object is not necessary for knowing the object. It also adds that it is sufficient to know the object's internal properties. Now the question is how knowing the internal properties of an object could be sufficient to know that object. I suggest that we need to distinguish two ways of talking about "formal properties" of objects. The logical form of all objects is their internal property of *being an object*. But the logical form of a certain object is also its possibilities for combination with other objects. Therefore, the logical form of an object, as far as it is an object, is its *being an object*. The logical form of that given object, however, consists in its combinatorial possibilities with other objects (see 2.0123). For this latter use of the term "logical form", I introduce a distinct name "Combinatorial property/form". Each object has a series of possibilities of combination with other objects. The combinatorial form of each object is unique. No two objects have the same combinatorial properties. An example could help us illuminate the relation between these three properties.

Take the table below as a description of an imaginary world. This world consists of four objects a, b, c and d, which are combined in two facts aRc and bRd.

	a	b
c	aRc	-
d	-	bRd

An object, say, *a* can be combined with *c* or *d*. Let's call this *a*'s combinatorial possibilities and label it $C_a(c \text{ or } d)$. The combinatorial possibilities of *a* are different from those of all other objects. The actual combination of *a*, however, is with *c*. This

actual combination is *a*'s material form/property. Let's indicate it by $M_a(c)$. Finally, the object *a* is an object (not a fact). This is the object's formal/essential form. These features fit three modal facts about (simple) objects: the formal property of an object is what the property *must* have in order to be an object. Its material property is the property that it actually has. Finally, its combinatorial property is what it *can/could* be. This categorisation, as we shall see later (see Section 2.3.4), is a corollary of the same categorisation in case of simple signs, or names, in language.

Let's sum up. According to *Tractatus* the world has a logical structure. It has a logical form which remains the same, no matter how the world could have been. This forms the substance of the world. The world, it is claimed, is composed of facts, not of things (either simple or complex). Facts, in turn, are composed of (simple) objects. The world's logical form consists of (simple) objects. Simple objects have formal/logical, combinatorial and material properties. Their material properties are the actual combinations of objects with other objects. Their formal/logical properties consist in their being parts of the unalterable form of the world. And finally their combinatorial properties are their possible combinations with other objects. The necessity of objects (that the world has substance) is provided by a transcendental argument from the possibility of language. As a result, to motivate the book's ontology we need to have a good deal of understanding of Wittgenstein's theory of language. This will be the task of the third section of this chapter.

2.3 Language

The third main topic in the *Tractatus* is a discussion of the nature of “depiction” (*Bild*). Wittgenstein proposed a general theory of depiction as a preliminary step in giving an account of language. He first discussed the possibility of depicting the world and then suggested that language should be seen as a way of depicting the facts that world consists in. In this third part of the chapter I first outline the book’s general theory of depiction (Section 2.3.1) and then explain its theory of language (Section 2.3.2).

2.3.1 The General Theory of Depiction

The German word “Bild” does not have a straightforward translation in English. The word is commonly translated as “picture” which stands for two-dimensional depictions, whereas “Bild” includes three-dimensional depictions, i.e. models, as well. In a conversation with Waismann, Wittgenstein clarified his intended use of “Bild” in “an extended sense”:

I have inherited this concept of a picture from two sides: first from a drawn picture (*Bild*), second from the model (*Bild*) of a mathematician, which already is a general concept. For a mathematician talks of picturing (*abbildung*) where a painter would no longer use this expression (Wittgenstein 1979, 185).¹⁸

¹⁸ Also see Stern’s discussion (1995, 35-36) of this ambiguity of the notion of “Bild”.

The term “Modell” is used in the *Tractatus* along with “Bild” (2.12, 4.01) for the same purpose. Wittgenstein said:

We picture facts to ourselves (2.1).

A picture is a model of reality (2.12).

We are able to depict facts to ourselves. A particular fact, for instance, that Napoleon was defeated in the battle of Waterloo, can be depicted indiscriminatingly in two-dimensional or three-dimensional media. It can be depicted in a painting (as it was depicted in a painting by, for instance, William Sadler in 1893) and alternatively through a modelling of the situation with toy soldiers. The same fact can be depicted by a model or a picture. For this reason, I use the term “depiction” to express both meanings of “Bild”. Depictions in the *Tractatus* have been assigned various features. In what follows I will discuss four aspects of them:

- (a) Depiction and representation
- (b) The logical form of depiction and pictorial relationship
- (c) Bipolarity and bivalence
- (d) Depicting and displaying

The last aspect, as will be seen in the next chapter (Section 3.2), is the preliminary step to the distinction between saying and showing.

2.3.1 (a) Depiction and Representation. According to Wittgenstein, what would make William Sadler's painting and our modelling of the battle of Waterloo depictions (*Abbildung*) of the same fact is their having an identical form. Obviously, two-dimensional depictions are different from three-dimensional depictions. They have different "forms of depiction" (*Form der Abbildung*) (2.17-2.172) or "forms of representation" (*Form der Darstellung*) (2.173-3.174). Form of depiction or representation of two-dimensional depictions is "picturing", whereas three-dimensional depictions represent facts through "modelling". What these two types of depiction have in common, thus, must be something essential (i.e. logical) to the action of depicting. This is called the "logical form of depiction" (*Logische Form der Abbildung*). All types of media must have the logical form of depiction in order to be considered depictions. This entails that "every picture [=depiction] is at the same time a logical one" (2.182). As a result an illogical world cannot be depicted, in the same sense that we cannot think how an illogical world would look (3.03-3.031). It is suggested that:

A logical picture of facts is a thought (3).

Moreover, that we are able to depict facts to ourselves does not guarantee that they are depicted correctly. It is surely likely that, say, an electrocardiograph device can fail to make a true depiction of heartbeats of a patient, due to some systematic failures. The graph, however, is still a graph of heartbeats, albeit an incorrect one. The graph could be seen as a correct or incorrect depiction of a possible state of

affairs concerning patients' heartbeats. Wittgenstein uses a term "represent" (Darstellung) to explain this feature:

A picture depicts reality by representing a possibility of existence and non-existence of states of affairs (2.201).

A depiction represents the possibility of a situation independently of whether it depicts it correctly or not (2.22). To ascertain whether a depiction is a correct depiction of a fact we measure it against reality (2.1511-2.1512). Nevertheless, a depiction is always a correct representation of a possible situation. If what it represents, i.e. the possible situation or state of affairs, is a fact (an existing state of affairs), then it is a correct depiction of reality. Otherwise, it is not. Think of William Sadler's painting again. It represents a possible situation, i.e. the defeat of Napoleon. But, it could have been depicting no fact at all. That is to say, Napoleon could have won the battle in Waterloo.¹⁹ To sum up, the distinction between depiction and representation²⁰ demands that a depiction is a representation of a possible state of affairs (not necessary an actual state of affairs).

2.3.1 (b) The Logical Form of Depiction and the Pictorial Relationship. Depictions, Wittgenstein maintains, are facts (2.141). Like facts, they have a (logical) structure. Think of a particular car accident, e.g. an accident between a taxi and a fuel tanker. It can be depicted with a photograph or a toy car model. For both depictions to be

¹⁹ For more on this issue see (White 2006, 49-50) and (Morris 2008, 122-123).

²⁰ Though Wittgenstein makes a sharp distinction between representation and depiction, he uses form of representation and form of depiction interchangeably. See (Morris 2008, 372 n.21)

depictions of the same fact they must be about arrangements of the same cars. If in fact a taxi has crashed with a fuel tanker, both depictions must represent at least *some* arrangements between a taxi and a fuel tanker. So no random distribution of toy cars can be considered a model. A depiction is not an agglomeration of objects. It is a structured unit. There must be an arrangement between toy cars and this arrangement must be a logical one (feature a). In the case of the taxi-fuel tanker accident, for example, other vehicles must be in some *logical* arrangement. For instance, they can't be placed over buildings' roofs. Moreover, depictions are not (simple) objects. Depictions are composed of different constituents and have internal logical complexity. Objects, however, are simple.

This logical arrangement between constituting elements of a depiction presents the "logical form of the depiction". The logical form of the depiction is something shared by all possible depictions of the fact. The logical form of a depiction consists in "the possibility that things are related to one another in the same way as the elements of the picture" (2.151). We saw that every depiction must be a representation of some possible state of affairs. This is guaranteed by the fact that depictions must have the same logical form as the states of affairs that they depict. Therefore, though it is not necessary that a depiction is a correct depiction of a fact, the logical form of the depiction must be the same as the logical form of the fact that it represents. For instance, it must have the same multiplicity (number of constituents) as the situation that it depicts.

In addition to this, a depiction must be about something. A three-dimensional depiction of an accident between a taxi and a fuel tanker must have a toy taxi and a toy fuel tanker. An arrangement between a toy motorbike and a toy tree has nothing to do with above accident. It is not a correct or incorrect depiction of an accident between a taxi and a fuel tanker. To conclude, there must be a correlation between the elements of a depiction and the (simple) objects in the world. This correlation is called “pictorial relationship” (*Die abbildende Beziehung*) in the *Tractatus*:

The pictorial relationship consists of the correlations of the picture’s elements with things (2.1514).

These correlations are, as it were, the feelers of the picture’s elements, with which the picture touches reality (2.1515).

In the same way that toy cars in an accident model stand for some real cars in the world, constituents of every depiction must be representatives of simple objects in the world.

2.3.1 (c) Bipolarity and Bivalence. As I explained above, depictions must be measured against reality. If what they represent is the case, i.e. is a fact, then they are true depictions of reality and if not, not. Depictions, therefore, have a property according to which not only are they capable of being true, but also they might turn out to be false after being measured against reality (2.17, 2.21). This property is called “Bipolarity” and excludes from the domain of depiction any form of representation whose truth-value could be known without comparing it to reality:

There are no pictures that are true a priori (2.225).

Depictions are bipolar, they are representations of possible states of affairs and could be correct or incorrect depictions of facts. However, they cannot be simultaneously correct and incorrect depictions of the world. A depiction is either right or wrong depiction of a fact. Our depictions of the world, therefore, must have the property of “Bivalence”. They must be either true or false. The property of bivalence is necessary for depictions, but it is not sufficient. Depictions must be bipolar too. We cannot have a depiction whose truth-value can be determined independently of the world. To sum up we have two conditions:

A depiction is bivalent

A depiction is bipolar

This idea has a significant role in Wittgenstein’s philosophy of logic and his concept of meaningfulness (see Section 2.3.5). That there are no pictures that are true a priori is an expression of Wittgenstein’s idea that the truth of logically necessary true sentences is independent from the world and tautologies lack sense (they are senseless).

2.3.1 (d) Depicting and Displaying. We saw that the logical form of a depiction must correspond to the logical form of the fact that it depicts. It is the necessary requirement for possibility of depiction. Wittgenstein claims that that the logical form of a depiction cannot itself be depicted:

A picture cannot, however, depict its pictorial form: it displays it (2.172).

A picture represents its subject from a position outside it. (Its standpoint is its representational form.) That is why a picture represents its subject correctly or incorrectly (2.173).

A picture cannot, however, place itself outside its representational form (2.174).

For a fact to be a depiction of some other facts, it must be capable of being true or false, that is, it must firstly be a possible representation of a situation. This means that it must be comparable to the “outside” world. This is to be secured by the logical form of the depiction. Now imagine that the logical form of a depiction is a fact extra to the fact that it depicts. Let’s call the fact that the depiction D is to represent F_1 and the extra fact (the logical form) F_2 . Now if the representation of the fact F_1 depends on its being a correct depiction of the “outside” fact F_2 , then we face a vicious regress, since the depiction of F_2 must firstly be a possible representation of F_2 . This possibility is to be secured by a third fact F_3 . And so on. The reason that the regress is vicious is that we could never make an assertion and language would be impossible. This demonstrates that the logical form of a depiction cannot be depicted.²¹

A logical form, Wittgenstein suggests, can only be *displayed* (*Aufweisen*) by a depiction. The difference between displaying and depicting is reintroduced in the *Tractatus* in terms of the distinction between showing and saying (See section 3.2).

²¹ Morris (2008, 131-136) presents a sophisticated discussion of the issue.

The argument for the depicting-displaying distinction (and in consequence the argument for the saying-showing distinction) seems like a transcendental argument from the possibility of depiction (language) to the necessity of the distinction. To secure that depiction (language) is possible it is necessary that depictions display their logical forms. Since otherwise for a depiction D to depict a fact F_1 it must have already depicted its logical form F_2 , which is just the beginning of an endless regress. I will come back to this feature again in Section 3.2.

Of the above features of depictions, the notion of pictorial relationship has a crucial role in providing an argument for the necessity of simple objects. We already saw that Wittgenstein's argument for (simple) objects is a transcendental argument from the possibility of depiction (Section 2.2). In the next section I will elaborate on the argument.

2.3.2 The Transcendental Argument for Simple Objects

Wittgenstein's argument for the necessity of simple objects is a transcendental argument from the possibility of depiction. The argument, briefly speaking, is this: for depiction to be possible, the world must have substance, i.e. must have simple objects. The argument is presented in these remarks:

Every statement about complexes can be resolved into a statement about their constituents and into the propositions that describe the complexes completely (2.0201).

Objects make up the substance of the world. That is why they cannot be composite (2.021).

If the world had no substance, then whether a proposition had sense would depend on whether another proposition was true (2.0211).

In that case we could not sketch any picture of the world (true or false) (2.0212).

The argument is presented in form of a *reductio ad absurdum* argument.²² The argument is as follows:

(1) Suppose that the world does not have (simple) objects

We saw that (simple) objects guarantee the logical form of the world (See Section 2.5). So;

(2) The world does not have an unalterable logical form

Such a world at best consists of facts which in turn are composed of complexes. This world lacks an eternal unchangeable form because its ultimate constituents are not unchangeable. Complexes might disintegrate or new complexes might emerge. Therefore the world does not have a substance beneath its facts. The immediate consequence of this is the impossibility of depicting such a world. Remember our three-dimensional depiction of an accident between a taxi and a fuel-tanker. Imagine

²² The argument for simple objects has been discussed by many commentators. They have suggested different accounts of the argument. See for example (Proops 2004; Zalabardo 2009; Morris 2008, 355-363; White 2006, 38-46, 54-60). I have borrowed from Proops' paper in formulating the argument.

that the toy taxi and the toy fuel-tanker are representatives of complexes in the world. Those complexes are composed of wheels, windows, engines, seats etc. Now to depict the accident between taxi and fuel-tanker we first need to secure that our toys represent existing complexes (have pictorial relationships with them), because it is possible that complexes do not exist. It is not inconceivable that we have wheels, windows, engines, seats etc. but cars have not been invented yet (actually it was the case till two centuries ago!) or that they are replaced by new vehicles and no cars remain. Now to make a legitimate depiction of the accident we need to have new depictions which tell us that there are cars in the world. We need an extra depiction which guarantees that constituents of the original depiction are in pictorial relationships with something in the world. From this follows that:

(3) That a particular depiction represents a possible state of affairs depends on that another depiction depicts a fact, i.e. it is true

This new depiction must be a legitimate depiction first. This indicates that it must depict a possible configuration between things in the world. But the same problem arises again. If the world is composed of complexes then the depiction needs a third depiction to ensure that constituents of the second depiction represent existing complexes. As a result we face an endless regress with a fatal consequence:

(4) The depiction is impossible

The above result conflicts the idea below:

(5) We depict facts

This idea, though implicit in the body of the argument, is expressed explicitly in a rather misplaced remark “we picture facts to ourselves” (2.1). From the conflict between (4) and (5), Wittgenstein derives:

(6) There must be (simple) objects

The argument is evidently motivated by the possibility of depiction or, as it will be discussed in the next chapter, by the possibility of language. It is necessary that the constituents of depictions stand for (simple) objects in order that they can represent possible states of affairs.

2.3.3 Language as a Depiction

The concept of “depiction” is used in the *Tractatus* to illustrate the nature of sentences, and consequently language. We read:

“A proposition is a picture of reality.

A proposition is a model of reality as we imagine it.” (4.01)

Sentences, accordingly, are depictions of the world. It follows that, like depictions, they must have two main features: (a) they are (logically) structured, and (b) they are not objects.

Feature (a). Sentences are facts (3.14) in the sense that they are not merely mixtures of words (3.141). Compare the nonsensical string of words “Plato Aristotle teacher

was of the” with the meaningful sentence “Plato was the teacher of Aristotle”. Obviously, the first sentence is just a nonsense series of words, whereas the second sentence is a meaningful depiction of something in the world. Like facts, sentences, have unity. The unity of a sentence, as was mentioned in the case of depictions (See Section 2.3.1 (b)), is secured by its logical form. Every sentence has a logical form. The logical form of a proposition consists in the (logically) determinate relation between its words. The logical form of a proposition, in contrast to the grammatical form of the sentence expressing it, ensures that a proposition is not a mere agglomeration of its constituents.

Feature (b). As facts, sentences are distinct from objects. They must be composed of (simple) objects in a (logically) determinate relation to one another. We saw that depictions represent possible states of affairs in the world and if what they represent is a fact then they are considered correct depictions of reality. The same applies to sentences. As depictions, they depict reality by representing possible situations:

“We use the perceptible sign of a proposition (spoken or written, etc.) as a projection of a possible situation.” (3.11)

The possibility of representing a state of affairs in the world is secured wholly by the fact that sentences belong to a different logical category to their constituents. Constituents of meaningful sentences are called “names” in the *Tractatus*. In the same way that facts are held to be different, logically speaking, from (simple) objects, sentences are separated in the *Tractatus* from names. According to the feature (b)

sentences must be considered as belonging to logically different categories to names.

In what follows I shall put Wittgenstein's ideas about language in the context of Frege's account of language. I first discuss Wittgenstein's departure from Frege's Unitarian characterisation of linguistic expressions (UCLE) and show how he makes his own version of the distinction between sense and reference. I then discuss his debt to Frege's context principle (see Section 2.3.4). Finally, Wittgenstein's Inferential Role Semantics will be explained in section 2.3.5.

2.3.4 The Sentence-Name Distinction and the Context Principle

We saw that Frege established his sense-reference distinction on a presumption about the characterisation of linguistic expressions. He had assumed a Unitarian Characterisation of Linguistic Expressions (UCLE) according to which:

(UCLE) All linguistic expressions are, logically speaking, names

This was supplemented by his distinction between the sense and reference of linguistic expressions, i.e. names. Names, according to him, have sense and anyone who knows their sense, knows to whom they refer. In other words:

(S-R) The reference of a linguistic expression is determined by its sense

Wittgenstein rejects both assumptions of Frege's philosophy of language. We saw that Wittgenstein criticises the ontological commitment to logical objects, in general, and the claim that truth-values are logical objects, in particular (see Sections 2.1.1-2.1.2). This approach to the philosophy of logic entails the denial of Frege's contention that sentences, like names, refer to objects (True and False). This objection motivated what I call a "Bipartite Characterisation of Linguistic Expressions" (BCLE):

(BCLE) Sentences are, logically speaking, different linguistic expressions from names

The assumption with the rejection of the idea that truth-values are logical objects entails that sentences do not have references. Rejection of (UCLE) leads to the rejection of Frege's other assumption (S-R). According to (S-R) if an expression has a sense then it has a reference too. With sentences as reference-less expressions which have sense, (S-R) is rejected. The distinction between sentences and names is expressed in the following remark:

(Names are like points; propositions like arrows— they have sense.) (3.144).²³

Wittgenstein appears to have used Frege's sense-reference distinction in his own way. Only sentences have sense and only names have reference (Bedeutung):

²³ The sentence-name distinction has in parallel a metaphysical distinction between facts and objects: "Only facts can express a sense, a set of names cannot." (3.142)

A name means an object. The object is its meaning [Bedeutung]. ('A' is the same sign as 'A'.) (3.203).

Names of the *Tractatus*, nonetheless, should be separated from Frege's proper names and Russell's logically proper names. Proper names might stand for real individuals (like Napoleon) or fictional ones (like Santa Claus), whereas the *Tractatus* names must represent eternal simple objects. As was explained in case of depictions, the references of constituents of depictions must subsist, since otherwise depicting the world would be impossible. This is equally true of names.

Moreover, the *Tractatus* names are not like Russell's logically proper names, which are just demonstratives like "that", "here", "I" etc. (see Russell 1914, 73f.). The references of demonstratives change from one situation to another – they do not stand for fixed references through different states of affairs. The *Tractatus* names, however, must represent the same objects in all possible states of affairs.²⁴ Wittgenstein deliberately avoids clarifying what he meant by "names". He thinks that it is not the responsibility of a logician to give examples of simple objects, as references of names. He sees this as an empirical (and not logical) issue.²⁵

One can propose below definitions for names and sentences:

²⁴ For a full discussion of Wittgenstein's conception of name see (Baker & Hacker 2005a, 113-129)

²⁵ See Malcolm's memory of his conversation with Wittgenstein about this matter (Malcolm 1986, 34).

A sign is a name iff it has reference.

A sign is a sentence iff it has sense.

No sign with a reference is eligible to be regarded as a sentence and no sign with sense is a name, or even a “composite name” (3.143). Names are “simple signs” (3.202). They are representatives of (simple) objects (3.22). Like elements of depictions which stand in pictorial relationships with (simple) objects in the world, names refer to (simple) objects of the states of affairs that they represent. But why ought simple signs in sentences refer to simple objects? I discuss this below.

Earlier on, I explained that, according to Wittgenstein, the logical form of the world consists of (simple) objects. (Simple) objects are necessary. In the *Tractatus*, the necessity of (simple) objects is established by the fact that depiction of the world is possible, i.e. language is possible (see Section 2.3.2). This transcendental argument for (simple) objects runs from the possibility of meaningful depiction of the world. The argument reveals that there is a link between the logical form of a proposition, which guarantees the possibility of meaningful (even though false) sentences, and the logical form of the world. The logical form of language demands that it consists of some names. In other words, the possibility of meaningful but false depiction of the world through language demands that sentences are composed of signs which necessarily have reference (i.e. names). The definition of “name”, in turn, ensures that there are (simple) enduring and eternal objects as references: A name is the representative of an object (3.22). This transcendental condition of the possibility of language is made clear in the remark below:

The requirement that simple signs be possible is the requirement that sense be determinate (3.23).

There must be linguistic expressions which necessarily have a reference in order for language to be possible. For “if there is a final sense and a proposition expressing it completely, then there are also names for simple objects” (NB, 64).

Sentences containing simple signs, i.e. names, are called in the *Tractatus* “elementary sentences” (*Elementarsatz*):

An elementary proposition consists of names. It is a nexus, a concatenation, of names (4.22).

It is only in the nexus of an elementary proposition that a name occurs in a proposition (4.23).

Elementary sentences, as Malcolm rightly noted, are “pictures *par excellence*” (Malcolm 1986, 4). They are “simplest kind of proposition” (4.21). They are ultimate products of logical analysis in the sense that all other sentences of language are logically reducible to them. Elementary sentences neither contradict each other (4.211), nor can they be deduced from each other (5.134). Like “names”, Wittgenstein does not provide examples of elementary sentences. Here again we can only say that they are not like sentences with proper names, nor with Russellian logically proper names (i.e. demonstratives).

Non-elementary sentences of language are constructed from elementary sentences. Non-elementary sentences are either like Russellian sentences containing definite descriptions, that is, having complex constituents (3.24), or they are sentences whose truth-values are functions of the truth-values of elementary sentences (5-5.01). Recall our imaginary world case which was composed of two facts aRc and bRd (see Section 2.2). In such a world, sentences “ aRc ” and “ bRd ” are elementary sentences depicting, respectively, the facts that aRc and bRd . Based on these sentences we can construct a series of compound sentences $\neg(aRc)$, $(aRc.bRd)$, $(aRc \rightarrow bRd)$ etc. While aRc and bRd are both elementary sentences, their negations $\neg(aRc)$ and $\neg(bRd)$ are not elementary sentences. $\neg(aRc)$ is a result of applying the negation sign to the elementary sentence aRc and its truth-value is a function of aRc . Unlike aRc , its negation does not need to be compared with reality to ascertain its truth-value. If we know the truth-value of aRc (through comparison with reality), we already know the truth-value of its negation. Moreover, while $(aRc \vee \neg aRc)$ is deducible from aRc , an elementary sentence bRd cannot be logically deduced from aRc .

Names, like (simple) objects, have logical forms. Contrary to the grammatical form of an expression, a name’s logical form is what is necessary for the identity of that expression. The logical form of a name, therefore, is what makes it a name, i.e. its having a reference. A sign cannot be a name unless its logical form consists of its being a representative of a (simple) object. The logical form of a proposition also consists in its having a sense, i.e. of representing a possible state of affairs.

The logical form of a name, as the constituent of a meaningful sentence, is determined by its “logico-syntactical employment” in a sentence:

In order to recognize the sign in the sign we have to attend to the use (NB, 18).

In order to recognize a symbol by its sign we must observe how it is used with a sense (3.326).

A sign does not determine a logical form unless it is taken together with its logico-syntactical employment (3.327).

A sign does not stand for a (simple) object unless it is (I) used in a meaningful sentence and (II) its employment matches the logico-syntactical rules. The first character is an obvious re-statement of Frege’s context principle (see Section 1.9.1).

The point is explicitly stated in the following remark:

Only propositions have sense; only in the nexus of a proposition does a name have meaning (3.3).

For a simple sign to refer to some (simple) object, it must occur in the context of an elementary sentence. Here it is important to distinguish using a sign from mentioning it. Mentioning a sign in a meaningful sentence does not confer meaning upon it. Take a sign “Hume”. It could be used or mentioned. When we say “‘Hume’ has four letters,” we mention the sign. The sentence does not give any clue about the meaning of “Hume”. But when we say “Hume was an Irish philosopher,” we have used the sign to speak about an individual. Though the sentence does not say to whom “Hume”

refers, it nonetheless manifests that it refers to a person, rather than a concept. Wittgenstein's affirmation of Frege's context principle plays a significant role in motivating the book's famous distinction between saying and showing. I will discuss this issue in the next chapter (Section 3.2).

In order to know whether a sign is a name, we need to know its logico-syntactical employment in language. What is significant in determining whether a sign is a name is that it has a use governed by *logical* grammar or *logical* syntax of language (3.325). Think of the logical operation of negation. The sign which stands for negation, that is "¬", always comes before sentences in a logical concept-script like Russell's *Principia Mathematica*. Now to know whether a sign in that concept-script is a name or a sentence is to know whether that sign can be preceded by, say, the negation sign. Names cannot, logically speaking, be negated and this is part of the logico-syntactical employment of names in language. This fact about names determines whether a given sign is to be considered a name or a sentence. Wittgenstein suggests that the general form of sentences is this:

$$[p^-, \xi, N(\xi)]$$

where p^- stands for all elementary sentences, ξ stands for any set of sentences and $N(\xi)$ stands for the negation of all the sentences making up ξ (see remark 6). Sentences are those signs which are capable of being negated. This criterion draws a sharp distinction between sentences and names.

Like (simple) objects, names have three distinct kinds of properties: formal, combinatorial and material. Recall our imaginary world again (see Section 2.2). In that world, objects are referred to by names (simple signs) “a”, “b”, “c” and “d” and facts are depicted by elementary sentences, e.g. “aRc” and “bRd”. In the language depicting this world, the logical form of a name “a” consists merely in its being a name. Its combinatorial form consists in its possible combinations with other names in language. So, the combinatorial form of the name “a”, for instance, is C_a (“c” or “d”). As a result of the impossibility of a combination between *a* and *b* (see the table in Section 2.2), the name “a” cannot be combined with “b” either. The actual combination of “a” is its combination with “c” in the sentence “aRc”. The material form/property of the name “a” is, thus, the meaningful sentences in which it is used (feature I).

Let’s summarise. We saw that Wittgenstein criticised Frege’s Unitarian conception of linguistic expressions and suggested that sentences should be logically distinguished from names. This distinction, as was explained, is internally linked to Frege’s context principle. This principle ensures that a word is meaningful if it is used in meaningful sentences. But this does not explain how *sentences* make sense. To see the *Tractatus* account of how strings of signs symbolise we need to take Wittgenstein’s conception of logic into consideration. In the next section I will explore this issue.

2.3.5 Inferential Role Semantics and the Notion of Senselessness

Wittgenstein thinks that depictions must not only be bivalent, but also bipolar:

A depiction is bivalent

A depiction is bipolar

As depictions, meaningful (*Sinnvoll*) sentences too must meet the same requirements. They must be bipolar as well as bivalent. The sufficient condition excludes all analytically true or false sentences, since they are incapable of having a different truth-value. It follows that as analytically true sentences (i.e. tautologies) cannot be considered sentences proper. Wittgenstein emphasises this point as follows:

There are no pictures that are true a priori (2.225).

Whatever we can describe at all could be other than it is.

There is no a priori order of things (5.634).

The remarks elaborate the fundamental idea of the book, that logical signs in tautologies are not representatives (4.0312). Sentences of logic are contentless, i.e. tautologies. They do not depict any possible situation since there is no a priori order of things in the world. But Wittgenstein qualified his exclusion of tautologies from sentences. He made a distinction between being Nonsense (*Unsinn*) and lacking a sense/being Senseless (*Sinnlos*). According to him tautologies lack sense; they are

senseless (*Sinnlos*) (4.461). But they are “part of the symbolism, much as ‘0’ is part of the symbolism of arithmetic” (4.4611). Evidently this is not the case for nonsense sentences. As White (2006, 81) has correctly pointed out conjoining a senseless sentence (e.g. “ $P \vee \neg P$ ”) with a meaningful sentence (e.g. “ P ”) produces another meaningful sentence (“ P ” & “ $P \vee \neg P$ ”), whereas conjoining a nonsense sentence (e.g. $\neg P$ “ $P \&$ ” \neg) to a meaningful sentence (e.g. “ P ”) produces a simply nonsense sentence ($\neg P(P \&) \neg \& P$). This is the point that was made in remark 4.465:

“The logical product of a tautology and a proposition says the same thing as the proposition. This product, therefore, is identical with the proposition. For it is impossible to alter what is essential to a symbol without altering its sense.”

The addition of a senseless sentence of logic to a meaningful sentence does not change the meaning of the latter sentence. It is in this sense that tautologies are like zero in arithmetic; they do not change the result of an addition or subtraction. Unlike nonsense sentences, tautologies have a role to play in language. They have something to do with the limits of language. They are, Wittgenstein thought, “limiting cases – indeed the disintegration of the combination of signs” (4.466). Though tautologies are not meaningful combinations of signs, they are nonetheless in the service of delimiting language. But how do they carry out this task? In the following paragraphs I will try to explain how tautologies are used to determine limits of meaningful talk about the world.

It was noted above that according to the *Tractatus*, for a sign to be a name it must be used in a sentential context. Though Wittgenstein’s appeal to Frege’s context

principle tells a story about how dead signs become names, it does not provide us with an account of how strings of dead signs become meaningful sentences. In other words, we need some story about what makes a combination of signs a meaningful sentence. Wittgenstein seems to have applied the same contextualist strategy at the level of sentences too. In what follows I use two remarks from the *Tractatus* and *Proto-Tractatus* to explain this issue.

In a remark in *Proto-Tractatus*, which is missing from *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein gives us a clue to the answer:

The requirement of determinateness could also be formulated in the following way: if a proposition is to have sense, the syntactical employment of each of its parts must have been established in advance. For example, it cannot occur to one only subsequently that a certain proposition follows from it. Before a proposition can have a sense, it must be completely settled what propositions follow from it (3.20103).

An arrangement of signs cannot be a sentence unless it has a syntactical role in an inference. It must be part of a valid inference. Take a valid inference such as the following:

(S1) If Socrates is mortal, then either Socrates is mortal or it is not the case that Socrates is mortal

The reason that the sentence "Socrates is mortal" is a meaningful string of signs is that it is part of this valid inference. We can settle in advance that the consequent of

the above conditional derives from its antecedent. To secure the meaningfulness of a sentence, we require that the context in which it occurs be a necessarily valid inference. Obviously the inference above could be seen as a conditional compound sentence too. In that case the context in which the sentence “Socrates is mortal” occurs is a sentence whose truth is necessary, that is, a tautology. To sum up, the wider context in which “Socrates is mortal” occurs must be, syntactically speaking, a valid inference and, semantically speaking, a necessarily true compound sentence.

In the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein claims that “every proposition of logic is a modus ponens represented in signs” (6.1264). Take the modus ponens below:

(S2) “‘Socrates is mortal’ & (‘Socrates is mortal’ → ‘Socrates is human’) → ‘Socrates is human’”

As a tautology, this inference provides a new context for the sentence “Socrates is mortal”. The reason that this string is a meaningful sentence is that it occurs as a component of a modus ponens manifested in a tautology sentence. The meaningfulness of “Socrates is mortal” depends on the truth of the whole tautology. This idea of Wittgenstein’s is a version of what is known as Inferential Role Semantics.²⁶ This approach has been developed in different ways by philosophers, but I take that the fundamental thought of *Inferential Role Semantics* is roughly this:

The meaning of an expression is determined by its role in inferences

²⁶ The idea is mainly developed by Robert Brandom, Gilbert Harman and Ned Block.

Wittgenstein's Inferential Role Semantic may be traced back to his notion of a "logical space" as it is applied to language. We saw that the world has a logical space in which possible states of affairs obtain (see Section 2.2). Wittgenstein re-applies this concept to language:

"A picture presents a situation in logical space, the existence and non-existence of states of affairs." (2.11)

"A picture represents a possible situation in logical space." (2.202)

"A proposition determines a place in logical space. The existence of this logical place is guaranteed by the mere existence of the constituents—by the existence of the proposition with a sense." (3.4)

Language is a totality of sentences (4.001) in the logical space. Every sentence has a logical place in the logical space. This logical place, however, has a fixed place in the logical space itself:

A proposition can determine only one place in logical space: nevertheless the whole of logical space must already be given by it.

(Otherwise negation, logical sum, logical product, etc.; would introduce more and more new elements—in co-ordination.)

(The logical scaffolding surrounding a picture determines logical space. The force of a proposition reaches through the whole of logical space.) (3.42).

The “logical scaffolding surrounding a picture” is a network in which a given picture is connected to other pictures.²⁷ This scaffolding is a network of inferences from a sentence to other sentences. It is only once a sentence has a place in this space of inferences that it is to be seen as a meaningful sentence.

To sum up, according to the *Tractatus*, the meaningfulness of elementary sentences depends on the truth of compound sentences in logical space. These compound sentences, however, must be tautologies. This is the key point in Wittgenstein’s Inferential Role Semantics. In what follows I try to show the significance of this issue.

Recall the *Tractatus* transcendental argument from possibility of language to necessity of (simple) objects. The idea is that if there were no (simple) objects, then the meaningfulness of sentences would depend on some other sentences being true. The result would be a vicious regress.

Here the same idea is in work. Take the sentence below:

(S3) If Socrates is mortal, then Socrates is human being

Unlike previous sentential contexts, here we have a conditional whose truth is not necessary. In (S1) and (S2) meaningfulness of “Socrates is mortal” depends on truth of the whole context, but it is independent of the truth-value of “Socrates is human being”. In (S3) we have a conditional whose truth-value depends on the truth-value of

²⁷ Wittgenstein called logic an “infinitely fine network, the great mirror” (5.511) in which “what does characterize the picture is that it can be described *completely* by a particular net with a *particular* size of mesh” (6.342). This explicates that a sentence must be in some logical relation to other sentences in language, otherwise it does not describe anything.

its consequent. To ensure that “Socrates is mortal” is a meaningful string of signs we need to guarantee that the whole conditional is true. But to guarantee the truth of the conditional we need to ensure that its consequent, that is, “Socrates is human being” is not false. As a result, in (S3) the meaningfulness of a contingent sentence “Socrates is mortal” depends indirectly on the truth-value of another contingent sentence. This conflicts with the *Tractatus* transcendental argument. As a result, it is only their occurrence in the context of *necessary* true sentences (S1 and S2) which determines the meaningfulness of elementary sentences.

Now we can see how tautologies delimit language and the world (see Section 2.1.3). It is by determining which strings of signs are meaningful and which are not, that tautologies draw the limits of meaningful speech. Frege and Russell maintained the idea that the truth of logical truths is guaranteed by logical objects of the world. Wittgenstein criticises this assumption of a platonic abstract world of logical objects. The truth of tautologies, Wittgenstein argues, is guaranteed by the nature of language, not by a platonic world:

It is the peculiar mark of logical propositions that one can recognize that they are true from the symbol alone, and this fact contains in itself the whole philosophy of logic. And so too it is a very important fact that the truth or falsity of non-logical propositions *cannot* be recognized from the propositions alone (6.113).

To know whether a sentence is a tautology, we are not required to look at the world, but just to be competent in using language. This means that, once we know how to

speak, we already know all tautological combinations of meaningful sentences. That we can recognise that sentence (2) is a tautology is a mark and manifestation of the fact that we are skilled in using language.

Moreover, logic draws the limits of the world by delimiting language. It is through a transcendental argument from the possibility of language that we get to the necessity of simple objects (which determine the logical form of the world).

Chapter 3

The *Tractatus* Paradox and the Reductio Response

3.0 Introduction

We saw that Russell considered logical forms of sentences as logical objects. He suggested that we have logical experience and logical acquaintance with them. As part of his general approach, in rejecting the ontological commitment to logical objects, Wittgenstein argued against Russell's suggestion. Wittgenstein's negative approach to Russell's account of logical forms, however, paves the way to Wittgenstein's rather positive and constructive account of our relation to logical form. This constructive account is to be found in the book's notion of "showing". In this chapter I will explore three questions about the notion of "showing" and its distinction from "saying":

The Question of Background: What is the philosophical background in which Wittgenstein introduced the notion of "showing"? (Section 3.1)

The Question of Nature: What does the distinction between "showing" and "saying" consist in? (Section 3.2)

The Question of Consequence: What does the showing-saying distinction entail (for the *Tractatus* itself)? (Section 3.3)

The distinction between showing and saying has been traced to different origins. Some commentators such as Diamond (1991) and Conant (2002) have found Frege's paradox of the concept "horse" to be the origin of the saying-showing distinction and have seen Wittgenstein's criticisms of Russell's Theory of Types as an application of the distinction.²⁸ Others, however, have asserted that "it is resulted from reflecting on Russell's theory of types, and not, as Diamond and Conant assert without textual support from reflecting upon Frege's puzzlement about the assertion that the concept horse is (or is not) a concept" (Hacker 2001a, 127). In this chapter I will stand away from this debate about the background and confine myself to a rather neutral and standard account of Wittgenstein's criticism of the Theory of Types (see Section 3.1). As will be explained, Wittgenstein's main criticisms of the Theory of Types is that the theory is nonsense (section 3.1 a) and unnecessary (section 3.1 b).

In the second section I will try to explain the distinction between saying and showing. The distinction has a close connection with the *Tractatus* context principle and inferential role semantics. The distinction is based on Wittgenstein's distinction between depicting and displaying (see Section 3.2).

The distinction has a consequence for the *Tractatus* itself. As will be explained, the distinction entails that sentences of the book are nonsense too. In other words, if the book's distinction between saying and showing is valid, then the book is nonsense. This is obviously a paradoxical claim since the reason for the nonsensicality of the *Tractatus* is provided by its own remarks. This problem which I will call the "*Tractatus*

²⁸ For an elaborate discussion of this account see (Jolley 2007)

Paradox” is an immediate consequence of the saying-showing distinction (Section 3.3).

The immediate response to the paradox is to argue that the book’s theory of language (which is the base of the distinction) is not true. This response has been supported by some philosophers. They have argued that if the book’s theory of language is true, then we get a *reductio ad absurdum* argument. In other words, the result of the saying-showing distinction is that the *Tractatus* is absurd. This has been taken as a reason to think that the book’s theory of language must be false. I will use Scott Soames’s (2003) account of the book to articulate this argument (Section 3.4).

3.1 Wittgenstein’s Criticisms of Russell’s Theory of Types

In a letter to Russell dated 1913 Wittgenstein outlined his main criticisms against him²⁹:

I for instance analyse a subject-predicate proposition, say, "Socrates is human" into "Socrates" and "something is human", (which I think is not complex). The reason for this is a very fundamental one: I think that there cannot be different Types of things! In other words whatever can be symbolised by a simple proper name must belong to one type. And further: every theory of types must be rendered superfluous by a proper theory of symbolism: For instance if I analyse

²⁹ Michael Potter (2008, 78-85) and Kelly Dean Jolley (2007, 23-49) have read the quote in somewhat similar ways.

the proposition Socrates is mortal into Socrates, mortality and $(\exists x,y) \varepsilon_1(x,y)$ I want a theory of types to tell me that "mortality is Socrates" is nonsensical, because if I treat "mortality" as a proper name (as I did) there is nothing to prevent me to make the substitution the wrong way round. *But* if I analyse (as I do now) into Socrates and $(\exists x).x$ is mortal or generally into x and $(\exists x)\phi x$ it becomes impossible to substitute the wrong way round because the two symbols are now of a different *kind* themselves. What I am *most* certain of is not however the correctness of my present way of analysis, but of the fact that all theory of types must be done away with by a theory of symbolism showing that what seem to be *different kinds of things* are symbolized by different kinds of symbols which *cannot* possibly be substituted in one another's places (NB, 120-121).

Here in the letter Wittgenstein uses an example to undermine Russell's theories. Take the sentence below:

(1) Socrates is mortal

If constituents of the sentence are replaced with variables we would have the functions below:³⁰

(2) Socrates is something

(3) Something is mortal

³⁰ For a similar possible analysis of (1) see (Morris 2008, 174-175)

These are the results of replacing the function expression "...is mortal" and the name "Socrates" with variables. (2) and (3) are, from Wittgenstein's point of view, "propositional variables" (3.313).³¹ They are not meaningful sentences, but "prototypes" of them (3.314). They are *classes* of meaningful sentences (3.311). Once values are assigned to their variables we have meaningful sentences. Propositional variables are merely *logical* prototypes (3.314) abstracted from meaningful sentences. (2) and (3), nonetheless, are not logical forms of (1). They are just combinatorial forms of expressions "Socrates" and "is mortal" in the sentence (1).

The two propositional variables above, however, are *not* the most abstract logical forms. The procedure of abstraction could be carried out further, to render the most abstract propositional variable derivable from (4):

(4) Something is something

Or even more abstract:

(4*) Something has some relation to something

(4*) is more abstract than (4) since it replaces the word "is" with a variable, i.e. variable "relation". This new variable ranges over a variety of functions such as "predication", "identity", etc. The abstraction of (4) and (4*) from (1) is obviously achieved through a different procedure from that of (2) and (3). (2) and (3) are the results of a Fregean function-argument analysis of sentence (1). (4) and (4*),

³¹ To stay consistent in translating "Sätze" to "sentence" I must have spoken of "sentential variable".

however, are results of running an Aristotelian (subject-predicate) analysis on sentence (1). Here Russell seems to have taken sentence (1) as a sentence whose logical form is subject-copula-predicate, that is, an assertion of a relation between two terms: Socrates and Mortality.

Russell's pure forms of sentence (1) are (4) or (4*) (See Russell 1913, 129). He had already admitted that these pure forms are the results of the subject-predicate analysis of sentences (Russell 1913, 98). The pure forms (4) and (4*) put constituents "Socrates" and "Mortal" (and "is") together and produce a meaningful sentence (1). Russell held that we have acquaintance with these forms. The forms, however, according to him are not constituents of the sentence (1), since otherwise we would face an endless regress. Russell's Multiple Theory of Judgement demands that the logical form of propositions secure their unity and makes it possible to distinguish agglomerations of meaningful words from meaningful sentences.

Wittgenstein recommends that, in a "proper theory of symbolism", (1) cannot not be analysed into expressions "Socrates", "mortality" and the logical form $(\exists x,y) \varepsilon_1(x,y)$, that is, the expression (4). Its correct logical analysis is either (2) or (3). But as was explained before, (2) and (3) are not logical forms of the sentence (1). The letter suggests that nothing in Russell's "pure form" (4) or (4*) guarantees that sentence (1) is meaningful, because it is unable to exclude the sentence below from the meaningful sentences:

(5) Mortal is Socrates

This counter-example show that Russell's Theory of Judgement, and consequently his account of pure logical form, is unable to secure the unity of meaningful sentences. Therefore, even if we have acquaintance with logical forms (4) or (4*) we are vulnerable to nonsense strings of signs. In other words, (4) and (4*) are common forms between meaningful sentence (1) and nonsense sentence (5). None of these forms is capable of explaining the exclusively meaningful sentence (1).

Russell's Theory of Types provides a solution. To block nonsense strings of words such as (5) we need to specify the logical type that each word belongs to. For instance to avoid sentence (5) we should specify two facts: (i) that Mortality is not an object, which means that "Mortality" is not a name standing for any object and (ii) that Socrates is not a function and we do not have a property such as *being Socrates*. Russell's Theory of Types ensures these facts. Therefore, it seems prima facie that the theory of types saves Russell's Theory of Judgement. Wittgenstein, however, shows that it is not the case. Two arguments against the Theory of Types can be distinguished in early Wittgenstein:

(1) Russell's Theory of Types is nonsense

(2) Russell's Theory of Types is not necessary

In what follows I explain these arguments.

3.1 (a). Russell's Theory of Types is Nonsense. In dealing with facts (i) and (ii) above, Russell's Theory of Types must claim that Socrates belongs to the level of individuals and Mortality to the level of first-order functions, i.e. concepts. That is to say:

(6) Socrates is an individual/object

(7) Mortality is a first-order function, i.e. a concept

In other words, to secure that (4) or (4*) are logical forms of (1), we need to guarantee that (6) and (7) are the case. A Russellian analysis of the logical form of (1), therefore, requires his Theory of Types, that is, (6) and (7) , as well as his Theory of Judgement, i.e. (4) or (4*):

Russell's type-theoretic explanations of facts (i) and (ii) via sentences expressing (6) and (7) raise a new question: Are sentences expressing (6) and (7) meaningful or nonsense? By Wittgenstein's measures they are obviously not representations of any possible state of affairs in the world. The predicate parts in them, i.e. "... is an individual/object" and "... is a first-order function/concept", fail to predicate anything real of their subjects. Predicates used in them are not genuine predicates; they *look like* genuine concept-expressions, but are just *formal* concepts (4.1272). Therefore, predicating them of objects produces nonsense strings of signs (4.126).

We can therefore conclude that sentences expressing (6) and (7) are as much nonsense as the sentence (5). The only difference is that the grammatical forms of sentences expressing (6) and (7) mislead us into taking them to be meaningful

expressions about Socrates and Mortality, whereas (5) is obviously grammatically ill-formed. I conclude that Wittgenstein denies that Russell's Theory of Types could help his Theory of Judgement. The Theory of Types is itself, according to Wittgenstein, just nonsense.

3.1 (b). Russell's appeal to the Theory of Types is unnecessary. Wittgenstein expressed in the *Tractatus* that Russell's Theory of Types is superfluous:

The theory of classes is completely superfluous in mathematics (6.031).

In our example, (2) and (3) are functions. Both are already present in the sentence (1) and can be *seen* and *recognised* in it. This issue indicates that Russell's Theory of Types was dispensable in the first place.

A "proper theory of symbolism", Wittgenstein argued, renders every theory of types "superfluous" and "make[s] it impossible to judge nonsense" (5.5422). In a correct analysis of sentences, we see the functions of each constituent. In other words, the Russellian analysis of the logical form of (1) into (4) or (4*) fails to be the correct analysis of (1). As a result we would not need an additional Theory of Types, embodied in (6) and (7). They are completely dispensable as ways to secure the unity of sentence (1).

Let's sum up. We saw that the Russellian analysis of "Socrates is mortal" into "Socrates", "Mortality" and the logical form (4) or (4*) was rejected by Wittgenstein. In

a proper symbolism, the correct logical analysis of sentence (1) presents us with a function-argument logical form which rules out two things: Russell's Multiple-relation Theory of Judgement and his Theory of Types. The logical form of (1) is self-evident and does not need to be explained. Once one sees (1) one recognises that it is composed of a function and an argument. Moreover, nobody mistakes (1) for a name; it is obviously a sentence. But how do we recognise these things in a sentence? To answer to this question we need to speak about the distinction between saying and showing. In the following section I explain this distinction.

3.2 Saying-Showing Distinction

As we saw earlier, depictions cannot depict their own logical forms (see Section 2.3.1 (d)). The logical form of a depiction cannot be depicted by other depictions either. Rather, a depiction always displays its own representational form. This displaying-depicting distinction is reformulated in the *Tractatus'* theory of language in terms of the distinction between showing and saying. Accordingly, the logical form of a meaningful sentence cannot be explained by other meaningful sentences. It is shown by the sentence itself:

Propositions cannot represent logical form: it is mirrored in them.

What finds its reflection in language, language cannot represent.

What expresses *itself* in language, we cannot express by means of language.

Propositions *show* the logical form of reality.

They display it (4.121).

The logical form of a meaningful sentence can be shown by it. Remember the sentences (1) and (5):

(1) Socrates is mortal.

(5) Mortal is Socrates.

Though Wittgenstein did not give an example of an elementary sentence, let's suppose that (1) is one. Wittgenstein would hold that the logical form of the (1) is recognisable in it, whereas (5) does not have a logical form at all. That (1) is meaningful is recognisable from it. The sentence does not need to be explained to us (4.021). Now a question is pressing:

How does a sentence show its logical form?

We saw that Wittgenstein had assumed two fundamental ideas in his theory of meaning: the context principle and inferential role semantics (see Sections 2.3.4-2.3.5). According to the context principle a word does not have meaning unless it occurs in a sentential context, and inferential role semantics says that a sentence does not make sense unless it occurs in the context of language, that is, in the logical space of the totality of meaningful sentences. As a result of the context principle, the reason that expressions "Socrates" and "Mortality" have meaning is that they occur in a meaningful sentence - (1). As meaningful expressions they have a combinatorial

form. The combinatorial form of “Socrates” is all predicates that could be ascribed to Socrates. This was formulated as follows:

(2) Socrates is something.

Likewise the combinatorial form of “Mortality” is all objects that could fall under this concept. This was expressed as follows:

(3) Something is mortal.

The occurrence of “Socrates” and “Mortality” in sentence (1) shows (2) and (3). Moreover, “Socrates” and “Mortality” have logical forms. Their logical form is their being names. Remember that the *Tractatus* distinguished formal properties of *being sentences* from *being names* (see Section 2.3.4). “Socrates” and “Mortality” as the constituents of a supposedly elementary sentence (1) have the formal property or logical form of being (Tractarian) names. As a result it would be plain nonsense to say:

(8) “Socrates” is a (Tractarian) name.

(9) “Mortality” is a (Tractarian) name.

These sentences do not depict some possible states of affairs, that is, they are not bipolar. (8) and (9) are just failed attempts to say what can only be shown. But how about the logical form of (1) itself? How do meaningful sentences show their logical forms? Remember the context (discussed in the Section 2.3.5) in which (1) occurs:

(S2) “‘Socrates is mortal’ & (‘Socrates is mortal’ → ‘Socrates is human’) → ‘Socrates is human’”

According to the book’s Inferential Role Semantics, the reason that (1) is meaningful is that it occurs in a context of a valid inference. (S2) is such a valid inference. Here again we can characterise a combinatorial form for sentence (1):

(10) “‘Socrates is mortal’ & (‘Socrates is mortal’ → P) → P”

where the domain of variable “P” is all possible meaningful sentences. (10) expresses all combinatorial possibilities that the sentence “Socrates is mortal” has in a modus ponens inference. Sentence (1) shows (10), that is, it shows its combinatorial form in the context (S2). But in addition to this, sentence (1) shows that it is a sentence (as opposed to a name) once it occurs in the context (S2). In other words, (1) shows its logical form (being a sentence) and distances itself from being a name. Being a name is the logical form of the constituents of (1), “Socrates” and “Mortality”. Therefore, being a component of a valid inference shows that a given string of signs is a (Tractarian) sentence.

As with the case of words, it is impossible to speak meaningfully about the logical forms of combinations of signs. A sentence as follows is as much nonsense as sentences (8) and (9):

(11) “Socrates is mortal” is a sentence.

Sentence (1) shows its logical form (that is its being a sentence). It is impossible to depict it and any attempt to depict it is doomed to be nonsense.

To sum up, it is impossible to speak about the logical forms of linguistic expressions and any attempt to say what a given linguistic expression is (that is, to say whether it is a name or a sentence) is doomed to failure. The reason for impossibility of speaking about logical forms is the same as the reason for impossibility of depicting logical forms. Remember the reason that it is impossible to depict logical forms is that it raises vicious regress. We saw that Wittgenstein motivated an argument from possibility of depiction to necessity of a depicting-displaying distinction. Here we have the same argument for the necessity of showing-saying distinction.

Suppose that it was possible to speak about logical forms. In other words, imagine that (11) was a meaningful sentence. In consequence, for (1) to be a meaningful sentence (11) ought to be true. This means that meaningfulness of a supposedly elementary sentence (1) depends on truth of (11). But (11) must already be meaningful. This would be secured by an extra sentence:

(12) “‘Socrates is mortal’ is a sentence’ is a sentence.

The problem is that sentence (12) does not have a better status than sentence (11). (12) must be meaningful too. The regress is vicious. We never reach a point where we have a sentence whose meaningfulness does not depend on the truth-value of another sentence. As a result we can never begin to speak about the world. But this

is a counter-intuitive claim. We do speak about the world! This brute fact blocks the vicious regress.

The impossibility of this vicious regress motivates the idea that there must be a distinction between speaking about the logical form of a meaningful sentence and a sentence showing its own logical form. That it is impossible to say that a string of signs is (or is not) a sentence demands that sentences such as (8), (9), (11) and (12) are all nonsense. They do not speak about some possible states of affairs in the world, that is, they are not bipolar. Unlike *mortality* which is a genuine concept, *being a sentence* and *being a name* are pseudo-concepts. As a result the sentences in which they occur as predicates are just nonsense.

The distinction rules out certain predicates from being meaningful constituents of possible sentences of language. As a result it tells us how to distinguish really meaningful sentences from hidden nonsense strings of words (those strings which contain merely *seemingly* meaningful predicates). Wittgenstein's saying-showing distinction, thus, has an immediate consequence for the *Tractatus* itself. Is the *Tractatus* itself a series of meaningful remarks or not? This is the question that I explore in the next section.

3.3 The *Tractatus* Paradox

We saw that predicates like “being a name” and “being a sentence” are pseudo-concepts and as a result the sentences in which they occur are pseudo-sentences.

The same is true in the cases of many other predicates such as “being an object”, “being a fact” etc. Wittgenstein argues that “is a fact” is not a real predicate since what it is thought to say is already in the sentence itself. Consider following sentences:

(1) Socrates is mortal

(13) It is a fact that Socrates is mortal

According to Wittgenstein (1) already has a sense and its affirmation through (13) does not add anything to it. (13) does not say anything more than (1). In other words, the predicate “is a fact” is not a real predicate and its occurrence in a sentence does not make any contribution to the sense of the sentence. Wittgenstein says³²:

Every proposition must *already* have a sense: it cannot be given a sense by affirmation. Indeed its sense is just what is affirmed. And the same applies to negation, etc (4.064).

Likewise, it is nonsense to say of a number “1” that it is a number since “being a number” is not a real (that is, external) property of a number. “Being a number” is an internal formal property of a number. That is the same with the predicate “being an object”. It cannot be said meaningfully of an object that it is an object (see 4.1271-4.12721). These considerations raise an immediate question: Are the sentences of

³² Wittgenstein’s discussion of the predicate “being a fact” is linked to his criticisms of Frege’s notion of “assertion sign” (see 4.442, 4.063, 6.111). Here I do not have space to discuss Wittgenstein’s objection.

the *Tractatus*, which are composed of similar predicates, themselves meaningful? Wittgenstein's own reply is surprisingly negative. According to him, the sentences of the *Tractatus* are nonsense. The famous penultimate remark of the book says:

My propositions serve as elucidations in the following way: anyone who understands me eventually recognizes them as nonsensical, when he has used them—as steps—to climb up beyond them. (He must, so to speak, throw away the ladder after he has climbed up it.)

He must transcend these propositions, and then he will see the world aright (6.54).

The book is accordingly is like a ladder; once the reader climbs the last rung of it she does not need it anymore. When she finishes reading the book, she figures out that the book was merely nonsense strings of words. At that stage, she would figure out “the whole sense of the book” which was already told in the preface:

[W]hat can be said at all can be said clearly, and what we cannot talk about we must pass over in silence (TLP, p.4).

Consider a sentence “Lions are mammals” and the remark “Objects are simple” (2.02). Contrary to the first sentence which has a logical form, remark 2.02 lacks any logical form. The logical form of the first sentence is this:

$\forall x(Lx \rightarrow Mx)$

Where “L” symbolises “being a lion” and “M” symbolises “being mammal”. The defective form of 2.02 is this:

$$\forall x(\rightarrow Sx)$$

in which “S” stands for “being simple”. The reason that “Objects of simple” is nonsense is that there is no tautology in which it features as a component. This puts Wittgenstein in a difficult situation. The reason that the *Tractatus* is nonsense is not outside of the book, but it is originated in thoughts that are expressed in the book itself. It is nothing less than a paradox that a book whose sentences are nonsense could argue for its own nonsensicality. Let’s call this paradox the “*Tractatus* Paradox”. The paradox could be articulated in different ways. In what follows I shall try to express the paradox via a *conditional proof* argument. The dependence of the evaluation of nonsensicality of the book on the theory of language motivated by two premises.

According to the first premise, if the doctrines of the *Tractatus*, including its theory of language, are true then the sentences of the book seem to say something that cannot be said (about language and the world) at all. They are neither elementary sentences depicting facts nor compound sentences. Unlike scientific statements, the philosophical sentences of the *Tractatus* are neither elementary propositions nor non-logical propositions. So, they can’t express any possible situations. This can be formulated as the first premise of the argument:

1. If the *Tractatus* theory of meaning is true, then what the sentences of the *Tractatus* seem to say cannot be said at all.

However, the grammatical forms of the sentences in the *Tractatus* delude us into thinking that they say something, whereas in fact they do not say anything. They *just seem* to say something but in fact they are nonsense. Now we have our second premise:

2. If what sentences of the *Tractatus* seem to say cannot be said at all, then the sentences of the *Tractatus* are nonsense.

Now let's assume that the *Tractatus* theory of meaning is true:

3. The *Tractatus* theory of meaning is true. (Assumption)

From the premises and the assumption we conclude:

4. What sentences of the *Tractatus* seem to say cannot be said at all. (from 1, 3 MP)

and

5. The sentences of the *Tractatus* are nonsense (from 2, 4 MP)

All these raise the *Tractatus* Paradox:

6. If the *Tractatus* theory of meaning is true then sentences of the *Tractatus* are nonsense.

(The *Tractatus* Paradox, from 3 and 5 by conditional proof)

If the book's thoughts are true, then they must already have meaning. But if they are nonsense, it is difficult to see how they could be true. As a challenge to the book, the paradox calls for efforts to save the book from being nonsense. The quick way to respond to the paradox is to reject the Assumption of the argument, that is, to argue that the book's theory of meaning is simply false. This response is known among commentators as a *Reductio ad Absurdum* argument. I shall use the label "Reductio Response" to refer to it. The response is expressed explicitly by Scott Soames. In the next section I explain Soames's reply to the *Tractatus* Paradox.

3.4 The Reductio Response

In an overview of Wittgenstein's the *Tractatus*, Scott Soames recognises two possible ways of approaching the *Tractatus* Paradox (Soames 2003, 252-253).

According to him on one view:

[T]he *Tractatus* is acceptable as it stands. In it, Wittgenstein has deliberately violated the rules of language in an attempt to show us what those rules really are; to get us to see what the rules of intelligible thought and language really are, he had to go beyond them (Soames 2003, 253).

This view, which is known as the "Ineffability reading", will be explained in Chapter Five. It suggests that there are metaphysical truths alongside empirical and logical truths. Accordingly, while empirical truths are communicable via meaningful sentences and logical truths are expressible by tautologies, metaphysical truths can

only be communicated via some sort of nonsense sentences. Accordingly the remarks of the *Tractatus* are such that though they do not say anything meaningful, they are capable of showing ineffable metaphysical truths about language and the world. Soames thinks that the above view was Wittgenstein's view when he wrote the book (though Wittgenstein changed his mind in his later works). Soames criticises this approach to the *Tractatus* Paradox reasoning that "the idea that one's words might succeed in showing the very thing that they purport, but fail, to state strikes me as a cheat (Soames 2006, 434)."

The second way of dealing with the paradox is to state that:

[T]he *Tractatus* as a whole is self-defeating and/or self-contradictory, despite its illuminating insights on many points. Thus, the Tractarian system must be rejected, and we should strive to find ways of preserving its insights while avoiding its clear inadequacies (Soames 2003, 252).

It seems that according to this view if we accept the assumption that the book's theory of language (the Tractarian system) is true, then the book turns out to be either nonsense or self-contradictory. Soames suggests that we should reject this assumption (that is, line 3 of the *Tractatus* Paradox). Soames's second view oscillates between two different ways of evaluating the *Tractatus*: seeing the book as a nonsensical self-undermining work and assessing it as an inconsistent self-contradictory series of remarks.

Evaluating the book as self-contradictory clashes with Wittgenstein's explicit statement that the book is nonsense (6.54). Moreover, a self-contradictory work is still philosophically valuable for those who are eager to challenge the incoherence of the work. Wittgenstein's work does not seem to be in a worse situation than Frege's definition of numbers. Though the definition entailed a contradiction, it did not fail to be worthy of philosophical discussion. The importance of Frege's self-contradictory definition of numbers is not in its truth-value, since it is diagnosed as problematic and false, but in consequent attempts, such as Russell's Theory of Types, to solve the puzzle. The *Tractatus* theory of meaning must be seen in the same light.

A similar way to assess the *Tractatus* - that is, to consider it as a self-contradictory work - can be found in Max Black's Mental Labour Argument (see Section 4.4.2) and Goldfarb's reductio/dialectical interpretation of the book (see Section 6.2.3). For reasons similar to those discussed above, all such attempts to understand the book fail to solve its main problem, that is, the *Tractatus* Paradox.

Soames's evaluation of the book as a self-undermining work addresses the *Tractatus* Paradox. He argues that if the book's theory of language entails that the book is a nonsensical series of remarks, then the only rational decision is to reject the book's theory of language as a false theory. This line of argument for the absurdity of the *Tractatus* is known in the literature on the book as a *reductio ad absurdum* argument (White 2006, 121).

Here we derive the conclusion that the book is *nonsense* from the assumption that its theory of language is true and to discharge the assumption we propose that the

book's theory of language must be false (also see Sullivan 2004, 38).³³ The argument can be formulated as follows:

7. If the *Tractatus* theory of meaning is true, then what sentences of the *Tractatus* seem to say cannot be said at all. (Premise)

8. If what sentences of the *Tractatus* seem to say cannot be said at all, then the sentences of the *Tractatus* are nonsense. (Premise)

9. The *Tractatus* theory of meaning is true. (Assumption for Reductio Argument)

10. What sentences of the *Tractatus* seem to say cannot be said at all. (from 7, 9 MP)

11. The sentences of the *Tractatus* are nonsense. (from 8, 10 MP)

12. It is not the case that the *Tractatus* theory of meaning is true. (from 9, 11 Reductio ad Absurdum)

The argument is built on showing that the assumption that the book's theory of language is true (line 9) leads to the conclusion that the book is nonsense (line 11), which is untenable. As a result the assumption must be false (line 12), that is, the

³³ Hacker and Baker suggested that the logic textbook argument is a *reductio ad contradictionem* and only the argument to *nonsensicality* should be named a *reductio ad absurdum* (see Baker & Hacker 2005b, 256).

book must be, philosophically speaking, false. Soames is just one example of a philosopher who considers the *Tractatus* to be a book with a false theory of meaning. This response to the *Tractatus* Paradox, which I am going to call the “Reductio Response”, has encouraged philosophers to seek some way to save the book’s theory of language and its philosophical insights. In the following chapters I will explore some of the main attempts to block the Reductio Response.

Chapter 4

Early Attempts to Block the Reductio Response; Russell, Carnap and Black

4.0 Introduction

Wittgenstein's paradoxical claim in the penultimate remark of the book and the Reductio Response attracted attention of many commentators and philosophers. The very first reaction was expressed by Russell in his introduction to the *Tractatus*. Russell presented a cautious metalinguistic solution according to which what the book was intended but failed to say could be said in a meta-language (Section 4.1). Russell's attempt to save the book's fundamental insights about logic and language can be formulated as an attempt to undermine premise 7 of the Reductio Response.

Russell was not alone in finding the *Tractatus* insightful. Logical positivists also found the book's ideas interesting. But similarly to Russell they felt discomfort with the penultimate remark of the book. Carnap, as a prominent figure in the Vienna circle, discussed the paradoxical statement 6.54 and offered a solution to save the insights of the book (see Carnap 1934, 282-284). Two arguments against the Reductio Response can be distinguished in Carnap's assessment of the *Tractatus*. The first argument, which I call "The Argument for Meta-language", is a development of Russell's metalinguistic solution (Section 4.2.1). Carnap argued that what the book

fails to say can be said in a meta-language of it. As will be seen, Carnap's argument also targets the premise 7 of the Reductio Response.

The second argument suggests that the book should be seen as a series of analytically true sentences, instead of nonsense sentences (Section 4.2.2). This is a reconstructive reading of the *Tractatus* in the sense that it tries to save some of the book's philosophical insights by jettisoning some of its other ideas. Here we have an obvious deviation from the remark 6.54 which states that the book is nonsense. The argument which I call "The Argument for Senselessness" is related to the Argument for Meta-language. This will be discussed in section 4.2.3. Finally I will use internal and external evidence from Wittgenstein to argue that the metalinguistic solutions of Russell and Carnap fail exegetically to represent the *Tractatus* (Section 4.3).

Max Black's reply to the Reductio Response (Black 1964, 377-386) is the third response that will be discussed in this chapter (Section 4.4). Black's attitude is philosophically and historically significant. Historically speaking, Black's reading of the penultimate remark 6.54 seems like a link between Carnap's positivist reading and the interpretations of Hacker and Conant. As a result, a discussion of Black paves the way for a smooth switch from the positivist readings to discussion of more recent interpretations.

I will distinguish two arguments in Black. The first argument, which I call "Book-as-Tautology" argument, is an heir to Carnap's Argument for Senselessness (see Section 4.4.1). It states that the *Tractatus* should be seen as a series of sentences of logical syntax. Similar to Carnap's argument, Black's reconstructive solution targets

premise 8 of the Reductio Response. Black's second argument is a supplementary argument to his first (see Section 4.4.2). This argument, which I call "The Mental Labour Argument", is based on distinguishing useful nonsense from useless nonsense. Accordingly, even if the *Tractatus* is nonsense, it is useful nonsense. The reason for this, on this view is that recognition of the nonsensicality of the book requires mental effort and cannot be done automatically. On this view the argument's target is again the premise 8 of the Reductio Response.

I will conclude that none of solutions suggested by Russell, Carnap and Black are able to block the Reductio Response (Section 4.5).

4.1 Russell's Metalinguistic Solution

The first reaction to the *Tractatus* Paradox is to be found in Russell's introduction to the book. He wrote:

His attitude upon this [i.e. what is mystical and cannot be said at all] grows naturally out of his doctrine in pure logic according to which ... [everything] which is involved in the very idea of the expressiveness of language must remain incapable of being expressed in language, and is, therefore, inexpressible in a perfectly precise sense. This inexpressible contains, according to Mr Wittgenstein, the whole of logic and philosophy...It is not this that causes some hesitation in accepting Mr Wittgenstein's position, in spite of the very powerful arguments which he brings to its support. What causes hesitation is the fact

that, after all, Mr Wittgenstein manages to say a good deal about what cannot be said, thus suggesting to the sceptical reader that possibly there may be some loophole through a hierarchy of languages, or by some other exit (TLP, pp. xxiii-xxiv).

Russell's explanation seems fairly clear. He suggests that (i) the *Tractatus* theory of logic and language is correct, and (ii) the book's mysticism that what cannot be said can only be shown follows naturally from his philosophy of logic and language. Recall the premise 7 of the Reductio Response:

7. If the *Tractatus* theory of meaning is true, then what sentences of the *Tractatus* seem to say cannot be said at all.

The antecedent part of the premise is an obvious affirmation of the point (i). Point (ii) affirms that the antecedent is logically linked to the consequent. Nevertheless, Russell feels "intellectual discomfort" (TLP, p. xxiv) in accepting the premise 7. As a result we have a way of blocking the Reductio through rejecting that the consequent part of premise 7 follows from the antecedent part.³⁴

Russell cautiously suggests a solution for the Reductio as follows: "there may be some loophole through a hierarchy of languages, or by some other exit". The suggestion is indeed a metalinguistic solution. Recall Wittgenstein's objection to Russell's Theory of Types. Take the sentence below from the Theory of Types:

³⁴ White (2006, 122-124) presents a very clear account of Russell's metalinguistic solution and then criticises it.

(R) “Mortality is a first-level function/concept”

According to Wittgenstein the sentence is just nonsense. Therefore, we have a judgement as follows:

(W) “‘Mortality is a first-level function/concept’ is nonsense”

Moreover, the final verdict of the book says that Wittgenstein’s judgement (W) is as nonsense as Russell’s sentence (R). Russell’s solution is that in a meta-language with a “new structure” we could speak about the logical form of words. He commented:

These difficulties suggest to my mind some such possibility as this: that every language has, as Mr Wittgenstein says, a structure concerning which, *in the language*, nothing can be said, but that there may be another language dealing with the structure of the first language, and having itself a new structure, and that to this hierarchy of languages there may be no limit (TLP, p. xxiv).

The passage functions in two ways: (i) it serves as an argument in defence of Russell’s Theory of Types, (ii) it functions as a suggestion to save the *Tractatus* from nonsense. Since the first function is not directly related to the purpose of this chapter I will dismiss it.³⁵ The second purpose of the passage is to suggest that what cannot be said in the *Tractatus* could be said in a meta-language of it. The passage

³⁵ Klein (2004, 300-302) has an insightful discussion of Russell’s defence of his Theory of Types.

suggests that what Tractarian sentence (W) seems to say (and fails) can simply be said in a meta-language, possibly by the following metalinguistic sentence:

(WM) “‘Mortality is a first-level function/concept’ is not a fact-expression”

where “... is a fact-expression” is another predicate in our meta-language. The idea is that what Wittgenstein’s sentence (W) tries to say about Russellian Type-theoretic sentence (R), and fails, can be said in a meta-language of it. The metalinguistic expression of what (W) fails to say is exactly (WM). The reason that (WM) is meaningful and (W) is nonsense is this: the predicate “...is nonsense” does not stand for any real property in the world, whereas the predicate “...is not a fact-expression” speaks about a feature of a linguistic string of signs, that is, the sentence (R). I will come back to this in the section 4.2.1.

Russell’s manoeuvre, therefore, is to undermine the Reductio Response by blocking its premise 7. The argument is that what cannot be said in the *Tractatus*, can be said in some meta-language of it.

Russell’s cautious metalinguistic comment on the book was taken more seriously by Carnap. He applied the same line of thought to block the Reductio Response. Here I confine myself to just a brief explanation of Russell’s suggestion. In Section 4.3 I will discuss some objections to the metalinguistic readings of the *Tractatus*.

Recall Russell’s type-theoretic sentence:

(R) “‘Mortality is a first-level function/concept’

and a *Tractatus* judgement that:

(W) “‘Mortality is a first-level function/concept’ is nonsense”

Assume that the language in which Russell’s type-theoretic sentences (R) and a *Tractatus* sentence (W) are formulated is an object-language. (R) appears to be about Morality, and (W) seems to say something about the sentence “Mortality is a first-level function/concept” (which can be considered as an “object of logic”). Wittgenstein thought that not only does (R) *merely seem* to speak about something, but also what (W) *seems* to say cannot be said at all. According to Russell and Carnap what (R) and (W) seem to say in an object-language can be formulated and said in a syntax-language sufficiently enriched with legitimate predicates, such as “...is a first-level concept-word” and “...is a fact-expression”. The metalinguistic expression of (R) is as follows:

(RM) “‘Mortality’ is a first-level concept-word”

In the Reductio Response, premise 7 of the Reductio Response says that, if the *Tractatus* theory of meaning is true, then what a *Tractatus* sentence (W) seems to say cannot be said at all. Carnap, like Russell, argued that what (W) could not say in the object-language of the *Tractatus* could be said in its meta-language. The metalinguistic expression of (W) is this:

(WM) “‘Mortality is a first-level function/concept’ is not a fact-expression”

With (WM) Carnap would show a way that the Reductio Response could be blocked. The sentence (WM) has content; it is meaningful and about the sentence (R). Though (WM) is expressed in a syntax-language, it has its own object, which is the sentence (R).

Carnap's metalinguistic attack on the Reductio Response is supplemented by what I call "The Argument for Senselessness". In the following section I explain these two arguments.

4.2 Carnap's Metalinguistic Solution

Like Russell, the logical positivists found the *Tractatus* insightful. They adopted Wittgenstein's view that logical judgements are tautologies and many seemingly philosophical statements are just nonsense. But like Russell they felt "intellectual discomfort" with the penultimate remark of the book (6.54), and that the only way to secure the book's insights was to block the Reductio Response. Carnap was the most prominent figure in Vienna Circle to argue against the Reductio Response. In his book *The Logical Syntax of Language* he took Wittgenstein's paradoxical remark 6.54 into consideration. In what follows, I distinguish two sets of positive and negative ideas and use them to represent Carnap's attack on the Reductio Response. Carnap recognised and affirmed two important ideas in *Tractatus*:

The most important insight I gained from his work was the conception that the truth of logical statements is based only on their logical structure and on the

meaning of the terms...it follows that these statements do not say anything about the world and thus have no factual content.

Another influential idea of Wittgenstein's was the insight that many philosophical sentences, especially in traditional metaphysics, are pseudo sentences, devoid of cognitive content (Carnap 1963, 25).

These insights can be summarised as the following two theses:

(Positive Idea 1) Sentences of logic are analytically true (they are tautologies)³⁶

(Positive Idea 2) Many philosophical sentences are nonsense

But the *Tractatus*, he held, contains two rather negative theses as well:

The first of these [two] theses... [states that] there are no sentences about forms of sentences; there is no expressible syntax...Wittgenstein's second negative thesis states that the logic of science ("philosophy") cannot be formulated...Consistently Wittgenstein applies this view to his own work also (Carnap 1934, 282-283).

³⁶ Carnap's conception of tautology, however, is different from Wittgenstein's conception. Friedman has noted that "Carnap's assertion that analytic sentences are empty of factual content and make no real claim about the world has therefore an entirely different sense and force from Wittgenstein's similar-sounding assertion (Friedman 1999, 193)." For a discussion of Carnap's difference from Wittgenstein on taking logic as tautology see (Hacker 1986, 50-55), (Ben-Menahem 2006, 187-190), (Friedman 1999, 220-226) and (Potter 2000, 263-265).

While the first thesis embodies Wittgenstein's showing-saying distinction, the second represents Wittgenstein's general negative impression of philosophical theories (4.111-4.113) which spread into his penultimate remark 6.54. Thus, we have two negative ideas:

(Negative Idea 1) It is impossible to speak about forms of linguistic expressions

(Negative Idea 2) It is impossible to say something philosophically significant

Carnap rejects both of these negative theses. He believes that what cannot be said in a certain linguistic system can be said in its meta-level linguistic system, if it is enriched sufficiently to do the job. Moreover, he repudiates Wittgenstein's hostility towards philosophising and argues that it is possible to have a form of philosophy which is as valuable as logic for empirical science. Corresponding to his rejection of the above Negative ideas I distinguish two arguments in Carnap: The Argument for Meta-language (Section 4.2.1) and The Argument for Senselessness (Section 4.2.2). These are, respectively, rejections of the first and the second Negative Ideas.

The Argument for Meta-language suggests that it is absolutely possible to speak about forms of linguistic expressions. We can use meta-languages to speak about what cannot be said in object-languages. Carnap's argument is obviously an heir to Russell's metalinguistic approach to the *Tractatus*. Indeed Russell's cautious proposal receives a rather stronger tone in Carnap's Argument for Meta-language.

The Argument for Senselessness is a suggestion that the *Tractatus* should be seen as a series of senseless analytic sentences which speak about logical syntax of

language. The argument is obviously a reconstructive reading of the book in the sense that it tries to reconstruct the book in a way that it does not face nonsensicality. The argument, as will be seen, is the forerunner of Black's Book-as-Tautology.

In what follows I shall first explain the arguments (Sections 4.2.1 and 4.2.2). I then explain the relation between these arguments (Section 4.2.3) and finally discuss some objections to them (Section 4.3).

4.2.1 The Argument for Meta-language

Carnap's first argument is a rejection of the Negative Idea 1 which says that it is impossible to speak about forms of linguistic expressions. The argument is based on an attack on premise 7:

7. If the *Tractatus* theory of meaning is true, then what sentences of the *Tractatus* seem to say cannot be said at all. (Premise)

Similar to Russell's metalinguistic suggestion, Carnap writes of the possibility of speaking about the logical forms of linguistic expressions of a particular sentence in a meta-language of it. According to him what cannot be said by the sentences of the *Tractatus* could be said in some meta-language of it. He said:

According to another opinion (that of Wittgenstein), there exists only one language, and what we call syntax cannot be expressed at all—it can only "be

shown". As opposed to these views, we intend to show that, actually, it is possible to manage with one language only; not, however, by renouncing syntax, but by demonstrating that without the emergence of any contradictions the syntax of this language can be formulated within this language itself. In every language S, the syntax of any language whatsoever—whether of an entirely different kind of language, or of a sub-language, or even of S itself—can be formulated to an extent which is limited only by the richness in means of expression of the language S (Carnap 1934, 52).

Carnap's aspiration is to undercut Wittgenstein's showing-saying distinction by introducing the possibility of expressing the logical syntax of *object*-languages in their *syntax*-languages. An object-language, according to Carnap, is a language in which we speak about the objects in the world. Take the language of zoology. This is an instance of an object-language in which we utter sentences about particular living objects, animals. The syntax-language of zoology, however, is the language in which we speak about the terms, sentences which are used in the language of zoology. (Carnap 1934, 277). Nonetheless, Carnap assumed that every syntax-language is in a sense an object-language:

In a certain sense, of course, logical questions are also object-questions, since they refer to certain objects—namely, to terms, sentences, and so on—that is to say, to objects of logic. When, however, we are talking of a non-logical, proper object-domain, the differentiation between object-questions and logical questions is quite clear (Carnap 1934, 277).

The idea that syntax-languages are in some sense object-languages reintroduces Russell's Platonic conception of logic. Recall that Russell saw his Theory of Types as a scientific theory (like any theory in zoology) which is concerned with objects in the world. Analogously, Carnap suggests that the *Tractatus* is formulated in an object-language and is about "the objects of logic" such as sentences, terms etc.³⁷ Recall Russell's type-theoretic sentence:

(R) "Mortality is a first-level function/concept"

and a *Tractatus* judgement that:

(W) "'Mortality is a first-level function/concept' is nonsense"

While (R) seems to speak about Mortality, (W) seems to speak about the sentence (R). Wittgenstein thought not only that (R) *merely seems* to speak about anything, but also what (W) *seems* to say cannot be said at all. According to Russell and Carnap what (R) and (W) seem to say in an object-language can be formulated and said in a syntax-language sufficiently enriched with appropriate predicates, such as "...is a first-level concept-word" and "...is a fact-expression". The metalinguistic expression of (R) is as follows:

(RM) "'Mortality' is a first-level concept-word"

and the metalinguistic translation of (W) is this:

³⁷ Klein (2004) offers an excellent account of the relation between Russell's Theory of Types, Wittgenstein's and Carnap's logical syntax.

(WM) “‘Mortality is a first-level function/concept’ is not a fact-expression”

Both (RM) and (WM) belong to syntax-language and their objects are respectively the word “mortality” and the sentence (R). With (WM) Carnap shows a way in which the Reductio Response might be blocked. The sentence (WM) has content; it is meaningful and about the sentence (R). Though (WM) is expressed in a syntax-language, it has its own object, which is the sentence (R).

Carnap’s metalinguistic attack on the Reductio Response is supplemented by what I call “The Argument for Senselessness”. In the following section I explain this argument.

4.2.2 The Argument for Senselessness

Carnap’s second claim in opposition to Wittgenstein is that it is possible to have legitimate philosophical sentences. In other words, he rejects Negative Idea 2, which says it is impossible to say something philosophically significant. The first application of this possibility is for the *Tractatus* itself. The book, accordingly, is not a train of nonsense philosophical sentences, but it is a set of remarks which are translatable into sentences of logic. Carnap’s claim is that the sentences of the *Tractatus* are senseless tautologies. With this identification of the sentences of the book with logical truths, Carnap tries to show that the book is not nonsense. The argument could be seen as an attack against premise 8 of the Reductio Response:

8. If what sentences of the *Tractatus* seem to say cannot be said at all, then the sentences of the *Tractatus* are nonsense. (Premise)

Carnap argues that the consequent of the conditional does not follow from its antecedent, that is, the *Tractatus* is not nonsense. To see how he motivates his attack we need to have an understanding of some of his ideas.

Carnap distinguishes two general modes of speech: the Material mode of speech and the Formal mode of speech. The difference between these two modes is that a sentence expressed in the material mode of speech contains words which designate objects, whereas words used in sentences expressed in the formal mode of speech are concerned only with forms (Carnap 1935, 64). Empirical sentences are expressed in the material mode of speech whereas syntactical sentences are expressed in the formal mode. Carnap's categories of empirical sentences and syntactical sentences correspond respectively to Wittgenstein's categories of meaningful and senseless sentences.³⁸ There is also a third category of sentences which Carnap calls "pseudo-object-sentences". This category corresponds to Wittgenstein's *pseudo-propositions*. But while the term "pseudo-proposition" has a pejorative meaning in the *Tractatus* (pseudo-propositions are just nonsense), "pseudo-object-sentence" is a neutral notion for Carnap. Pseudo-object-sentences are not necessarily nonsense, though they may be. In other words, we have nonsense pseudo-object-sentences and not-nonsense pseudo-object-sentences.

³⁸ For a discussion of the difference between Carnap's and Wittgenstein's conception of logical syntax, see (Friedman 1999, 177-197).

Carnap objects to Wittgenstein for not drawing a sharp line between formulations of the logic of science and metaphysical sentences (Carnap 1934, 284). Wittgenstein believes that all philosophical and metaphysical sentences are just nonsense pseudo-propositions (that is, nonsense pseudo-object-sentences). Carnap argues that though the sentences of both domains are neither empirical nor syntactical, i.e. they are pseudo-object-sentences, they are not necessarily nonsense (even though *many* philosophical sentences are nonsense (Positive Idea 2)). The main problem with pseudo-object-sentences of the logic of science is that they have misleading formulations; they are formulated in the material mode of speech and look like empirical meaningful sentences, while really they are similar to syntactical sentences in the sense that they speak about terms, sentences, and theories (and not objects). Carnap said:

The material mode of speech is not in itself erroneous; it only readily lends itself to wrong use. But if suitable definitions and rules for the material mode of speech are laid down and systematically applied, no obscurities or contradictions arise. ... It is not by any means suggested that the material mode of speech should be entirely eliminated. For since it is established in general use, and is thus more readily understood, and is, moreover, often shorter and more obvious than the formal mode, its use is frequently expedient (Carnap 1934, 312).

That pseudo-object-sentences of the logic of science are misleadingly formulated in the material mode does not mean that we should eliminate any non-empirical talk

from this mode of speech. Carnap claims that these pseudo-object-sentences have some use; they are “often shorter and more obvious than the formal mode”.

Carnap sets a criterion of translatability to distinguish between sentences of metaphysics and the logic of science (both are formulated in material mode of speech). According to him, if a pseudo-object-sentence could be translated into a syntactical sentence, then it is not nonsense. “Translatability into the formal mode of speech”, Carnap believes, “constitutes the touchstone for all philosophical sentences, or, more generally, for all sentences which do not belong to the language of any one of the empirical sciences (Carnap 1934, 313).” Subsequently, he argued that, contra Wittgenstein, the pseudo-object-sentences of the *Tractatus* (in contrast to pseudo-object-sentences of metaphysics) are translatable into sentences in the formal mode of speech. According to Carnap, the contents of the book are equivalent to formal syntactical sentences and by Wittgenstein’s standards they should be seen as senseless sentences, not nonsense. To sum up, according to Carnap:

(C₁) Sentences of the *Tractatus* are pseudo-object-sentence translatable into syntactical sentences

(C₂) Syntactical sentences are identical with sentences of logic

(C₃) Sentences of logic are not nonsense

From C₁ to C₃ we derive the conclusion that:

(R) Sentences of the *Tractatus* are not nonsense

The conclusion (R) is just the rejection of the premise 8. Carnap criticised Wittgenstein for reducing the importance of a philosophical work like the *Tractatus* to its “psychological influence upon the philosophical investigator”, which is lacked in metaphysics” (Carnap 1934, 283-284). The objection is that with Wittgenstein’s remark 6.54 the importance of the *Tractatus* is reduced to the mental effort invested by its readers to recognise its nonsensicality. This suggests the book has no significance beyond the fact that its readers eventually recognise that it is nonsense! As will be explained, Black’s Mental Labour Argument faces the same problem (see Section 4.4.2). Carnap’s objection, therefore, could be regarded, though anachronistically, as an objection to Black’s Mental Labour Argument.

To sum up, Carnap argues that the sentences of the *Tractatus* are not nonsense since they are translatable into sentences in the formal mode of speech, which themselves are not nonsense. These latter sentences are identical to logical sentences. Therefore, it is suggested, the *Tractatus* may be considered a set of remarks identical to tautologies. Unlike sentences of the *Tractatus*, metaphysical sentences are untranslatable. The Argument for Senselessness is a reconstructive reading of the *Tractatus* in the sense that it is based on dismissing the book’s penultimate remark - the explicit statement that the book is nonsense. Carnap finds the final verdict of the book “very unsatisfactory” and subject to rejection (Carnap 1934, 283). It seems obvious though, that Carnap’s argument is exegetically problematic. And this problem is shared by Black’s Book-as-Tautology Argument. I will discuss this issue in section 4.4.1.

4.2.3 The Relation Between Two Arguments

The relation between the Argument for Senselessness and the Argument for Meta-language is a tricky one. One might object that Carnap's Argument for Meta-language and Argument for Senselessness collapse to each other. According to the first argument what cannot be said in the *Tractatus* may be expressed in a syntax-language of it. The objector would say that this is exactly what the second argument holds: what the book fails to say may be expressed by explicitly syntactical sentences of syntax-language. In other words, she argues that the idea that sentences in the meta-language are syntactical analytic sentences is implicit in the Argument for Meta-language.

I have two reasons for distinguishing two arguments, instead of formulating simply one argument. The first reason is that Carnap formulates and rejects two distinct Negative Ideas in his assessment of the *Tractatus* (see Section 4.2). As a result we explicitly have two different attacks on different lines of the Reductio Response. The Argument for Meta-language targets premise 7 and the Argument for Senselessness attacks premise 8.

My second reason is a rather pragmatic one. Two arguments are distinguished to represent two strands of Carnap's in thinking about syntactic sentences. He does not seem to have a clear idea of the nature of syntactical sentences. On the one hand, he acknowledges that syntactical sentences, as sentences of logic, could be seen as

sentences in an object-language; i.e. as sentences dealing with objects such as sentences, terms etc. (see above, also Carnap 1934, 277), but on the other hand, he notes that his use of “being concerned with” in the case of syntactic sentences is purely figurative:

When we say that pure syntax is concerned with the forms of sentences, this 'concerned with' is intended in the figurative sense. An analytic sentence is not actually 'concerned with' anything, in the way that an empirical sentence is; for the analytic sentence is without content. The figurative 'concerned with' is intended here in the same sense in which arithmetic is said to be concerned with numbers, or pure geometry to be concerned with geometrical constructions (Carnap 1934, 7).

If, as this passage entails, syntactical sentences are just vacuous analytic sentences which do not speak about the world, then they cannot be compared with empirical sentences of zoology. Carnap's argument that sentences in syntax-language are only figuratively *about* something does not help at all. If “figuratively” is used to mean “not really”, then it is not clear why syntactical sentences should be any better than nonsense sentences. Think of zoology. If syntactic sentences about terms, sentences etc. in zoology are *not really about* anything, then it is very doubtful that they are any different from nonsense sentences.

The two arguments may be taken to represent two strands in Carnap. The Argument for Meta-language illustrates Carnap's inclination to identify sentences in syntax-language with meaningful sentences about the world, whereas the Argument for

Senselessness represents the tendency to identify syntactic sentences with senseless tautologies. Though both arguments support the idea of meta-language, they formulate different versions of it. Russell's metalinguistic attitude in thinking of the possibility of meaningful expressions of what the book fails to say corresponds solely with Carnap's Argument for Meta-language. Recall our example of the *Tractatus* judgement against Russell's Theory of Types:

(W) "Mortality is a first-level function/concept' is nonsense"

and its metalinguistic expression:

(WM) "Mortality is a first-level function/concept' is not a fact-expression"

Russell would say that though (W) is a nonsense sentence, what it tries to say can be said in a meaningful metalinguistic expression (WM). According to him (WM) is a statement about a fact (an abstract fact) in the world. Carnap has the same attitude towards metalinguistic expressions. Remember that he made an analogy between the metalinguistic sentences of syntax-language and sentences in an object-language: they both concern objects in the world. Sentences in syntax-language are about terms, sentences, etc. which are no less objects than animals for sentences of the object-language of zoology. Consequently, according to Carnap's Argument for Meta-language (WM) should also be regarded as a meaningful sentence.

The criterion of translatability in Carnap's Argument for Senselessness shows Carnap's other tendency. Take sentences (W) and (WM). In the light of the argument of Carnap's recently considered, (W) is expressed in the material mode of speech

and it is in fact a pseudo-object-sentence. Nevertheless, it can be translated into a syntactical sentence in the formal mode of speech (therefore it is a not-nonsense pseudo-object-sentence). Its translation is (WM). Here again we have a distinction between syntax-language and object-language. (W) is a sentence in object-language, whereas (WM) is its translation into a syntax-language. But here, unlike with the Argument for Meta-language, (WM) is considered a logico-syntactical sentence. (WM), therefore, is seen as a tautology (senseless) sentence.

Metalinguistic attacks against the Reductio Response are representatives of philosophically very interesting attempts to save the *Tractatus*. The only problem with them is that they do not represent exegetically faithful readings of the book. In the next section I will explain how Russell's and Carnap's metalinguistic solutions fail exegetically.

4.3 Objections to Metalinguistic Solutions

In this section I will criticise Russell's and Carnap's metalinguistic solution to the Reductio Response. In discussing Carnap I disregard his unclarity about the nature of syntactical sentences and the distinction between his two arguments. I will simply examine Russell's and Carnap's general metalinguistic approaches. To do so, I focus on the first premise in Carnap's argument for the claim that the *Tractatus* is not nonsense:

(C₁) Sentences of the *Tractatus* are pseudo-object-sentence translatable into syntactical sentences

I will try to show that (C₁) is false because the syntactical sentences cannot convey what the *Tractatus* sentences are intended to communicate. I use two pieces of exegetical evidence to motivate my objection: external evidence from Wittgenstein's letter to Russell (Section 4.3.1) and internal evidence from the *Tractatus* (Section 4.3.2).

4.3.1 External Evidence

The possibility of a metalinguistic solution had already been considered and rejected by Wittgenstein in his 1914 notes dictated to Moore. He said:

In order that you should have a language which can express or say everything that *can* be said, this language must have certain properties; and when this is the case, *that* it has them can no longer be said in that language or *any* language (NB, 107).

Wittgenstein's aim is to explain the essence of language and the nature of propositions (see NB, 39). This covers all possible languages, including object-languages and meta-languages. Wittgenstein's showing-saying distinction and his picture theory of representation are attempts to explain *all possible* representations. To use Potter's terminology (Potter 2000, 169-172), Wittgenstein's conception of

inexpressibility is a strong one, whereas Russell's and Carnap's inexpressibility is weak inexpressibility. Wittgenstein thinks that the relation between language and the world is strongly inexpressible, that is, absolutely inexpressible, whereas metalinguistic attitudes suggest that it is possible to express this relation in some language.

4.3.2 Internal Evidence

The metalinguistic interpretations conflict with remarks in the *Tractatus*. Recall the following Type-theoretic sentence:

(R) "Mortality is a first-level function/concept"

According to Wittgenstein:

(W) "'Mortality is a first-level function/concept' is nonsense"

According to Russell and Carnap what (W) fails to express meaningfully about (R) could be expressed by its metalinguistic translation:

(WM) "'Mortality is a first-level function/concept' is not a fact-expression"

What the predicate "...is nonsense" fails to say about (R) is now expressed by the predicate "...is not a fact-expression" in the syntax-language. Unlike "...is nonsense" which Wittgenstein would consider to be a formal predicate, "...is not a fact-expression" is a genuine predicate. Now if (WM) is a meaningful sentence, by the

Tractatus criteria of meaning it must be an empirical sentence about the world. The sentence (WM) then speaks about the certain contingent/accidental features of the sentence (R). But if it is so, then the *Tractatus* judgement (WM) is just a scientific statement. This conflicts with Wittgenstein's explicit statement that "philosophy is not one of the natural sciences" (4.111). As a philosophical work the *Tractatus* statement (W) cannot be equivalent to an empirical statement. It follows that the metalinguistic sentence (WM) is not the correct translation of (W). As a result Russell's metalinguistic attitude and Carnap's Argument for Meta-language do not cohere with the *Tractatus*.

(WM) could alternatively be seen as a syntactical sentence which speaks about necessary features of the sentence (R). But this is no less problematic. Nothing in the sentence (R) necessitates whether (R) is or is not a fact-expression. That a string of signs like (R) is a fact-expression rather than, say, an object-expression is "just the consequence of either an established usage when our ordinary word-language is concerned or a consequence of a stipulated convention with respect to the vocabulary of an invented symbolic language." (Klein 2004, 311)

To sum up, (WM) is either an expression of essential or accidental features of (R) ("A proposition possesses essential and accidental features" (3.34)). If (WM) is meaningful then it just expresses accidental features of (R). But this entails that (WM) is not the correct translation of (W). If (WM) is a senseless syntactic sentence, then it must express necessary features of (R). But nothing in (R) necessitates whether it is or is not a fact-expression. Hacker adds an extra reason why "the paraphrases into

the formal mode do not actually capture what is intended [by Wittgenstein]". He suggests that:

The illegitimate pseudo proposition of the *Tractatus* is intended to indicate part of the essential nature of facts, —that is, features of a fact without which it would not be a fact at all, and not to state anything about the essential nature of sentences or propositions (Hacker 2001a, 335).

Hacker's reason, nonetheless, does not seem to be faithful to Wittgenstein. Wittgenstein explicitly states that "my *whole* task consists in explaining the nature of the proposition" (NB, 39).³⁹

4.4 Black's Two Arguments

Max Black tries to save the book from its self-defeating conclusion by demonstrating that the *Tractatus* has philosophical value. He does this by attempting to block the Redutio Response. According to Black, Wittgenstein's reason for raising such a self-condemning conclusion that the book is nonsense, is that he had not "supplied a sufficiently perspicuous view of the philosophical activity he was advocating" (Black 1964, 380). In contrast to Russell's metalinguistic solution, Black's suggestion is that the *Tractatus* Paradox and the Redutio Response are avoidable by measures of the

³⁹ For a discussion of Carnap's conception of eliminating metaphysics see (Hacker 2001a, 324-344) and (Conant, 2001).

Tractatus itself (Black 1964, 377). In this way, Black's attempt seems more sympathetic than Russell's metalinguistic solution.

Two main arguments can be highlighted in Black's commentary to the *Tractatus*. These arguments are attempts to undermine the idea that the *Tractatus* theory of meaning is false, i.e. the view that the *Tractatus* is philosophically worthless.

The first argument is an attempt to show that the *Tractatus* is a series of senseless tautologies, but not nonsense sentences. The argument is heir to Carnap's Argument for Senselessness. The idea is to save the book from nonsensicality by drawing an analogy between the remarks of the book and logical sentences. I call this the "Book-as-Tautology" reply to the Reductio Response. The second argument is a hypothetical argument aiming to demonstrate that even if the book is nonsense, it is useful: this utility consists in the mental labour a reader consumes to discover its lack of sense. I call it the "Mental Labour" argument.

The arguments employ the same strategy in blocking the Reductio and the same destiny. As it will be seen both attack the premise 8 of the Reductio. Nevertheless, the destiny of both attempts is that they fail to block the Reductio. In terms of exegetical evidence Black's Book-as-Tautology Argument is in fact a reconstructive reading of the book and is less faithful to the text than the Mental Labour Argument.

4.4.1 The Book-as-Tautology Argument

Black's argument consists of interconnected discussions of Wittgenstein's conceptions of "communication" and "not being meaningful". According to Black, Wittgenstein held two interconnected accounts of these concepts:

A sentence can communicate iff it can say or show

A sentence is nonsense iff it is neither meaningful nor senseless

The Paradox, Black thinks, arises from a "too hasty equation" of what is not meaningful with "nonsense", and of what is not rationally communicable with "unsayable" (Black 1964, 379). The *Tractatus*, Black holds, leaves room for communication through "showing" and permits the possibility that a sentence lacks sense but does not fall necessarily into nonsense. Such a sentence would belong to the category of senseless sentences, i.e. tautologies. He thinks that these two ideas were provided by the book and that the reason we faced the Paradox is that Wittgenstein is "too willing, at the very end, to equate communication exclusively with 'saying'" (Black 1964, 377). Black's interpretation is an attempt to stay as close as possible to the main themes of the book, even in cases in which Wittgenstein violated his own insights. Recall premises 7 and 8 of the Reductio:

7. If the *Tractatus* theory of meaning is true, then what sentences of the *Tractatus* seem to say cannot be said at all.

8. If what sentences of the *Tractatus* seem to say cannot be said at all, then the sentences of the *Tractatus* are nonsense.

Black's suggestion is this: If we remain faithful to the spirit of the book, that is, we adopt the *Tractatus* theory of meaning, then we see that what sentences of the *Tractatus* seem to say cannot be said at all (premise 7). But by the criterion of the *Tractatus* theory of meaning some of what cannot be communicated through saying can be communicated through showing. Moreover, again according to the book's theory of meaning if a sentence communicates by showing, it is just senseless, but not nonsense. As a result the premise 8 must be rejected. By rejecting premise 8, we can block the conclusion of the Reductio Response, i.e. that the *Tractatus* theory of meaning is false.

Black's attempt to undermine premise 8 and the Reductio Response could be formulated as the following argument:

P₁ Sentences of the *Tractatus* are rules of logical syntax

P₂ Rules of logical syntax are principles (i.e. formal statements) of logic

P₃ Principles of logic communicate something about language and the world through showing

P₄ Nonsense sentences are incapable of showing or saying anything

C Sentences of the *Tractatus* are not nonsense

Black holds that the sentences of the *Tractatus* belong to ‘logical syntax’ or philosophical grammar (P₁) for “all such remarks are *a priori* but involve no violations of rules of logical syntax” (1964, 381).⁴⁰ Take Wittgenstein’s claim that propositions are not complex names (see the remark 3.143). The remark, according to Black, should be regarded as a comment on the logical grammar of the word “proposition”. He assumes that formal sentences of logical syntax are in the same place as formal sentences of logic (P₂) and “the possibility of formally expressing the rules of logical syntax apply equally to the expression of principles of logic” (1964, 141).

Senseless sentences of logic, according to Black, communicate truths about language and the world by showing them (P₃). “Their function”, he recommended, “is a peculiar one of showing something about the logic of their constituents” and to “display ‘the logic of the world’ (6.22)” (Black 1964, 380). Finally, as was already discussed, Black argues that according to the *Tractatus* communication can be achieved through showing or saying. However nonsense sentences are incapable of either of these ways of communicating (P₄). The result of the argument (C) is a direct attack on the premise 8.

Black’s argument is subject to a misunderstanding. The argument was seen by some scholars as suggesting (i) that the *Tractatus* is nonsense, and (ii) that the nonsense sentences of the book are capable of showing something. Cheung says:

⁴⁰ Hacker takes “violation of rules of logical syntax” as the reason of being nonsense. This common theme between positivist reading and ineffability reading, as we shall see later, is criticised by Conant (see Section 6.3.1 (b)).

[T]here are commentators who think Wittgenstein takes nonsensical pseudo-propositions to be able to show something that cannot be said. Max Black is an example. Black suggests that a large number of remarks referred to in TLP 6.54–7 belong to “logical syntax” or philosophical grammar. They are “formal statements, ‘showing’ something that *can* be shown” (Black 1964, 381) (Cheung 2008, 203).

This is a complete misreading of Black’s attempt and in fact contradicts premise P₄ of his argument. That the book is nonsense is exactly what Black’s argument tries to refute. Moreover, Black is explicit that only nonsense sentences are unable of communicating in any possible way. Unlike Cheung, Black holds that nonsense sentences cannot say or show anything (P₄). Indeed this is his main reason for suggesting that the book is senseless.

Black is fully aware that his reading is not exegetically faithful to the *Tractatus*. The remark 6.54 states that the book is a ladder which is to be thrown away once the reader has reached the top of it. Black too sees the book as a series of elucidations such as the remark about the grammar of the notion of “proposition”. Senseless sentences of the book are Wittgenstein’s ladder-like attempt to present us with the “essence” of language and the world. However, he argues that it is a ladder “that need not to be thrown away” (Black 1964, 381). The reading is obviously an example of a reconstructive reading, as opposed to an interpretive reading.⁴¹ It is worth noting

⁴¹ We saw that Carnap’s Argument for Senselessness too had the same problem.

that Black's aim, however, is to propose a reading based "on his [Wittgenstein's] own principles" (Black 1964, 377).

This obvious deviation from Wittgenstein's explicitly made statement in 6.54 is criticised by Conant:

[T]his interpretation saves one half of the text of 6.54 (the declaration that the propositions of the word are in some way lacking 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 (2002, 428 n.14).

The problems with Black's argument, however, are not limited to this. The first and second premises of his argument are vulnerable to exegetical and/or philosophical criticisms. Previously I discussed the objection to a similar premise in Carnap's metalinguistic solution:

(C₁) Sentences of the *Tractatus* are pseudo-object-sentence translatable into syntactical sentences

I argued that sentences of the *Tractatus* are not syntactical sentences and/or cannot be translated to syntactical sentences (see Section 4.3). Since Carnap's (C₁) is similar to Black's P₁ Black's argument is vulnerable to the same objection. Therefore, in what follows I confine myself to discussion of the Hacker-Conant objection to the premise P₂.

Hacker and Conant complain that Black's conception of the notion of a "formal statement" is not supported by exegetical evidence. Conant objects that Wittgenstein only uses the notions of "formal concept" and "formal property" but not that of a "formal statement" (Conant 2002, 427 n.14). More than this, Wittgenstein would have considered "formal statement" as a pejorative notion. Hacker puts this objection in the following way:

Wittgenstein's propositions about the essences of things consist, Black suggested, in a priori statements belonging to logical syntax. These are formal statements that show things that can be shown, and they are no worse than logical propositions, which do not transgress the rules of logical syntax. But this is mistaken. The propositions of logic are senseless, not nonsense. Wittgenstein's own propositions, which Black called 'formal statements', are, by the lights of the *Tractatus*, nonsensical pseudo propositions. They show nothing at all (Hacker 2001a, 103 and 2000, 356).

The notion of "formal", I think, can be understood in two ways: (1) as that which is contrasted with Material or (2) as that which is contrasted with Genuine/Proper. Wittgenstein's use of "formal" fits the first understanding of the term. Black appears to have read it in the second way. We read in the *Tractatus* that, as opposed to internal formal relations, external material relations are "relations proper" (4.122). Also, sentences in which "formal concepts" are used are clearly considered to be pseudo-propositions (4.127f). This exegetical evidence explicitly discredits Black's premise P₂.

4.4.2 The Mental Labour Argument

Black believes that his reply to the Reductio Response is not a complete success. According to him, regarding the sentences of the *Tractatus* as senseless “will not rescue some of the most striking [remarks of the book in which]... expressions such as ‘the world’, ‘a fact’, ‘a name’, and many more, are used by Wittgenstein in invented or in stretched senses” (Black 1964, 382). These sentences, he thinks, must eventually be rejected as nonsensical. But he proposed that though these sentences must be discarded as nonsense, they are far from aimless gibberish strings of words. The reason is that they must be used before they are thrown away as nonsense (Black 1964, 386).

Here again we have an argument against the Reductio Response. This argument is that, even if the *Tractatus* were nonsense, it would still be useful nonsense. This argument, like the last one, targets premise 8 of the Reductio Response. The idea is that the word “nonsense” in that premise equivocates between, so to speak, “useful nonsense” and “useless nonsense”. The Reductio Response needs “nonsense” in premise 8 to be used in a “pejorative sense” (Black 1964, 386). It is only with this pejorative sense of nonsense in the premise 8 the result of the Reductio Response, namely that the *Tractatus* theory of meaning is false, could be derived. Black, however, argues that the book is useful nonsense.

Sentences of the *Tractatus*, according to Black, are all attempts to capture the “essence” of things and words. Some of these sentences, as was discussed above, are a priori senseless sentences. The rest are sentences which either consist of new concepts or have used old words with new meanings. In the latter case, old words are stretched “towards a generality foreign to their ordinary usage” (Black 1964, 385). Take the words “world” and “name”. Wittgenstein uses “world” to mean something broader than the physical cosmos and his conception of “name” deviates from our ordinary concept of proper names.

The purpose of stretching a concept or inventing a new concept, according to Black, is to try a new way of looking at the world through a new language (Black 1964, 386). The endeavour, however, is open to failure or success. The failed efforts are those that end in “incoherence” and lead to “contradiction”. Black suggests that the *Tractatus* is as an example of such an effort, and ends in incoherence. The discovery of its incoherence, however, is “a result that had to be won by severe mental labour, and could not have been achieved by any short-cut – such as the automatic application of some principle of verifiability” (Black 1964, 386). The philosophical importance of the *Tractatus*, therefore, should be located in the “mental labour” used finally to reveal its self-inconsistency.

Black uses few cases from mathematics to elucidate the issue. Here I examine an example that he used as a guide for understanding Wittgenstein’s actual practice in the *Tractatus*. The example is the invention of the notion of infinity, symbolised by the

sign “ ∞ ”. This sign was first introduced to indicate the greatest of all numbers. That is to say, a hypothetical definition was first suggested for infinity:

(4) The infinite is the greatest number

The sign “ ∞ ” seemed to behave like other numbers. It was therefore subjected to the standard mathematical operations such as addition (e.g. $\infty+n=\infty$), multiplication (e.g. $n.\infty=\infty$), and so on. The infinite, therefore, seemed to look like any other number, n , except that it is greater than all of them. This is a way of “extending a mathematical concept” and stretching its meaning (Black 1964, 383). This development of the definition of the notion of infinity and use of “ ∞ ”, however, would appear to lead to a contradiction through Cantor’s demonstration that for every number, x , the number 2^x is surely greater. From this it follows that 2^∞ must be greater than ∞ , which is a contradiction. Black concludes that “it makes no sense to talk of ‘the greatest number’ ...[since] the attempt to extend the series of natural numbers by imagining a final term ‘beyond all of them’ must lead to contradiction” (Black 1964, 384). The outcome of this investigation is that the notion of infinity as it was originally defined is nonsense since it leads to incoherence (Black 1964, 384). Black’s mathematical example, however, needs some clarification.

The above mathematical case is introduced to explain how stretching the pre-determined meaning of a concept (like infinity) into absolutely new uses (like using ∞ as a natural number) ends in nonsense. Therefore, here we have a case of unsuccessful *stretching* of the meaning of a notion (we end in incoherence). The case reintroduces a paradox identical to the one that Russell discovered in Frege’s

definition of numbers (where numbers which were defined as second-order *concepts* considered as logical *objects* as well).

Black does not provide his readers with a detailed discussion of how sentences of the *Tractatus* turn out to be similar. White (2011), however, gives a fine account of how the *Tractatus*' remarks lead to contradiction. Take the following remarks from the book:

(A) "The world is everything that is the case" (1)

(B) "There is only logical necessity" (6.37)

Now, two concerns can be reasonably raised: (1) whether or not (A) is a one of the things that is the case, and (2) whether (B) is a case of logical necessity. The first question pushes us into the vicious circle problem which "was precisely the sort of loop that Russell's paradox preyed on" (White 2011, 27). White's concern with (B) is that "[it] is... self-refuting. It is clearly neither an empty tautology nor the contingent claim that there don't happen to be any necessary propositions that are not logically necessary" (White 2011, 30). Now it can be seen how and in what way the *Tractatus*' remarks lead to a contradiction. In the light of Black's account stretching the use of "world" from what we ordinarily know as "the physical cosmos" to taking it as "everything that is the case" leads to contradiction.

The Mental Labour Argument faces some serious problems. Here, I will go through two main objections. In first objection, I examine Black's identification of "nonsense" with "self-contradiction". I will also claim that Black's argument does not respond to

the *Tractatus* Paradox at all. My second objection deals with the role of “mental labour” in his argument. I will argue that his argument fails to block the Reductio Response.

Black considered his mathematical case to be an instance of an indirect proof to the conclusion that the *Tractatus* is nonsense (Black 1964, 384). But an indirect proof at most leads to the conclusion that the book is self-contradictory. We saw that Black’s infinity case was a logical paradox like Russell’s Paradox. The problem with stretching the meaning of the expression “infinite” is that it leads to a logical puzzle no worse than Frege’s contradictory definition of numbers (see Section 3.4 for a discussion of this problem).

Black was already aware of this problem (see Black, 1964, 379). To differentiate the *Tractatus* from logical paradoxes like Russell’s Paradox he introduces the notion of “mental labour” into the discussion. According to him, the discovery of the fact that the book is self-contradictory is not useless. He argues that this discovery requires mental labour. It cannot be achieved “by any short-cut – such as the automatic application of some principle of verifiability” (Black 1964, 386). He observes that the mental labour used in climbing the ladder “will not have been in vain” (Black 1964, 385). Black appears to be claiming that (i) the *Tractatus*’ inconsistency is not on the surface and it can therefore only be seen at a cost of some mental effort (otherwise it could have been seen *automatically*), and (ii) that the book enables the reader to recognise that it is a self-contradictory piece of work. I find both claims problematic.

Consider the two formulas “ $P \& \neg P$ ” and “ $P \rightarrow Q \ \& \ Q \rightarrow R \ \& \ R \rightarrow \neg P$ ”. Black’s argument demands that while the first formula is easy to recognise as a contradiction, the recognition of a contradiction in the second one requires some mental effort. The *Tractatus* seems like the second contradiction. Disclosing the contradiction requires some mental effort on the part of readers.

The first problem with Black’s account is that “mental labour” is a term of degree. Every discovery of a contradiction requires *some* degree of mental labour. Consequently, it is unclear how the *Tractatus* could have more philosophical merit than obvious self-contradictions. That the recognition of the contradiction in “ $P \rightarrow Q \ \& \ Q \rightarrow R \ \& \ R \rightarrow \neg P$ ” needs more mental labour is just a matter of the psychology of discovering self-contradictions. To sum up, Black’s argument reduces the *Tractatus* to a psychological effort to disclose a series of hidden self-contradictions motivated by the sentences of the book. This conflicts with Wittgenstein’s Fregean anti-psychologist conception of philosophical-logical investigation.

Moreover, Black’s account fails to distinguish the *Tractatus* from gibberish. If the reason that the *Tractatus* is useful nonsense is that the recognition of inconsistency in it requires some mental effort, then the only significance of this effort would consist in figuring that inconsistency out. Nordmann raises the same concern:

On Black’s account, we discover that the sentences of the *Tractatus* are nonsensical, but this affords no inference as to whether any other sentences are nonsensical, too – the *Tractatus* does not allow us to see *why* its sentences are nonsensical since, due to their nonsensicality, they cannot tell or teach us this.

Black's difficulty is therefore that a [*Tractatus*] sentence...means nothing and can teach us nothing – except solely that it is illegitimate (Nordmann 2005, 78).

It is unclear from Black's argument how the sentences of the *Tractatus* are any better than mere gibberish, if their only use consists in leading the reader to recognising their self-contradiction.

4.5 Conclusion

We have discussed different reactions to the Reductio Response. The Metalinguistic solutions of Russell and Carnap, as was explained, do not save the book's fundamental insights about logic and language. The reason is that the translations do not represent the *Tractatus* judgements. Reconstructive solutions of Carnap (Argument for Senselessness) and Black (Book-as-Tautology) also fail to block the Redcutio. They do not succeed in justifying their thought that the remarks of the *Tractatus* are analytic senseless tautologies. Moreover, they are exegetically unfaithful to the *Tractatus*. Finally, Black's Mental Labour Argument is implausible as it reduces the significance of the book to the idea that it leads its readers to realise its nonsensicality. Black's Mental Labour Argument, nonetheless, is a forerunner of the Ineffability and Therapeutic readings. Discussing these interpretations is the task of following two chapters.

Chapter 5

The Ineffability Attempt to Block the Reductio Response; the case of Hacker

5.0 Introduction

In the previous chapter, early positivist metalinguistic readings of the *Tractatus* were discussed. Here I will examine two more approaches to the book: Malcolm-Ramsey's reading and the Ineffability approach.

The Malcolm-Ramsey's reading, which was first put forward by Ramsey, relies on the idea of accepting the philosophical insights of the book without accounting for Wittgenstein's own assessment of it (i.e. the remark 6.54) and its crucial role. In the first section, I will use Norman Malcolm's interpretation as a representative of this attitude (Section 6.1) and then argue that this reading is not a consistent one (Section 6.1.1).⁴²

There are many versions of the Ineffability reading. In this chapter, I will focus on Peter Hacker's interpretation as representative of this tradition (Section 5.2).⁴³ Pursuing a direction analogous to Black's Mental Labour Argument, Hacker proposes

⁴² I will base my description of Malcolm on (Malcolm 1986).

⁴³ See (Hacker 1986; 2001a)

that Wittgenstein thought of his book as positive nonsense, as opposed to negative nonsense. The positive nonsense sentences of the *Tractatus*, according to Hacker, are *illuminating* nonsense in the sense that they communicate truths that could not have been communicated through well-formed sentences; and through this procedure they lead the reader to realise that they are nonsense.

I will set three questions (and correspondingly three programme) as guidelines to give a clear picture of Hacker's reading:

(1) How and in what sense is the *Tractatus* not negative nonsense? (Section 5.2.1)

(2) How and in what sense is the *Tractatus* positive nonsense? (Section 5.2.2)

(3) What reasons and textual evidence does Hacker provide for his reading? (Section 5.2.3)

The first question represents my Negative programme in accounting for Hacker's reading and the second question the Positive programme. The last question asks about Hacker's motivation and evidence for his account of illuminating nonsense. In the negative programme, I will try to explain Hacker's distinction between illuminating nonsense and gibberish. The positive programme will be guided by two sub-questions:

The What-question: What is/can be communicated with nonsense sentences?

The How-question: How do nonsense sentences communicate anything?

Hacker's answer to the first question is *metaphysically necessary ineffable truths*. His reply to the second question is that nonsense sentences communicate indirectly through intimating and gesturing at what they communicate. Finally, the third programme deals with Hacker's motivations for his reading and the evidence he supplies from the *Tractatus*.

In section 5.3, I will examine Hacker's definition of positive nonsense. I pose two questions for the Ineffability reading:

(Q1) Do well-formed sentences show the same thing that illuminating nonsense sentences are expected to communicate? (Section 5.3.1)

(Q2) Could nonsense sentences communicate ineffable truths? (Section 5.3.2)

My answer to the first question is negative and to the second question is this: it is not clear from Hacker's reading. These discussions will be supplemented by a short section on the Therapeutic commentators' assessment of the Ineffability reading (Section 5.3.3). This last section paves the way to my exploration of the Therapeutic interpretation in the next chapter. I will conclude that Hacker's reading, as a representative of the Ineffability interpretation, does not seem successful in convincing its opponents that it can block the Reductio Response.

5.1 Malcolm's Reading

Norman Malcolm's reading of the *Tractatus* is a representative of an approach to the book which does not give significant weight to Wittgenstein's evaluation of the *Tractatus*. The book, accordingly, must be read as embodying an insightful philosophical theory of language and logic. Consequently, the main task of the interpreter is to discover and explain those insights consistently. Malcolm's *Nothing is Hidden* is such a commentary effort. His encounter with the penultimate remark 6.54 is very quick and fast. He claims:

On my interpretation of the *Tractatus*, its theory of language rests on a metaphysical underpinning. It is often remarked, and with some justice, that the *Tractatus* is an 'anti-metaphysical' work.... Did Wittgenstein recognize that some of the conceptions and assertions of the *Tractatus* were nonsensical? Perhaps not...Was Wittgenstein aware of the metaphysical character of ... conceptions [used in the *Tractatus*]? It doesn't seem likely. I think that if he had been aware of this the *Tractatus* would never have been written. What was later perceived as metaphysics in the *Investigations* was embraced as solid reality in the *Tractatus* (Malcolm 1986, 32-33).

Malcolm appears to make various claims which seem to have an argument as their target. Malcolm's target seems to undermine the conclusion of the following hypothetical argument:

(P1) Wittgenstein knew that metaphysics is nonsense

(P2) Wittgenstein knew that the *Tractatus* is metaphysical

(C) Wittgenstein knew that the *Tractatus* is nonsense

He rejects (P2) by reasoning that the book would not have been written if Wittgenstein had been aware of the metaphysical nature of his theory of language. As a result, Wittgenstein could not have been aware that his book was nonsense.

I highlight three major assumptions behind Malcolm's reading:

(The Meaninglessness Assumption) Nonsense has a merely negative meaning

(The Exegetical Assumption) Nonsense in the *Tractatus* has an exclusively negative meaning

(The Unawareness Assumption) A person would write nonsense only if he did so unknowingly⁴⁴

Wittgenstein's statement that the book is nonsense, accordingly, must be read as a negative evaluation of the book since the notion of "nonsense" in 6.54 is derogatory (The Exegetical Assumption). Malcolm does not reject Wittgenstein's conception of nonsense. Consequently, the negative meaning of "nonsense" is the only sense of it relevant here (The Meaninglessness Assumption). This move leads to the idea that the *Tractatus* is an absurd work written by an irrational author who merely put together nonsense strings of words. To save the author from irrationality and the

⁴⁴ I have used Conant's (2002, 357) illustration of positivists' twofold assumption in reading the *Tractatus* in formulating Exegetical and Awareness assumptions.

book from absurdity, Malcolm makes a third assumption according to which the book would have been absurd only if its author had been unaware of its nonsensical character (Unawareness Assumption).

The third assumption denies that Wittgenstein knew that the *Tractatus* was nonsense, i.e. the conclusion (C). Through the denial of (C) Malcolm tries to protect the philosophical value of the book (meaning that it contains true insights) while avoiding its evaluation as nonsense. According to White, Ramsey understood the *Tractatus* in the same way. The idea is that we disregard the penultimate claim of the book and then try to propose a reading that contains as many philosophical insights that can be derived from a purely straightforward reading of the book as possible (White 2006, 124-125).

5.1.1 Objections to Malcolm's Reading

Malcolm's reading is vulnerable to several interrelated criticisms. First, he does not try to answer the Reductio Response at all. Malcolm's commentary on the *Tractatus* is in fact an attempt to protect the insights of the book while ignoring the connection between its penultimate remark 6.54 and the views presented elsewhere in it. By rejecting (C), Malcolm simply ignores (or underestimates) the explicit remark 6.54 which manifests Wittgenstein's awareness of the book's nonsensicality. Malcolm's interpretation, thus, appears to be based on a false presumption that Wittgenstein was unaware of the nature of his own book.

Second, pace what Malcolm seemed to assume, the remark 6.54 is a straightforward result of the book's philosophical insights. It means that one cannot accept insights of the book and simultaneously reject their immediate consequence. The claim that Wittgenstein was (or was not) aware of nonsensicality of his book, i.e. (C), already assumes the following claim:

(C*) The *Tractatus* is nonsense

Wittgenstein's awareness or ignorance does not seem to avoid the problem that the book is nonsense. Recall the Reductio Response:

7. If the *Tractatus* theory of meaning is true, then what sentences of the *Tractatus* seem to say cannot be said at all. (Premise)

8. If what sentences of the *Tractatus* seem to say cannot be said at all, then the sentences of the *Tractatus* are nonsense. (Premise)

9. The *Tractatus* theory of meaning is true. (Assumption for Reductio Argument)

10. What sentences of the *Tractatus* seem to say cannot be said at all. (from 7, 9 MP)

11. The sentences of the *Tractatus* are nonsense. (from 8, 10 MP)

12. It is not the case that the *Tractatus* theory of meaning is true. (from 9, 11 Reductio ad Absurdum)

The line 11 is evidently identical to assumption (C*). If we substitute (C*) for 11, the conclusion of the Reductio (line 12) can be derived again. It turns out that Malcolm's implicit adherence to (C*) actually lets the Reductio Response derive its conclusion. As a result Malcolm's approach does not attempt to block the Reductio.

To Malcolm's interpretation, other commentators, specifically the Ineffability readers, have raised different objections. To give an example of the Ineffability interpretation, Hacker expresses his disagreement with Malcolm in his review of *Nothing is Hidden* in the following way:

Was Wittgenstein aware of the metaphysical character of [his book]... when he wrote the *Tractatus*? Malcolm suggests that it is unlikely... This seems to me to be mistaken. The *Tractatus* is a great work of the high metaphysical tradition. Wittgenstein was perfectly self-conscious about his metaphysical commitments (Hacker 1978, 147).

The sentences of the *Tractatus* according to Hacker are "deliberately and self consciously put together with a very definite point and purpose" (Hacker 2001a, 111). I'll say more about this objection to Malcolm in the course of my discussion of Hacker's reading in the next section.

I finish this section with a conclusion that ignoring the penultimate remark of the book does not provide a way to avoid the Reductio Response. One cannot consistently accept the philosophical insights of the book and ignore their logical consequence (i.e. the remark 6.54).

5.2. Hacker's Reading

Hacker believes that there is a way of avoiding the Reductio Response. His strategy could be characterised as an argument against Malcolm-Ramsey's reading and his three implicit assumptions. Contrary to Malcolm, Hacker holds that the book is not a series of absurd strings of words which are uttered without awareness of their nonsensicality. He also believes that Wittgenstein did not regard his book as a string of nonsense either. Hacker says:

[A]lthough we should indeed take seriously the claim that the sentences of the *Tractatus* fail to conform with the logical syntax of language and are accordingly nonsensical, we should take equally seriously the claim that those sentences are a self conscious attempt to say what can only be, and indeed is, shown by features of the relevant symbolism. Only thus conceived can they be thought of as a ladder up which we can climb to attain the correct logical point of view; however the metaphor of the ladder is to be taken, we can hardly claim that a 'ladder' consisting of mere gibberish can lead anywhere (Hacker 2001a, 142-143).

The key for reading the *Tractatus* faithfully, accordingly, is to take Wittgenstein's penultimate statement 6.54 seriously, that is to take it into account and not to ignore it as Malcolm did. We must admit that the book is nonsense. But Hacker suggests that "nonsense" in 6.54 does not necessarily represent negative nonsense. That the

Tractatus is nonsense does not entail that it is gibberish, since otherwise it could not function like a ladder. Wittgenstein, accordingly, evaluated his book as nonsense in a rather more positive way. Hacker seems to be motivating an argument against the premise 8 of the Reductio Response:

8. If what sentences of the *Tractatus* seem to say cannot be said at all, then the sentences of the *Tractatus* are nonsense.

The argument is as follows: for the Reductio Response to motivate the conclusion that the *Tractatus* theory of meaning is false (line 12), it is required that the notion of “nonsense” in premise 8, and consequently in line 11, is univocal and just negative nonsense. But the problem is that (i) the notion of “nonsense” has a positive meaning as well as its negative sense and (ii) Wittgenstein saw his book to be positive nonsense.

Hacker’s attack on premise 8 is a descendant of Black’s Mental Labour Argument. Black’s argument draws a distinction between useful and useless nonsense and then claims that the *Tractatus* is not useless nonsense. The use of the book, according to Black, consists in the mental labour that is undertaken to recognise that the book is nonsense. We saw that Black’s argument faced an objection by Nordmann that “Black’s difficulty is therefore that a [*Tractatus*] sentence...means nothing and can teach us nothing – except solely that it is illegitimate (Nordmann 2005, 78).” Hacker’s argument suggests an extra value for the nonsense sentences of the book. He states that:

[T]he author of the *Tractatus* deliberately and self consciously fails to comply with the rules of logical syntax in order to bring his readers to apprehend necessary features of reality that cannot be stated in language and to see that these features are shown by the propositions of our language (Hacker 2001a, 122).

Reading the *Tractatus* turns out to have two kinds of value: it helps us to recognise that the book is nonsense and to apprehend some truths about language and the world. Both Hacker and Black believe that *Tractatus* has the first kind of value. It is only Hacker, however, who holds that the book has the second kind of value as well. After reading the book, according to Hacker, the reader will have a grasp of truths which they might have missed before. This gives a rather positive philosophical dimension to the book.

In what follows I will set out a three-part programme to give an account of Hacker's conception of positive nonsense: negative programme, positive programme and Motivations and Textual evidence.

In the negative programme, I will explore Hacker's account of how the *Tractatus* is not gibberish (negative nonsense). I shall suggest a provisional three-part criterion to check the examples used by Hacker to distinguish positive nonsense from gibberish. The main characteristic of the *Tractatus*, is that in contrast to patently gibberish sentences the book has "the capacity to deceive". In contrast to the sentences of the *Tractatus*, mere gibberish does not deceive us into taking it as nonsense. I will propose two concerns regarding this capacity:

Capacity Concern: In virtue of what do some strictly-speaking nonsense sentences, and not others, have the capacity to deceive?

Status Concern: How and in what sense is a nonsense sentence which is capable of deluding people into taking it to be meaningful, better than a merely gibberish string of words which does not hide its nonsensicality?

I will discuss the Capacity Concern in the negative programme (Section 5.2.1) and the Status Concern in the positive programme (Section 5.2.2).

The positive programme concerns Hacker's definition of illuminating (positive) nonsense. I will take two features of positive nonsense into consideration: (i) these sentences communicate ineffable truths and (ii) they eventually reveal their nonsensicality. Feature (i) will be scrutinised through exploring a distinction between communication via meaningful expressions and communication via nonsense expressions (Section 5.2.2.1). I shall try to answer to the What-question and How-question (see above). They shed light on the nature of what positive nonsense sentences communicate, and how the *Tractatus* communicates what it communicates.

The What-question will be used to shed light on the nature of what positive nonsense sentences communicate, and the How-question will be applied in clarifying how the *Tractatus* communicates what it communicates. We shall see that the book is meant to communicate ineffable necessary metaphysical truths about language and the

world (The What-question) by indirectly leading us to see them in well-formed sentences of language (The How-question).

Feature (ii), however, will be linked to a distinction between illuminating nonsense and misleading nonsense (Section 5.2.2.2). Unlike misleading nonsense, positive illuminating nonsense sentences eventually reveal their lack of sense. This, however, is the result of communicating ineffable truths - feature (i). All these facts account for an answer to the Status Concern. These are what distinguish positive nonsense from misleading nonsense and secure a privileged status for the *Tractatus* in comparison to other books of metaphysics.

I will finally supply a short section on Hacker's motivation and also the textual evidence from the *Tractatus* he offers in support of his reading (Section 5.2.3). Hacker supplies a series of internal and external evidence. I will confine myself to the evidence he provides from the book.

5.2.1 Negative Programme

Sentences of the *Tractatus* are obviously different from gibberish strings of words. Hacker gives us different instances of gibberish sentences:

(a) "Lilliburlero", "piggledy wiggled" (Hacker 2001a, 111), "Ab sur ah" (Hacker 2001a, 332 n.5)

(b) “God has is” (Hacker 2001a, 115) “Is the good more or less identical than the beautiful?” (Hacker 1986, 18)

(c) “Socrates is identical” (Hacker 2001a, 109)

These examples evidently fail to make sense for very different reasons. Hacker does not provide a systematic explanation of how they fail to make sense, but it is worth trying to offer an account. It seems that each of these sentences fails to meet some of the following conditions that we normally take a meaningful sentence to have:

(C1) It is composed of meaningful constituents

(C2) It is grammatically well-formed

(C3) It is logically well-formed

We start with (C1), then go to (C2) and end in (C3). If a sentence does not meet (C1) at first place, it is considered to be nonsense. But if the condition is met, then we need to check (C2). If the second condition is met we take the final step and check (C3). Once the sentence satisfies the third condition it is taken to be meaningful.

In the light of above procedure, sentences of (a) are discarded as nonsense since they fail to meet (C1). Sentences of (b) fail to meet (C2), though they are composed of meaningful constituents. Sentence (c) does not satisfy the last condition (C3). “Socrates is identical”, for instance, is composed of meaningful constituents in a grammatically subject-predicate form, but it does not have a logical form.

One observation is in order. The above procedure merely reflects the psychological procedure we undergo in checking if a sentence is meaningful. Logically speaking all nonsense is nonsense since “nonsense no more comes in kinds than it comes in degrees” (Hacker 2001a, 117). The sentence (c) is not less nonsensical than the sentences of (a).

All sentences of categories (a) to (c) are, logically, equally gibberish. According to Hacker, sentences of the *Tractatus* are nonsense in a rather positive sense. Take the sentence below, which is Hacker’s example of a *Tractatus* sentence:

(1) “A is an object”

Sentence (1) is composed of meaningful constituents that are put together in a grammatical form - subject-predicate - (so it meets C1 and C2). But the sentence is nonsense because it lacks a logical form (i.e. it does not satisfy C3). So far, Hacker’s example of positive nonsense seems no better than the gibberish sentence “Socrates is identical” in (c). Maybe other examples can help to bring out the difference:

(2) “The class of lions is a lion” (Hacker 2001a, 163)

(3) “Julius Caesar is a prime number” (Hacker 2003)⁴⁵

⁴⁵ One needs to note that though sentences (2) and (3) are as nonsense as (1), unlike (1) they are not considered by Wittgenstein as truths. To get the perfect examples of illuminating nonsense we need to negate (2) and (3). Nonetheless I stay with (2) and (3) since they do not change the result of our above elucidation of how (1) differs from gibberish. Our elucidation is based on examining predicates of sentences, which remain the same in the examples and their negations.

Both sentences are at the same level as (1) and (c). They meet C1 and C2, but not C3. But the reason that they fail to make sense is a logico-syntactical clash between its constituents. The predicate part in (2), that is the expression "...is a lion", is a first-order concept expression and can only be concatenated with an object expression. But the subject part "The class of lions" is a second-order concept expression. The predicate part of (3) is a second-order concept expression, which means its subject must be a first-order concept expression. But "Julius Caesar" is an object expression. In these sentences "the words have been combined in a way contrary to the logico-syntactical rules for their use" (Hacker 2003, 17).

In (1) we have a second-order predicate "...is an object" which is predicated erroneously of a name "A". In (c), however, we have a *seemingly* a first-order predicate "...is identical" to which it turns out that *no meaning* is given since *being identical* is a two-placed function (i.e. a relation) and needs two objects. We are told in the *Tractatus* that:

The reason why 'Socrates is identical' means nothing is that there is no property called 'identical' (5.473).

In other words, while in (1) "...is an object" is a predicate, in (c) we have a sign "...is identical" which is neither a first-order predicate nor any other possible type of predicate. In (1) "...is an object" is a meaningful second-order predicate which happens to be used illegitimately (and results in a nonsense sentence), but in (c) "...is identical" is not a meaningful constituent at all. Wittgenstein says:

[T]he reason why 'Socrates is identical' says nothing is that we have not given *any adjectival* meaning to the word 'identical' (5.4733).

To sum up, unlike sentence (1), sentence (c) merely *seems* to meet the condition (C1). The constituent "...is identical" in sentence (c) is not really meaningful. Nonetheless, both (1) and (c) are logically speaking nonsense. The result is that sentences of the *Tractatus* are logically speaking at the same level as gibberish: "Strictly speaking they are all literally nonsense" (Hacker 1986, 51). But sentences of the *Tractatus* deceive the reader into taking them to be meaningful, whereas a negative nonsense sentence like "Socrates is identical" does not hide its lack of sense.

The *Tractatus* could be seen as a series of nonsense sentences which deceive the reader into mistaking them for meaningful utterances. This is the capacity that gibberish strings of words lack. But still we are far from an explanation of how and in what way sentences of the *Tractatus* have the capacity to deceive their readers into mistaking them for meaningful sentences. Their capacity to deceive raises a significant concern:

Capacity Concern: In virtue of what do some strictly-speaking nonsense sentences, and not others, exhibit the capacity to deceive? What makes "A is an object", seem more meaningful than "Socrates is identical", if both sentences are logically speaking nonsense?

Hacker (2001a, 332 n.5) makes a list of three features of positive nonsense sentences as opposed to negative nonsense (gibberish):

- (i) They are uttered with an intention (to lead the reader to see something that cannot be said but can only be shown in well-formed sentences)
- (ii) They have a role to play (which is to lead the reader to the top of the ladder where he will discover that the book is nonsense and will see the world correctly from a logical point of view)
- (iii) They contain expressions that are used as formal concepts in well-formed sentences

Feature (iii) illustrates how and in what way sentences of the *Tractatus* are *not* negative nonsense (gibberish). Features (i) and (ii), however, explain how and in what sense sentences of the *Tractatus* are positive nonsense. As it will be seen due the course Hacker uses features (i) and (ii) to characterise what he means by positive (illuminating) nonsense. Of the three features above, here I confine myself to discussing the third item: I shall examine the first and second features when I explore the positive conception of nonsense (see Section 5.2.2).

Hacker (2001a, 115-116) places “A is an object” as representative of illuminating nonsense in contrast to “Ab sur ah” and “A is frabble” as examples of gibberish. “A is an object” is as much nonsense as “Ab sur ah”. The reason for the nonsensicality of “A is an object” is that some of its constituents are used incorrectly. Nonetheless, unlike gibberish sentences which have some nonsense expressions, all constituents of “A is an object” are meaningful in isolation from it. It is composed of “A” and “...is

an object” which could be found in meaningful sentences, e.g. “A is red” and “There is an object which is red”. The expression “...is an object” has an overtly meaningful use in this latter sentence. It appears that the feature (iii) could be seen as a conjunction of two sub-features. We can hold of illuminating nonsense sentences that:

(iiia) They are composed of meaningful expressions

(iiib) Some of their constituents are used incorrectly

Being composed of independently meaningful expressions, therefore, seems to be Hacker’s answer to the Capacity Concern. Sentences of the *Tractatus* are composed of independently meaningful expressions (iiia) which are used in well-formed sentences as formal concepts. This masks the fact that they are used incorrectly in sentences of the *Tractatus* (iiib). The fact that a sentence “A is an object” is composed of meaningful constituents (iiia) hides the fact that some of its constituents are used incorrectly (iiib). As a result the audience can mistakenly consider the sentence to be a meaningful sentence.

Here I need to warn against a misreading of Hacker to which some commentators, e.g. Conant, succumb. He ascribes to Hacker a conception of nonsense according to which:

The resulting nonsense is ... due ... to precisely the meanings that the words already have: meanings which clash with one another when imported into this context. It is supposed to be an example of a kind of nonsense which is due to

the way in which the meanings of the parts of the sentence fail to fit together so as to make sense (Conant 2002, 407).

This is an obvious misreading of Hacker which is caused by overlooking the sub-feature (iiib). According to Hacker the reason that the sentence “A is an object” which is composed of meaningful constituents is nonsense is the clash of logical syntax of its constituents. In the passage above Conant misrepresents Hacker as if he believes that the reason for nonsensicality is the clash of meanings of words. Take the following sentence:

(4) All bachelors are married

The meaning of “bachelor” clashes with the meaning of “married”. They are antonyms. Now with Conant’s picture of Hacker, he should take (4) as nonsense, whereas Hacker would judge (4) to be absolutely meaningful. According to Hacker the source of nonsensicality is the clash of logical syntax, not the clash of meanings (i.e. senses) of words.⁴⁶

The capacity to deceive leads to a second concern as well as the Capacity Concern:

Status Concern: How and in what sense is a nonsense sentence which is capable of deluding people into taking it to be meaningful, better than a mere gibberish string of words, which does not hide its nonsensicality? How and in what sense does “A is an object” have a privileged status compared to the gibberish “Socrates is identical”?

⁴⁶ Also see Hacker’s reply to Conant in (Hacker 2003, 7).

This new concern is my issue in the next section where I discuss Hacker's account of what positive nonsense *is*.

5.2.2 Positive Programme

So far we have seen that sentences of the *Tractatus* are, according to Hacker, not negative nonsense (gibberish). Now we need to see how and in what sense they are positive nonsense. I take the Status Concern as a guideline in my account of Hacker's notion of positive nonsense. To address the Status Concern I shall explore features (i) and (ii) of positive nonsense sentences. The features will be linked to two distinctions in Hacker's works: a distinction between effable communication and ineffable communication (Section 5.2.2.1) and a distinction between illuminating nonsense and misleading nonsense (Section 5.2.2.2). These distinctions are the key to seeing how sentences of the *Tractatus* manage to secure their privileged status

5.2.2.1 Communicating Ineffable Truths

Against Malcolm's implicit Unawareness Assumption which suggests that one would write nonsense only unknowingly, Hacker presents the *Tractatus* as an instance of nonsense which is written intentionally. Nonsense sentences of the book, according to him, are produced with a certain intention. This frames feature (i) of Hacker's conception of positive nonsense:

- (i) They are uttered with an intention (to lead the reader to see something that cannot be said but can only be shown in well-formed sentences)

To discuss the intention of the book, that is, to lead the reader to see what can only be shown by well-formed sentences of language, we need to consider a distinction that Hacker makes between communication via meaningful expressions and communication via nonsense expressions. According to Hacker, communication in the *Tractatus* is not limited to saying. We can communicate through sentences which do not say anything at all, i.e. nonsense strings of words:

[W]hat cannot be said is not ineffable in the sense of being either incommunicable or imperceptible—it just cannot be expressed by the sense of a significant proposition (Hacker 2001a, 151).

I propose two questions as guidelines for understanding Hacker's distinction:

The What-question: What is the object of communication via nonsense sentences?

The How-question: How do nonsense sentences communicate anything?

I first deal with the What-question and then explore an answer to the How-question.

5.2.2.1(a) The What-question

Hacker's distinction between communication via meaningful expressions and communication via nonsense expressions has an ontological dimension. Accordingly,

there are not only sayable truths; there are ineffable truths as well. Meaningful sentences (embedded in natural sciences) communicate truths about the world by saying them. In contrast, a piece of *gibberish* is a string of words which does not say anything about the world. Hacker believes that although the nonsense sentences of the *Tractatus* do not say anything about the world, they communicate truths about its features. The ineffable/unsayable truths that are communicated by these nonsense sentences of the book are the necessary features of reality:

The *Tractatus* had argued that purportedly metaphysical propositions were attempts to describe nonlogical necessities about the world, logic, and language (Hacker 2001a, 331).⁴⁷

Unlike gibberish strings of words, sentences of the *Tractatus* are capable of communicating ineffable necessary truths about language, logic and the world. Though they are nonsense, they are capable of communication through illuminating and elucidating necessary truths about the world. Hacker calls them “illuminating nonsense”.

Hacker’s position must be distinguished clearly from Black’s reading. While both argue that sentences of the *Tractatus* communicate necessary truths, they propose different conceptions of necessary truths. Black equates necessary truths exclusively with logical truths (and suggests taking the *Tractatus* as a series of analytic truths), whereas Hacker holds that, according to Wittgenstein, necessary truths could be

⁴⁷ Also see (Hacker 1986, 51)

logical or metaphysical. Hacker's Wittgenstein saves the task of communicating metaphysical truths for sentences of the *Tractatus*. This idea conflicts with Wittgenstein's explicit remark that "the only necessity that exists is *logical* necessity (6.375)." Being aware of the conflict Hacker announces:

[I]t is misleading of the *Tractatus* to say that all necessity is logical necessity, since after all most of the propositions of the *Tractatus* itself seem to state non-contingent truths, metaphysical necessities about the nature and essence of reality, of any possible world. Of course, Wittgenstein claimed that the propositions of the *Tractatus* are pseudo-propositions. Strictly speaking they are all literally nonsense. So all expressible necessity is logical. Metaphysical necessity is ineffable (Hacker 1986, 51).

Metaphysical necessities are ineffable truths whereas logical necessities are perfectly expressible by tautologies. Remark 6.375 is a misrepresentation of Wittgenstein's intention since "according to the *Tractatus*, the only (effable) necessity is logical necessity" (Hacker 2001a, 11). Illuminating nonsense sentences of the book communicate ineffable truths about the world. Hacker (2001a, 98-101, 146-151) offers a list of ten categories of truth that could be communicated, though not via saying. I try to support each category with an example from Hacker of an illuminating nonsense sentence (though my list of examples is not exhaustive):

1. Truths about the harmony between language and reality. The harmony between a meaningful sentence and the world is something that can only be shown.

2. Truths about the meaning or sense of expressions. A name shows what it means. Similarly a meaningful sentence shows its sense. A sentence “a=b” is just a nonsense sentence which tries to say what can only be shown in language and through the substitutability of expressions “a” and “b”.

3. Truths about logical relations between meaningful sentences. That a meaningful sentence “Q” follows from “ $P \rightarrow Q$ ” and “P”, is something that can only be shown.

4. Truths about internal properties and relations of things and situation. Internal properties are necessary and so it is impossible to assert or deny that a thing possesses one. As a result a sentence such as “Oxford blue is darker than Cambridge blue” is nonsense.⁴⁸

5. Truths about categorical features of things and type classifications. Unlike Russell, Wittgenstein thinks that logico-syntactical forms of things can only be shown. Therefore, Russellian sentences such as “A is an object”, “Red is a colour” and “The class of lions is not a lion” are examples of ineffable truths.

6. Truths about the limits of thought. We cannot exclude a certain form of words by reference to reality, as Russell did with his theory of types. Consequently a sentence “‘The class of lions is a lion’ is nonsense” is nonsense.

⁴⁸ Richter (2004, 74-76) argues that “Oxford blue is darker than Cambridge blue” is an absolutely meaningful sentence.

7. Truths about the logical structure of the world. That the world contains such-and-such possibilities can only be shown. A sentence “It is possible that such-and-such is the case” is another example of illuminating nonsense.

8. Truths about the metaphysics of natural science. That nature has laws is something that cannot be said.

9. Truths about metaphysics of experience. What a solipsist says about the self, i.e. “There is no soul”, is an instance of a truth that cannot be said.

10. Truths about ethics, aesthetics and religion. What sentences in these areas communicates ineffable truths.

Let’s see how a nonsense sentence, say, “A is an object” communicates a truth. Hacker holds that what is communicated by “A is an object” can only be shown and is shown by a well-formed sentence of language. What is communicated by illuminating nonsense sentences are shown by empirical (meaningful) and logical (senseless) sentences of language. An attentive reader who has apprehended the message of “A is an object” recognises the communicated ineffable truth in meaningful sentences such as “A is red” and senseless sentences like “A is red or A is not red” as well. According to Hacker, sentences of the *Tractatus*, are instances of illuminating nonsense:

[T]hey clarify the philosophical matters discussed in the book, *inter alia* by bringing one to apprehend that what the *Tractatus* tries to say cannot be said and that the attempt merely results in pseudo-propositions; and by bringing one

to understand that what cannot be thus spoken about is nevertheless shown by well-formed propositions (Hacker 2001a, 125 n.37).

To summaries Hacker's answer to What-question, nonsense sentences communicate ineffable metaphysically necessary truth about features of the world, language and logic.

5.2.2.1(b) The How-question

According to Hacker, illuminating nonsense sentences communicate ineffable truths by "intimating", "guiding" (Hacker 1986, 18-19) and "bringing" (Hacker 2001a, 125 n.37) the reader to apprehend and understand what is required for a speaker to communicate. It appears that by gesturing at ineffable truths, illuminating nonsense manages to communicate. On the side of the reader, it seems that we are capable of "grasping", "apprehending" (Hacker 2001a, 140) and "understanding" (Hacker 2001a, 125 n.37) what is meant by the utterer of illuminating nonsense.

To sum up, unlike meaningful sentences which directly communicate what they are meant to convey, illuminating nonsense sentences convey their message *indirectly* to hearers. They guide, lead and bring attentive readers to see what can only be shown by well-formed sentences of language.

5.2.2.2 Recognition of Nonsensicality

We saw that the fact that illuminating nonsense sentences are capable of deceiving us into taking them to be meaningful sentences jeopardises their positive status, since it would be odd to call such deceiving sentences “illuminating”. Recall our Status Concern:

How can the nonsense sentences of the *Tractatus* be illuminating, in contrast to gibberish, if they just mislead us into taking them to be meaningful sentences? If their superiority over gibberish consists in their capacity to deceive, then in the final analysis they are not really better than gibberish. As a result, the sentences of the book would be at best misleading nonsense sentences. To secure the unique positive status of sentences of the *Tractatus*, therefore, we need to consider a distinction between illuminating and misleading nonsense.

Recall that illuminating nonsense sentences have the capacity to reveal their nonsensicality in addition to communicating ineffable truths:

- (ii) They have a role to play (which is to lead the reader to the top of the ladder where he finds the book to be nonsense and can see the world from the correct logical point of view)

But the question is why this feature is so important to Hacker’s positive conception of nonsense. To answer this question we need to take a look at Hacker’s definition of “illuminating nonsense”:

Illuminating nonsense will guide the attentive reader to apprehend what is shown by other propositions which do not purport to be philosophical; moreover, it will intimate, to those who grasp what is meant, its own illegitimacy (Hacker 1986, 18-19).

Evidently Hacker uses features (i) and (ii) to fix the definition of illuminating nonsense; they communicate ineffable truths *and* reveal their nonsensicality. Despite their appearances these features are not independent. I argue that, whatever communicates ineffable truths necessarily reveals its own illegitimacy. Hacker believes that a nonsense sentence is illuminating if its message is grasped by the reader and once she grasps that message she finds the sentence nonsense. As a result features (i) and (ii) are solely characteristics of positive nonsense.

In contrast to illuminating nonsense, we are told, there are misleading nonsense sentences. Misleading nonsense sentences are nonsense sentences which in no way reveal their meaninglessness. Unlike gibberish, which does not hide its nonsensicality, misleading nonsense does not reveal its lack of sense. But unlike illuminating nonsense which *eventually* reveals its nonsensicality, misleading nonsense hides it forever. Therefore, the difference between illuminating and misleading is that the former's deceptive appearance of meaningfulness is temporary, while the latter's persists.

Hacker argues that, according to Wittgenstein, traditional metaphysical statements are prevalent examples of misleading nonsense. Logically speaking, sentences of traditional metaphysics are as much nonsense as sentences of the *Tractatus*, but the

latter *eventually* reveal their nonsensicality to their readers. This is not the case with statements of traditional metaphysics:

The source of the error of past philosophy lies in its failure to understand the principles of the logical syntax of language which are obscured by grammatical forms. These principles reflect the essential nature of any possible symbolism, the conditions of the very possibility of representation. Failure to grasp them engenders the illusion that one can say things which can only be shown. This in turn leads to misleading nonsense (Hacker 1986, 19).

Take the (nonsense) sentences “A is an object” and “There are objects”. According to Hacker these communicate ineffable truths about A and the world respectively. Once the reader understands the messages of these nonsense sentences she finds them nonsense. It is in this way that a sentence reveals its nonsensicality; by communicating a message about ineffable truths.

The difference between misleading and illuminating nonsense is not embedded in the sentence. Obviously “A is an object” and “There are objects” are sentences which could be found in any work within the metaphysical tradition. They are not exclusively nonsense sentences of the *Tractatus*. Diarmuid Costello expresses nicely the point as follows:

Given that both [sc. illuminating and misleading nonsense], on Hacker's account, 'violate the rules of logical syntax', the only real difference between them is the degree of cunning or self-consciousness with which they are yielded.

The latter naively blunders into the confusion - that 'one can say things which can only be shown' - which the former aspires to illuminate as confusion (Costello 2004, 110).

What makes “There are objects” misleading in some philosophical works and illuminating in others is its capacity to reveal *eventually* its lack of sense. Here the question is this:

How does communication of ineffable truths reveal the nonsensicality of sentences?
How does an identical sentence reveal its nonsensicality in one philosophical context and not in another?

Hacker’s account assumes that once the reader grasps the whole theory of language developed in the book, he will be able to figure out that the book is nonsense. The book as a whole communicates an ineffable theory of language, and once it is grasped by the reader, she finds all of the sentences involved in conveying that ineffable theory to be nonsense (by the light of the theory). The main point of the book, accordingly, is its ineffable theory of language:

In a letter to Russell dated 19 August 1919, written shortly after he had finished the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein told Russell that the main contention of the book, to which all else, including the account of logic, is subsidiary, 'is the theory of what can be expressed [*gesagt*] by prop[osition]s—i.e. by language—(and, which comes to the same, what can be thought) and what cannot be expressed by

prop[osition]s, but only shown [*gezeigt*]; which I believe is the cardinal problem of philosophy' (CL 68) (Hacker 2001a, 140).

To improve our understanding of the significance of this procedure in the characterisation of illuminating nonsense, it may be useful to compare it to the procedure of finding sentences gibberish. Recall our three criteria for distinguishing gibberish from meaningful (Section 5.2.1). These conditions comprise a set of rules which are already known by us and are applied to each individual sentence. Rules (conditions) in the set are not communicated by the same sentences that are measured by the rules. As a result, when those sentences fail to make sense (because of failure to satisfy the conditions) they fall into negative nonsense (gibberish). But in the case of the *Tractatus* the theory of language is communicated by the very sentences that are to be evaluated. Therefore, when they fail to meet the requirements of a meaningful sentence, they do not fall into the bad category of *gibberish*. They are evaluated as nonsense, but just as illuminating nonsense since the evaluating theory is already motivated by them.

A sentence "Only propositions have sense; only in the nexus of a proposition does a name have meaning" (3.3) could be misleading or illuminating. If it is a sentence of a book which communicates an ineffable theory of language, then it is illuminating. Otherwise, it is just a misleading nonsense sentence which never reveals its nonsensicality to the reader.

To sum up, illuminating nonsense sentences deceive readers into taking them to be meaningful. This is caused by their being composed of meaningful expressions

(feature iii). Nonetheless, they manage to convey some ineffable truths (feature i) which *eventually* frame an ineffable theory of language. This ineffable theory sheds light on the sentences by which it is communicated and reveals their status as nonsense (feature ii). In other words, though each sentence of the *Tractatus* deceives the reader, when the book is finished and its theory is grasped, the whole book reveals its nonsensicality.

5.2.3 Motivations and Textual Evidence

Hacker provides textual evidence from the *Tractatus* as well as philosophical reasons in support of his argument against the Reductio Response. Also, in discussing the Therapeutic reading he gives various reasons to support his ineffability conception of positive nonsense. These reasons are produced in the context of criticisms of the Therapeutic interpretation, but they reflect the general motivations behind his reading. Below I list five major motivations for Hacker's account.

Recall Black's Mental Labour Argument. It was intended to block the Reductio Response by motivating the possibility of "useful nonsense". Accordingly, the book is nonsense, but useful nonsense, since it leads the reader to recognise its nonsensicality. In other words, it eventually reveals its nonsensicality. And this is the only purpose of the book. We saw that it was not good enough to read a book to find out that it is nonsense. Hacker's reading is intended to add extra value by motivating

the notion of “ineffable truth”. According to him the book reveals its nonsensicality once the reader grasped the book’s ineffable theory of meaning.

Moreover, Hacker argues that Wittgenstein was aware that his book contained important truths (Hacker 2001a, 109, 123). In the preface of the *Tractatus* we read:

[T]he *truth* of the thoughts that are here communicated seems to me unassailable and definitive. I therefore believe myself to have found, on all essential points, the final solution of the problems (TLP, p.4).

This repudiates the idea that one does not intentionally write nonsense (cf. Malcolm’s Unawareness Assumption). Wittgenstein seems perfectly aware that the book is nonsense (6.54) but he has written nonsense for the purpose of communicating insights (preface).

Thirdly, Wittgenstein saw his book as a ladder (6.54). A ladder, Hacker holds, cannot be a series of gibberish since gibberish does not lead us anywhere (Hacker 2001a, 142). We need some type of positive nonsense which communicates something valuable, some insights. It is only through communicating an ineffable theory of language that we eventually recognise the book’s nonsensicality. This is a clear repudiation of Malcolm’s implicit Meaninglessness Assumption.

Fourth, Hacker supports his reading with a battery of textual evidence from the book. This evidence supports the claim that according to Wittgenstein there are truths about language and the world which cannot be said (and indeed are not contingent)

but can be communicated by nonsense sentences. This evidence supports the third reason above. It may be characterised as follows:

(a) There are ineffable truths. Hacker (2001a, 139-140) suggests that Wittgenstein believed that there are things that cannot be communicated by meaningful sentences - they are ineffable:

There are, indeed, things that cannot be put into words.

They *make themselves manifest*. They are what is mystical (6.522).

There are ineffable things alongside sayable truths. What is mystical, Wittgenstein explicated, is that the world exists, rather than how it is (6.44). Describing how the things are is the task of meaningful sentences (see 3.221, 4.5).

(b) Ineffable truths are metaphysically necessary truths about language, logic and the world. Unlike empirical contingent effable truths, ineffable truths are necessary. They are internal formal properties of simple objects and/or metaphysical truth that red is a colour). If a truth is internal, it is unthinkable that it not be the case (cf. 4.123). That there are simple objects, for example, is a necessary condition of the very possibility of language. Hacker says:

And internal, formal, and structural properties and relations, which metaphysics aspires to articulate, cannot, by the very nature of a symbolism, be stated or described. But 'they make themselves manifest in the propositions that

represent the relevant states of affairs and are concerned with the relevant objects' (TLP 4.122) (Hacker 2001a, 120).

(c) We can communicate what cannot be said (ineffable truths). Though ineffable truths cannot be communicated through meaningful sentences, they are shown by features of the relevant symbolism (Hacker 2001a, 141). Wittgenstein's discussion of solipsism is the key point in establishing this idea. He says:

[W]hat the solipsist *means* is quite correct; only it cannot be *said*, but makes itself manifest.

The world is *my* world: this is manifest in the fact that the limits of *language* (of that language which alone I understand) mean the limits of *my* world (5.62).

Accordingly the solipsist's attempt to describe her situation is doomed to failure. What she says is just nonsense. Nonetheless, it is not negative nonsense (gibberish) since what she tries to say "makes itself manifest in the limits of my language being the limits of my world... in the relation between the proposition and reality" (Hacker 2001a, 149-150). She communicates truths about the world.

(d) We grasp what is intended to be communicated by nonsense. The case of the solipsist is again the key. What the solipsist "means" is understandable. We just need to know her intention to speak nonsense. The same applies to Russell's axiom of infinity. Wittgenstein says:

What the axiom of infinity is intended to say would express itself in language through the existence of infinitely many names with different meanings (5.535).

What is “intended” by pseudo-propositions of Russell’s theory is true and apprehensible. Wittgenstein’s denial of Russell’s axiom, Hacker notes, is by parity of reasoning equally nonsense “but what it intends to say would be shown through the existence of finitely many names with different meanings” (Hacker 2001a, 116). Hacker’s Wittgenstein holds that the number of objects is finite, but that this is a truth that can only be shown by features of our symbolism.

(e) Once we grasp the ineffable theory of language developed in the book we see it as nonsense. We already saw that Hacker quoted from Wittgenstein’s letter to Russell that the main contention of the book was “the theory of what can be expressed by propositions and what cannot be expressed by propositions, but only shown” (Hacker 2001a, 129). Once the reader grasps the theory he finds the book to be nonsense. This is in clear conflict with Wittgenstein’s thought that philosophy is not a body of doctrine (4.112). Hacker observes that the philosophical method practised in the *Tractatus* is opposed to the method defended in the book. As a result, the book’s method is not, strictly, the correct method in philosophy (see Hacker 1986, 24-25). Hacker comments:

[T]he *Tractatus* was intended to be the swansong of metaphysics. Its method is to be discarded, and its propositions transcended and rejected, like a ladder which is to be thrown away after one has climbed it up (Hacker 1996, 36).

This textual evidence supports Hacker's denial of Malcolm's other implicit assumption, the Exegetical Assumption, that nonsense in the *Tractatus* had an exclusively negative meaning.

Fifth, Hacker makes a case for the claim that Wittgenstein's pre- and post-*Tractatus* conversations and writings (including correspondence, comments, lectures) further support his idea that the book was meant to communicate ineffable truths (Hacker 2001a, 126-140). According to him, Wittgenstein never thought of the *Tractatus* as mere gibberish; rather he saw it as a clock which does not work correctly. Many of the insights of the book, Hacker thinks, were retained or transformed in his later works. This could not be the case if they were plain gibberish (Hacker 2001b, 330).

5.3 Assessment of Hacker's Reading

Hacker's account of positive nonsense has been criticised by commentators, mainly advocates of the Therapeutic interpretation, for exegetical and philosophical deficiencies. Exegetically speaking his account is claimed to fail to cohere with remarks of the *Tractatus* (internal evidence) and/or Wittgenstein's pre- and/or post-*Tractatus* comments, correspondence and conversations about the book (external evidence). Philosophically speaking it is argued that the account is incoherent, or at least that it exhibits internal tensions.⁴⁹ In this section, I will introduce and examine

⁴⁹ See Richter (2004, 73-81) for criticisms of Hacker's external evidence.

some objections to Hacker's account of illuminating nonsense. I suggest two questions for the Ineffability reading:

(Q1) Do well-formed sentences show the same things that illuminating nonsense sentences are expected to communicate? (The 'Showing' Objection - Section 5.3.1)

(Q2) Could nonsense sentences communicate ineffable truths? (The 'Implication' Objection - Section 5.3.2)

Both questions concern the first feature of positive (illuminating) nonsense sentences:

- (i) They are uttered with an intention (to lead the reader to see something that cannot be said but can only be shown in well-formed sentences).

My answer to the first question, which I call "the 'Showing' Objection", is negative. To reply to the second question I will try to give an illustration of how Hacker's account of "communicating ineffable truths" should be understood. I will argue that Hacker's notion of gesturing, hinting, suggesting etc. is rooted in a Gricean conception of implication. Having done that, I argue that from Hacker's definition of illuminating nonsense it is not clear how nonsense sentences could implicate/communicate ineffable truths (I call this "the 'implication' objection").

These two objections will be followed by a short section on some of the Therapeutic readers' (specifically Conant and Diamond's) criticisms of the Ineffability account. I will conclude at the end of the chapter that Hacker's reading, as representative of the

Ineffability interpretation, is not successful in convincing its opponents that it can block the Reductio Response.

5.3.1 The 'Showing' Objection

Hacker's feature (i) of illuminating nonsense is no less problematic than its third feature. It says:

- (i) They are uttered with an intention (to lead the reader to see something that cannot be said but can only be shown in well-formed sentences)

He holds that illuminating nonsense sentences bring us to see what is shown by well-formed sentences of language. Think of the nonsense sentences "A is an object" and "Red is a colour". According to Hacker these guide us to ineffable truths about A and Red in the world. They lead us to truths *that A is an object* and that *Red is a colour*. He suggests that what is communicated by, say, "A is an object" is exactly that *A is an object*, except that it is not communicated through saying:

What Wittgenstein is saying to Russell when he denies that one can say that there are N objects is precisely ...[this]: *if there are, all right, only that there are* has to be expressed—has to be *shown*—in another way, namely by features of our symbolism (Hacker 2001a, 116).⁵⁰

⁵⁰ The passage is criticised by White too. See (White 2011, 64 n.71)

Here I try to examine Hacker's thought that well-formed sentences show the same thing that illuminating nonsense sentences guide us to see. My question is this: Do Hacker's illuminating nonsense sentences guide us to see the same thing that is shown by well-formed sentences or not? (Q1). My answer is negative.

Let's see how Hacker explains the way nonsense sentences elucidate what is shown by well-formed sentences. Take the sentence below:

(R) "A is an object"

This is a nonsense sentence. According to Hacker what it guides us to see is shown by relevant well-formed (meaningful and senseless) sentences such as:

(M) "A is round"

(S) "A is round or it is not the case that A is round"

Wittgenstein holds that meaningful sentences show their logical form, which is identical to the logical form of reality (4.121). The logical form of (M) is "Fx", where "F" represents all possible predicates and "x" stands for all possible objects. We can say:

Sentence (M) shows its logical form which is "Fx"

In addition to its logical form, the sentence (M) also shows the combinatorial form of its sub-sentential constituents. The combinatorial form of "A" is all predicates that can be legitimately combined with it, and the combinatorial form of "...is round" is all possible objects that fall under it. The combinatorial form of the former is "Fa" and the

combinatorial form of the latter is “Rx” (where “a” refers to the object A and “R” represents the predicate “being round”). Consequently we can make two additional claims:

Sentence (M) shows the combinatorial form of its constituent “A” which is “Fa”

Sentence (M) shows the combinatorial form of its constituent “...is round” which is “Rx”

A tautology, on the other hand, shows its logical form and the combinatorial possibilities of its component sentences. As regards the logical form we can say:

Sentence (S) shows its logical form, which is “ $P \vee \neg P$ ”

where “P” stands for all possible meaningful sentences of language. As far as it concerns the combinatorial possibilities of the sentential components of (S), i.e. the combinatorial possibilities of (M), the combinatorial form of (M) is all possible meaningful sentences which could be combined legitimately with (M). This combinatorial possibility/form of (M) is therefore “ $M \vee P$ ”. Here we can say:

Sentence (S) shows the combinatorial form of its component (M) which is “ $M \vee P$ ”⁵¹

⁵¹ Someone might object that what is shown by (S) is much richer than “ $M \vee P$ ” since it shows the logical form of its constituents as well. Therefore what it actually shows is this: “ $Fx \vee \neg Fx$ ”. I argue that although what we see in (S) is “ $Fx \vee \neg Fx$ ”, this is because its sentential component (M) is at work in showing too. Simultaneous to (S), its component (M) also shows something. The result is “ $Fx \vee \neg Fx$ ”. Here I have kept them (ideally) separate to display what (S) shows aside from the logical form of its component (M).

Remember Hacker's claim that (R) guides us to see some ineffable truths which could only be shown by well-formed sentences (S) and (M). The difficulty with Hacker's position is that what is shown by (M) and (S) has nothing to do with the truth that A is an object. What these well-formed sentences show are just logical and combinatorial *forms*. They do not show any type of *truth*. As a result nonsense sentence (R) suggests or guides us to see what is shown by well-formed sentences (M) and (S). This includes:

The logical forms "Fx" and " $P \vee \neg P$ "

The combinatorial forms "Fa", "Rx" and " $M \vee P$ ".

The problem with Hacker's view is that these are not truths (like *that A is an object* or *that being round is a predicate*): they are just forms.

One might argue that the combinatorial form shown "Fa" does express important truths about the object *a*. It expresses/communicates the truth that *a* is an object and cannot be used as a function. This attempt is dubious. It seems to me that what expresses the fact that *a* is an object is not the mere form "Fa", but (*the fact*) that "Fa" is the combinatorial form of *a*. In other words:

That/The fact that "Fa" is the combinatorial form of *a* expresses the fact that *a* is an object

As a result, the form “Fa” in itself is unable to express any facts/truths whatsoever. It is “Fa” being the combinatorial form of *a* which expresses/communicates the truth that *a* is an object.

Again, some advocates of the Ineffability reading might object that my picture is not charitable to the spirit of Hacker’s account. The objector would suggest that according to Hacker the relation between the illuminating nonsense (R) and a well formed sentence (M) must be understood in this way: the fact that (M) is meaningful shows that *A* is an object. Consequently in Hacker’s account we deal only with truths and not with forms. This claim could be formulated as follows:

(MH) That (M) is meaningful shows that *A* is an object and that being round is a predicate

(MH) is suggested as the proper way to read Hacker’s account of the relation between illuminating nonsense and well-formed sentences.

I think this suggestion does not help Hacker at all. (MH) does not seem to be able to help the proponent of Hacker. The reason is this: On closer inspection, (MH) turns out to be composed of three things: a sentence, a relation and a fact that the sentence stands in some relation to it. (MH) is composed of the following sentence:

(T) “‘A is round’ is meaningful”

The sentence is in the relation of “showing” to the fact that *A is an object (and/or being round is a predicate)* Putting it differently, (MH) must be rewritten into this way:

(MH*) “‘A is round’ is meaningful” shows that *A is an object* and/or *being round is a predicate*

This way of accounting for illuminating nonsense would work if (T) were a meaningful sentence, but the problem is that (T) is as much nonsense as the sentence (R). The sentence (T) is not bipolar and the predicate “...is meaningful” is not a proper predicate, by Wittgenstein’s standards. A meaningful sentence shows its sense (4.022); its sense does not need to be explained to us (4.02-4.021). Hacker’s reading would only allow well-formed sentences (M) and (S) show something. Nonsense sentences could at best guide us to well-formed sentences. (MH) and (MH*) are in conflict with the spirit of Hacker’s reading.⁵² (T) is nonsense and by Hacker’s standards cannot show anything.

As a result manoeuvres such as (MH) and (MH*) do not supply a way out for an advocate of Hacker’s interpretation. They would at best be retreats to Black’s way of reading the book, which relies on an ascription of the capacity of showing to nonsense sentences and identification of sentences of the *Tractatus* with sentences of logic (which are capable of showing).

Moreover, (MH) and (MH*) are at odds with the fundamental thought of the *Tractatus*, which is that logic is tautologous. With (MH) and (MH*) we revert to the Russell-Frege ontological commitment to logical truths and the possibility of communicating them. Here we bring back the idea that logic has content which may be

⁵² See (Hacker 2003, 22)

communicated in some way or other. This being so, Wittgenstein's criticism of Russell's Theory of Types is neutralised. Remember that Russell thought that there are logical truths such like A is an object that could be said in plain language. Hacker's Wittgenstein seems to have accepted Russell's ontological commitment, but to have made a merely terminological change by substituting "showable" for "sayable". Goldfarb levels the same objection:

[I]t is certainly the case that logical truths, being tautologies have no sayable content. But if showing is a type of communication, then it seems truths are not empty of content (ineffable, showable content); and logical truths are not empty of that sort of content. (Goldfarb 2011, 14)⁵³

I conclude that what the nonsense sentences might communicate is essentially different from what is shown by well-formed sentences. While well-formed sentences show their logical and combinatorial *forms*, nonsense sentences are claimed to communicate *truths*.

5.3.2 The 'Implication' Objection

Hacker's account of how certain nonsense sentences communicate important truths is the most unclear and difficult thing in his reading of the *Tractatus*. Remember that Hacker proposes that illuminating nonsense sentences communicate ineffable truths

⁵³ Also see (Jolley 2007, 43-46) and (Conant 2002, 421)

through guiding, intimating, gesturing and bringing the reader to see what is manifested in well-formed sentences of language (see Section 5.2.2.1b). Moreover, he holds that we can grasp, apprehend and understand what is meant to be communicated via the illuminating nonsense sentences.

I suggest that Hacker's conception of nonsense may be understood in terms of Gricean theory of implication. In what follows, I shall first sketch the Gricean analysis of implication. I will then show how Hacker's reading of the *Tractatus* fits into this theory. At the end, I will make an objection to Hacker's view.

Take the sentence below:

(1) "The door is open"

This sentence has a straightforward literal meaning which is exactly what it says. Nevertheless, it could have an implication as well as a literal meaning. Imagine that the sentence is uttered in a circumstance where the door is actually closed and the utterer seems to be feeling cold. A sufficiently rational listener (who is a competent speaker of the language) would assume that the sentence is not meant by the speaker to say what it literally says, but something else. The sentence has a literal meaning that:

(1Lit) The door is open

But it has an implication, which is what the speaker has actually meant by the sentence:

(1Imp) The door should be closed

Here we have a distinction between what the utterance (1) says and what it implicates. This distinction between “what is said” and “what is implicated” is part of Grice’s theory of language (see Grice 1989, 22-40). The literal meaning of a sentence can be different from what it implies. But, what a sentence says and what it implies are parts of the utterance’s meaning. Therefore, what is implicated by an utterance is no less a part of its meaning than what is directly said by it. What the sentence (1) says enables it to imply something else (indeed something *somewhat* opposite)⁵⁴ and it also leads the audience to grasp that implication. The implication of (1) can be grasped and apprehended by a competent language-user. Based on such prevalent linguistic phenomena, Grice suggested that we need to assume some speaker-meaning as well as sentence-meaning (literal meaning) for sentences (see Grice 1989, 87-93 and 117-123). The sentence-meaning of an utterance is its literal meaning which is conveyed by its meaningful expressions combined in logically legitimate way.⁵⁵ The speaker-meaning of an utterance is what the speaker intends to communicate by uttering that sentence. Therefore, the speaker-meaning is determined by the speaker’s intention. To sum up, we have two sets of distinctions:

⁵⁴ The expression “somewhat” is used deliberately to prevent a confusion that the implication of (1) is its logical negation “It is not the case that the door is open”. What we need is that “while an ironic trope must convey something that vividly contrasts with what is literally meant by the words, this need not be the “opposite” of the latter (Cooper 2009, 378).” In our example (1Imp) is *somewhat* opposite to (1Lit).

⁵⁵ I follow Miller in equating sentence-meaning with literal-meaning and identifying them with the truth-conditions of a meaningful sentence (see Miller 2007, 64)

Speaker-meaning vs. sentence-meaning (literal meaning)

What is said vs. what is implicated

What is said and what is implicated are both elements of meaning. In our present case of sentence (1), the literal meaning is perfectly sayable. In fact, the literal meaning of (1) is what it says, that is (1Lit). The speaker-meaning of (1) is sayable too. It could be said by the following sentence:

(1Imp*) "The door should be closed"

The literal meaning of (1) in the above illustrated circumstance leads us and implicates to us what its speaker actually means by uttering (1), i.e. (1Impl), which could in turn have been said straightforwardly by (1Imp*).

I hold that an advocate of a Gricean theory of implication accepts following four features:

(F₁) The primary sentence has a literal meaning (sentence-meaning).

(F₂) The primary sentence has a speaker-meaning.

(F₃) The primary sentence could imply/lead/guide the hearer to its speaker-meaning.

(F₄) The speaker-meaning of the primary sentence is expressible.

Hacker could be seen to have developed a conception of illuminating nonsense in a similar spirit to this very primitive picture of the Gricean theory of implication. His

explanation of how nonsense sentences could illuminate, I believe, has several (though not all) elements of above discussion. He holds that speakers intend to communicate something (F_2) by uttering illuminating nonsense sentences (in contrast to gibberish). They guide/intimate (rather than saying directly) hearers to those things (F_3). Once the audience understands the intention behind the illuminating nonsense, they get the truth that was to be communicated. However, Hacker's case of the *Tractatus* obviously does not fit (F_1) and (F_4). In what follows I examine different ways that rejecting one or all of these two last features could affect the process of communication.

Imagine that the implication of sentence (1) is inexpressible. Then we would have a case of implication which has all features except for (F_4). In such a case, the hearer understands what the speaker means by uttering (1) but she cannot express it verbally. Here, although we have a sort of inexpressibility, it is not absolutely impossible to express what the utterer means by (1). The hearer's non-verbal behavior in going and closing the door is an expression of what the utterer meant by (1). Here we have a non-linguistic expression of what the speaker asked indirectly to be done.

The audience must express (verbally or non-verbally) their understanding of the speaker-meaning, since otherwise it is very unclear how we could determine whether the audience has understood what the speaker intended to communicate by that sentence. I conclude that, although it is possible that the implication of an utterance is ineffable in some media, say linguistic medium, it must be expressible in some

way. I call this sort of inexpressibility “weak inexpressibility” because it involves only a weak and partial denial of (F₄).⁵⁶

The second case is where we have all features except for (F₁). This is a case where a speaker utters *seemingly* sheer nonsense (such as “Ab sur ah”), but the audience could express (verbally or otherwise) what the speaker means by that sentence. The problem with this case is that here we have a string of signs “Ab sur ah” which only *seems* to be nonsense. The fact that the audience could say what the sentence is meant to communicate proves that “Ab sur ah” is absolutely meaningful, though it has appeared nonsense to us. As a result the sentence directly means what it says and what it says is what its speaker means by it.

We can use this second case to illustrate how Grice tried to analyse what speakers mean with their utterances. We saw that Grice draws a distinction between sentence-meanings and speaker-meanings. Based on this distinction, he introduces a two-step programme for the analysis of ordinary sentences: determining sentence-meaning in terms of speaker-meaning and convention, and determining speaker-meaning in terms of mental states of the speaker (see Grice 1989, 92-116 and 213-223). The programme is obviously a *reductive analysis* of meaning. The speaker-meaning, accordingly, has a priority over sentence-meaning in the sense that to determine what an utterance means we need to explore what the speaker means by using that utterance:

⁵⁶ For a similar account of different sorts of inexpressibility see (Potter 2000, 169-172).

[T]he notion of speaker's-meaning is defined in terms of utterers' intentions, in a way that requires no use of the notion of sentence-meaning; and the notion of sentence-meaning is defined in terms of speaker's-meaning and convention, in a way which requires no use of the notion of sentence-meaning. The meaning of language is non-circularly analysed in terms of mental content (Miller 2007, 253).

Recall "Ab sur ah". If we can determine what is meant to be communicated by its speaker (its speaker-meaning), then we have managed to determine what the sentence means (its sentence-meaning). As a result, grasping the speaker's intention is the only way to understand the meaning of the *seemingly* nonsense sentence "Ab sur ah".⁵⁷ The case appears to be a *seemingly* nonsense sentence which in fact expresses a speaker-meaning. Therefore, what we have here is a perfectly meaningful sentence and its inexpressible implication is indeed what it is meant to communicate (its speaker-meaning).

Now, let's examine Hacker's notion of illuminating nonsense. In the light of Hacker's reading, the sentences of the *Tractatus* seem to have all listed features except for (F₁) and (F₄). They are not meaningful and their implications are not expressible. The situation here is in a sense the converse of the second case. There, the sentence which seemed nonsense to us was actually meaningful. In the case of the *Tractatus* we have a series of sentences which seem meaningful to the readers, but are actually nonsense.

⁵⁷ Also see (Lycan 2000, 111-112)

Take the sentence “The world is all that is the case”. This seems meaningful to the reader of the book, but it is actually nonsense. According to Hacker, the sentence is meant to direct the reader to grasp something ineffable about the relationship between the world and language. There are two ways to understand “ineffability”. The truth communicated by the sentence could be weakly inexpressible (that is, only linguistically inexpressible) or strongly inexpressible (that is, it is inexpressible in all possible linguistic or non-linguistic media).

Hacker holds that what is impossible to communicate through saying, i.e. linguistic expression, could be communicated indirectly, perhaps through some non-verbal expressions. Therefore, the Ineffability reading’s “inexpressibility” is quite weak. But it is still stronger than Carnap’s and Russell’s understanding of inexpressibility in the sense that they believe that it is possible to express what is at issue metalinguistically, whereas Hacker holds that no linguistic expression is possible.

Of course this is not a knock-down argument against Hacker’s reading. But it is meant to raise a concern about his interpretation and show the need for some sort of explanation and qualifications about how and in what way the truths of the book are strongly inexpressible.

5.3.3 The Therapeutic Reading’s Objections

The Ineffability interpretation of the *Tractatus* in general and Hacker’s account as a representative of it have received a battery of extensive criticisms from the

Therapeutic commentators. They have argued that though Hacker admits that the book is *stricto sensu* nonsense (Hacker 2001a, 105, 146), he “chickens out” by taking the sentences of the book as somehow capable of communicating truths about the world and language. To ‘chickening out’ here is to allow that Wittgenstein can imply, gesture, hint and say indirectly what cannot be said meaningfully and directly. “To chicken out”, Diamond writes, “is to pretend to throw away the ladder while standing firmly, or as firmly as one can, on it” (Diamond 1991, 194). An Ineffability reader, accordingly, never takes the final step (embodied in 6.54) and does not drop the ladder. Though reading the nonsensical remarks lead her to the recognition of nonsensicality of the book, she keeps the ineffable truths at the end of the process of reading.

It is helpful to look at the phenomenology of reading the *Tractatus* from the Ineffability interpretation perspective. In what follows, I shall first describe Conant and Diamond’s illustration of the mental stages that an Ineffability reader undergoes through reading the *Tractatus* (Section 5.3.3 (a)). I shall then highlight two major commitments of the Ineffability reading (according to the Therapeutic commentators) (Section 5.3.3 (b)). This last section paves the way to a discussion of the Therapeutic reading in the next chapter.

5.3.3 (a) The Phenomenology⁵⁸ of Reading the *Tractatus* from an Ineffability Perspective

Conant (2002, 418-424) and Diamond (2000) give an illustration of different mental stages that Ineffability readers undergo through reading the *Tractatus*. I will present it as a three-stage process as follows:

Stage 1: illusion of sense

At first, the reader has an illusion of reading a meaningful book. As a result, he thinks that he is presented with a meaningful theory of meaning which is expressed by the remarks of the book. The source of the illusion of sense is in adopting a psychologistic conception of meaning according to which the meaning of an expression (word or a sentence) is its mental accompaniment. Diamond (2000, 159) calls this the “psychological imagination”. We see a series of sentences consisting of words which only *seem* to have meaning in isolation from the sentence in which they occurred. As a result we take them as meaningful. A nonsense sentence “Caesar is a prime number” is a perfect example of sentence composed of *seemingly meaningful* words:

[We] *believe* that we have given meaning to some of the constituent parts of a proposition when we have not done so...In such cases, we undergo the

⁵⁸ I follow Conant in talk of “the phenomenology of meaning that we undergo” (See Conant 2002, 446 n.87) and mean the way that it appears to us that we mean something determinate by our words (See Conant 2002, 423).

phenomenology of meaning something determinate while failing to mean anything determinate by our words (Conant 2002, 418).

It seems to us that the *Tractatus* is composed of meaningful sentences since its sentences are composed of independently meaningful words.

Stage 2: Recognition of the nonsensicality of the book

As a result of this illusion of sense, we regard ourselves to be presented with a theory of meaning, expressed by the *seemingly* meaningful remarks of the book. The theory states that meaningful sentences are bipolar, that is, they are capable of being true and capable of being false. In the light of this doctrine, we find that sentences of the book fail to meet this condition and as a result they must be considered nonsense. But the nonsense sentences of the *Tractatus* are clearly different from gibberish (which is a composition of meaningless constituents). This difference leads us to another level of illusion.

Stage 3: Illusion of substantial nonsense

The nonsense sentences of the book are imagined to belong to a type superior to obvious/overt gibberish. Here, according to Diamond (2000, 159) we face a “false imagination” of a “point of view for philosophical investigation” from which we can understand what is intended to be communicated by covert nonsense sentences.

Conant says:

Thus what happens to us as readers of the *Tractatus* – assuming the word succeeds in its aim- is that we are drawn into an illusion of occupying a certain 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... We take ourselves to be occupying a perspective from which we can view the logical structure of language ‘from sideways on’ (Conant 2002, 422).

We imagine, mistakenly, that there is a philosophical standpoint outside of language and the world from which we can see the world as a whole (Diamond 2000, 160). As a result we take ourselves to be able to communicate truths via nonsense sentences composed of meaningful constituents. We hold that these nonsense sentences, in contrast to gibberish, have something substantial and significant to communicate. The result, according to the Ineffability reading, is a series of ineffable truths. This move is to save the book from being merely negative nonsense. According to the Therapeutic commentators the Ineffability reader is entangled with this false imagination and is unable to see that there is no “sideways” view of language. Unlike the psychological imagination from which an Ineffability reader finds a way out, the imagination of the philosophical standpoint is just a prison from which the Ineffability reader has no escape. Based on the phenomenology of meaning experienced by an Ineffability reading, the Therapeutic commentators have characterised two central interrelated features of the Ineffability reading. This will be the issue of the next section.

5.3.3 (b) The Core Commitments of the Ineffability Reading

Conant has characterised two central features of the Ineffability reading:

The first is that... those propositions of the *Tractatus* about which Wittgenstein said, at remark 6.54, that they are to be recognized as ‘nonsensical’ to convey ineffable insights. The second feature is ...the idea that what such recognition requires on the part of a reader of the *Tractatus* is the application of a theory that has been advanced in the body of the work – a theory that specifies the conditions under which a sentence makes sense and the conditions under which it does not (Conant and Diamond 2004, 47).

These features may be summarised as follows:

The idea of Substantial Nonsense: Nonsense is not just mere nonsense (gibberish, negative nonsense); there is substantial nonsense too.

The idea of the Wholesale Process of Recognition of Nonsensicality: The recognition of nonsensicality is a result of a wholesale procedure.

The first idea is obviously a rejection of Malcolm’s implicit Meaninglessness Assumption, which says that nonsense has a merely negative meaning. Substantial nonsense, according to Conant (2002, 400), is “a proposition composed of signs that symbolise, but which has a logically flawed syntax due to a clash in the logical category of its symbols”, whereas “mere nonsense” is “a string composed of signs in

which no symbol can be perceived, and which hence has no discernible logical syntax". Substantial nonsense is nonsense which positively communicates (by illuminating) truths that cannot be said by meaningful sentences. These are, accordingly, truths about the transcendental condition of the possibility of meaningful talk.

The idea of the substantial conception of nonsense is not a straightforward account of Hacker's reading. Two observations are in order. First, Hacker (2001a, 117) says "there are no different senses of the word 'nonsense'. Nor are there different kinds of nonsense—nonsense no more comes in kinds than it comes in degrees" (Hacker 2001a, 117). This does not match Conant's attribution of the idea of two types of nonsense to Hacker. However, Hacker (*ibid*) insists that unlike gibberish, which is uttered unintentionally, the philosophical nonsense sentences of the *Tractatus* are uttered intentionally by Wittgenstein. They are meant to do a job (leading the reader to the recognition of the nonsensicality of the book).

Second, Hacker thinks that philosophically speaking, the idea that some nonsense sentences are more significant than others (i.e. the idea of substantial nonsense) is false. But, he believes that exegetically speaking it is the correct picture of what Wittgenstein thought when he wrote the *Tractatus*. According to Hacker (2001a, 115-116) he thought of his book as significant nonsense.⁵⁹ Hacker's second manoeuvre, as Goldfarb (2011, 14) has rightly pointed out, is strange and "astonishing as a guide

⁵⁹ This strategy involves in rejecting Malcolm's implicit Exegetical Assumption, which says that nonsense in the *Tractatus* has an exclusively negative meaning, while admitting his Meaninglessness Assumption.

to interpretive practice” (Goldfarb 2011, 14). I find this second reply of Hacker’s uncharitable to Wittgenstein and more like a dismissive reading of the book.

The idea of a wholesale process of recognising the nonsensicality of the book is correlated with the first idea. As a result of accounting for ineffable truths about conditions of meaningful talk we have a theory of meaning which can be applied to the sentences of the book itself. The result is that the book is nonsense. Accordingly, “there can be a moment in a reader’s assimilation of the doctrines of the book when the theory (once it has been fully digested by the reader) can be brought simultaneously to bear *wholesale* on all of the (putatively nonsensical) propositions that make up the work” (Conant 2011, 628). Once the reader understands the ineffable theory of meaning proposed in the book she can and will evaluate the whole book as nonsensical.

The Therapeutic interpreters have based their reading on criticisms of both of the central features of the Ineffability reading discussed above. According to the Therapeutic interpreters the purpose of the book is not to communicate ineffable truths, and the process of recognising the nonsensicality of the book is not a wholesale process. As a result, the Therapeutic readers’ philosophical and exegetical motivations for their positive account supply us with their arguments against the Ineffability account. Hence, I will discuss these arguments, in the next chapter.

Chapter 6

The Therapeutic⁶⁰ Attempt to Block the Reductio Response; the case of Conant and Diamond

6.0 Introduction

This chapter is built around two general considerations, one thematic and one methodological. Thematically speaking the chapter has two major parts. The first part is devoted to an explanation of the Therapeutic reading and the second one deals with objections to the reading. In the first part I will try to give a fairly uncontroversial explanation of the Therapeutic reading (Sections 6.1-6.5). To do so I will establish my description of two ideas which are presented by the Therapeutic commentators as the core commitments of their reading:

The Austere Conception of Nonsense: All nonsense is plain/mere nonsense

The Piecemeal Process of Recognition of Nonsense: The recognition of nonsensicality is a piecemeal process

The two commitments are taken to present a “framework” for reading the *Tractatus*. They are considered as methodological guidelines which everybody should follow when reading the “body” of the book. These two ideas are both based on the idea

⁶⁰ The reading is also labelled as “resolute”. To keep things simple I will use the name “therapeutic”.

that there cannot be meaningful “theories of meaning”. The reason that a sentence is nonsense is not that it fails to meet some criterion of meaningfulness. In the same way, the recognition of the nonsensicality of a sentence is not a result of applying a theory of meaning to it. There is a more or less common understanding among the Therapeutic readers of the first commitment, that is, the Austere Conception of Nonsense. The second commitment, however, has been interpreted in at least two different ways by Conant and Goldfarb. I will explain the notion of “piecemeal” and how it can be understood in a Therapeutic way. I will follow Conant’s account according to which what makes a reading “piecemeal” is its *method*, not its *application*.

The Therapeutic interpreters give many reasons and much exegetical evidence for the two commitments. I will first discuss the philosophical motivations behind them and then consider the exegetical evidence (Section 6.3). I shall explain two philosophical justifications for the austere conception of nonsense: Frege’s context principle and the Gricean conception of meaning. The Therapeutic readers are explicit and in agreement about how words have meaning, but they seem to have different views about how sentences receive their meaning. The two justifications I consider will be supplemented with a sketch of a “use” conception of meaning, explaining how and in what ways, according to the Therapeutic readers, sentences make sense. The discussion of the philosophical motivations behind the core commitments will be followed by a discussion of textual evidence from the *Tractatus*.

The first part will end with a discussion of the purpose of the book (according to the Therapeutic interpretation) and how the Therapeutic reading manages to block the Reductio Response (Sections 6.4 and 6.5). The aim of the book, as will be explained, is to relieve us of our inclination to do philosophy. Discharging this aim is a matter of making a causal impact on the reader's mind. The causal effect of the book, however, is not uninformative and non-cognitive. I will argue that the cognitive result of the book is to return to the reader her practical knowledge of how to use linguistic expressions properly.

Methodologically speaking, in explaining the reading, I will try to answer to three questions:

The Methodological question: How ought the *Tractatus* to be (or not be) read?

The Phenomenological question: How is the *Tractatus* read by the Therapeutic readers?

The Teleological question: What is the purpose of the book?

The methodological question concerns the way that the book ought to (or ought not) be read. The phenomenological question, however, has a descriptive tone. It is about the way in which the Therapeutic readers actually read the book. It concerns the different mental stages that the Therapeutic reader passes through whilst reading the book. Finally the teleological question is about the purpose of the book when it is read from the Therapeutic perspective. These questions will be dealt with in different stages of my description of the Therapeutic reading. The first question is dealt with in

section 6.1. The second question will be attended to in section 6.2.2(b). Finally, in section 6.4, I will discuss the teleological question.

In the second part of the chapter I will explore four important objections to the Therapeutic reading (Section 6.6). The first objection is advanced by Schroeder and White and mainly targets the Therapeutic reading's austere conception of nonsense. Their argument starts by assuming that nonsense according to the Therapeutic interpretation is a sentence which contradicts itself. Then they argue that this conception of nonsense is philosophically incorrect and exegetically unable to explain the *Tractatus*. The objection, I will argue, is based on a false assumption.

The second, third and fourth objections, however, are forceful objections against the interpretation. The Therapeutic reading's frame-body dualism has been criticised as methodologically defective. The main reason is that the Therapeutic commentators have based the justification for the framework (which is expected to be a guide to how to read the body) on evidence from the body. Somewhat related to this objection, some opponents of the reading have claimed that the austere conception of nonsense and the piecemeal process of reading are informed by theoretical grounds. The argument is that these commitments rely on a contextualist theory of meaning which is motivated by the remarks from the body of the book. The fourth objection is that the Therapeutic commentators are unable to explain how to climb a ladder which is composed of mere nonsense sentences. The linked idea is that even the "imaginative understanding" of the utterer of nonsense is unable to help the reader to read the book.

I take these objections to signal deficiencies in the Therapeutic reading. In the next chapter I will take the opportunity to try to advance a new Therapeutic account of the *Tractatus* which is free of these deficiencies.

6.1 Two core commitments of the Therapeutic reading

In a letter to Ludwig von Ficker, whom Wittgenstein had hoped to convince to publish the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein explained the purpose of his book as follows:

[T]he book's point is an ethical one. I once meant to include in the preface a sentence which is not in fact there now but which I will write out for you here, because it will perhaps be a key to the work for you. What I meant to write, then, was this: My work consists of two parts: the one presented here plus all that I have *not* written. And it is precisely this second part that is the important one. My book draws limits to the sphere of the ethical from the inside as it were, and I am convinced that this is the *ONLY rigorous* way of drawing these limits. In short, I believe that where *many* others today are just *gassing*, I have managed in my book to put everything firmly in place by being silent about it. And for that reason, unless I am very much mistaken, the book will say a great deal that you yourself want to say. Only perhaps you won't see that it is said in the book. For now, I would recommend to you to read the *preface* and the *conclusion*, because they contain the most direct expression of the point of the book. (Wittgenstein 1979, 16)

The letter is very significant for the Therapeutic reading. Exegetically, it provides a clear report of the intention behind the *Tractatus* and a clue to how the remark 6.54 should be understood. Here Wittgenstein gives a specific status to the preface and the conclusion of the book over the rest of it. This has motivated a 'Frame-Body' dualism in the Therapeutic reading. According to this idea, the preface and the book's closing remarks are to be considered the "framework" in which Wittgenstein "combines remarks about the aim of the book and the kind of reading it requires" (Diamond 2000, 149). The rest of the book is what is to be read as the 'body' of the book.

The framework of the *Tractatus*, Conant argues, has a specific character because it provides instructions for reading the book. The framework provides answers to the questions: Why does the book have the *form* that it does? Is the aphoristic and ladder-like form of the book "merely an optional decorative feature of the book" (Conant 2002, 426 n.7)? The frame of the *Tractatus*, Conant says, is such that (unlike most works in philosophy) it cannot be "divested without violence to the content it harbours". The framework stands in a profound relation to the philosophical ambitions of the book and tells us "why the text comes in the shape that it does" (Conant 2002, 377). Therefore, the preface and the conclusion appear to have a specific methodological importance for reading the book.

In the light of Wittgenstein's letter, the Therapeutic commentators have offered a different interpretation of the penultimate remark of the book:

My propositions serve as elucidations in the following way: anyone who understands me eventually recognizes them as nonsensical, when he has used them—as steps—to climb up beyond them (6.54).

Unlike the Ineffability interpreters, the Therapeutic ones contend that the remark does not suggest that the reader is required to understand the *sentences* of the book in order to reach the top of the ladder, where she recognises the nonsensicality of the book. The key to recognition of nonsensicality is rather in “anyone who understands *me*”.⁶¹ It is the understanding of the author which plays the crucial role in leading the reader to the top of the ladder. Demand for understanding the author supplies the reader with a methodological guide to reading the book. But how and in what ways does understanding Wittgenstein lead his readers finally to discard the *Tractatus* as nonsense? I will come back to this question in section 6.2.

The Therapeutic commentators suggest a rather conservative understanding of how the methodological importance of the frame should be understood. The frame, according to them, tells us how the book *ought not* to be read. Therefore, it “leave[s] a great many questions about just how the *Tractatus* ought to be read in detail unanswered” (Conant and Diamond 2004, 47). This conservative account has a liberal consequence for reading the book from the Therapeutic perspective. The frame at best provides a “scheme of interpretation” (Sullivan 2002, 53-54), or a “program for reading the book” (Conant and Diamond 2004, 47). As a consequence,

⁶¹ Conant (2002, 379 and 427 n.13) has given an illuminating history of Wittgenstein’s correction of Ogden’s translation of this remark to support the emphatic importance of the phrase “anyone who understands me”.

a variety of Therapeutic readings are possible. The frame only provides a general outline of how the book should be read, but it does not speak about what to read in the book. Conant says:

To be a resolute reader is to be committed at most to a certain programmatic conception of the lines along which those details are to be worked out, but it does not deliver a general recipe for reading the book – a recipe that one could apply to the various parts of the book in anything like a straightforward or mechanical way. And we do not apologize for this. For we think that this is just how it should be. There should be no substitute for the hard task of working through the book on one's own. A resolute reading does not aim to provide a skeleton key for unlocking the secrets of the book in a manner that would transform the ladder into an elevator; so that one just has to push a button... and one will immediately be caused to ascend to Tractarian heights, without ever having to do any ladder-climbing on one's own (Conant and Diamond 2004, 47).

Reading the book therapeutically requires a laborious task of reading the remarks one by one. Nobody could make this task any easier by giving keys for unlocking the book's secrets. You need to read the book *yourself* and see how it takes *you* to the end of the ladder. As a result, we could have a variety of Therapeutic interpretations which are equally therapeutic readings of the book as far as they remain committed to the principle ideas of the whole programme. One might argue that this account of the Therapeutic makes it impossible to say what readings are *not* Therapeutic, since we are all eligible to have our own understandings of the book. This is not true. Like

every other programme the Therapeutic reading has a solid core which says what sorts of readings are illegitimate. The conservative side of the programme discards the Ineffability attitudes as exegetically incorrect readings, since they do not hold onto the core ideas of the programme. Conant and Diamond have presented the core commitments of the Therapeutic reading as negations of the two allegedly fundamental ideas of the Ineffability reading. Therefore, the general core commitments of the Therapeutic reading are as follows:

The Austere Conception of Nonsense: All nonsense is plain/mere nonsense

The Piecemeal Process of the Recognition of Nonsense: The recognition of nonsensicality is a piecemeal process

Remember the substantial conception of nonsense (which Conant attributes to the Ineffability reading): nonsense is not just mere nonsense (negative nonsense), it could be substantial nonsense too. The idea was that early Wittgenstein had understood the nonsense sentences of his book as nonsense sentences which have something rather significant to communicate. Accordingly, they communicate ineffable truths about language and the world. The first commitment of the Therapeutic interpretation is an affirmation of Malcolm's implicit Meaninglessness Assumption (already denied by Hacker) which says that nonsense has a merely negative meaning.

The austere conception of nonsense is a rejection of the idea that there are positive and negative (gibberish) nonsense. Mere nonsense, according to this conception, "is

from a logical point of view, the only kind of nonsense there is” (Conant 2002, 381). As a result, seemingly meaningful sentences such as “There are objects” or “A is an object” are not logically speaking better than obviously gibberish strings of words like “Socrates is identical”, “Socrates is frabble” (Diamond 1991, 197) “Caesar is a prime number” (Conant 2002) or “piggly wiggle tiddle” (Diamond 2000, 151).

The most immediate consequence of this idea is that, once the reader finishes reading the *Tractatus*, she is left with mere nonsense, incapable of communicating any ineffable truths (if indeed there are any such things). The rejection of the idea of ineffable truths is the link between the first commitment of the Therapeutic reading and its second commitment. According to the Ineffability account the recognition of nonsensicality of the book is a by-product of grasping the ineffable insights communicated by the remarks of the book. This process, Conant holds, is a wholesale process in the sense that once the reader has grasped the ineffable theory of meaning of the book, she recognises that all of the seemingly meaningful sentences of the book uniformly fail to meet the criteria of meaningfulness. The rejection of the first commitment, as a result, compels denial of the second commitment.

This notion of “piecemeal” needs some clarification. In the next section I will explore the meaning of this notion and different ways to understand it.

6.2 Meanings of “Piecemeal”

In following two sections I shall try to clarify the notion of “piecemeal” as it is understood by the Therapeutic readers. To accomplish this I shall first discuss what the notion of “piecemeal” does *not* mean. Then I initiate a positive account of what is considered “piecemeal”. Finally I will examine two conceptions of this notion in the Therapeutic account.

6.2.1 What “Piecemeal” does not mean

According to the Ineffability interpretation, the reader first grasps the ineffable theory of meaning communicated by the book (which draws the limits of sense) and then applies this theory to the sentences of the book. In this way, the application of the theory is a wholesale task in the sense that “there can be a moment in a reader’s assimilation of the doctrines of the book when the theory (once it has been fully digested by the reader) can be brought *simultaneously to bear wholesale on all of the (putatively nonsensical) propositions* that make up the work” (Conant 2011, 628 emphasis is added).

This careless characterisation of the notion of “wholesale” is problematic in two ways. First, it misrepresents the Ineffability reading. Secondly, it misplaces the conflict between the Therapeutic and the Ineffability interpretations.

The first problem with this characterisation is that it ascribes an obviously false belief to the Ineffability readers. It is pretty clear that the application of any theory whatsoever, to its objects is a time-consuming process which could not be done in the blink of an eye. The application of the ineffable theory of meaning too is a piecemeal process in this sense. The theory is required to be applied to each sentence, or at least to every sentence which seems to express the idea of the book or seems to provide an argument for that idea. It is only after such a time-consuming process that the *Tractatus* can be evaluated as uniformly nonsense. Conant himself states that:

[Calling the Ineffability process of reading “wholesale”] does not mean that in a single glance the devotee of such a theory will be able to take in that every nonsensical string is, indeed, nonsensical prior to having to inspect the strings in question. Such a discovery will take time and will require the examination of a great many individual linguistic strings (Conant 2011, 629).

The second problem with this interpretation of “wholesale” is that it reduces the difference between the Ineffability and the Therapeutic readings to the quantity of sentences which are recognised as nonsense at a time. According to this incorrect picture the Ineffability process of reading the book consists in grasping its theory of meaning and finally applying it to *all* sentences of the book, whereas in reading the book therapeutically we unmask nonsensicality *one* sentence at a time. Conant comments:

This way of putting the difference reduces it to a matter of the *quantity* of sentences which stand or fall through the exercise of a particular intellectual act: in the one case, only one sentence at a time; in the other case, a whole class of sentences at once... [T]he fundamental difference between these two readings lies not in their respective understandings of the quantity of exercises of the requisite intellectual capacity, but rather in their respective understandings of the *qualitative* nature of the capacity thus exercised (Conant 2011, 629).

This differentiation of the readings does not represent the qualitative nature of the different methods which are invoked in them. In the next section, I will explore the importance of *method* in understanding the notion of “piecemeal” therapeutically. But before that, one more observation: Conant (2012, 627) and Goldfarb (1997, 71) (2012, 15) emphasise that the piecemeal process of reading the book is not a sentence-by-sentence process. It is rather a case-by-case process. In each stage we inspect one set of sentences which frame a distinct philosophical issue (Conant 2011, 628), and show that they are nonsense. For instance remarks 1s and 2s could be seen as sets of sentences which are intended to provide an ontological theory and remarks 3 and 4 could be regarded as presenting a theory of propositions. By case-by-case recognition that there is no ontological theory or theory of language the reader realises the nonsensicality of the remarks involved in those discussions (see Goldfarb 1997, 71).

6.2.2 What “Piecemeal” means

Conant suggests that “piecemeal” should be understood as a notion standing for a specific method of inspecting strings of words. He introduces a distinction between a “mechanical” procedure of inspection and an “imaginative” procedure of inspection. The mechanical procedure requires “an inspection of the string in question in order to see if it accords with the dictates of the theory” (Conant 2011, 629). Here we have a theory of meaning which is to be applied mechanically to each sentence to determine whether it is meaningful or not. The imaginative procedure of inspection is a human process and cannot be carried out mechanically. It requires the involvement of the reader’s imagination in understanding.

I distinguish two perspectives in explaining the piecemeal imaginative reading of the *Tractatus*: a normative account and a descriptive account. The normative account explains what the reader has to do in order to read the book: she should try to understand the author. The descriptive account illustrates what it is involved in understanding the author: undergoing a certain experience of understanding. The descriptive account presents a description of the changes in mental states of readers and the changes that they experience in their state of understanding the author (Conant 2011, 628). In what follows, I shall first discuss the normative view and then explain the descriptive account.

6.2.2 (a) The Normative Account. The normative account suggests how we should read the book. Recall the methodological guide of the framework, that is, the significance of trying to understand the author, instead of his sentences. The non-

mechanical piecemeal process of reading the book is a process which demands, precisely, that the reader tries to understand the author. The imaginative nature of the piecemeal reading of the *Tractatus*, therefore, requires attempting to understand the author of the book. Diamond (2000) has given a full account of how one could understand the utterer of nonsense. Accordingly, one requires an “imaginative activity of understanding” the speaker. Here I do not have space to discuss this issue. I can only note that the proposal has received forceful objections from the Ineffability commentators (Schonbsumdfeld 2007, 113-114; Koethe 2003). The idea and how it could motivate a reading of a set of uniformly nonsense sentence is unclear to me.

6.2.2 (b) The Descriptive Account. The descriptive account explains the path that a reader traverses when reading the *Tractatus*. The account discusses the different mental states that the reader experiences while reading the book. Accordingly, the experience of reading *Tractatus* consists in undergoing a certain experience of imagining that the sentences in question are meaningful (cf. Diamond’s “psychological imagination” in Section 5.3.3 (a)). This stage of reading is followed eventually by a realisation that we have not given any meaning to the sentences.

Conant says:

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... 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 be a victim of a hallucination) (Conant 2002, 423).

A theory of meaning is a mechanical means for determining whether a sentence is meaningful or not, but it does not have anything to do with “the reader’s phenomenology of having understood something determinate by the form of words in question” (Conant 2002, 423). According to the Therapeutic commentators, it is exactly this second task which is philosophically significant and exegetically essential for understanding the *Tractatus*. Conant (2012, 627-628) thinks that anyone who understands the author naturally undergoes a transformation from illusion of understanding the book to dissolution of this illusion. Now the question is this: how is the piecemeal process of reading the book carried out? In the next section, I will explore two Therapeutic answers to this question.

6.2.3 The Imaginative Piecemeal Process of Reading: Goldfarb and Conant

The two core commitments of the Therapeutic reading, as was just explained, provide at most a scheme and a programme for understanding the book. However, we need something more positive about how the piecemeal (that is, imaginative engagement in) reading of the book should take place. In this section, I will discuss two general ways of reading the book piecemeal (that is, two ways of imaginatively engaging with it). Conant-and-Diamond and Goldfarb suggest that an imaginative piecemeal process of reading consists in a procedure of “interrogating” the sentences

of the book. They give two different accounts of how the process of interrogation could proceed. I shall first explain Goldfarb's conception of interrogation and then discuss Conant and Diamond's conception.

Goldfarb suggests that the process of interrogation is based on following the logical consequences of the sentences to the point where the sentence turns out to be incoherent. He says:

[I]f we try to follow out some of the logical implications of calling something an object [that is, logical implication of a sentence "A is an object"], given where the notion is supposed to be fitting in the theory, then we will get nothing... We may think the text presents a theory, but that just shows we have not asked ourselves certain questions about it, which would lead us to follow out logical implications of it, and that would make it implode (Goldfarb 1997, 70).

The idea is that, in order to interrogate a sentence, we need to follow its logical implications. In the case of the *Tractatus*, the interrogation ends in discovering the incoherence of the sentences in question. Then such an incoherent (set of) sentence(s) is to be regarded as nonsense.

Conant and Diamond state that the interrogation of sentences is the activity of philosophical clarification which is intended to bring into view the use of these sentences. This attempt of elucidation "can bring out that no use has been fixed on for some or other sign, or indeed that we have been in an unclear way trying to run together two quite different sorts of use, wanting neither the one nor the other but

both” (Conant and Diamond 2004, 64). At the end of the interrogation we realise that the *Tractatus* is mere/plain nonsense since no meaning is given to its sentences. The process of piecemeal interrogation takes the reader from the illusion of sense to the recognition of this illusion and consequently to its dissolution. Unlike the wholesale procedure, here the illusion of sense explodes from within, not through application of a theory (Conant 2002, 424).

Unlike Conant and Diamond, who suggest that the result of interrogations is the recognition that sentences are just plain nonsense, Goldfarb suggests that “the rejection of the corpus is based on the emergence of contradiction, not because the sentences are syntactic word salads [plain nonsense]” (Williams 2004, 23). Goldfarb’s reading is called a “reductio”⁶² or “dialectical”⁶³ interpretation of the book.

I do not intend to discuss Goldfarb’s conception of the piecemeal procedure in detail, but it is worth noting two connected worries about his reading:

First, Goldfarb’s reading is exegetically unfaithful to the book. Wittgenstein had judged the book to be nonsense (remark 6.54), but not self-contradictory. Though Goldfarb sees the *Tractatus* as a long *reductio* argument levelled against Russell and Frege’s account of logic and language, his conception of this argument is far from *reductio ad absurdum* arguments. To use Hacker’s terminology, Goldfarb sees the *Tractatus* as a *reductio ad contradictionem*.

⁶² (Williams 2004, 23)

⁶³ (Biletzki 2003, 82-93)

Secondly, he suggests that the process of interrogation involves revealing the logical implications of sentences. Now in case of the *Tractatus* we have sentences which only *seem* meaningful. Goldfarb thinks that interrogation of the seemingly meaningful sentences of the *Tractatus* reveals that they are really incoherent. The problem with Goldfarb is that the logical implications of the sentences which only *seem to be meaningful* cannot be *real* incoherencies. Think of a really meaningful sentence “I am a liar”. The sentence leads into real incoherence because if it is true, then I am lying and the sentence is false. An example of the *Tractatus* sentence “A is an object”, however, cannot collapse into real incoherence because to be incoherent it needs to be true and false simultaneously (compare with “I am a liar”). But by the standards of the *Tractatus*, nonsense sentences cannot have any truth-values, whatsoever.⁶⁴

Conant and Diamond’s account of piecemeal procedure is the more prevalent conception in the literature on the Therapeutic reading. Therefore, I will use the Conant-Diamond notion of piecemeal as the standard conception of the term. It is worth noting that Goldfarb’s and Conant-and-Diamond’s conceptions of “piecemeal” are not more than two general tendencies in adopting the Therapeutic interpretation’s second core commitment (The recognition of nonsensicality is a piecemeal process). We are still far away from saying anything positive about exactly how a great deal of the book works in detail (Conant and Diamond 2004, 47).

⁶⁴ Williams runs a similar objection and holds that Goldfarb’s *reductio* argument turns the *Tractatus* into a self-contradictory theory (Williams 2004, 30 n.24).

To sum up, the Therapeutic process of reading the book and the recognition of its nonsensicality cannot be qualified by the claim that it is *in practice* a piecemeal process, since the Ineffability process of reading the book is in practice piecemeal too. The key point is that only the Therapeutic reading is *in principle* piecemeal too. The interpretation depends on the imaginative engagement of the reader in interrogating sentences of the book and eventually imploding them. The Ineffability reading, in contrast, is in principle a mechanical wholesale process of applying a theory of meaning to the sentences of the book. The piecemeal process of interrogating, according to the Therapeutic commentators, operates on a case-by-case basis and dissolves one case at each step

6.3 Motivations for the Core Commitments

The core commitments of the Therapeutic account are motivated in two ways: philosophical and exegetical. The Therapeutic readers argue that philosophically speaking there is no substantial nonsense (the first commitment) and that to inspect the meaningfulness or nonsensicality of linguistic strings we do not necessarily need a theory of meaning. The recognition of meaningfulness or nonsensicality comes as a by-product of a piecemeal process of inspecting and reading the sentence (the second commitment). The first commitment, as was mentioned before, is an admission of Malcolm's implicit Meaninglessness Assumption, which says that nonsense has a merely negative meaning.

The two features of the Therapeutic reading are supported by a further claim that these commitments are the ideas that early Wittgenstein adhered to. This is an explicit affirmation of another of Malcolm's implicit assumptions, that is, the Exegetical Assumption that nonsense in the *Tractatus* has an exclusively negative meaning (which is the assumption already rejected by Hacker). Exegetical evidence is required to support this additional idea. In what follows I will first explain the philosophical justifications and then discuss the exegetical motivations.

6.3.1 Philosophical Motivations

In this section, I will explore two philosophical justifications for the austere conception of nonsense: Frege's context principle and the Gricean conception of meaning. The Therapeutic readers are explicit and in agreement about how words have meaning, but they seem to have different views about how sentences receive their meaning. These two will be supplemented with a sketch of a "use" conception of meaning, as a third motivation, explaining how and in what ways, according to the Therapeutic readers, sentences make sense.

Take the sentence "A is an object". This sentence seems to be meaningful; it is composed of expressions which seem to be meaningful independently of the sentence in which they occur. The proper name "A" has a reference in the world which is A, and the predicate "...is an object" seems to stand for a concept which "...is an object" refers to in the sentence "There is an object on the table". As a result, the sentence seems to have meaningful constituents. But the problem is that in "A is an object" they have been joined together in a logically illegitimate way. The expression

“...is an object” is a second-order concept-expression which according to the logico-syntactical rules of language can only be legitimately combined with a first-order concept-expression (see Section 5.2.1). The name “A”, however, is a proper name of an individual and, again with respect to the logico-syntactical rules of language, can only be legitimately combined with a first-order concept-expression. As a result, in the sentence “A is an object” we have two completely meaningful constituents which have been joined together illegitimately.

The Therapeutic interpreters see this account of the nonsensicality of “A is an object” as common to the Ineffability and positivist commentators. This account is considered by the Therapeutic readers as the wrong way to conceive of meaning and nonsensicality. I distinguish two philosophical assumptions behind the previous accounts and take them as the targets of the Therapeutic reading’s criticisms. These assumptions are the following:

Words have meaning in isolation from their sentential context (cf. Diamond 2000, 159).

Strings of signs are intrinsically either cases of nonsense or meaningful sentences (Conant 2002, 458).

I take the austere conception of nonsense to involve rejection of both of these assumptions. In what follows I discuss the context principle as a repudiation of the first presumption and the Gricean account of meaning as a rejection of the second one.

6.3.1 (a) The Context Principle

The first assumption according to which words have meaning in isolation from any sentential contexts is obviously a psychologistic conception of meaning. On that view, meanings of expressions are mental images which speakers associate with them. Meanings of words, therefore, can be grasped in isolation from sentential context. We just perceive the ideas that words recall (that is, their mental accompaniments). This account of meaning, as we saw in the first chapter (see Section 1.9.1), is opposed by Frege's well-known "Context Principle":

Never to ask for the meaning of a word in isolation, but only in the context of a proposition (Frege 1884, xxii)

The context principle suggests that the expressions "A" and "...is an object" can have or fail to have meaning, depending on the sentential context in which they occur. Think of an obviously nonsense sentence like "A and is an object are". The psychologist tendency is to think of it as an illegitimate combination of meaningful words. But Frege's context principle entails that in this case we have only an illusion of meaningful constituents. Diamond refers to this illusion as a "psychological illusion" (see Section 5.3.3 (a)). This is the reader's illusion of sense in reading sentences such as "A is an object". In the light of Frege's context principle, we realise that the expressions "A" and "...is an object" in "A and is an object are" are as much nonsense as "piggly" in "piggly wiggle tiddle". The source of the illusion of sense is

the similar appearances of words in different linguistic strings. We have meaningful sentences “There are objects on the table” and “A is a brave man” which have the same constituents as “A is an object”. Nonetheless, the appearance is false. The expression “...is an object” in “A is an object” and “There are objects on the table” is just a common physical sign which in the first sentence (unlike in the second one) does not symbolise at all.

The immediate consequence of Frege’s context principle is the denial of the substantial conception of nonsense.⁶⁵ According to the substantial conception of nonsense (which allows substantial as well as mere nonsense), of the two strings of signs “A is an object” and “A and is an object are” only the first one is an example of substantial nonsense, whereas the second one is mere nonsense. Now in the light of Frege’s context principle, the first sentence is no better than the second one; they are equally mere/plain nonsense.

6.3.1 (b) The Gricean Conception of Meaning

The second presumption, which says that strings of signs are intrinsically either cases of nonsense or meaningful sentences, suggests that “meaning” is to be seen as a logical characteristic which some strings of signs have and some do not.

⁶⁵ Conant (2002, 388-392) believes that Frege was not aware of this immediate consequence of his context principle and had adopted (wrongly) a substantial conception of nonsense. He argues that Geach, Weiner and Dummett are committed to the same thought, though in different ways. Diamond, in contrast, believes that Frege had adhered to an austere conception of nonsense (See Conant 2002, 437 n. 52).

Meaning, accordingly, is the characteristic of logically legitimate combinations of meaningful words such as “Socrates is wise”. As a result, nonsense strings of signs belong to one of the following types:

(a) Failures in overt logical combinations of meaningful constituents (say, “Caesar is a prime number”)

(b) Failures in covert logical combinations of meaningful constituents (say, “1 is a number”)

(c) Simple outright mixture of words (say, “Socrates Plato”)

(d) Dead sign salads (say, “Ab sur ah” and “piggly wiggle tiggie”)

In cases like (a) and (b) “we think the thought is flawed because the component senses of its parts logically repel one another” (Conant 2002, 419). Sentences like (a) and (c) are taken as examples of violations of rules of logical syntax. This is the philosophically standard conception of nonsense which is shared by both the Ineffability and Positivist readers. The Therapeutic readers, nonetheless, have a different attitude:

For a resolute reader, the charge of nonsense is directed not at the propositional sign itself, but rather at the character of the relation in which a particular speaker stands to a propositional sign. Such a charge is entered when a speaker imagines themselves to have conferred a method of symbolizing upon a sign while having failed to do so. According to the standard reading, what nonsense

denotes (in its weighty sense as a term of criticism) is a logical characteristic of certain propositions: it inheres in the linguistic strings themselves. Whereas, according to resolute readers, the linguistic strings themselves are neither guilty nor innocent. They are at most the occasions for certain forms of confusion. What the term nonsense (in its weighty sense as a term of criticism) denotes instead is a form of illusion—one which is generated through an inability on the part of a speaker to command a clear view of what he is doing with his words (Conant 2011, 630).

The passage, though long, gives us a series of interconnected clues for understanding the Therapeutic account. The first point in the passage is that meaning (and as its opposite “nonsense”) is not a logical characteristic of linguistic strings. Linguistic strings are not meaningful (or nonsense) in themselves. It is *us* who confer (or fail to) meaning upon strings. The key point in this account of meaning is “*our* relation to linguistic strings”, that is, our role as human beings in using (written or voiced) signs to communicate linguistically. This fits the Gricean idea that speaker-meaning is prior to sentence-meaning. Accordingly, the meaning of a sentence is in final analysis determined by the speaker’s intention. I shall understand the significance of the linguistic agent in the Therapeutic reading in these Gricean terms.

The second point of the passage is about the source of nonsensicality. The reason that strings of signs fail to make sense is that the speakers have failed to give meaning to their words, even though they think they have done so. Conant suggests that “nonsense”, as a technical term, should be understood as referring to the *illusion*

of communication, in situations in which nothing is there to be communicated. Therefore, notions of meaning and nonsense are, it is suggested, to be understood in terms of the relation between linguistic agents and signs.

Take the sentence "Caesar is a prime number". This is nonsense, but not because it is a *logically illegitimate combination* of meaningful words. The reason is instead our failure to mean something by it, that is, to make certain determinations of meaning. On the audience side, what we have is a string of signs in which no meaning can be recognised. The sentence, as a result, is logically no better than "piggly wiggle tiggly". The speaker has failed to invest the sentence with meaning, even though she has thought otherwise. A similar strategy must be applied when we explain why and how "Caesar crossed the Rubicon" makes sense. The reason that this sentence makes sense is that we (as utterers of it) have given meanings to the whole string of signs and we (as the audience) can recognise meanings in the string of signs.

The significance of the relation between linguistic agents and linguistic strings in the Therapeutic interpretation has an immediate consequence for the nature of the process of inspecting sentences. Accordingly, nonsensicality is not a logical property of linguistic strings, but refers rather to the "illusion of sense". The Therapeutic procedure of interrogation consists in inspecting (sets of) sentences in order to see if the speaker has *really* given any meaning to them or whether she is just under the illusion (cf. Diamond's "psychological imagination") of uttering meaningful sentences. This process of inspection does not demand any theory of meaning, but only an effort of making sense of sentences (which sometimes fails). In this process, no theory of

meaning has a use since it could only be applied if meaningfulness and nonsensicality were characteristics of sentences. According to the Therapeutic interpretation, however, meaningfulness and nonsensicality refer to relations between speakers and sentences, and these can only be revealed through case-by-case interrogations.

Let's recapitulate. The two core commitments of the Therapeutic reading (the austere conception of nonsense and the piecemeal process of recognition of nonsense) are denials of two fundamental features of the Ineffability account (the substantial conception of nonsense and the wholesale process of recognition of nonsense). Those core commitments have been supported by philosophical and exegetical explanations. The philosophical justifications, I have explained, are Frege's context principle – the thesis that words do not have meaning outside of sentential contexts - and the idea that meaning and nonsense are not properties of linguistic strings per se, but involve the mental states of the agents who utter and read the sentences at issue.

6.3.1 (c) A Development in the Concept of “use”

There is an issue worth addressing. Though the Therapeutic reading provides a philosophical account of how words signify, it is vulnerable to an objection that its account of how sentences signify is purely psychologistic. Take the meaningful sentence “Caesar crossed the Rubicon”. According to the context principle, the

reason that “Caesar” is meaningful is that it occurs in a meaningful sentential context. But what about the whole sentence? Why is it that this sentence has meaning, but the sentence “Caesar is a prime number” does not?

Here it seems that the reason that “Caesar crossed the Rubicon” is meaningful is that we, as speakers, have meant something by it, whereas in “Caesar is a prime number” no meaning is given to the sentence. It seems that the speaker’s intention or, to put it in a Gricean way, the speaker-meaning plays the major role in determining what a string of words means. The speaker’s psychology, not the sentence itself tells us what a sentence should be taken to mean.⁶⁶ Logically speaking, there is no difference between the sentences “Caesar crossed the Rubicon” and “Caesar is a prime number”.

The sentence “Caesar crossed the Rubicon” is not, considered in itself, more meaningful than “Caesar is a prime number”. They could equally be meaningful or nonsense, depending on our relationship to them. There could be situations in which the first sentence is not meaningful, and in which the second one makes perfect sense. Imagine a restaurant where the salads on the menu are labelled by numerals. Suppose that on the menu, Caesar Salad is assigned the numeral 3.⁶⁷ In such restaurant “Caesar is a prime number” is a perfectly meaningful sentence, whereas “Caesar crossed the Rubicon” is not given any meaning.

⁶⁶ The worry was first raised by Lars Hertzberg.

⁶⁷ I have borrowed the restaurant example from Gustafsson (2000, 76-77) and adapted it for my purpose.

Let's make the circumstance more complicated by imagining that the manager of the restaurant is called "Caesar" too. Now think of a conversation about Caesar salad where a waiter tells a guest that "Caesar is a prime number and Caesar crossed the Rubicon". Puzzled by the speech, a rational guest would hold that either the waiter had been talking about the Caesar salad, but had mistakenly mentioned a fact about the manager too; or, she meant to speak about the manager but mistakenly began with a fact about the Caesar salad. In both of these cases the whole sentence "Caesar is a prime number and Caesar crossed the Rubicon" is nonsense. Here we have a speaker who "has been unwittingly hovering between alternative possibilities of meaning his words, without determinately settling on any one" (Conant 2002, 412). The discovery that she has failed to mean something determinate can only be made through a piecemeal process of trying different possible interpretations, which is exactly what we just saw in the restaurant example. Once the waiter understands that she has not given any determinate meaning to her sentence, "Caesar is a prime number and Caesar crossed the Rubicon", she recognises the nonsensicality of this utterance.⁶⁸

To sum up, it looks that from a logical point of view, there is no difference between "Caesar is a prime number" and "Caesar crossed the Rubicon". Lars Hertzberg has suggested that we should apply Frege's context principle at the level of sentences too:

⁶⁸ See (Conant 2002, 411-413) for an elaborate explanation of how the dialectic of interpretation goes and (Conant 2002, 404) for an example of its application.

[A] sentence considered by itself may seem to carry a determinate sense, yet in a given context may turn out to carry a different sense, or the sense may be lost. Or a sequence of words that looks as if it did not make sense by itself might turn out to make sense, etc. [...]It seems natural to apply Frege's stricture once more on this level, and say that we cannot speak about the logical properties of a sentence in isolation, but only as it is uttered by a speaker in a context. (Hertzberg 2001, 4-5)

This development of applying the context principle at the level of sentences is already available in works of Conant and Diamond (Gustafsson 2000, 70-73). Conant has argued that “what we want to discover is thus not to be seen at all, if we look at mere isolated word rather than at the working parts of *the proposition in action*” (Conant 2002, 385 emphasis is added). This strategy seems like a development of the context principle into a use theory of meaning, as applied to sentences. Accordingly, the meaning of a sentence is to be determined by its use in wider contexts, that is, in the situations in which the sentence is used. This proposal obviously suggests a strong connection the conceptions of meaning we find in early and later Wittgenstein.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ Hertzberg's way of developing the context principle, of course, is not the only one. An alternative way to develop the context principle is to motivate a version of Inferential Role Semantics, as we find e.g. Robert Brandom's voluminous book, *Making it Explicit* (1994). Interestingly, Conant (2002, 403-404, 412) provides us with clues of the same thought. He suggests that “the *Tractatus* articulates what Robert Brandom calls an expressivist conception of logic... 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) *dar Klwerden von Satzen* (2) revealing specifically logical vocabulary (such as the logical constants) to be linguistically optional and thus subject to possible ‘disappearance’ ... and (3)

The above three philosophical explanations have been supplied by exegetical evidence from the *Tractatus*. In the next section I explore this evidence.

6.3.2 Exegetical Motivations

I have discussed the philosophical justifications behind the Therapeutic reading's two commitments; but these are supported by a battery of exegetical evidence too. The commentators take Wittgenstein to have been committed to the core commitments when he wrote the *Tractatus* (and also in his letter to von Ficker). This presumption is an affirmation of Malcolm's implicit Exegetical Assumption that Wittgenstein thought that nonsense has an exclusively negative meaning. (In section 5.2.3 we saw that that assumption was rejected by Hacker). It is not very clear whether advocates of the Therapeutic reading need to support its core commitments with textual evidence (see Section 7.1). In what follows I shall list three categories of textual evidence that are provided: (i) evidence for the context principle (which supports the austere conception of nonsense), (ii) evidence for the significance of linguistic agents (which motivates the piecemeal process of recognition of nonsense) and (iii) evidence for the application of the context principle at the level of sentences.

perspicuously representing the inferential relations between thoughts (Conant 2002, 454, 121)."

(i) Evidence for the Context Principle. Wittgenstein, according to the Therapeutic reading, accepted Frege's context principle (See Conant 2002; Diamond 1991, 95-114). To quote just two explicit remarks:

Only propositions have sense; only in the nexus of a proposition does a name have meaning (3.3).

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

These are supplemented by Wittgenstein's distinction between a "sign" and a "symbol". Think of an object like a dog in the world. It could be signified by different signs in different languages. We use the signs "chien" in French and "hund" in German to refer to dogs. But these signs do not have meaning in themselves. They ought to symbolise something, that is, refer to something in order to be taken as meaningful linguistic signs. As far as "chien" and "hund" refer to dogs they are linguistic symbols for dogs. On the one side, we have signs which are "what can be perceived of a symbol" (3.32). On the other side, there are symbols which are just perceptible signs (3.1-3.11). Symbols are what can be recognised in meaningful signs. Now, for a simple sign to be recognised as a symbol (i.e. to make sense) it needs to be used in some meaningful sentential context:

In order to recognize a symbol by its sign we must observe how it is used with a sense (3.326).

A sign does not determine a logical form unless it is taken together with its logico-syntactical employment (3.327).

The logico-syntactical employment of a sign in a meaningful sentential context secures that it is a meaningful expression. The “use” of a word is its employment in a sentential context.

(ii) Evidence for the significance of linguistic agents. Wittgenstein also accepted the idea that meaning is not a characteristic of linguistic strings, but rather a relation between us as speakers or listeners, and sentences (See Conant 2002). Nonsense, therefore, is a result of a failure to invest signs with meaning or a failure to recognise symbols in signs:

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

Frege says that any legitimately constructed proposition must have a sense. And I say that any possible proposition is legitimately constructed, and, if it has no sense, that can only be because we have failed to give a *meaning* to some of its constituents.

(Even if we think that we have done so.) (5.4733).

Signs in themselves do not have any meaning. As a consequence, they cannot be used with the wrong sense. It is *us* who give them meaning and the only reason that a sentence does not make sense is that “we have failed to give a meaning to some of its constituents”. Now it can be understood why the process of inspecting sentences is a piecemeal process. The outcome of the process is the recognition that the sentence has been given a meaning by its speaker or that she has failed to mean anything by her utterance, even though she thought otherwise. The recognition of the

nonsensicality of the *Tractatus*, accordingly, follows the same process. At the end of the book, we “recognise” or “perceive”⁷⁰ that the book is nonsensical, that is, we recognise that we were under the *illusion of sense*, where in fact no sense was given to the sentences of the book.

(iii) Evidence for the application of the context principle at the level of sentences.

Kremer has suggested that the notion of “logical space” together with the notion of “use” in the context principle can be developed into a more general concept of use. He writes:

Given our treatment of logical syntax as determining logical relations between propositions, we arrive at a conception of sense as inferential role, and of meaning as a contribution to inferential role. Here the CP [context principle] combines with the metaphor of logical space as a network of inferentially related ‘places,’ to move us from the consideration of propositions as the context in which words have meaning to language as the context in which propositions have sense (Kremer 1997, 113).

Accordingly, for a sentence to be meaningful, it must have a role in an inferential chain in language, that is, between meaningful sentences. If a sentence leads us through an inference from a meaningful sentence to another meaningful sentence,

⁷⁰ Conant (2002, 404) points at the occurrence of the term “erkennen” in 6.54 and 3.326. Suggesting “recognise” or “perceive” as translations of it, Conant highlights a link between the recognition of nonsense in 6.54, the recognition of meaning or nonsensicality of symbols in 3.326 and the recognition of symbols in 3.32.

that sentence is already a meaningful sentence too. Kremer seems to be referring to the following remark:

A proposition determines a place in logical space. The existence of this logical place is guaranteed by the mere existence of the constituents—by the existence of the proposition with a sense (3.4).

A proposition can determine only one place in logical space: nevertheless the whole of logical space must already be given by it (3.42).

Accordingly, sentences receive their meanings from the role they play in linguistic inferences. To be meaningful, a sentence must be a part of the logical network between meaningful sentences of language.

We have seen that the Therapeutic reading was based on three philosophical motivations: the Fregean context principle, the Gricean conception of meaning and an improved conception of use. Moreover, I explained that according to these readers, Wittgenstein adhered to these philosophical ideas in the *Tractatus*. Corresponding to this threefold philosophical motivation, exegetical evidence from the *Tractatus* has been offered.

6.4 The Purpose of the *Tractatus*

We saw that unlike the Ineffability reading, the Therapeutic interpretation does not hold that the book communicates ineffable truths. Now one might wonder, if the book

is not even capable of gesturing at truths, what is its rational purpose? In this section I will discuss the rational purpose that the Therapeutic readers have identified for the book. Conant argues that the purpose of the *Tractatus* is as follows:

“to bring its reader to the point where he can recognise 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 nonsense . . . implicit in the everyday practical mastery of language that the reader already possesses (Conant 2002, 423-424).

At the end of the book, the reader will eventually recognise that she was under an illusion of sense throughout the book. Nonetheless, this does not seem to be a good enough explanation of the purpose of the book. Its sole purpose cannot merely be to lead the reader to recognise her illusion of sense. This raises a teleological question:

What is the purpose of the book?

The Therapeutic reading needs to say something more substantial about the purpose of reading a book composed of plain nonsense sentences. Conant proposes that the recognition of the illusion of sense consists of acquiring an “insight into the sources of metaphysics” (Conant 2002, 421). Accordingly, at the end of the book, the reader regains her capacity to distinguishing sense from nonsense, which was clouded as a result of engaging in metaphysical questions. The aim of the book is to help the

reader to get rid of her impulse to do philosophy. The process of reading, therefore, is indeed a therapeutic process of freeing the reader from philosophical confusions (Conant 2002, 454 n.119). As Williams sums up “[sentences of the *Tractatus* according to the Therapeutic reading] are *effective* in changing the views of philosophers, in bringing them to stop theorizing” (Williams 2004, 22).

This way of understanding the *Tractatus* has been criticised by many philosophers who are sympathetic to the Therapeutic reading as well as by opponents of the Therapeutic interpretation. The causal significance of the book is epitomised in its *effectiveness* in changing the reader (Conant 2011, 628); and this is criticised by Williams (2004, 22) as a “romantic” and “esoteric” defence of the reading. Sullivan, who is sympathetic to the Therapeutic reading, has also claimed that understanding the *Tractatus* “should be more like linguistic understanding, and less like a blow on the head” (Sullivan 2003, 196). The idea is that a philosophical work is expected to have a rational purpose, rather than a merely causal aim. The book is expected to be motivated by the reason behind it, not by the effect it has on its readers’ minds (which in the case of the *Tractatus* is to neutralise the inclination to do philosophy any more).

On the Therapeutic account, the *Tractatus* is not bereft of rational purpose. Conant and Diamond (2004, 66-67) and Kremer (2007, 157-158, 170 notes 93-94; 2004, 62-63) use Ryle’s distinction between *knowing that* (theoretical knowledge) and *knowing how* (practical knowledge) to account for the rational purpose of the *Tractatus*. According to them, what the *Tractatus* gives us is not theoretical knowledge or

knowledge-*that* (effable, as the positivists had thought, or ineffable, as the Ineffability readers did), but practical knowledge or knowledge-*how* to use language. Thus, the aim of the book is to lead the reader to a stage where she eventually recovers her everyday practical mastery of how to use linguistic expressions.

The above Rylean distinction, nevertheless, is unable to rule out the Ineffability reading. White (2011) is a noteworthy example of an advocate of the Ineffability account who entertains the same distinction. He has argued that

He [sc. Wittgenstein] is simply drawing attention to something he believes is already implicit in our mastery of language, and our ability to know how the world must be if what we say is to be true or false (White 2011, 44).⁷¹

On this reading, the *Tractatus* communicates ineffable truths about how to use language. This is what we already and implicitly know, but through the book we see it explicitly. The difference between White's interpretation and the Therapeutic reading is to be found in his claim that "it is precisely because the sentences of the *Tractatus* can, for all their nonsensicality, draw attention to what shows itself [i.e. how to use linguistic expressions], that they succeed finally in leading the reader to recognise them as nonsense" (White 2011, 58). According to White, the book communicates knowledge of how to use language (White 2011, 44) and as a consequence of getting that knowledge the reader finds the book nonsensical. In other words, the

⁷¹ Also see (White 2011, 31)

recognition of the nonsensicality of the *Tractatus* is the result of its communication of practical knowledge of language to readers.

The story on the Therapeutic interpretation is completely different. On the Therapeutic reading, the reader's recovery of knowledge of how to use language is a *sign* that she has realised that the *Tractatus* is nonsense. To sum up, while White takes the recovery of practical knowledge of language as the *cause* of recognition of nonsense, the Therapeutic commentators hold this as a *sign* that the book is recognised as nonsense. This practical knowledge then dissuades the reader from coming back to metaphysics in future.

6.5 The Response to the Reductio Response

Unlike the Positivists and the Ineffability readers, who try to block the Reductio Response by undermining some of its premises, the Therapeutic reading adopts a radically different approach. Recall the Reductio Response:

7. If the *Tractatus* theory of meaning is true, then what sentences of the *Tractatus* seem to say cannot be said at all. (Premise)
8. If what sentences of the *Tractatus* seem to say cannot be said at all, then the sentences of the *Tractatus* are nonsense. (Premise)
9. The *Tractatus* theory of meaning is true. (Assumption for Reductio Argument)

10. What sentences of the *Tractatus* seem to say cannot be said at all. (from 7, 9 MP)

11. The sentences of the *Tractatus* are nonsense. (from 8, 10 MP)

12. It is not the case that the *Tractatus* theory of meaning is true. (from 9, 11 Reductio ad Absurdum)

We saw that the positivists and the Ineffability readers tried to block the argument by rejecting some of its premises, premises 7 and 8. Even though they are different strategies in blocking the Reductio Response, they agreed that the Reductio argument is a real argument. In other words, they believe that premises 7 and 8 are meaningful premises and that the argument is valid. The Therapeutic readers contend that the premises are not genuinely meaningful, and so nor is the argument or its conclusion. Their argument is simply that the book does not have any theory of meaning. This idea, as we saw before, is at the heart of the Therapeutic reading's two core commitments. The austere conception of nonsense is based on rejecting the idea that "nonsense" is a theoretical notion. Moreover, the piecemeal process of reading the book does not have anything to do with going through chains of inferences from premises to conclusions. Conant says:

[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 'recognise' that he has only been going through the motions of 'inferring' (apparent) 'conclusions' from (apparent) 'premises' (Conant 2002, 422).

The process of reading the book and eventually recognising its nonsensicality is not a process of going through an argument. According to Conant we do not start from the antecedent of premise 7 and end at the consequent of premise 8, where the book is judged to be nonsense. He argues that calling the whole argument of the book a Reductio is not helpful because “that would simply mean that the conclusion to be affirmed is the negation of some original assumption. What assumption? The specification of a conclusion or an assumption is only possible where what is to be specified is something that makes sense.” (Conant 2007, 56). The reductio argument is based on the idea that its assumption, that is the line 9, is already meaningful. But this conflicts with the Therapeutic commitments.

I conclude that according to the Therapeutic interpretation the Assumption that the *Tractatus* theory of meaning is true is just nonsense, not even false. As a result both premises 7 and 8 are nonsense too. This strategy motivates two claims: (a) The Reductio Response is based on an illusion, and (b) all previously discussed non-Therapeutic attempts to block the Reductio Response (by trying to undermine some of the argument’s premises) are equally based on illusion. The reason for (b) is evidently that these non-Therapeutic interpretations are based on the assumption that premises 7 and 8 are meaningful.

6.6 Objections

The Therapeutic reading's core commitments have been subjected to various criticisms. In the following sub-sections, I will explore the following four major objections to this reading: (a) The Schroeder-White objection (b) The Framework objection, (c) The Context Principle objection, and (d) The Ladder objection. Schroeder and White claim that the austere conception of nonsense is philosophically problematic and exegetically unfaithful to the book. The Framework objection complains that the Therapeutic commentators illegitimately use textual evidence from the body of the work to support the framework. The third problem with the reading is that its conception of nonsense is as theory-laden as the alternative readings. Finally it has been argued that the reading is unable to explain how reading a book of mere nonsense could possibly resemble ascending a ladder. Except for the first objection, which I argue is based on a misunderstanding of the Therapeutic reading, I find the other objections quite forceful.

6.6.1 The Schroeder-White Objection

Schroeder and to some extent White have raised the objection that the austere conception of nonsense is “philosophically inconsistent and exegetically fanciful” (Schroeder 2006, 112). In this section, I will explain their criticism and argue that they fail to make a good case against the Therapeutic reading.

Schroeder presents a compressed account of how the book is to be read therapeutically:

One could of course imagine that a sentence that seems to make sense, but contains some hidden inconsistency, is transformed by a number of self-evident steps into some obvious piece of nonsense- for example, a straightforward contradiction (Schroeder 2006, 108).

The Therapeutic reading as represented by Schroeder seems to be committed to two theses:

(T1) The *Tractatus* is a series of inconsistencies

(T2) The elucidation is a progress from latent inconsistencies to obvious inconsistencies

Schroeder thinks it quite plausible to hold that a sentence is nonsense because of self-contradiction. He says:

Necessary falsehoods are (or appear to be) necessarily false because they contain an inconsistency: they implicitly contradict themselves. And self-contradiction – saying and denying something at the same time – is a paradigm of not making sense (Schroeder 2006, 111).

So, there is a way to understand how the sentences of the *Tractatus* fail to make sense: they contradict themselves (T1). But they cannot be regarded as straightforward and obvious necessarily false statements. What goes on in the

Tractatus is a logical progression from hidden self-contradictions to straightforward inconsistencies. At the end of the book, the reader reaches a point at which she sees clearly that the book is just a series of inconsistencies, which were initially hidden from her. So we have (T2). This account resembles the criticism Black's Mental Labour Argument, which suggested that the reason that the *Tractatus* is nonsense is that it is inconsistent. Here Schroeder appears to have identified the Therapeutic reading with Black's Mental Labour Argument. But, to support his claim that the Therapeutic readers hold to (T1) and (T2), Schroeder does not provide any textual evidence. In contrast, White does provide some textual support. He interprets Conant's contention that "the illusion of sense is exploded from within" (White 2011, 56 n. 63) as indicating that advocates of the Therapeutic interpretation are committed to ideas such as (T1) and (T2). He says:

When Ricketts writes 'on the theory's own apparent telling, there can be no such theory,' a 'theory's *apparent* telling' can only *apparently* imply that there can be no such theory. If what is meant is that the theory is in some way self-refuting, or that we are *actually* presented with a theory which implies any such theory to be impossible, that simply shows the theory to be false, not nonsense. We have in fact been given no good reason to suppose that the sentences of the *Tractatus* are nonsense (White 2011, 46).

White and Schroeder's objection is pretty obvious: they argue (a) that according to the Therapeutic interpretation, reading the *Tractatus* is a piecemeal process of disclosing hidden inconsistencies and finally finding the book as a wholly inconsistent set of

statements (T1 and T2). Moreover, they argue that (b) this is an incorrect interpretation of the book.

I think White and Schroeder's objection has a very limited appeal. At worst, White and Schroeder's picture is a misrepresentation of Conant and Diamond's reading of the book. According to Conant and Diamond, the reason the book is nonsense is that no meaning has been given to its sentences, not that they are hidden self-contradictions. At best, their criticism is an objection against Goldfarb's 'reductio' reading of the book (as Williams has named it), not the Conant-Diamond's interpretation. This is rooted in the fact that Conant's conception of "piecemeal" is different from Goldfarb's (see Section 6.2.3). Therefore, the objection is not an all-embracing criticism of the Therapeutic account.

Schroeder suggests an alternative reading. His proposal is fairly straightforward. He recommends that the *Tractatus* is a series of necessary true statements, instead of necessary false statements. He believes that necessary truths "have their uses; and anyway, admitting them to be true is hardly compatible with dismissing them [in the way that necessary falsehoods are to be dismissed as nonsense]" (Schroeder 2006, 111). He concludes that we should not agree with Wittgenstein's final verdict that the book is nonsense. This proposal is just a reiteration of the Metalinguistic readings (Carnap and Russell) and Black's Book-as-Tautology Argument, and is therefore vulnerable to criticisms of them (see Chapter Four).

6.6.2 The Framework Objection

The Therapeutic interpreters' frame-body dualism has given rise to a series of objections by advocates of the Ineffability reading. They have observed that this reading is methodologically problematic (Williams 2004; Hacker 2001a, 109; White 2011, 48-50). The introduction of the frame-body dualism was a methodological invention intended to serve the purpose of reading the book correctly. The frame, accordingly, is supposed to give us instructions for reading the body. Therefore, it should consist of meaningful sentences and be sharply distinguished from the body. But advocates of the Therapeutic reading do not always recognise this distinction. They offer remarks of the *body* of the *Tractatus* as exegetical evidence that Wittgenstein (in the *Tractatus* and his letter to von Ficker) was committed to the core commitments of the Therapeutic account (embedded in the framework).

The strategy of using remarks from the *Tractatus* gives rise to a series of problems for the Therapeutic reading. On the one hand, using the internal evidence counts against the claim of the penultimate remark of the book that the *Tractatus* is entirely mere nonsense, since some remarks of the book are being used as evidence. On the other hand, using remarks from the body of the book undermines the consistency of the body of the *Tractatus*. If the book is *not* entirely nonsense, then it is not clear why it should be discarded as completely nonsense. Moreover, the Therapeutic reading's strategy of extracting remarks from the body and enlisting them as parts of the framework interrupts the dialectic of reading the book and climbing the ladder. The

extracted remarks are parts of the dialectic of the book and link their preceding remarks to the following ones.

To these objections, Conant has replied that the book is not entirely nonsense, but *essentially* nonsense. According to him, “not every sentence of the work is (to be recognised as) nonsense. For not every sentence serves as an elucidation... many of the sections of the *Tractatus* ... belong to the frame of the work and are only able to impart their instructions concerning the nature of the elucidatory aim and method of the work if recognised as sinnvoll” (Conant 2002, 457 n.135). This answer, however, appears at the same time to be an affirmation of the consistency objection. If the book is not entirely nonsense, then we have a body of remarks which is expected to be a ladder composed of really nonsense sentences (as its rungs). In such a story, really meaningful sentences (which support the commitments of the framework) represent missing rungs of the ladder. The result is an inconsistent body of remarks.

In their joint paper, Conant and Diamond (2004) make a new attempt to avoid this problem. They have argued that it would be misleading to depict the Therapeutic programme as the view that we first need to fix the framework and then to read the book in the light of that fixed framework. Rather, “the remarks about the book and the book that they are about – must be interpreted in the light of each other” (Conant and Diamond 2004, 69). To understand what 6.54 asks us to do we need to read the body of the book and to understand the body we need to understand 6.54:

[W]e cannot get a handle on what a remark such as §6.54 says apart from a detailed understanding of much that happens along the way in the book (such

as an understanding of what the book seeks to show us along the way about nonsense and the exemplifications of the practice of elucidation it thereby affords). We must interpret a remark such as §6.54 in the light of what we find in the body of the book; and vice versa (Conant and Diamond 2004, 68).

This reply does not seem convincing at all. The response, I believe, relies on confusing explanation with justification. The objection of the Ineffability commentators is that the framework cannot be motivated and justified by appeal to remarks from the body, since the frame suggests a way in which the body ought to be (or not to be) read. Therefore, the body cannot be used to justify what is said in the framework. Of course, the frame could be better understood in the light of the body, and vice versa. But, this is just a matter of using the body to explain (and not to justify) the framework (and vice versa).

I conclude that while it is necessary to use the frame to justify how to (or not to) read the book, the framework could be understood in its own and without any justification from the body. The body cannot produce motivations for the framework since it is in the light of instructions of the frame that the body should be read. To sum up, the frame-body dualism produces more problems for the Therapeutic reading than it solves. Goldfarb has found the emphasis that some commentators put on what has been called the 'frame' misleading (Goldfarb 2012, 16). Some philosophers have radicalised the Therapeutic reading by suggesting that, pace Conant, the book consists *entirely* of nonsense sentences. This means that the framework should be read as nonsense too. As a consequence, the whole idea of the frame-body dualism

is given up. (See for example Read and Deans 2012 on the Therapeutic side, and White 2011, 48-49 from the Ineffability side). In the next chapter, I will suggest a version of the Therapeutic reading which evades this problem.

6.6.3 The Context Principle Problem

An objection related to the previous criticism is that the austere conception of nonsense relies on a theory of meaning and that, even by the lights of the Therapeutic reading, the process of understanding the *Tractatus* is in effect a process of inspecting the sentences of the *Tractatus* against a theory of meaning. I explained earlier that the austere conception of nonsense receives its philosophical motivation from the Fregean context principle. This principle is evidently a philosophical theory about the meanings of words. As a result, the declaration of the nonsensicality of the book is a consequence of applying a theory of meaning: that is, the Therapeutic process of reading the book is no less wholesale than the Ineffability process of reading. Stern comments:

Diamond's account helps us see just how Wittgenstein drew on Frege's work in the philosophy of logic in developing the [austere] conception of nonsense...[In Diamond's interpretation] 'nonsense' is not just an expression used to emphatically dismiss a view, but also a term of art that depends on a theory of meaning derived from her reading of Frege (Stern 2003, 137-138).

It seems that the Therapeutic interpreters, like the Ineffability commentators, do not take the final step - they also fail to give up this theory-laden conception of nonsense. In other words, if the notion of “nonsense” in the final verdict of the book is a technical term supported by a (contextualist) theory of meaning, then the austere conception of nonsense is “seriously compromised” (Williams 2004, 18) (for a similar objection, see also Glock 2004). To this objection Kremer has replied as follows:

[W]e are not using “nonsense” in some technical way whose meaning is defined by the “picture theory” or any other theory. We are using the word “nonsense” in a pre-theoretical, common-sense way. We are simply saying, lo and behold, none of this actually made any sense! (Kremer 2001, 43)

The notions of “meaning” and “nonsense” in remark 6.54 should be understood as common sense notions and the verdict should be regarded as a fairly ordinary sentence. The verdict, therefore, does not have any theoretical force; it is rather to be seen as an utterance of ordinary speech. This proposal is also endorsed by Denis McManus (2006, 49) and by Conant and Diamond (2004, esp. 60-65). Below, I take a look at Conant and Diamond’s suggestion.

Conant and Diamond (2004, 60) argue that they have not thought of the context principle as a theoretical basis for their reading. Like Kremer, they believe that “nonsense” is not a technical term for Wittgenstein and in his remark 6.54 the notion is used “quite informally, as when we ask someone simply whether, by a particular word in a sentence, she means this or that” (Conant and Diamond 2004, 63). The informal way of inspecting sentences, they suggest, consists of our “ordinary logical

capacity” to engage in philosophical clarification or interrogation of a (set of) sentence(s) in order to see if any use has *really* been given to the signs we have used in our sentences. What is needed in such philosophical clarifications, Conant explicates, “is not a commitment to some doctrine, but rather a practical understanding of how to engage in a certain sort of activity” (Conant 2006, 178).

I find this reply unconvincing. Conant and Diamond’s idea is that by referring to the context in which a sentence is used we can interrogate a sentence or a set of sentences in order to see if they really are meaningful, or if “no determinate meaning had been given to some word in the context in which she used it” (Conant and Diamond 2004, 63). I argue that, with this allegedly “informal” conception of nonsense, no reader would find the *Tractatus* to be nonsense at all. Take any sentence from the *Tractatus*. It is used in some more or less wider context of remarks. In the *Tractatus* we have a series of more or less clearly separated sections in which almost all sentences could be taken to make sense. Anyway, the *Tractatus* was regarded by its author as a ladder in which each sentence is linked to its preceding and succeeding sentences. Moreover, in terms of the form of the book, the numbering system imposes a sort of context and also a key for reading each sentence. Wittgenstein explicitly stated that “the numbers indicate the order of the propositions and their importance. Thus 5.04101 follows 5.041 and is followed by

5.0411, which is a more important proposition than 5.04101” (Wittgenstein 1971, 41).⁷²

Suppose that Conant and Diamond are correct: (a) that “nonsense” is used informally, (b) that to say the book is nonsense is to say that our “ordinary logical capacity” (not a contextualist theory of meaning) reveals that the book is nonsense, and (c) that it is by inspecting the context in which a sentence occurs that we judge the meaningfulness of that sentence. By these standards the *Tractatus* is perfectly meaningful since by our ordinary logical intuition we find the book as wholly meaningful. The book consists of a series of interconnected seemingly meaningful sentences. The interconnection secures the context against which each sentence is to be inspected. The book seems perfectly meaningful vis-a-vis our ordinary logical capacity to inspect sentences.

I conclude that the Therapeutic readers still owe their opponents an explanation of their austere conception of nonsense. Kremer’s proposal has met a negative reception even from philosophers more sympathetic to this reading. Peter Sullivan (2004, 44 n.7), to give an example, expresses his doubt whether, ‘pre-theoretically’, the notion of nonsense is committed enough to do any interesting work. In the next chapter, I will suggest a way to entertain Kremer’s proposal without facing the difficulties explained above.

⁷² In a letter to Ludwig von Ficker, he emphasised the significance of the numbering system in making sense out of remarks: “the decimals will have to be printed along with the sentences because they alone give the book lucidity and clarity and it would be an incomprehensible jumble without this numeration” (Wittgenstein 1979, 97).

6.6.4 The Ladder Problem and Understanding the Author

The last problem with the Therapeutic account is that, if Wittgenstein had thought of his book as plain nonsense, he would not have compared the book to a ladder, since “we can hardly claim that a 'ladder' consisting of mere gibberish can lead anywhere” (Hacker 2001a, 143). But according to the Therapeutic reading, to climb the ladder the readers only need to understand the author. This belongs to the part of the methodology of the reading according to which we should try to understand Wittgenstein qua author, rather than his words per se. The reply has not convinced the Ineffability readers. Genia Schonbaumsfeld has observed rightly that:

[M]aking a distinction between understanding the utterer of nonsense rather than the nonsense itself won't help us along, for even our 'imaginative acts of identification' with the utterer of nonsense have to be constrained by at least some minimal (propositional) content ... Simply claiming that it is possible, via a method of projection, to understand the author rather than what he is saying, isn't going to do the trick. For if all the propositions in the work really lack a sense, not just a '(clear)' sense, then what materials have we got for understanding even the author? (Schonbaumsfeld 2007, 113-114)

In order to have an imaginative understanding of an utterer of a nonsense sentence, we need to have at least some common ground, and this would naturally consist of some meaningful sentences. The argument is that it is impossible to have an

imaginative understanding of an individual who uniformly and systematically utters only gibberish sentences. No matter how ready archaeologists were to decode hieroglyph writings, it was only when they eventually discovered some clues (in this case, the Greek translations of certain hieroglyph writings) that the alphabet was finally decoded. I find the objection quite reasonable and an insuperable one for the Therapeutic reading. In the next chapter, I will try to do better by proposing an alternative conception of “understanding the author” which dispenses with Diamond’s “imaginative understanding”.

6.7 Conclusion

The Therapeutic account proposes a method for interpreting the *Tractatus*. The proposal is to read the book through the lens of a frame-body dualism. The framework provides us with a method for reading the book. The frame represents two main commitments of the reading: the austere conception of nonsense and the piecemeal process of reading the book (which is a process of applying an imaginative understanding of the author). These commitments are interconnected and one cannot accept one without the other. The framework is supported by exegetical evidence as well as philosophical argument. Philosophically it is supported by the Fregean context principle, and the Gricean thesis that speaker-meaning is prior to sentence-meaning, and by a development of the notion of “use”.

The Therapeutic reading's reply to the Reductio Response is radically different from the positivist and the Ineffability responses. Unlike these latter reactions, which argue against premises of the Reductio Response (premises 7 or 8), the Therapeutic readers argue that the whole Reductio Response is nonsense. The reading, however, is not unproblematic. Even though its advocates have tried to reply to objections, they do not seem to have provided successful answers. In the next chapter I will suggest a new way to improve the reading.

Chapter 7

A New Attempt to Block the Reductio Response

7.0 Introduction

This chapter presents my attempt to read the *Tractatus* therapeutically. I will try to produce an account which is immune to the defects of the Therapeutic reading (Section 7.1). The reading that I am going to propose is pragmatic in nature. It is mainly inspired by Grice's theory of communication. The idea is to show that the book is nonsense, not because its sentences fail to make sense, but rather because they are used pointlessly in the conversation of the *Tractatus*. As in the previous chapter, I will arrange my discussion around three questions:

The Methodological question: How ought the *Tractatus* be (or not be) read?

The Phenomenological question: How is the *Tractatus* read by the Therapeutic readers?

The Teleological question: What is the point/purpose of the book?

These questions will be answered in different sections of the chapter. I shall first discuss the methodological question (Section 7.3), then explain the four stages I

think a reader goes through when reading the book (Section 7.5) and finally I deal with the purpose of the *Tractatus* from the perspective of my reading (Section 7.7).

I will first conduct a textual analysis of the preface and the penultimate remarks 6.54 (Section 7.2). I argue that the book should be seen as a long conversation between Wittgenstein and his reader which, like any other conversation, requires effort on the part of the audience to understand the speaker/author. The analysis gives rise to two philosophical questions:

(Q1) What does understanding a speaker in a conversation consist of?

(Q2) When is a conversation successful?

To answer to these questions I shall initiate a philosophical analysis, in the next section, of the nature of conversation (Section 7.3). I will use Grice's theory of conversation, his Cooperative Principle and his four maxims of informative conversation, to set up the philosophical basis of my account. According to Grice, in order to have a successful conversation, both sides of the communication need to be cooperative. They have to try to contribute as much as possible to achieving the goal of the conversation. To be cooperative in conversation on the speaker-side means to observe certain conversational maxims. To be cooperative in conversation in the hearer-side requires making the presumption that the speaker respects the conversational maxims. Seen in this light, a failed communication is one in which an utterance is used (by speaker) pointlessly or considered (by the audience) as purposeless and absurd.

The fourth section is an exposition of how the core commitments of the Therapeutic reading are explicable in terms of our Gricean theory of conversation (Section 7.4). If this is right, then my reading is a Therapeutic interpretation. This will be followed by a detail examination of how the book should be read according to this Gricean account (Section 7.5). I will distinguish four stages of reading the book and try to describe an understanding distinct from the one that is standardly offered by the Therapeutic account, of the different mental stages that the reader of the *Tractatus* experiences in reading the book. The audience (reader) assumes that Wittgenstein is engaged in a long conversation whose purpose is to communicate information (assumes that the book is a textbook), but through reading the book she gradually figures out that nothing informative is uttered in the conversation. The sentences are eventually recognised as either patently false or obviously true, which is to say, violations of certain maxims of informative conversation.

The notions “patent falsehood” and “obviously true” are vulnerable to some serious misunderstandings. In section 7.6, I will clarify these notions by responding to three hypothetical objections to my reading.

I will conclude the chapter with a discussion of the purpose of the *Tractatus* (Section 7.7). Like the Therapeutic readers, I argue that the book has a positive purpose additional to the revelation of its nonsensicality. This positive purpose consists in enabling its readers to use language properly after they have finished the book. It communicates practical knowledge of how to use language. My contribution to the reading consists of giving an explanation of how the book achieves this goal. I will

use Davidson's account of metaphor to illustrate how a conversation like the *Tractatus* sets its readers free from philosophical inclinations by causally affecting their minds. I argue that the book should be seen as a figurative conversation which communicates practical knowledge by inducing effects in readers' minds. The section will conclude with a discussion of Roger White's use of a modified version of Davidson's account of metaphor to explain the *Tractatus* – though that reading, I will argue, is not successful.

7.1 The Pathology of the Therapeutic Reading

I begin my reading with an illustration of what are probably the weakest points of the Therapeutic reading. In the previous chapter I found the Therapeutic readers' responses to the following three objections quite unconvincing:

The framework of the book is motivated by remarks from the body, which are supposed to be plain nonsense.

The philosophical motivation for the austere conception of nonsense, i.e. the context principle, is itself a theory of meaning and also motivated by remarks from the body.

It is impossible to climb a ladder of plain nonsense sentences, even by using imaginative understanding of the author of the book.

It seems that the Therapeutic reading faces two main difficulties underlying the above objections: first, the sentences of the *Tractatus* seem very different from gibberish

strings of signs. This fact makes it pretty difficult to accept that the book is really plain nonsense. Second, the Therapeutic readers have committed themselves to showing that Wittgenstein saw the *Tractatus* in the same way as it is described by their reading. As a result, they have supported the framework with remarks from the body.

My reading takes advantage of these two difficulties with the Therapeutic interpretation. To deal with the first one, I simply suggest accepting that the book consists of sentences with literal meaning (sentence-meaning). Then, I try to show how a book composed of literally meaningful sentences might eventually fail to make sense. To do so, I appeal to a Gricean use vs. meaning distinction in pragmatics. The distinction will be discussed in section 7.3.3. This distinction creates the possibility that a literally meaningful sentence might lack any purposeful use in a certain conversation. The sentences of the *Tractatus*, I propose, are like this.

To deal with the second difficulty, I use Kremer's intuition that the austere conception of nonsense is a pre-theoretical and common sense notion. Once it is established that the Therapeutic conception of nonsense (and its opposite, "meaning") is a common sense notion, the Therapeutic account does not need to show that Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus* had the same intuition too. As a linguistic agent, he could not lack the same intuition when he wrote the *Tractatus*. In other words, the austere conception of nonsense was not something specific to Wittgenstein and as a result no special justification needs to be provided by appealing to the book. My account will not need to rely on any exegetical evidence to support the austere conception of nonsense. The only material that I will use from the *Tractatus* is the

preface and the remark 6.54. These remarks are the basis of the core commitments of the Therapeutic reading, and of my account too. Nonetheless, I refrain from using remarks from the body to support them.

7.2 Textual Analysis

The sole exegetical evidence that I use for my reading is from the framework of the book. Here I conduct a textual analysis of the remark 6.54 and the preface. Let's start with the remark 6.54:

My propositions serve as elucidations in the following way: anyone who understands me eventually recognizes them as nonsensical, when he has used them—as steps—to climb up beyond them.

The Therapeutic interpreters have quite correctly emphasised the significance of the phrase “anyone who understands me” in reading the book and climbing its ladder. The importance of understanding the author, in contrast to understanding his propositions, is the key to taking the final step of the ladder and throwing it away at the end of the process of reading.

The emphasis on understanding the author, instead of what he says, not only reveals the way the book ought not to be read (as the Therapeutic interpreters have thought), but also, and more importantly, uncovers the way that Wittgenstein saw his book. The phrase “anyone who understands me” seems to suggest that Wittgenstein

regarded the book as a conversation with his would-be readers. The reader is asked to try to understand the speaker, rather than his words. This is a necessary condition for a successful conversation (of course this does not mean that understanding the author is a sufficient condition for understanding the book, but at least it is a necessary one). It is not impossible to imagine a conversation in which all utterances of the speaker are understood by the addressee, but where she fails to understand the speaker. In such conversations, the audience fails to understand the author and the spirit of his speech.

Though somewhat anachronistically, Wittgenstein's Sketch for a Foreword (which was written for his *Philosophical Remarks*) may help us to see how Wittgenstein might have understood his own books in general. We are told that the "book is written for those who as are in sympathy with the spirit in which it is written" (Wittgenstein 1998, 8). The spirit of the book, according to him, "separates those who understand it & those who do not. The foreword too is written just for such as [those who] understand the book" (Wittgenstein 1998, 10). The role of the preface, therefore, is to ask the reader to try to understand the author and the spirit of the book.

Understanding the *Tractatus*, seen in this light, would be a matter of understanding of the spirit in which it was written. This, in turn, consists in trying to understand its author. Understanding the author and the spirit of a book (such as works of Wittgenstein) is far away from understanding a scientific work, since the spirit of his works are different from those of scientists (Wittgenstein 1998, 9). All that is needed for understanding a scientific book is to grasp what is communicated by its

sentences, i.e. to understand its propositions. To understand the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein believes, the reader necessarily needs to understand the spirit of the book, not its sentences. This provides us with a methodological guide to reading the book.

One can say that we have a distinction between taking the *Tractatus* to be a scientific textbook, which requires grasping its propositions, and taking it to be a long conversation, which demands understanding the speaker. Remark 6.54 recommends that the book should be understood in the latter way. In the preface Wittgenstein made a clear statement of the way in which the book should be read:

Perhaps this book will be understood only by someone who has himself already had the thoughts that are expressed in it—or at least similar thoughts.—So it is not a textbook.—Its purpose would be achieved if it gave pleasure to one person who read and understood it. (TLP, p.3)

The book is not a scientific textbook. It is not written with the aim of teaching truths. Moreover, it is useful only to those who have already thought at least similar thoughts.⁷³ Wittgenstein seems to apply, in the preface, a Kantian phenomenon-noumenon distinction on understanding the book. We are presented with a distinction between the appearance of the book and its true nature. The book, accordingly, is

⁷³ Typically the Therapeutic readers insist that “it is not a textbook” while dismissing “someone who has himself already had the thoughts that are expressed in it—or at least similar thoughts”. The possibility of communicating “thoughts” - which is forceful evidence for the Ineffability reading - has been used as counter-evidence for the Therapeutic reading. Specifically, it is linked by “so” to “it is not a textbook”, which means the reason that the book is not a textbook.

written for those to whom it would appear as a textbook. They are metaphysicians; people who have already dealt with thoughts similar to those expressed in the remarks of the book. But the true nature of the book is that it is nothing like a textbook and so does not communicate any truths. The book is rather like a long conversation which demands understanding the speaker, on the part of the audience.

One observation is in order. Even though the book looks more like a monologue (than a conversation), it is a real conversation. The reader's only response to the author (which transforms it from a monologue to a dialogue) is what is expected at the end of the book: throwing away the ladder. The sign that the reader has understood the book is that she never comes back to it or any other philosophical text. This is the response that the author considered a sign that the conversation was successful and that the reader understood him.

Let's recapitulate. The *Tractatus* is not written for everybody. It is only aimed at those who are eager to understand the author. The book is considered by its author to be a long conversation which requires an understanding audience. Now we have two questions to discuss:

(Q1) What does understanding a speaker in a conversation consist of?

(Q2) When is a conversation successful?

Both questions have a general philosophical character and require philosophical scrutiny. In what follows, I shall introduce Grice's account of communication as a means to explore the questions.

7.3 Grice's Account of Communication

It is a common linguistic phenomenon that what we say is not necessarily what we mean. Take two sentences:

(1) Juliet is the sun

(2) Democracy is democracy

The sentence about Juliet is blatantly false if it is taken at face value. It is very improbable (and indeed irrational) to assume that Shakespeare wanted us take (1) to be a literal description of a fact about Juliet. Sentence (1) is used as a metaphorical description of Juliet and in some way or other it reveals something about Romeo's love for her. Sentence (2), meanwhile, does not say anything at all. It is just an obvious tautology. But the sentence could be used to implicate that democracy is a serious matter and cannot be confused with anything that only *seems* like democracy.

To explain the distinction between what a sentence says and what it implicates in a more philosophical way Grice introduced a theory of communication (Grice 1989, 22-40). He saw a conversation as a (i) purposeful and (ii) cooperative enterprise which is governed by a general principle:

The Cooperative Principle: Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged (Grice 1989, 26).

Different conversations have different goals, but all communications have some purpose. Moreover, participants must contribute to the purpose of conversation as much as possible. The contribution of the participants in a conversation can be separated into two parts: the contribution of the speakers and the contribution of the hearers. I discuss them in what follows.

7.3.1 Speaker-side. On the side of the speaker, Grice (1989, 26f) puts forward four maxims which specify how to be cooperative:

The Maxim of Quantity: Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purposes of the exchange); do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

The Maxim of Quality: Try to make your contribution one that is true. Specifically: (1) Do not say what you believe to be false; (2) Do not say something for which you lack adequate evidence.

The Maxim of Relation: Be relevant.

The Maxim of Manner: Be perspicuous. Specifically: (1) Be brief; (2) Be orderly; (3) Avoid ambiguity; (4) Avoid obscurity of expression.

In order for a speaker to follow the Cooperative Principle, he has to follow these four maxims. Two points about Grice's maxims are in order. First, these maxims are not exhaustive. It is always possible to add some new maxims to the list above. Secondly, these maxims only govern a certain type of communication. They govern "maximally effective exchange of information". Grice is aware of this narrow specification of his conversational maxims and admits that "the scheme needs to be generalised to allow for such general purposes as influencing or directing the actions of others" (Grice 1989, 28).

Take the sentences (1) and (2) above. Sentence (1) is obviously false and uttering it is a failure to make a cooperative contribution in a conversation whose purpose is to exchange information about, say, fictional characters in Shakespeare's plays (for example, when it is uttered by a lecturer in a academic module on Shakespeare). Whereas, to say "Juliet was the lover of Romeo" would be a perfect contribution to that conversation. What we have here is an utterance of (1) that flouts the maxim of quantity. Sentence (2) is an obvious tautology and does not communicate anything informative about democracy when it is uttered in, say, a dictionary of politics, whereas the sentence "Democracy is a market" could represent some political view about democracy. Thus, the utterance of sentence (2) appears to flout the maxim of quality.

7.3.2 Hearer-side. It is not sufficient for the speaker to try to follow the Cooperative Principle. In addition, the hearer too must assume that the speaker is following it. This is because sometimes people say things while meaning something completely

different. Sentences (1) and (2) could be used to communicate. In order to understand what these sentences communicate, the audience must be able to draw a distinction between what the speaker's utterance says and what it implicates (see Grice 1989, 118-138). In this situation, a hearer must be able to understand that sometimes speakers communicate by intentionally violating the maxims of conversation. Sentence (1), that is, "Juliet is the sun" is used in Shakespeare's play in such a way that implicates that Romeo loves Juliet. Sentence (2) too could be used to make a perfect communication in, say, a debate on democracy to argue that democracy should be taken seriously and not reduced to anything else.

A hearer, therefore, is expected to try to make as much sense as possible out of a speaker's utterances. By presuming that a speaker tries to follow the Cooperative Principle, a listener can look for the implicature of an utterance when nothing meaningful can be grasped from what is said by it. As a result, flouting or violating conversational maxims (on the speaker side) does not necessarily indicate that the utterances are nonsense. They could have some important implicatures. "Nonsense" is a verdict that a hearer is expected to reach only after inspecting every possibility of implicature. Once the utterance cannot be attributed an implicature, the hearer can conclude that the speaker has failed to mean anything by his utterance.

7.3.3 Understanding the Speaker and Nonsense. Now we are in a position to answer our questions:

(Q1) What does understanding a speaker in a conversation consist of?

(Q2) When is a conversation successful?

It seems that communicative understanding on the Gricean account consists of mutual understanding between speakers and hearers. Speakers should observe the Cooperative Principle, and hearers should assume that the speakers try to follow it. The hearer-side of this story is the significant part for my project. I believe that “understanding the author” in the *Tractatus* should be understood as “understanding the speaker”, that is:

To assume that the speaker tries to follow the Cooperative Principle

Moreover, a successful conversation is a result of a sincere attempt on the side of hearers to make as much sense as possible out of the speaker’s utterances. As a result, once a listener realises that it is impossible to make any sense of the speaker’s utterance, the communication begins to evaporate. In a failed communication, one side fails to make any sense of the speaker’s utterances (that is, to attribute any implicature to the speaker’s utterance). The term “nonsense” in conversations does not necessarily refer to “semantic nonsense”. It rather can stand for *pointlessness* or *absurdity*. Sentences (1) and (2) are not necessarily semantically nonsense, but in their contexts of use, they are pointless or absurd. They are not parts of successful communications.

The above conception of “nonsense” is closely motivated by a distinction between meaning and use. This distinction has been taken to mark the line between semantics and pragmatics (Davies 2006, 19). The focus of semantics is on the

meaning of linguistic expressions and the violation of the criteria of meaningfulness in nonsense sentences. Pragmatics, in contrast, deals with utterances in different contexts or situations. A semantically meaningful sentence may be used in the wrong situation and as a result fail to communicate anything. The notion of “nonsense” in the remark 6.54 should be understood as referring to failure in conversation. This change of perspective can help us to see how meaningful sentences of the *Tractatus* are used in a way that fails to make any contribution in a conversation, and as a result, the utterances of these sentences fail to communicate.

One observation is in order. The Gricean notion of “use” should be distinguished from the Therapeutic readers’ Wittgensteinian notion of “use”, as it was applied to explain how sentences make sense (see Section 6.3.1 (c)). The notion of use as invoked by (later) Wittgenstein applies to all linguistic expressions, whereas Grice holds that only sentence which already have literal meaning can be used to communicate. In other words, for (later) Wittgenstein and the Therapeutic readers of the *Tractatus* the meaning of a sentence is its use in a context, whereas on my Gricean reading the literal meaning of a sentence differs from its use.⁷⁴

This generally Gricean picture of conversation has two significant roles to play in my proposal. First, it motivates both core commitments of the Therapeutic reading. Secondly, it gives us a hopefully clear and self-consistent understanding of how the

⁷⁴ For a detailed discussion of the notion of “use” in Grice and Wittgenstein see (Hacker 1996 244-249)

Tractatus is to be read therapeutically. In what follows I shall first discuss the commitments of the Therapeutic reading and then I discuss my suggestion.

7.4 The Core Commitments

The Therapeutic reading's two core commitments could be perfectly explained by the above Gricean account of conversation. Remember the commitments:

Austere Conception of Nonsense: All nonsense is plain/mere nonsense.

Piecemeal Process of Recognition of Nonsense: The recognition of nonsensicality is a piecemeal process.

Think of the sentence "Juliet is the sun" again. According to the Therapeutic reading, as a linguistic string it is not necessarily meaningful (or nonsense). It completely depends on whether or not we have given meaning to it. Moreover, the process of figuring out whether it is meaningful or not is a piecemeal process of inspecting the sentence and checking possible ways to make sense of this string of signs.

We can make sense of this with our Gricean account. The sentence might be a clear violation of the maxim of quality (as it is the case when it is uttered as a real description of Juliet in a module on Shakespeare). Alternatively it could be uttered in an astronomy lecture on a newly discovered star, called "Juliet", in a certain solar system. In this latter case, the sentence is uttered in accordance with the Cooperative Principle and in the hope of communicating new information about that

solar system. The sentence is nonsense in the Shakespeare case since its utterer has failed to give a meaning to his utterance “Juliet is the sun”. In the astronomy lecture case, in contrast, the utterance is used by the lecturer in accordance with the Cooperative Principle and to communicate certain piece of information about the space.

Moreover, we saw that in the Therapeutic account the notion of nonsense was defined in terms of “illusion”. Accordingly nonsense is just an illusion of sense, where no sense is given to dead signs. The notion of “illusion” has an equal significance in my Gricean suggestion. I propose that “nonsense” should be understood as illusion of complying with the Cooperative Principle and its conversational maxims, where they are in fact violated or flouted.⁷⁵

The process of checking the meaning of a sentence is a piecemeal process. The hearer assumes that the speaker is following the Cooperative Principle and so if he has failed to obey the conversational maxims, the listener considers the possibility of communication through implications. It is only at the end of this piecemeal inspection that the utterance can be said to be meaningful or nonsense. If the utterance does not have any implications, then it would be nonsense.

The central point of the Therapeutic reading’s denial of the wholesale reading is its denial of the idea that inspecting sentences is a matter of applying a theory of

⁷⁵ We shall see in Section 7.5 that in case of the *Tractatus* recognition of its nonsensicality is the recognition of the illusion of being informative (that is, being in accordance with maxims of informative conversation).

meaning or logical syntax. According to the reading, we do not need sets of rules of logical syntax to inspect sentences. Though here we have a set of conversational maxims, they are far from rules of logical syntax. Conversational maxims are not necessarily finite, whereas rules of logical syntax must necessarily be numerable. Remember the sentence “Juliet is the sun”. It must conform to certain rules of logical syntax. In contrast, the conversational maxims which a speaker should observe in uttering this sentence are infinite (as a result of the infinitely many goals of different conversations). Maxims of conversations do not frame any *theory* of meaning and failure to follow them does not entail failure to observe a mechanical criterion of meaning.

I conclude that my reading fits with the commitments of the Therapeutic reading and deserves to be considered as an interpretation in this tradition. In the next section I will use my pragmatic account to illustrate the different states of reading the *Tractatus*.

7.5 Four Stages of Reading the *Tractatus*

Above, I argued that the *Tractatus* should be understood as a long conversation between Wittgenstein and his readers. It is a conversation which has two characteristics: (a) it requires that the audience tries to understand the speaker, and (b) at the end of it the audience realises that the book is nonsense. Here I try to use

the above Gricean model of conversation in order to understand how the book should be read by a reader. I distinguish between four different stages of reading the book:

The First Stage: The hearer (reader) assumes that the speaker aims to have an informative conversation (i.e. assumes that the book is a 'textbook')

The Second Stage: The hearer (reader) finds that the speaker violates the maxims of informative conversation (namely she judges the book to be uninformative)

The Third Stage: The hearer (reader) discards the possibility that the speaker uses language figuratively in order to create implicatures (i.e. rejects the idea that the book is a work written in a figurative language)

The Fourth Stage: The hearer (reader) reaches the verdict that the conversation is pointless and absurd (that the book is nonsense)

The four stages above describe how the process of reading the *Tractatus* should ideally go. These stages illustrate the sort of "phenomenology of meaning"⁷⁶ that a reader of the book experiences. In formulating the stages I have used parentheses to translate how the *book* is to be *read* as a conversation.

The First Stage. We saw that understanding a speaker requires that she be assumed to be trying to follow the Cooperative Principle. Now we need to see how this account is to be applied to the *Tractatus*. Remember the Kantian distinction between the appearance of the book and its true nature. We saw that the *Tractatus* was written for

⁷⁶ I borrow the phrase from Conant (2002).

those to whom the book would appear to be a textbook. To these readers, who are mainly metaphysicians and professional philosophers, the author/speaker appears to be trying to communicate truths, that is, to conduct a maximally effective exchange of information. They assume the book to be a textbook about the most general truths about the world, and its author to be a person who tries to observe all four maxims of informative conversations. These readers' conception of philosophy is evidently Fregean-Russellian in character. They believe philosophy and logic to be involved with the most general scientific (i.e. informative) branches of knowledge. This is an important issue to which I will return when I discuss the third stage.

With the presupposition of being involved in an informative conversation, the reader of the *Tractatus* (or rather Wittgenstein's audience) assumes that Wittgenstein's sentences should obey the maxims of informative conversation. This assumption is important for understanding the notion of "nonsense" in remark 6.54. We shall discuss it in a bit.

The Second Stage. The process of reading the book, nonetheless, gradually reveals that the conversation is not really informative. Despite the appearance of the book, the reader gradually becomes aware of the true nature of the book; that is, that the book is not a textbook and does not communicate (general) information about the world or language. To put it another way, the audience of the conversation gradually becomes aware that the conversation is not informative at all and that the speaker does not follow the Cooperative Principle and its maxims.

Remember that, according to the Therapeutic reading, the reader of the *Tractatus* is under the illusion of reading a series of meaningful sentences (what Diamond calls “psychological imagination”). Moreover, it is argued that the reader gradually loses this illusion through reading the book. In line of my Gricean account of “nonsense”, I suggest that the notion of nonsense, as it is applied to the *Tractatus*, should be understood as failure of the speaker to follow the maxims of informative conversation. The reader/hearer will judge the book to be nonsense when she observes that the speaker does not make any contribution to the informative goals of the conversation. The frustration of the reader is rooted in her presumptions that the book is a textbook and that the purpose of the conversation is communication of information. Below I use different remarks from the book to show how the reader becomes frustrated.

Take the sentences “The world is all that is the case” (1). This sentence, which is the first remark of the book, has always puzzled readers. Frege had asked Wittgenstein about the nature of the remark:

[I]s the equation to be understood as a definition? That is not so clear. Do you want to say, “I understand by ‘world’, everything that is the case”? Then “the world” is the explained expression, “everything that is the case” the explaining expression. In this case nothing is thereby asserted of the world or of that which is the case, but if anything is to be asserted, then it is something about the author’s use of language. Whether and how far this use might concur with the language of everyday life is a separate matter, which is, however, of little

concern to the philosopher once he has established his use of language.[...] If, however, you do not mean the sentence “the world is everything that is the case” as a definitional equation, but want to set forth a valuable piece of knowledge, each of the two names “the world” and “everything that is the case” must already have a sense before the framing of the sentence, a sense which is therefore not only then given to it in virtue of this equation. Before I can write something further about this matter, I must have reached clarity about this. Definitional equation or recognition judgment? Or is there a third? (Frege 2011, 65-67)

Although the remark seems at first sight to be meaningful, it turns out not to be communicating information about the world. It is more like a “pointless” dogmatic definition which has not been given any use whatsoever in the process of conversation. The remark seems to be flouting the maxim of quantity since its utterer seems to have failed to say something informative enough.⁷⁷

White has presented an alternative understanding of how the remark fails to make sense. The remark, according to him, generates a Russellian vicious circle. According to Russell’s vicious circle principle no collection can be definable only in terms of itself: “whatever involves *all* of a collection must not [itself] be one of the collection” (Russell 1956, 63). Here we have a proposition which, if it is a fact, then it must be one of the things that is the case. It means that the remark is “generating precisely the sort of loop that Russell’s paradox preyed on” (White 2011, 27). In

⁷⁷ Grice (1989, 33) proposed utterances of patent tautologies “War is war” and “Women are women” as examples of violations of maxim of quantity.

terms of the maxims of informative conversation, White's reading suggests that the remark flouts the maxim of quality since it says something blatantly false. White comments:

[T]he opening paragraphs are to be regarded as nonsensical sentences attempting to bring us to see something that, on pain of contradiction, could not be said (White 2011, 27).

The second example is "The only necessity that exists is *logical* necessity" (6.37). White sees this sentence as a self-undermining utterance which is "clearly neither an empty tautology nor a contingent claim" (White 2011, 30). White argues that, if the sentence is true, then it raises a question about the status of the sentence itself: The sentence itself is not a logical necessity (tautology), but it is not a meaningful contingent sentence either. He concludes that it is a self-refuting sentence. The utterance is an example in which the speaker has flouted the maxim of quality and said something which is obviously (obvious to everybody, including Wittgenstein) false.

My third and fourth examples are the remarks "The general form of propositions is this: this is how things stand" (4.5) and "A proposition is a truth-function of elementary propositions. (An elementary proposition is a truth-function of itself.)" (5). Like remark 6.37, these utterances are self-refuting. If remark 4.5 is true, then it fails to be categorised as a meaningful sentence. The same is true of remark 5.

As the reader undergoes the process of reading the book she gradually becomes aware that the sentences of the book are either obviously true or blatantly false. In other words, through the process of reading, she realises that the speaker does not convey any piece of information via his utterances. Recognition of this failure to follow the Cooperative Principle by the speaker/author is the result of a piecemeal process of reading. The reader first assumes that remark 1 is an utterance in the service of an informative conversation, but through reading and taking time to think about it, she realises that the remark in question and the related utterances of the book (the piecemeal process goes on a case-by-case process basis, not a sentence-by-sentence one) do not comply with the maxims of conversation. She then moves on to new sets of sentences and this continues to the end of the book.

After inspecting each set of utterances and finding them to violate the conversational maxims, there are two possibilities for the reader/hearer: (P1) exploring the possibility that the utterances were used to communicate information by implicating (and not by saying), or (P2) judging that that the piece of conversation and its utterances are pointless and absurd (announcing that set of sentences are nonsense). (P1) is the more charitable move and is normally the first candidate to be considered. Only when following (P1) is found to be unsatisfactory is the second possibility taken into account. These two possibilities correspond respectively to our third and fourth stages in reading the book.

The Third Stage. Frustrated with the speaker's failure to follow the Cooperative Principle, the hearer will examine the possibility that the speaker might have used his

utterances to convey information by implicating something that is not literally said. Here she does not give up on her assumption that the purpose of conversation is to conduct a “maximally effective exchange of information”, but she explores the possibility of “implicating” instead of directly “saying”.

This way out, however, does not succeed. The main problem with the suggestion is that it conflicts with the reader’s conception of informative conversation. The reader’s conception of philosophy, as was discussed in the First Stage, is a Fregean-Russellian conception. In fact, the reader’s/hearer’s assumption that the book is an informative conversation is very much Fregean-Russellian and this conception of an “informative conversation” does not allow for the possibility of *implicating* something informative.

Frege argued that the aim of science is truth and that the sentences in which truths are expected to be expressed are assertions which say what they say clearly and directly. He argues that we have a “logical disposition” alongside, say, a “poetic disposition” (Frege 1997e, 369). The language of science in this respect differs from the language of poetry. In science, we use assertions and declarative sentences to communicate thoughts, whereas in poetry, sentences are used figuratively to recall different feelings and mental images. Sentences of science are expected to be clear and unambiguous, whereas in figurative uses of language we utter sentences with extra meanings to what they say. These extra meanings are their implications. As branches of scientific study, logical and philosophical investigations are required to be assertions about truths (albeit abstract truths). The main point is that this

conception of “informative communication” presumes that ideally speaking, textbooks are exclusively composed of assertions which say directly what they are meant to communicate. Therefore, in a perfectly written textbook, there is no room for implication and figurative use of language.

I conclude that the reader’s Fregean-Russellian conception of textbooks and informative conversation does not permit figurative use of language to communicate philosophical insights. Thus the reader will discard possibility (P1) and take the final step: exploration of the possibility (P2).

The Fourth Stage. That the reader cannot find anything which the sentences of the *Tractatus* implicate leads the reader to judge that Wittgenstein’s utterances are pointless and absurd. Remember the Therapeutic interpretation’s suggestion that “nonsense” should be understood as “the illusion of sense”. The verdict that the book is nonsense, on my reading, indicates the evaporation of “the illusion of informativeness”. This highlights the difference between my reading and the Therapeutic reading. At the end of the conversation, we do not judge the sentences of the book to be nonsense; rather we judge that they are uttered pointlessly, without making any informative contribution to the conversation.

Let’s summarise. The reader starts reading the book with the assumption that Wittgenstein’s purpose in the conversation is to communicate some information, but gradually she feels frustrated with the way that communication goes. Each time she finds that a set of sentences does not make a contribution to the conversation (because of how they flout maxims of informative conversation), she feels more

suspicious about the purpose of the book. At the end of the book, she eventually realises that it is nonsense (absurd): a collection of patently true or false sentences.

7.6 The Meaning of “Obvious”

A major difficulty with my suggestion is in the notion of “patent falsity/truth”. My reading is obviously based on the claim that the reason the book is called nonsense is that its sentences are either patently true or blatantly false. The utterances of the book are not used to communicate information. Here I discuss three objections:

(O1) The notions of “patent” and “obvious” are merely psychological notions and cannot be used in a philosophical account.

(O2) The nonsensicality of the *Tractatus* cannot be explained by application of notions “blatantly false” and “patently true”.

(O3) If the book is “blatantly false” and “patently true”, it is at worst either a tautology or self-contradictory but definitely not nonsense.

(O1). One might be misled by the notion of “obvious” and hold that when a remark, say, 4.5 is evaluated as patently false it means that it is *judged* by the audience *to be false* (i.e. it appears to the minds of audience to be false). As a result, “patently true or false” would be defined in terms of “being taken to be true or false”. Then the

argument is that this is a confusion of a logical concept like “being true/false” with a psychological notion “being judged to be true/false”. Recall Frege’s comment:

[B]eing true is quite different from *being held as true*, whether by one, or many, or by all, and is in no way to be reduced to it. There is no contradiction in something being true which is held by everyone as false. I understand by logical laws not psychological laws of *holding as true*, but laws of *being true* (Frege 1997f, 202-203).

The Fregean distinction between logic and psychology indicates that what seems to be obviously false is not necessarily false. Everybody could simply be wrong in their judgements. A sentence could be judged to be true while it is actually false. Likewise, a remark in the *Tractatus* could be judged to be true by a reader, whereas it is false. In other words, that a remark of the *Tractatus* is patently true/false does not establish that it is in fact true/false. As a result, the objection is that my account speaks at best about the psychology of readers, not about the *Tractatus* itself.

I argue that this objection fails. We saw that it is an element of the Therapeutic reading that sentences do not have logical characteristics like “meanings”. It is *us* who invest or fail to invest strings of signs with the meanings they have. The notion of obviousness should be understood in the same way. It is to *us* that an utterance is obviously true or blatantly false. An utterance cannot be obviously true or false in itself. It always needs some human perspective in order to count as “obviously” true/false. This does not mean that it is an arbitrary judgement that a certain utterance is *obviously* false or not. The criterion for such judgements is our

competence in using language. As long as we are linguistically competent enough to understand the sentences “Juliet is the sun” or “The only necessity that exists is *logical* necessity”, we find them to be obviously false.

What makes an utterance “Democracy is democracy” *patently* true is that it does not contribute the information required to the conversation. Likewise, the reason that “War is not war” is to be considered to be *patently* false is that it does not reflect its (presumably rational) speaker’s true belief that war is war.⁷⁸ The former utterance violates maxim of quantity and the latter one, the maxim of quality.

(O2). Another objection is that the nonsensicality of the *Tractatus* cannot be explained by relying on the notions “blatantly false” and “patently true”. One might argue that the sentences of the *Tractatus* are far away from “Juliet is the sun” and cannot be evaluated on the ground of this comparison. Take the sentences below:

(3) Caesar is the sun

(4) Caesar is a prime number

The objection could be formulated as follows:

(p₁) The suggested Gricean account is based on explaining how (3) is “obviously false”, but it does not deal with (4).

(p₂) Sentences (3) and (4) belong to different logical categories.

⁷⁸ Rational speaker does not hold irrational contradictory belief such as war is not war.

(p₃) The sentences of the *Tractatus* belong to the same category as (4).

(c) Therefore, the proposed Gricean reading does not explain how sentences of the *Tractatus* should be evaluated to be nonsense.

The main premise in the objection is (p₂). The idea is that while the sentence (3) is or at least could be a meaningful sentence (for instance if it was used by one of Caesar's generals in praise of him), sentence (4) is *obviously nonsense*. Therefore, only (3) could have a truth-value. In other words, if we know what "Caesar" and "...is the sun" mean, then we do not need to check anything in the world to see whether (3) has a truth-value.⁷⁹ Our linguistic understanding reveals its falsity. In the case of (4), however, what our linguistic competence reveals is the nonsensicality of (4), not its truth-value. Therefore, we have two logically different sentences. The objection is that our Gricean account cannot be used to explain the nonsensicality of the *Tractatus*.

This objection is also based on a misunderstanding of the notion of meaning. The opponent has assumed that linguistic strings have meaning or are nonsense in themselves. As a consequence, he has taken (4) to be obviously nonsense (reasoning that its constituents are in logical conflicts with each other), whereas (as it was illustrated in our restaurant example - see Section 6.3.1 (c)) there could be situations in which (4) was a meaningful true utterance. Nothing in (4) indicates that it

⁷⁹ By "knowing the meaning of 'Caesar'", I do not mean knowing to whom it refers, since it would be an example of looking at the world. It suffices if we know that it is a name of a human being.

is nonsense since it is just a string of signs that could be used to utter something meaningful or nonsense. On the other hand, (3) is not meaningful in itself either. In some situations the sentence fails to make sense and cannot be ascribed any truth-value at all.

What makes (3) and (4) nonsense is that they are used pointlessly. Imagine a conversation in the mentioned restaurant between two waitresses who both know all facts about salads which are served in that place. Suppose that in the middle of conversation one waitress utters sentence (4). Since the other waitress is perfectly aware that Caesar is a prime number, no information is communicated to her. As a result we have a case for violation of maxim of quantity. This is the reason why (4) could be nonsense. Uttering (3) in an academic conference about Julius Caesar could be equally pointless because it violates the maxim of quality- it is uttered while the speaker does not believe that Caesar was really the sun. To sum up, (3) and (4) belong to the same logical category.

(O3). The third objection is that if the book is “blatantly false” and “patently true”, it is at worst either a tautology or self-contradictory, but definitely not nonsense. White says:

The fact that a sentence is ‘self-refuting’ in this way does not prove it is nonsense. All that can be concluded from such self-refutation is that if the proposition is significant then it is necessarily false (White 2011, 57)⁸⁰.

⁸⁰ I will discuss White’s reading in section 7.7.3.

The objector seems to believe that the *Tractatus* introduces a tripartite theory of meaning (*sinnvoll* - *sinnlos* – *unsinn*) according to which tautologies and self-contradictions are senseless (*sinnlos*). Unlike meaningful sentences (*sinnvoll*) which need to be compared to reality to ascertain their truth-value, the truth-values of tautologies and contradictions are obvious from their logical forms. In other words, they are obviously true or false, whereas the truth-value of meaningful empirical sentences is not obvious on the surface. The objector then goes on to argue that the book cannot be regarded as “blatantly false” and “patently true” since it is already evaluated by Wittgenstein to be “nonsense”. Nonsense sentences, by the book’s criteria of meaning, do not have truth-values (let alone “patent” ones). The objection could be formulated as follows:

(a₁) The Gricean account holds that the verdict in the penultimate remark should be read to say that the utterances of the book are obviously true/false, but

(a₂) According to the *Tractatus* theory of meaning, nonsense sentences do not have truth-values, therefore

(c) The Gricean account is false

The second premise of the argument is problematic. My account agrees with the Therapeutic reading that the *Tractatus* does not promote any theory of meaning whatsoever. Thus, from my perspective, as from the Therapeutic one, premise (a₂) is absolutely nonsense. (It is not even false). Moreover, philosophically speaking, what the objector might assume to be a definitely senseless sentence, I believe to be

simply a *possibly meaningful utterance*. Pace my opponent's view, my reading is based on a bipartite conception of meaning which (i) excludes the third possibility of "senseless" sentences and (ii) holds that meaning (or nonsensicality) is a matter of *our relation* to linguistic strings, not something in them. Therefore, unlike the objector who takes "Democracy is democracy" and its negation to be definitely senseless sentences, I view them as *possibly meaningful utterances*.

The objection (O3), that the *Tractatus* is at worst either a tautology or self-contradictory, but definitely not nonsense, is very familiar. It is the usual criticism of two interpretive approaches: (a) those readings which take the *Tractatus* to be a series of tautologies (Black's Book-as-Tautology Argument and Carnap's two arguments, see Sections 4.2 and 4.4.1), and (b) those readings which take the *Tractatus* to be a series of self-contradictions (Black's Mental Labour argument - see Section 4.4.2). The criticism, however, does not affect my Gricean suggestion.

I conclude that all above objections are based on conceptions of "obvious" distinct from that on which my reading is based. The objections are based on an assumption that the psychology of the audience determines whether a sentence is "patently true/false". In my reading, however, a sentence is "patently true/false" if its truth-value can be determined solely by our linguistic competence in understanding the sentence and its constituents.

7.7 The Purpose of the *Tractatus*

We saw that a reader who is eager enough to follow the author of the *Tractatus* eventually recognises that the book is nonsense. To use Gricean terminology, a hearer who has taken the book to be an informative conversation (a textbook) and also assumed that the speaker is committed to the Cooperative Principle and its maxims, eventually finds the whole conversation a pointless series of either blatantly false or patently true utterances. An advocate of the Ineffability account would complain that this is not good enough to justify reading the *Tractatus*; we need something much more substantial from the book. The complaint is not new or exclusive to my proposal. It is indeed an attack against all Therapeutic interpretations. I have already discussed this issue and the Therapeutic commentators' replies to it (see Section 6.4).

In this section, I will follow more or less the same line of thought in defending my reading. Nevertheless, I will use Davidson's discussion of metaphor to shed light on how the book has something substantial to offer its readers. The idea is that the book should be considered a metaphorical work which affects the audience in the way that metaphors do, and not by communicating ineffable insights. The effect of the book is to help the reader to divest themselves of their inclination to philosophise. Moreover, I will argue that metaphors, as Davidson claimed, have cognitive value. The cognitive value of the *Tractatus* is that it helps the reader to recover her practical knowledge of how to use language. In other words, once the reader recognises that the book is nonsense, she is able to use language properly.

Finally, I will evaluate White's alternative application of a modified version of Davidson's account of metaphor to reading the *Tractatus*. I will argue that White fails to make a successful case for his account of metaphor. Moreover, the remarks of the *Tractatus* do not fit his characterisation of metaphors.

7.7.1 Davidson on Metaphor

In what follows, I will not explain Davidson's arguments for his account of metaphor, but I will use some of the main points of his view to motivate my reading. I shall first outline Davidson's account of metaphor. I distinguish three motifs in his paper "What Metaphors Mean" (1978) and structure this section around an explanation of them. The motifs are as follows:

(D1) A metaphorical utterance has a literal meaning (sentence-meaning)

(D2) A metaphorical utterance does not have a metaphorical meaning (cognitive propositional content)

(D3) Metaphorical utterances have informative uses.

Davidson holds that metaphors are as meaningful as literal utterances. He takes them to have truth-conditions (in his own Tarskian sense):

The argument so far has led to the conclusion that as much of metaphor as can be explained in terms of meaning may, and indeed must, be explained by

appeal to the literal meanings of words. A consequence is that the sentences in which metaphors occur are true or false in a normal, literal way, for if the words in them don't have special meanings, sentences don't have special truth (Davidson 1978, 256-257).

Metaphorical utterances are capable of having truth-values. To use an early Wittgenstein thought: metaphorical utterances could have truth-values in either of two possible ways: they could be bivalent (that is, literally speaking either true or false) or they could be bipolar (that is, capable of being true and capable of being false). Davidson's account of metaphor is neutral in regard to these two ways. Davidson's account can accept that both "Juliet is the sun" (which is bipolar and bivalent by Wittgenstein's standards) and "Democracy is democracy" (which is only bivalent, again, by Wittgenstein's standards) are metaphors. The significant point on his account is that the truth-value of a metaphor is obvious:

For a metaphor says only what shows on its face—usually a patent falsehood or an absurd truth (Davidson 1978, 259).

Any competent language user see that "Juliet is the sun" and "War is not war" is patently false and that "Democracy is democracy" is obviously true (see Section 7.6).

Another element of this conception of metaphor is the relation between truth-values and utterances. What we have in the case of metaphors is not true or false sentences which communicate metaphorical meanings. Rather we have some

utterances which are *taken as true or false* and used metaphorically. Davidson stated:

What matters is not actual falsehood but that the sentence be taken to be false (Davidson 1978, 257).

Generally it is only when a sentence is taken to be false [or taken to be true] that we accept it as a metaphor (Davidson 1978, 258).

That an utterance should be taken as true or false signals the significance of *us* as language users. This is very much parallel with my discussion in section 7.6.

The third point about Davidson's view is his pathology of metaphors. Searle believes that metaphors are utterances which appear defective once they are taken literally. He considers four sources of this defectiveness; "The defects which cue the hearer may be obvious falsehood, semantic nonsense, violations of the rules of speech acts, or violations of conversational principles of communication" (Searle 1979, 105). Davidson lists two sources: blatant falsehood and its opposite, patent truth. The pathology is identical to the pathology that I used to show how the *Tractatus* fails to make sense (see Section 7.5).

Davidson's thesis (D2) is the central point of his paper. Its immediate target is the long tradition of thinking that metaphors are utterances that literally say one thing, but are used to implicate something else. The implicature of the metaphorical sentence is what its speaker means to communicate by using that utterance. Obviously this

picture is based on identifying implicatures with metaphorical meanings of sentences.

Davidson, in contrast, says:

No theory of metaphorical meaning or metaphorical truth can help explain how metaphor works. Metaphor runs on the same familiar linguistic tracks that the plainest sentences do; this we saw from considering simile. What distinguishes metaphor is not meaning but use—in this it is like assertion, hinting, lying, promising, or criticizing. And the special use to which we put language in metaphor is not—cannot be—to 'say something' special, no matter how indirectly. For a metaphor says only what shows on its face—usually a patent falsehood or an absurd truth. And this plain truth or falsehood needs no paraphrase—its meaning is given in the literal meaning of the words (Davidson 1978, 259).

The first point of the paragraph is the distinction between meaning and use. Davidson argues that, as far as their literal meaning goes, metaphors are normal sentences and in this respect they do not differ from non-metaphorical sentences. The difference between metaphors and non-figurative sentences is in the use of metaphors. Take a sentence “Juliet is the sun”. It can be used to say something metaphorical or something astronomical about a star called “Juliet”. The sentence, thus, is used in Shakespeare’s play metaphorically and in an astronomy lecture non-metaphorically.

The second point of the passage is Davidson’s claim that metaphors do not have metaphorical meanings. According to him there is no metaphorical meaning or truth

behind what a metaphorical utterance says directly. Unlike philosophers like Searle who argues that people use metaphors to communicate something indirectly (that is, the speaker-meaning) hidden behind what they say (that is, the sentence-meaning), Davidson believes that metaphors do *not* say anything beyond than their literal meaning. He argues that metaphors are not paraphrasable, not because metaphors say something too novel for literal expression but because there is nothing there to paraphrase (Davidson 1978, 246).⁸¹

The third thesis (D3) is very much connected to (D2). Metaphors, Davidson argues, do not convey any alternative message to what they literally say. They just do not have “metaphorical meaning”. Davidson introduces a causal account of how the metaphor works. Accordingly, metaphors are used to induce effects in minds of hearers. Remember the sentence “Juliet is the sun”. Its metaphorical use has a different effect on the audience’s mind (given that she knows that the sentence is used figuratively) than it would if it were being used to lie about who Juliet really is. Davidson comments:

Joke or dream or metaphor can, like a picture or a bump on the head, make us appreciate some fact—but not by standing for, or expressing, the fact (Davidson 1978, 262).

Metaphors are not cognitive in the sense that they do not state facts; they do not communicate any “metaphorical meaning”. Nonetheless, they are not non-cognitive.

⁸¹ For a discussion of Davidson’s reason for this claim see (Lycan 2000, 211) and (Guttenplan 2005, 16-20)

They “make us appreciate some fact” though not by directly saying it. As a consequence, to view something as a metaphor is not to regard it as confusing, merely emotive, or unsuited to serious, scientific or philosophical discourse (Davidson 1978, 246). I conclude that metaphors have informative uses, though in a very different way to normal informative conversations.

7.7.2 The *Tractatus* as a Metaphorical Work

To discuss the purpose of the *Tractatus* I distinguish two questions:

(a1) How does the *Tractatus* appear to the reader once she finishes reading?

(a2) What is the real purpose of the *Tractatus*?

We saw that at the end of reading the audience finds the book as a long pointless conversation which has failed to communicate any piece of knowledge. The book appears to her as a long boring series of uninformative utterances (a1). This is the explanation of how and in what sense the book is eventually recognised to be nonsense. But, as it was explained before, reading the text has a significant effect on the cooperative reader. It helps the reader to dispel her inclination to do philosophy. This is not an insignificant issue. Indeed, this effect shows the real purpose of the book.

Though the book appears to be pointless (that is, uninformative) to its reader, it has a point. It is an intentional attempt on the part of the author to lead metaphysicians,

who are the people under the illusion of having informative conversations (and who would initially approach the book as a textbook), to see their illusion. The book is a long attempt to cure the disease of using language improperly (a2).

The book as a whole is a metaphorical work. It is a long conversation in which Wittgenstein has used utterances which, in the end function metaphorically through inducing the effect of radical dissatisfaction with philosophy in the reader's mind. Every sentence is a step on the ladder, and every step functions metaphorically. The metaphorical nature of the book, however, does not undermine its informative and cognitive value. Like any metaphor, the book has an informative use. The cognitive value of the book consists in its facilitation of the reader's recovery of her practical knowledge of how to use language. A cooperative reader is expected to be able to use language properly once she finishes the book. This practical knowledge, as it was discussed before, is a *sign* that the reader has understood Wittgenstein and is the result of the metaphorical function of the work.

This picture of the book as a figurative work is not a new one. Conant reminds us that Frege and Ogden regarded the book as an artistic and literary piece. He supports these impressions with a quote from Wittgenstein's letter to Ludwig von Ficker about the *Tractatus*: "the work is strictly philosophical and at the same time literary" (Conant 2002, 426 n.7). The application of Davidson's analysis of metaphor to explain the point, however, is new. As a metaphorical work, the book is composed of, literally speaking, meaningful sentences (D1) which are used figuratively to communicate insights about language, i.e. practical knowledge (D3). These insights, nonetheless,

are not ineffable “metaphorical meanings” (implications) (D2) whose communication ends with the recognition of nonsensicality of the book: they are practical insights about how to use language.

The application of the Davidsonian conception of metaphor provides an answer to Sullivan’s worry that understanding the utterances of the book “should be more like linguistic understanding, and less like a blow on the head” (Sullivan 2003, 196). Metaphors, as Davidson argues, do work like “bump on the head” and at the same time “make us appreciate some facts”. As a result, one should not be worried about the causal role of figurative language.

One might object that even the best that the *Tractatus* could achieve is to encourage us not to do the “Tractarian metaphysics and philosophy”, but what about the rest of philosophy and metaphysics? How could the book encourage its reader not to do any other kind of philosophy? My answer to this worry is this: the book is not a textbook and is not written for all sorts of readers. Wittgenstein says that it is written only to those that have “similar thoughts” (TLP, p.3). As a result the domain of the book is very limited. But in this limited domain, the book’s aim is ambitious enough. It tries to dispel the inclination of doing philosophy in its readers.

Moreover, it seems unfaithful to the book to say that the purpose of the book is to communicate the truth that philosophy is nonsense. As I mentioned the book does not aim at communicating any truth, even such a negative truth as *philosophy is nonsense*. The only purpose of the book is to help its readers to divest themselves of the inclination to do philosophy. As a metaphorical work, the book functions like a

bump on the head of its readers. That is to say, it is not meant to communicate a general truth like *philosophy is nonsense*.

7.7.3 White's Reading of the *Tractatus*

Roger White (1996) has proposed a modification to Davidson's conception of metaphor and used it to interpret the *Tractatus* (White 2011). White's project appears to have a philosophical phase and an exegetical phase.⁸² His project, however, is different to mine. In this concluding section, I try to explain the difference between my reading and White's. I will also argue against his reading.

White's conception of metaphor is based on three major claims (White 2011, 45):

(W₁) A sentence used figuratively does not need to have literal meaning

(W₂) A sentence used figuratively does not acquire a metaphorical meaning if it lacks a literal meaning

(W₃) The insights that are to be communicated by figurative uses of language are not propositional and could not be recast as propositions

⁸² For a criticism of White's account of metaphors see (Guttenplan 2005, 266-283).

The second and third claims are similar to Davidson's (and mine) theses (D2) and (D3).⁸³ According to White metaphors do not have "metaphorical meaning", but they have informative uses. He believes that metaphors can be used to convey insights. The insights that they communicate are not propositional (effable or ineffable). Like the Therapeutic readers, White uses a Rylean distinction between knowledge that and knowledge how to elucidate an informative use for the *Tractatus*. The book, according to him, does not communicate that-truths, but rather how-truths. The insights of the book are not effable or ineffable theoretical truths about language or the world, but practical knowledge about how to use language.

The first of White's claims- i.e. (W₁) - however, is his departure from Davidson's account of metaphor. This is the main difference between my account of the *Tractatus* as a metaphor and White's too. He says:

The ordinary, literal, sense of a metaphorical sentence, if such exists, *never* plays a role in the apprehension of that metaphor when we are apprehending it as metaphor. To apprehend a metaphor as a metaphor involves ignoring whatever literal sense it may have (White 1996, 226).

White holds that there are countless examples of figurative uses of language where the used sentences do not have any literal meaning (sentence-meaning). To support his claim White has suggested a series of examples which, according to him, are nonsense sentences and are used figuratively (White 2011, 36-45):

⁸³ While (W3) is identical to (D3), (W2) is similar to (D2) in the sense that both argue that metaphors do not have "metaphorical meaning", but differ from (D2) in that Davidson does not think that metaphors could lack literal meaning. This difference is the result of White's distinct thesis (W1).

Deep as Australia. If there was anything deeper, he'd be it. (from Dickens *Great Expectations*)

Bh8 I like this move a lot. Bj10 would have been even stronger. (David Bronstein's chess annotation)

Grace me no grace, nor uncle me no uncle. (from Shakespeare's *Richard II*)

The sentences are judged by White to be “*demonstrably* nonsense” (austerely plain nonsense), but still “understandable”. They do not have any literal meaning whatsoever, but no one has any difficulty in understanding them. White argues that they are used figuratively and metaphorically to communicate what could not be said via sentences with literal meaning.

I have two considerations about White's account. First, I believe that White fails to provide successful cases for claim (W_1). Secondly, his account of the relation between communicating knowledge about how to use language and recognising the nonsensicality of the *Tractatus* is mistaken. I take these considerations to be the most important reasons that White's modified Davidsonian notion of metaphor fails to explain the *Tractatus*. I will discuss them below.

Let's examine the Bronstein annotation (White 1996, 218-220; 2011, 40-42) which is White's strongest proposed case of nonsense. The story is this: in one of his games Bronstein had a black bishop which was in an apparently dominant position e5, but he made a surprising move of retreating the piece to the corner square h8 and commented:

(B) “Bh8, I like this move a lot: Bj10 would have been even stronger”

Though moving the bishop to h8 immobilises the piece, it gains control over the diagonal a1-h8 just as effectively as it would from e5. The advantage of the move was in avoiding a vulnerability to attack that it would have faced on e5. Bronstein’s sentence, however, is clearly nonsense. The chessboard is 8 squares by 8 and the annotation Bj10 does not describe any possible move on the chessboard.

White lists various characteristics of the sentence (B), but to keep the discussion short I mention just some of them. Sentence (B) is nonsense, but it is also understandable by anyone. The sentence is not a joke or hyperbole. It communicates truths about the chessboard. What (B) communicates is not the trivial obvious fact that (B) is nonsense, but an insight into features and strengths of the move (Bh8). These insights, however, could not be conveyed through legitimate annotations (they are pieces of practical information about how to move a bishop in chess). Finally, anyone who understands Bronstein (compare him to the author of a book) realises that his sentence is nonsense.

Conant and Dain (2011) have examined the Bronstein case in detail. They argue that sentence (B) is not nonsense at all and even if it were “demonstrably nonsense” it would be quite dissimilar from the *Tractatus* remarks, since they do not seem nonsense at first sight. Here I am not going to add anything substantive to their objections, but I shall formulate their objection in a slightly different way. I argue that White has hovered between two sentences in providing an example to support the claim (W_1):

(B1) “Bj10.”

(B2) “Bh8, I like this move a lot: Bj10 would have been even stronger.”

(B1) is an “obviously nonsense” annotation in chess. No chess-player takes this annotation seriously. It is just a nonsense sentence in chess language. There is no possible move Bj10 in chess. (B2), however, is a perfectly meaningful and understandable sentence in ordinary language. While announcing (B1) in a conversation about chess would be absolutely illegitimate, it is obvious that the speaker of (B2) is fully aware that Bj10 is an impossible move. Therefore, to judging that (B2) was simply nonsense would be an over-hasty judgement. (B2) is in fact a candidate for a figurative use of language. It could be a joke or hyperbole, depending on the situation in which it is uttered. By uttering (B2) Bronstein intends to exaggerate (in a humorous way) the significance of his move Bh8.

It seems to me that in making a case for (W_1), White hovers between (B1) and (B2). Neither of these two sentences have all of the characteristics that White claims for (B). Only (B1) is “*demonstrably* nonsense” and only (B2) is an “understandable” sentence. As a result he does not seem to provide a real case of nonsense being used metaphorically.

A possible reply by White is that the nonsense expression “Bj10” is used in (B2) too. As a result, (B2) must be nonsense too since one of its constituent expressions is meaningless. I propose that the objection is an outcome of overlooking the context principle and its significance to the austere conception of nonsense. In the light of the

context principle, the relation between sentences and their constituents is the other way around. If we accept that the sentence (B2) is meaningful then its constituent “Bj10” must be meaningful too. Therefore, the common sign “Bj10” between (B1) and (B2) should be regarded as a sign which has a use and symbolises in ordinary language (that is, in sentence B2) whereas it lacks use in the finer-grained language of chess (that is, in sentence B1). To conclude, White cannot accept the austere conception of nonsense unless he has already accepted the context principle. But if he accepts the context principle, he cannot defend the nonsensicality of (B2).

My second consideration about White’s reading concerns his explanation of the relation between communicating practical knowledge about language and judging the *Tractatus* to be nonsense. White thinks that it is through and as the result of communicating practical pieces of information about how to use language that the reader eventually realises that the *Tractatus* is nonsense:

[I]t is precisely because the sentences of the *Tractatus* can, for all their nonsensicality draw attention to what shows itself [i.e. how to use linguistic expressions], that they succeed finally in leading the reader to recognise them as nonsense (White 2011, 58).

As I argued before (see Section 6.4), it is the other way around. It is through leading the reader to recognising the book as nonsense that Wittgenstein communicates the practical knowledge about language to her. Her capability to speak properly is the *sign* that he has taken the final step and figured out the nonsensicality of the book.

I conclude that White's modified Davidsonian notion of metaphor is unable to explain how to read the *Tractatus* as a metaphorical work. It lacks the significant feature (D1) in giving an account for the book.

Conclusion

I conclude with a discussion of different replies to the Reductio Response and their flaws:

The metalinguistic solutions of Russell and Carnap failed to block the Reductio for exegetical reasons. While the book seems to say something philosophical about necessary features of the world, metalinguistic translations do not say anything necessary about linguistic expressions. The reconstructive solutions of Carnap and Black were no less problematic. They were either unfaithful to the remarks of the book (they are based on ignoring 6.54) or originated from a misreading of the *Tractatus*. Black's Mental Labour Argument was more exegetically accurate, but it was unable to explain the purpose of the *Tractatus*. Moreover, its attempt to explain why the book is self-contradictory is at best an attempt to block a reductio ad *contradictionem* (to use Hacker's terminology), not the Reductio Response (which is a reductio ad *absurdum*).

Malcolm's (and Ramsey's) reading was also unsuccessful. They attempted to use insights of the book (the book's theory of meaning) while neglecting to consider their immediate consequence (the nonsensicality of the book). This is a misunderstanding of the nature and scope of the book's theory of language.

Hacker's reply to the Reductio is also problematic. The Therapeutic interpreters argue that Ineffability readers "chicken out" out taking the final step and throwing the ladder away. I argued that the Ineffability account is best understood in terms of a

Gricean conception of implicature. As was explained, Hacker fails to give a clear account of how nonsense sentences communicate indirectly (that is, implicate) ineffable truths.

The Therapeutic interpretation of e.g. Conant and Diamond, was also found to be problematic. The reading struggles to explain (1) how the framework of the book is motivated by the remarks from the body, which are expected to be plain nonsense, (2) how the austere conception of nonsense (i.e. the context principle) is itself a theory of meaning and also motivated by remarks from the body, and (3) how it is possible to climb a ladder of plain nonsense sentences, notwithstanding our use of an imaginative understanding of the author of the book.

I suggested that the Therapeutic interpretation's frame-body dualism and its twofold core commitments can be revitalised with a pragmatic reading of the notion of "nonsense" (in the preface and 6.54). I argued that the reason the book is nonsense is not that its remarks lack literal meaning, but that they are found to be unsuccessful in respect of Gricean maxims of (informative) conversation. The book, thus, is a series of literally meaningful sentences which are uttered pointlessly and absurdly. Judging the book to be nonsense, however, is a result of undergoing the experience of reading the book and recovering the practical knowledge of how to use language properly. In the end, the reader divests herself of the inclination to use language improperly (that is, to do philosophy). That is the purpose of the *Tractatus* and could only be achieved if its reader understands the author.

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I use the abbreviation **TLP** only when I refer to the preface and introduction of the *Tractatus*. Otherwise I simply refer to the remarks' numbers in the book. Above abbreviations are followed by page numbers.

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