

On Wittgenstein's and Carnap's Conceptions of the Dissolution of Philosophical Problems, and against a Therapeutic Mix: How to Solve the Paradox of the *Tractatus*

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In this article I distinguish Wittgenstein's conception of the dissolution of philosophical problems from that of Carnap. I argue that the conception of dissolution assumed by the therapeutic interpretations of the *Tractatus* is more similar to Carnap's than to Wittgenstein's for whom dissolution involves spelling out an alternative in the context of which relevant problems do not arise. To clarify this I outline a non-therapeutic resolute reading of the *Tractatus* that explains how Wittgenstein thought to be able to make a positive contribution to logic and the philosophy thereof without putting forward any (ineffable) theses. This explains why there is no paradox in the *Tractatus*.

I. Introduction

In this article I discuss certain differences between the early Wittgenstein's and Carnap's conceptions of philosophical problems and their dissolution, with a view to addressing issues relating to current debates in Wittgenstein-interpretation. I argue that, for Wittgenstein unlike for Carnap, dissolving a philosophical problem or a view as logically confused involves as an essential element spelling out a better alternative way of thinking about the issue. For Wittgenstein, dissolving a problem is therefore not a merely negative achievement of demonstrating that it involves confusions. Relating to this I argue that therapeutic variants of what is known as the resolute reading of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* assume a conception of the dissolution of philosophical problems that is closer to Carnap than Wittgenstein in the

preceding sense. In order to explain this, I distinguish therapeutic readings from resolute readings more generally, and outline a non-therapeutic resolute reading that explains the positive character of the *Tractatus*' response to problems with Frege's and Russell's philosophies of logic, while clearly distinguishing his response from philosophical theses. This clarifies what the early Wittgenstein understands by philosophising without theses, and the sense in which the *Tractatus* makes a positive contribution to logic and philosophy thereof, even though it does not do so in terms of theses, including paradoxically nonsensical theses. Accordingly, the proposed interpretation explains why there is no paradox in the *Tractatus*, contrary to what its interpreters have often assumed.

II. Conceptions of philosophical problems as based on logical unclarities

In analytic philosophy there are many different conceptions of philosophical problems. Often they are envisaged on the model of scientific problems, whereby it is assumed that philosophical problems are well-formulated, and can be answered through an investigation of relevant facts. (Such facts might be thought of as some kind of non-empirical metaphysical facts, whatever they might be.) However, some key figures of early analytic philosophy, most notably Ludwig Wittgenstein and Rudolf Carnap, rejected this view, conceiving philosophical problems as logical or conceptual, and as involving, at least often, logical unclarities, misunderstandings or confusions. As Wittgenstein says in the Preface to the *Tractatus*: 'The book deals with the problems of philosophy and shows, as I believe, that the way of posing these problems [Fragestellung dieser Probleme] rests on the misunderstanding of the logic of our language.' Later in the book he writes:

Most propositions and questions that have been written about philosophical matters are not false, but nonsensical. Consequently, we cannot give any answers to questions of this kind, but only establish their nonsensicality. Most questions and propositions of philosophers depend on our failing to understand the logic of our language.¹

Similarly, Carnap speaks of philosophical problems as pseudo-problems, maintaining, for example that idealism and realism as philosophical positions, and as attempts to answer questions about the nature of reality, are meaningless. ‘Since we consider only factual content as the criterion for the meaningfulness of statements, neither the thesis of realism that the external world is real, nor that of idealism that the external world is not real can be considered scientifically meaningful.’² Similarly, Carnap accused Heidegger of meaningless talk in the case of his article ‘What is Metaphysics?’, where Heidegger discusses the notion of nothing or nothingness (see section 2 below).

As I aim to show, despite appearing similar, Wittgenstein’s and Carnap’s views on how to respond to philosophical problems, understood as involving logical confusions, differ significantly. Having been much better in public relations than Wittgenstein, Carnap has often been taken as the spoke-person for the view that philosophical problems involve logical confusions or unclarities, and for the approach that considers logic as the way to address philosophical problems. Consequently, Carnapian ideas have also been read into Wittgenstein. This seems evident in some earlier scholarship on Wittgenstein, for example, Erik Stenius’s and Max Black’s classic *Tractatus*-commentaries, although I will not try to justify this claim.³ However, I argue that the mistake of reading Carnap into Wittgenstein is committed also by certain recent interpreters, even though the Carnapian influence in their case may be unconscious. I mean in particular the so-called therapeutic resolute readers who

¹ TLP: 4.003. For abbreviations of Wittgenstein’s works, see bibliography.

² Carnap (1967: 334; cf. 228).

³ See Stenius (1960) and Black (1964).

regard Wittgenstein as recommending philosophical therapy as the appropriate response to philosophical problems, and who seek to explain in this way what Wittgenstein means by philosophising without theses. Essentially, the goal of such a therapy is to make a philosopher recognise their original problem as based on or as involving logical confusions, and that she was speaking nonsense. Consequently, she would then be released or liberated, through a process of her confusions being made apparent, from her philosophical problems, and from problematic ‘thought-restricting’ metaphysical tendencies of thinking on which the problems depend.⁴ Here Wittgenstein’s task is understood to be one of ‘overcoming our tendencies to metaphysics through delicate attention to our inchoate desire to speak “outside ‘the limits’ of language”.’⁵

The therapeutic reading of the early Wittgenstein is often associated or identified with the so-called resolute reading of the *Tractatus*.⁶ I quote Goldfarb from his article where the term ‘resolute reading’ first appeared in print, and where Goldfarb characterises this reading, with reference to Cora Diamond, in terms that capture well the gist of the therapy-view, although Goldfarb does not use the word ‘therapy’:

A resolute view has to say, if we truly throw the ladder away, how is it that the nonsense could have been helpful. [...] The process of working from inside, not assuming an external stance, is one in which we treat transitional languages [as exemplified by the sentences of the *Tractatus*] as though it were real language, and interrogate it logically. The question, then, is why we use this transitional language, rather than any other. The answer must lie in this: in showing that there is no such thing as an ontological theory, one should give the best

⁴ Read and Hutchinson (2010: 151).

⁵ Read and Hutchinson (2010: 154).

⁶ Read and Deans (2003: 260), Read and Hutchinson (2010: 156, 159 note 16). Read now prefers to call his Wittgenstein-interpretation ‘liberatory’ rather than ‘therapeutic’, but the view seems to remain essentially the same (personal communication).

ontological theory one can find, and show its terms fall apart upon closer logical inspection. Similarly with a theory of propositions.⁷

Thus, on Goldfarb's understanding of the resolute reading, Wittgenstein's aim is to lead us to see that there is no such thing as an ontological theory or a theory of propositions by demonstrating how even the best theory of relevant sort collapses into nonsense. This is how nonsense can enlighten us philosophically, according to the therapeutic view. Philosophical clarification cures or liberates us from the temptation to theorise by showing us how relevant terms fall apart upon closer examination, and how what we wanted to say is mere nonsense. Accordingly, Read and Hutchinson describe the *Tractatus* as a 'masterfully deliberate enticement of the reader deep into nonsense'.⁸ Problems could be raised here for the therapeutic reading about how one is meant to generalise from the nonsensicality of the *Tractatus* to the nonsensicality of philosophical theorising and metaphysics more generally, and for Goldfarb about how one nonsensical theory can be better than another. But I leave this to the side. However, I believe this identification of resolute reading with therapeutic readings is mistaken. As I explain in section 4, a resolute reader who refrains from attributing any intended theories or theses to Wittgenstein, need not be committed to any ideas about philosophical therapy in the preceding sense or maintain that Wittgenstein's aim is merely the negative one of showing the nonsensicality of philosophical theorising.

In fact this assumption about Wittgenstein's merely negative aims is not limited to therapeutic readings. Although José Zalabardo does not describe his interpretation as either resolute or therapeutic, it too bears a similarity to therapeutic resolute readings and a Carnapian view of the dissolution of philosophical problems. According to Zalabardo: 'Wittgenstein seeks to show that a correct understanding of the logic of our language will

⁷ Goldfarb (1997: 71), my square brackets.

⁸ Read and Hutchinson (2010: 154).

expose the posing of philosophical problems as an incoherent pursuit.’⁹ According to Zalabardo, the acceptance of this paradoxical outcome – paradoxical because it also brings to question Wittgenstein’s argument for his conclusion – is optional, however. Readers who do not accept Wittgenstein’s argument as correct, including Zalabardo himself, may continue to regard Wittgenstein’s account of representation as a contribution to a legitimate subject without drawing the destructive conclusion regarding philosophy.¹⁰ However, just as the reading I propose questions the therapeutic view of Wittgenstein as having merely negative aims, similarly it questions Zalabardo’s view of Wittgenstein as aiming to establish the incoherence of philosophy. Moreover, as I explain in section 4, the therapeutic reading and traditional metaphysical interpretations of the *Tractatus* share certain important problematic assumptions that give reasons to regard them as mere flip sides of one and the same view of the nature of philosophy.

How the identification or association of resolute readings with therapeutic interpretations came about is not entirely clear, given that the two originators and main representatives of the resolute reading, Diamond and James Conant, never seem to use ‘therapy’ or ‘therapeutic’ as a description of their view. Possibly, the Preface to the collection *The New Wittgenstein* which brought the resolute reading into wider attention has contributed to this impression. There we find the following description:

This volume contains papers on Wittgenstein which [...] share certain fundamental and—with respect to received views about Wittgenstein’s thought—quite unorthodox assumptions about his conception of the aim of philosophy. [...] [W]ithout regard to the period (or periods) of his work with which they are concerned, they agree in suggesting that Wittgenstein’s primary aim in philosophy is—to use a word he himself employs in characterizing his later philosophical procedures—a *therapeutic* one. These papers have in common an

⁹ Zalabardo (forthcoming: 1), cf. Zalabardo (2015: 4-5).

¹⁰ Zalabardo (forthcoming: 1), Zalabardo (2015: 232). For responses to Zalabardo from the point of view of the resolute reading, see Diamond (forthcoming) and Floyd (forthcoming).

understanding of Wittgenstein as aspiring, not to advance metaphysical theories, but rather to help us work ourselves out of confusions we become entangled in when philosophizing.¹¹

As such the question regarding the source of the identification or association of the resolute reading with therapeutic ones is a merely sociological one with little philosophical importance. It is significant only because it has led to a widespread misconception of the resolute reading as therapeutic, and as holding that Wittgenstein merely aims to demonstrate the nonsensicality of philosophical theories without offering any positive philosophical accounts in their place.¹² This has generated objections whose authors have misleadingly presented them as applying to the resolute reading in general, although they only apply to its therapeutic variants (see section 4). In what follows I question this identification/association, point out a similarity between the therapeutic view and Carnap's approach, and spell out an alternative that also releases Wittgenstein from the alleged Tractarian paradox. Let me begin with Carnap, and then return to Wittgenstein.

III. Carnap's alleged overcoming of Heideggerian metaphysics

In his article on overcoming metaphysics through the logical analysis of language, Carnap accuses Heidegger of meaningless talk, whereby Carnap assumes that the verifiability of a sentence, i.e. the possibility of showing it to be true or false, constitutes a general criterion of sense or meaningfulness. Very briefly, according to Carnap, there are three kinds of cases of nonsense: 1) A sentence contains one or more meaningless words. 2) A sentence consists of meaningful words but it is constructed contrary to syntax. 3) A sentence is correctly

¹¹ Crary 2000: 1. Diamond's and Conant's reading is described as therapeutic on pp. 12-13.

¹² See for example Glock (2017: 235) and White (2011). Even the introduction to the *Oxford Handbook of the History of Analytic Philosophy* seems to assume the identity between resolute and therapeutic readings. See Beaney (2013: 12).

constructed with regard to syntax, but words in it are used in a way goes against their more fine grained logical grammar, as exemplified by the sentence ‘Caesar is prime.’ For while the property of being a prime can be sensibly attributed of numbers, it cannot be sensibly attributed of persons.¹³ Carnap then seeks to show that Heidegger uses the word ‘nothing’ contrary to syntax on the grounds that, while in some of his sentences Heidegger uses the word in a normal way, in others he seems not to be doing so. The former kind of instances of the use of ‘nothing’, Carnap believes, put him in a position to say that Heidegger does not intend to introduce a new use for ‘nothing’, and that when later in his article Heidegger uses ‘nothing’ as if were a name, he is using the word contrary to syntax. Accordingly, when Heidegger further uses the word as a verb in ‘Nichts nichtet’, modelled according to Carnap on ‘Der Regen regnet’ (the rain rains), Carnap deems the sentence ‘doubly-nonsensical’.¹⁴

The resolute reading of Wittgenstein emphasises certain differences between Carnap’s and the early Wittgenstein’s approaches, regardless whether it is understood therapeutically or not. Characteristic of all versions of the resolute reading is to see Wittgenstein as proceeding in a piecemeal way, without relying on a general standard of sense, such as the principle of verifiability or the picture theory of linguistic representation, which would be first theoretically established and then applied to particular cases to establish the nonsensicality of what is said.¹⁵ Unlike Carnap, Wittgenstein does not in this sense rely on any general claims about the nonsensicality of language use, for example that metaphysical, ethical and religious uses of language are nonsense.¹⁶ Rather, for Wittgenstein any claim about nonsensicality has to be established separately by examining the employment of relevant words by whoever is using them. As he explains in the end of the *Tractatus*, ‘[...]

¹³ Carnap (1931: 227-228).

¹⁴ Carnap (1931: 229-231).

¹⁵ Conant and Diamond (2004), Goldfarb (1997: 70-71).

¹⁶ Carnap (1931: 236-237).

whenever someone else wanted to say something metaphysical, [we would] demonstrate to him that he had failed to give a meaning to certain signs in his sentences.¹⁷ Thus, as Goldfarb says, Wittgenstein proceeds by ‘interrogating logically’ ‘from within’. Accordingly, resolute readings in all forms maintain that when pointing out what is problematic in some instance of the use of words Wittgenstein only relies on the comprehension of logic that language users have by virtue of being language users, not on a general standard of sense that the *Tractatus*’ paradoxically nonsensical sentences somehow establish. (I return to this in section 4.)

Looking at Carnap’s critique of Heidegger in this light, Carnap appears to assume that words have some kind of standard uses that are sensible and non-standard uses that are not, even though he does not deny the possibility of introduction of new uses. Correspondingly, his argument seems to assume that overall Heidegger should be using the word ‘nothing’ according to some such standard, old or new. But it is unclear what would justify the requirement that Heidegger should be using his words in the same way in every sentence. Why could he not use ‘nothing’ in the usual way in some of his sentences and in different novel ways in other sentences? Because this possibility cannot be excluded, Carnap’s inference from the fact that Heidegger on some occasions uses his words in the usual way to the conclusion that he intends to use them in the usual way elsewhere in his article too, but falls into nonsense, is not valid.¹⁸ Accordingly, it would seem a less prejudicial for Carnap to not assume conformity with some general standard of sense, but instead examine Heidegger’s use of words case by case in order to establish whether we can understand something by them. It therefore appears that Carnap’s analysis and argument would benefit from taking a more piecemeal Wittgensteinian form; in logical analysis one cannot jump to conclusions but,

¹⁷ TLP: 6.53, my square brackets.

¹⁸ Carnap (1931: 231).

ought to examine relevant sentences one by one if needed. In failing to do so, Carnap risks doing injustice to Heidegger. Given then the reasonable suspicion that Carnap might be doing injustice to Heidegger, Carnap's argument for overcoming metaphysics fails as a philosophical-logical clarification.¹⁹

Now, despite this important difference between Wittgenstein's and Carnap's approaches, I hope that a similarity between Carnap's treatment of Heidegger and the therapeutic interpretation of Wittgenstein is emerging to view. Carnap's sole aim in his engagement with Heidegger is to establish that Heidegger speaks nonsense, that his approach is logically confused, and that it needs to be abandoned. No better alternative way for thinking about nothing is proposed, but the focus is limited to establishing the negative result of meaninglessness. A similarity to Kant's discussion of the paralogisms and antinomies in the transcendental dialectic can perhaps be detected, with Kant arguing for the impossibility of certain conclusions and answering certain questions on the basis of the necessary conditions for knowledge which he has laid out.²⁰ Although Kant does not describe as nonsensical the inferences and theses he critiques, it seems that Carnap is closer to Kant in his criticism of Heidegger than to Wittgenstein, given Carnap's reliance on a general standard of sense. By contrast, Wittgenstein appears more willing to try to understand Heidegger in his comments from this period.²¹ But whatever Wittgenstein's attitude towards Heidegger might be, let us now turn to his view of the dissolution of philosophical problems.

IV. Wittgenstein on philosophical problems and their dissolution

¹⁹ For a critical discussion of Carnap's argument against Heidegger, see Witherspoon (2002).

²⁰ Kant (1990: A293ff./B349ff.).

²¹ WVC: 68, VW: 73. The relation between Wittgenstein and Heidegger, both early and late, is discussed in Kuusela 2018a.

In the *Big Typescript* from the beginning of 1930s Wittgenstein describes the dissolution to philosophical problems as follows:

When one asks philosophy: “*What is* – for instance – substance?” one is asking for a rule. A general rule, which *is valid* for the word “substance”, i.e. a rule according to which I have decided to play. [...] Just remember the case of the Law of Identity in order to see that taking care of a philosophical problem is not a matter of pronouncing new truths about the subject of the investigation (identity).

The difficulty lies in understanding how establishing a rule helps us. Why it calms us after we have been so profoundly anxious. Obviously what calms us is that we see a system that (systematically) excludes those structures that have always made us uneasy, those we were unable to do anything with, and that we still thought we had to respect. Isn't the establishment of such a grammatical rule similar in this respect to the discovery of an explanation in physics – for instance, of the Copernican system? There is a similarity. – The strange thing about philosophical uneasiness and its resolution might seem to be that it is like the suffering of an ascetic who stands there lifting a heavy ball above his head, amid groans, and whom someone sets free by telling him: “Drop it”. One wonders: If these propositions made you uneasy and you didn't know what to do with them, why didn't you drop them earlier? What stopped you from doing this? Well, I believe it was the false system that he thought he had to accommodate himself to, etc.²²

Arguably, Wittgenstein already understood the dissolution of philosophical problems in this way in the *Tractatus*. As I aim to show, the best way to read the book is to take it as doing what is described in the quote. To explain what I mean, however, I need to outline an interpretation of the *Tractatus* that can make sense of this, given that neither the therapeutic resolute reading nor the traditional metaphysical interpretation seem able to do so. For, insofar as therapeutic readings take the main point of the *Tractatus* to be to demonstrate the impossibility of philosophical theorising and the nonsensicality of philosophical statements, it is hard to see what positive insights, comparable to the introduction of the Copernican

²² BT: 307/TS 213: 417. For comments on the law of identity, referring back to its elimination from the correct logical language in the *Tractatus*, see BT: 203, 304.

system, the *Tractatus* could have to offer in the place of the philosophical theories reduced to nonsense. The same goes for Zalabardo's reading, in the case where Wittgenstein's arguments are accepted, and the incoherence of philosophy follows. If Wittgenstein's arguments are not accepted, Zalabardo seems to end up in something like the position of traditional metaphysical interpretations that regard Wittgenstein as seeking to establish metaphysical theses about language and reality. Only, on Zalabardo's reading Wittgenstein does not succeed to establish them, and if he did, the theses would paradoxically reveal themselves as impossible.²³ But metaphysical readings, too, fail to explain the *Tractatus* in accordance with the preceding. Evidently, they take Wittgenstein's alleged nonsensical theses to be 'pronouncing new truths about the subject of the investigation', ineffable or not-strictly-sayable as those truths may be, with Wittgenstein trying speak about what can only be shown but not said or represented.²⁴

Let me therefore turn to *Tractatus*-interpretation in order to outline a non-therapeutic resolute reading of the *Tractatus*. What I take here to be the characteristic mark of resolute readings, and why I classify the proposed reading in this way, is: 1) The rejection of notions such as ineffable thought, unentertainable truth or thesis, a theory that cannot strictly speaking be said, or substantial nonsense as possible ways to explain what Wittgenstein tries to do in the *Tractatus*. 2) The idea that Wittgenstein only aims to clarify what his interlocutors already know as language users, i.e. the principles of logic that they already rely on in using language. (See references and quotes in the next section.) In identifying these two as the core commitments of the resolute reading I am following Diamond and Conant, as they

²³ Zalabardo (2015: 5).

²⁴ For the latter kind of interpretations, see White (2011: 57-59), and Hacker (2017: 211).

originally spelt out the idea of the resolute reading.²⁵ To distinguish it from therapeutic readings, the proposed interpretation could also be called ‘methodological’ or ‘logical’.²⁶

V. A non-therapeutic resolute reading of the *Tractatus*

According to the interpretation I propose, the purpose of the sentences of the *Tractatus* is to introduce an improved version of a Fregean-Russellian logical language which Wittgenstein puts forward as a replacement of the languages of Frege and Russell, because the latter ‘still fail to exclude all [logical] errors’.²⁷ Importantly, this means that the Tractarian sentences do not constitute philosophical theses, that is, true/false philosophical claims about logic, the nature of language, the nature of reality, and so on, contrary to how they have been traditionally interpreted. Instead, their purpose is to introduce the logical principles and formal concepts that make up Wittgenstein’s logical language. Rather than expressed by means of theses, Wittgenstein’s clarifications of logic are then encoded into the structure or rules of this language. (I return to this below.) Here it is worth emphasising that to introduce a language (or the concepts and principles governing a language) is not the same as to put forward a true/false theory or theses. By introducing a logical language or a calculus one has not yet put forward a thesis or theory about anything.

How the *Tractatus*’ sentences are intended to do their introductory work can be outlined as follows. Wittgenstein’s reader, naturally enough, is assumed to be a language user. Consequently, she is taken to be in possession of tacit knowledge of the principles of logic the comprehension of which Wittgenstein takes to be a condition for her understanding

²⁵ Diamond (1991: Chapter 6), Conant (2002), cf. Conant and Diamond (2004). See Conant and Bronzo (2017: 178-179).

²⁶ For a more detailed discussion of this interpretation, see Kuusela (2018b: Chapters 1.4-3).

²⁷ TLP: 3.325, my square brackets.

language in the first place.²⁸ Importantly, this means that the reader does not need to – indeed, cannot – be informed about the principles of logic (about what can or cannot be said in language, and so on). No one can or needs to be informed about what they already know. Accordingly, the aim of the sentences of the *Tractatus* is not to inform the reader about anything. It is to remind the reader of, and to clarify to her, what she already implicitly knows by virtue of being a language user. This non-informative function of the Tractarian sentences is another way to distinguish Wittgenstein’s sentences from theses. By contrast, true scientific and metaphysical theses do provide information about whatever they concern, i.e. the truths discovered. Moreover, that the reader does not need to be informed about logic also means that the sentences of the *Tractatus* need not constitute properly expressed thoughts or representations of ‘logical facts’ or ‘what is shown’, or statements regarding ‘logical truths’ or ‘necessary truths’. This is not required, but hints and gesturing suffice for Wittgenstein to convey his points about logic, because the reader’s implicit knowledge of logic puts her in a position to meet Wittgenstein ‘half-way’.²⁹ All Wittgenstein needs to do is to guide the reader to recognise is that the principles governing his notation are the same as those which the reader already relies on in her use of language. As Wittgenstein explains the key point in the pre-Tractarian *Notebooks*: ‘Logic takes care of itself; all we have to do is to look and see how it does it.’³⁰

Further, relating to the *Tractatus*’ rejection of philosophical and logical theses, a crucial aspect of the process of reminding the reader about logic is leading her to recognise that the principles of logic cannot be the object (or subject matter) of true/false theses. Wittgenstein’s basic insight is again simple. The reason why there cannot be any logical theses is that in saying anything at all, including spelling out philosophical or logical theses,

²⁸ TLP: 4.022, 5.5563.

²⁹ Cf. Frege (1960: 54).

³⁰ MS 101: 39r/NB: 11, cf. 43; cf. TLP: 5.437f.

language users must already comprehend and rely on the principles of logic. But if comprehending logical theses already assumes a comprehension of the principles of logic, theses cannot (ultimately and properly) clarify such principles.³¹ This point, that in saying anything we always already assume logic, that is, a comprehension of relevant non-empirical necessities and possibilities, and that theses therefore cannot properly clarify logic or the necessities and possibilities in question, explains why Wittgenstein's clarification of logic in the *Tractatus* assumes the form of the introduction of a logical language, as can now be explained.

A key point in the *Tractatus* is that the proper way to clarify what is logically necessary and possible is to codify relevant necessities and possibilities into the rules or structure of a logical language.³² One reason for this view is that it accurately reflects the status of the principles of logic as something always already assumed in saying something by means of language. Accordingly, as Wittgenstein also explains, logic is something that expresses itself in language, but cannot be expressed by means of language, i.e. by means of propositions or what is said in language.³³ But the point can also be further elucidated as follows. A thesis always leaves room to wonder whether the asserted logical exceptionless necessity really holds, for example, whether all propositions really share a general form, as the *Tractatus* maintains. Thus, a thesis leaves the matter unclear. By contrast, codifying such a necessity into the rules of a logical language leaves no room for such questions or unclarities. Insofar as the reader accepts that Wittgenstein's logical language correctly reflects the principles of logic that govern thought and language use, she will also have to accept that every possible proposition has the general propositional form, because any

³¹ See TLP: 6.111-6.112.

³² This interpretation was originally outlined in Kuusela 2011a and 2012. It is spelt out in greater detail in Kuusela 2018b. A similar view has been made very recently proposed by Engelmann (2018).

³³ TLP: 4.12-4.121.

proposition that can be formulated in Wittgenstein's logical language has this form, and there is no other way to formulate a propositions in this language. Thus, unlike in the case of a thesis about all propositions possessing the general propositional form, Wittgenstein's notation (if it is accepted as a correct logical language) excludes any questions and objections regarding this point. More generally, what is logically possible can now be identified with what can be expressed in the logically perspicuous language. What is logically necessary, in turn, is what is presupposed by the possibility of expressing whatever can be expressed. Examples of the latter are the general propositional form and the requirement that names must always have a reference.³⁴

In accordance with this, Wittgenstein comments later, in summer 1929, on the view that the proper way to express a logical necessity or a philosophical view is to codify it into a notation:

R[amsey] does not comprehend the value I place on a particular notation any more than the value I place on a particular word because he does not see that in it an entire way of looking at the object is expressed; the angle from which I now regard the matter. The notation is the last expression of a philosophical view.³⁵

Although this remark is from the period after the completion of the *Tractatus*, and therefore cannot provide any direct evidence for its interpretation, the *Tractatus* can be readily understood in its light. (Note also that, due to Ramsey's premature death, the two only ever discussed Wittgenstein's early philosophy, and perhaps some early ideas of how to modify it.) Everything that interpreters have traditionally construed as Wittgenstein's theses regarding language, reality, and logic, including the so-called picture theory of language, can naturally be understood as part of Wittgenstein's design for a logical language, and relevant

³⁴ TLP: 3.203, 3.22, 4.5, 5.47f.

³⁵ MS 105: 10-12, my square brackets.

remarks as explaining its design. Very briefly, in this language propositions are concatenations of logically simple names that refer to logically simple objects, with propositions constituting true/false representations of possible facts that are concatenations of objects. The capacity of language to represent the world is based on the referring function of names and language sharing a logical form with reality, complex propositions are truth-functions of elementary propositions constructed by means of the operation of joint negation, tautologies are limiting cases of propositions that indicate what counts as a correct inference, and so on.³⁶ Wittgenstein's frequent employment of modes of language characteristic to the introduction of notational devices now also loses its oddity, as opposed to when relevant remarks are read as theses or as nonsense whose purpose is only to reveal its nonsensicality. Just to provide an illustrative sample: 'I call the sign with which we express a thought a propositional sign.'³⁷ 'The simple signs employed in propositions are called names.'³⁸ 'I call any part of a proposition that characterizes its sense an expression (or a symbol).'³⁹ 'I call such a variable a 'propositional variable'.⁴⁰ 'In introduce these expressions [of internal and external relation] in order to indicate the basis of confusion, very wide spread among philosophers, between internal and proper (external) relations [...].'⁴¹ And so on. Evidently, the purpose of these remarks is to introduce formal concepts that belong to Wittgenstein's notation. This is not the same putting forward theses.

Clearly, there is no shortage of indications that Wittgenstein is introducing formal concepts, notational devices and logical principles, sometimes with an explicitly stated clarificatory purpose. My point goes beyond such remarks, however, and its justification does

³⁶ See TLP: 3.21, 4.12, 4.46, 4.466, 5, 5.5, 6.1ff.

³⁷ TLP: 3.12.

³⁸ TLP: 3.201.

³⁹ TLP: 3.31.

⁴⁰ TLP: 3.313.

⁴¹ TLP: 4.122, my square brackets. Cf. 4.126.

not specifically depend on the occurrence of explicit introductory locutions. According to the proposed reading, Wittgenstein begins the introduction of the principles and elements of his notation right in the first remark of the book. What is outlined first is what we are to understand by reality as the object of thought and propositional representations. From this we proceed to the notion of picturing or representation generally, then to thought and language as particular kinds of representations of reality, and so on. Although Wittgenstein speaks as if making metaphysical assertions, his purpose all along is the introduction of formal concepts, such as world as the totality of facts, names as referring expressions, proposition as true/false representations, and so on. There is nothing remarkable about this. We can readily understand statements such as ‘The name means [bedeutet] and object. The object is its meaning.’⁴² as saying something like ‘In the correct notation a name is a referring expression. Its reference constitutes its meaning’. Not only is this way of speaking convenient, but it is unproblematic in that both metaphysical statements and introductory logical definitions have the same exceptionless generality. The sentences of the *Tractatus* together then provide the reader with an explanation of the principles and formal concepts of Wittgenstein logical language, along with illustrations of how a variety of problems arising for Frege and Russell can be dissolved by adopting Wittgenstein’s account of logic, as encoded into his logical language.⁴³

It is important, however, that it is no part of the proposed interpretation that introducing formal concepts and principles is the *only* goal Wittgenstein has, as if their introduction did not serve the broader purposes of logical-philosophical clarification, and as if philosophy were merely concerned with language or thought. What is meant to be achieved through the introduction of relevant formal concepts and principles is the reader’s arriving at

⁴² TLP: 3.201.

⁴³ For a comparison between Wittgenstein’s method of introducing his language and Carnap’s method of logical syntax, both with regard to similarities and differences, see Kuusela (2012 and 2018b: Chapter 3).

‘the correct logical point of view’ from which they can ‘see the world aright’,⁴⁴ i.e. as a totality of contingent obtaining states of affairs that are actualizations of possible concatenations of objects as determined by their logical forms, with language/thought and reality constituting two logically isomorphic structures. Further philosophical insights relating issues such as solipsism, propositional attitudes, and ethics are then also meant to fall into place from this perspective. For example, looking at things from the point of view of Wittgenstein’s notation, there is no metaphysical subject to be found in the world, and the notion of a subject does not enter into the analysis of propositional attitudes.⁴⁵ Similarly, moral value as something absolute is not anything found in the world of contingent facts, and it is not a possible object of true/false propositions that represent possible facts. Instead, moral value – happiness as something good and unhappiness as something bad – is to be thought in terms of a harmony/disharmony between the will (as ‘the bearer of the ethical’) and the world.⁴⁶ The proposed interpretation, in other words, does *not* imply that the *Tractatus* would not provide insights into the nature of reality and human life. For Wittgenstein there is an essential connection between language and reality, language being language only by virtue of representing reality.⁴⁷ Consequently, even though Wittgenstein’s logical clarifications do not constitute true/false propositions or metaphysical theses, and relevant necessities and possibilities concerning reality could not be expressed by means of propositions, his clarifications and the structural features of his logical language are intended to also clarify to the reader the essence of the world in the capacity of a possible object of

⁴⁴ TLP 4.1213, 6.54.

⁴⁵ TLP: 5.631-5.633, 5.54-5.542, 5.64-5.641.

⁴⁶ TLP: 6.373-6.374, 6.4-6.43, MS 103: 19r, 35r-36r/NB: 75, 78. See Kuusela (2017) for discussion.

⁴⁷ TLP: 6.124.

thought or discourse.⁴⁸ Logic, as he says, constitutes a ‘reflexion’ or a ‘mirror image’ of the world.⁴⁹

With regard to the justification of this interpretation, given its evident compatibility with the text, and how much of the text it can explain, the most important point is that it dissolves the alleged paradox of the *Tractatus*, while leaving no doubt about the nature of Wittgenstein’s book as a positive contribution to logic and philosophy. For the paradox only arises insofar as the *Tractatus* is read as putting forward theses about logic, language, reality, and so on, whilst at the same time rejecting their possibility. In short the paradox is that, if the *Tractatus* contains theses or a theory, it cannot be nonsense; if the book is nonsense, it cannot contain theses or a theory. On the outlined interpretation, there is not such paradox, however. (Neither does Wittgenstein himself ever mention such a paradox. Of course, it would constitute a serious problem for a logical treatise, if it did contain a paradox.) The solution to the paradox, or the clarification that there never was such a paradox, is intimately connected with the key point of the book that exceptionless logical or philosophical necessities cannot be properly expressed by means of theses. Rather, they are to be expressed by encoding them into the structure of a logical language (its rules and formal concepts) thus making perspicuous relevant necessities. This language rather than the sentences of the *Tractatus*, as explained, is the proper expression for Wittgenstein’s logical and philosophical insights. This solves the paradox. For, evidently, to introduce a logical language is not the same as putting forward propositions or theses, and insofar as Wittgenstein’s views regarding logic are

⁴⁸ TLP: 5.471-5.4711, 6.124.

⁴⁹ TLP: 6.12-6.121, 6.124. In this regard the early Wittgenstein remains close to Russell, who similarly thinks that logic can reveal something about the nature of reality and the logical structures of facts spoken of, thus clarifying distinctions that are not merely linguistic. See Russell (2010/1919: 25). Relatedly, Wittgenstein’s notion of logical-syntax differs crucially from Carnap’s, and from the notion of syntax assumed by the contemporary model theoretic account of logic. Rather than an abstract structure that can be connected with reality by giving an interpretation to syntactical items, for Wittgenstein only signs with a meaningful use have logical syntax (TLP 3.326-3.327). This again brings to view the essential connection between language/thought and the world for Wittgenstein. For discussion of relevant differences between Wittgenstein and Carnap, see Kuusela (2012 and 2018b: Chapter 3).

expressed as encoded into his language, there is no need to express those views in terms of (paradoxically nonsensical) theses. Consequently, once the reader has understood how Wittgenstein's logical language works, the introductory sentences of the *Tractatus* can be thrown away, just like a ladder after one has climbed it up.⁵⁰

Importantly, given the outlined explanation of the function of the sentences of the *Tractatus*, there is no longer any need to resort to notions such as ineffable thought, truth or thesis, or that of speaking about what can only be shown, in order to explain how the book can be understood as a positive contribution to logic and as a substantial contribution to philosophy, contrary traditional metaphysical interpretations, such as those of P.M.S. Hacker and Roger White.⁵¹ Similarly Zalabardo takes Wittgenstein to be concerned with what can only be shown but not spoken about.⁵² But attempts to explain away the paradox by relying on such notions only succeed in trading an apparent paradox for a real one, whereby one declares certain matters to be impossible to speak about, but keeps speaking about them anyway. This is what Diamond has called 'chickening out'.⁵³ But it seems worse than that. To act as if being able to entertain thoughts that one declares at the same time to be unentertainable seems a matter of self-deception or dishonesty, whereby lack of courage (chickening out) might be a possible cause. Zalabardo seeks exit from this situation by claiming that what Wittgenstein says is not correct, so that silence about philosophy and logic does not follow, after all.⁵⁴ Perhaps this is a better solution than postulating unthinkable thoughts and nonsensical theses. But it leaves Zalabardo with the onus of explaining why exactly Wittgenstein's elucidations of logic do not show the impossibility of

⁵⁰ TLP: 6.54.

⁵¹ Hacker (2017), White (2011).

⁵² Zalabardo (forthcoming).

⁵³ Diamond (1991: 181).

⁵⁴ Zalabardo (forthcoming).

logical/philosophical theses.⁵⁵ More seriously, the problem remains that on Zalabardo's interpretation Wittgenstein was aiming to do something overtly incoherent: to speak about what cannot be spoken about, as if he could not see a problem with such an attempt. In this regard Zalabardo remains close to the metaphysical interpretation that similarly ascribes to Wittgenstein the incoherent intention to speak about what cannot be spoken about.

The main problem with therapeutic readings, as with metaphysical readings that postulate unentertainable thoughts and theses, is how the *Tractatus* can be understood as making a positive contribution to logic, philosophy thereof and philosophy more broadly. Insofar as therapeutic readings maintain that 1) the main goal of the *Tractatus* is to demonstrate the impossibility of philosophical theorising or liberate his readers from a tendency to metaphysics, and accept 2) that the only way to express positive views in philosophy is by means of theses, so that insofar as Wittgenstein has no theses he has no positive views about logic either, they make it incomprehensible how the *Tractatus* could be understood as a positive contribution to logic and philosophy. Consequently, although I reject the view that Wittgenstein seeks to contribute to logic by putting forward paradoxically nonsensical theses, I agree with certain traditionalist objections, such as that of Hacker that the resolute reading would lead to the loss of Wittgenstein's 'hard-won insights into the nature of logic', and the objection of White that the resolute reading constitutes 'an immensely trivialising account of Wittgenstein's work.'⁵⁶ But these objections do not apply to the resolute reading as outlined here, only to its therapeutic variants in the specified sense. Although therapeutic readings do not seem able to explain how the *Tractatus* could give expression to any positive insights about logic, this is no difficulty for the proposed version of the resolute reading (see section 5).

⁵⁵ See Zalabardo (2015: Chapter 5) for discussion of relevant points.

⁵⁶ Hacker (2000: 369) and White (2011: 46) respectively.

It is worth noting how the second commitment of therapeutic readings also begs the question against Wittgenstein's attempt to abandon theses. It is doubtful that we can accept the assumption that the only way to express positive insights in philosophy is to put forward theses, and make sense of Wittgenstein's attempt to abandon theses *qua* philosopher, unless he is regarded as some kind of Zen master.⁵⁷ But for the latter interpretation there is no independent textual evidence, and no historical evidence to back it up. Indeed, the acceptance of the second point seems to make the therapeutic readings a mere flipside of traditional metaphysical interpretations that similarly accept the assumption that the only way to express a philosophical view is a thesis. This assumption is just what commits metaphysical interpretations to the view that there is a paradox in the *Tractatus*, and it leads to the problematic postulation of ineffable thoughts, or nonsensical theses and truths as a way out of the paradox. This reveals how deep-seated the assumption is that theses are the only way to express philosophical or logical views, with both the therapeutic and metaphysical readings, as well as Zalabardo, tacitly accepting this assumption.

Unlike therapeutic interpretations that read the *Tractatus* as a nonsensical pamphlet against philosophical theorising, the proposed interpretation can also readily explain what Wittgenstein means in the end of the book by the strictly correct method of philosophy, and how this method figures as part of his view of the future of philosophy.⁵⁸ This method is not to be thrown away. Only the sentences that are used to introduce Wittgenstein's logical language, which the strictly correct method makes use of, are to be thrown away. Ultimately, the purpose of Wittgenstein's logical language is that it constitutes the framework for philosophy as logical analysis. This language is the framework within which logical analyses

⁵⁷ Cf. Hacker (2017: 218).

⁵⁸ TLP: 6.53.

are to be carried out, whereby philosophy then becomes an activity of clarification.⁵⁹ Indeed, as indicated by Wittgenstein's statement in the Preface that he takes himself to have solved all philosophical problems 'in essentials', he expects this method of analysis to be applicable to, and able to solve, any philosophical problem whatsoever. Since the *Tractatus* does not actually discuss every possible problem of philosophy, the claim of their having been solved in essentials must relate to philosophical methodology he has introduced, and which is intended to make possible their solution.

More specifically, characteristic of Wittgenstein's method of analysis is that it enables one to treat philosophical problems purely formally, without making any claims about whatever philosophical sentences subjected to analysis might speak about. (Perhaps they do not speak about anything.) As Wittgenstein describes the strictly correct method, it would consist in not saying anything nonsensical. Rather, whenever someone put forward metaphysical nonsense, making a statement about an exceptionless necessity as if stating a necessary truth, it would be demonstrated to this person that she had failed to give a meaning to certain signs she was using.⁶⁰ Importantly, by practising philosophy in this way we would then be able to avoid the fundamental, 'very widespread' mistake of philosophers who attempt to put forward theses about the necessary or internal characteristics of their objects of investigation.⁶¹ On the proposed reading the ultimate goal of the *Tractatus* therefore is the introduction of a method that makes it possible to avoid what Wittgenstein regards as the fundamental confusion of past philosophy: the failure to distinguish between factual statements and clarifications concerning non-empirical, exceptionless necessities and

⁵⁹ TLP: 4.112.

⁶⁰ TLP: 6.53, quoted in section 2.

⁶¹ TLP: 4.122.

possibilities. Hence, Wittgenstein does not aim to get us to abandon philosophy, *pace* Zalabardo, but to modify our approach to philosophy.⁶²

Importantly, Wittgenstein's elucidation of logic also importantly explicates the justification of philosophical accounts. Insofar as statements of so-called necessary truths involve a logical confusion, the justification of philosophical clarifications concerning exceptionless necessities can hardly depend on their correspondence with some kind of necessary truths or non-temporal facts, or on what language shows. Accordingly, it is quite unclear how one ought to evaluate the justification of the *Tractatus*' alleged metaphysical theses on such a correspondence-model that envisages Wittgenstein as putting forward unsayable metaphysical truths or as speaking about what can only be shown. (Can we somehow observe that the world is a totality of facts rather than of objects, for example? How do we establish on the basis of observations that every possible proposition is a true/false representation of a state of affairs?) However, this is not the justificatory ground for philosophical clarifications. Rather, as Wittgenstein explains, having just made the point that logical necessities cannot be stated by means of sentences but are shown by language, as encoded in its rules or structure: 'Now we understand our feeling that we are in the possession of the correct logical point of view when everything adds up in our symbolism.'⁶³

The criterion for the correctness of our logical or philosophical point of view, in other words, consists in the absence of anomalies in our logical language by means of which we explicate the logical principles governing thought and language as well as reality as the object

⁶² Zalabardo (forthcoming: 1 and 2015: 4). Here Wittgenstein's diagnosis of what has gone wrong in the philosophical tradition parallels that of Heidegger in *Being and Time* in that Heidegger too identifies as the fundamental confusion of philosophy the philosophers' running together of statements regarding non-empirical possibility and necessity on the one hand, and factual statements on the other hand. (See Kuusela 2018a. For the strictly correct method, see Kuusela 2011b.) Given how strongly Carnap was impressed and influenced by Wittgenstein's elucidation of the truths of logic as tautological, i.e. that logic does not state any truths about reality, it is remarkable that he could see no value in Heidegger's work. Unless Carnap simply never looked into the *Being and Time*, this is strange enough to suggest that additionally a sociological explanation is needed to make sense of the philosophically disappointing encounter between Carnap and Heidegger.

⁶³ TLP 4.1213, cf. VW: 131.

of thought/language. A host of relevant kind of problems arise for Frege and Russell. They pertain, for example, to Frege's account of negation as a second-level function, and relatedly, to his and Russell's postulation of logical objects, Russell's theory of types, his account of the possibility of false judgment and the unity of propositions, Frege's and Russell's accounts of the justification of inferences in terms of logical principles or the axioms of logic understood as expressing true propositions, and more generally to their accounts of the a priori character of logic and our knowledge of logic in terms of self-evident truths. (See below for discussion and references.) Such problems indicate that a correct account has not yet been given of the logical principles governing thought and language, and that the correct logical point of view has not been arrived at.

The absence of such anomalies is also how the *Tractatus*' own account of logic is to be evaluated. Here the reader's comprehension of logic provides the basis for her recognising anomalies as anomalies, for example, that false propositions are possible and that Russell's failure to explain their possibility constitutes a problem, to give a most straightforward example. In this sense the justification of the *Tractatus*' account of logic partly depends on its solving relevant problems with Frege's and Russell's accounts of logic. The solution of these problems constitutes the most immediate ground for the reader to accept as correct Wittgenstein's elucidations of logic in the *Tractatus*. Beyond this, the justification of the *Tractatus* account of logic also depends on whether its logical language can actually be employed as the basis of logical analyses so as to solve all philosophical problems, according to Wittgenstein's programmatic claim.

Wittgenstein, of course, came to recognise relatively soon after his return to philosophy, following his post-*Tractatus* philosophical hiatus, that the logical connectives do not always function according the rules laid out in the *Tractatus*. This became evident in

1929 with the so-called colour-exclusion problem.⁶⁴ Eventually this led Wittgenstein to reject the idea that there could be a single unified and systematic account of logic, such as the *Tractatus* had assumed, accepting Frege's and Russell's universalism about logic, i.e. that the rules of logic are the same in every area of thought and language use. Thus, logic turned out to be much more complex than the *Tractatus* had assumed, and ultimately the *Tractatus*' account of logic was not justified.⁶⁵

VI. Back to Wittgenstein on philosophical problems: the *Tractarian* Copernicus

How Wittgenstein's account of the solution to philosophical problems in the *Big Typescript* matches what he does in the *Tractatus* can now be outlined. As explained, the purpose of the *Tractatus* is to introduce a logical language that is not plagued by the problems with Frege's and Russell's accounts of logic. In this regard it is an impressive achievement. For example, Russell's problem regarding the unity of proposition no longer arises in the context of the *Tractatus*' holistic account of names, according to which a name is not the name it is independently of its possible combinations with other names. Similarly, the problem of false proposition is dissolved by the *Tractatus*' account of proposition as representing a possibility, i.e. a possible state of affairs. Likewise the regress problem, relating to Frege's and Russell's

⁶⁴ See 'Some Remarks on Logical Form'.

⁶⁵ PI §23. For Wittgenstein's rejection of logical universalism see Kuusela (2018b: Chapter 5.1). Diamond (1991: 19) is clear that the resolute reading in her sense is not committed to the *Tractatus*' successfully abandoning philosophical theses. I agree. As I would explain this point, an unintended philosophical thesis regarding language entered the *Tractatus* through its methodological commitment that every sensible proposition can be analysed according to its model for logical analysis. Unlike some therapeutic readings, the resolute reading outlined here therefore is not committed to the claim that the early Wittgenstein successfully abandoned philosophical theses. It only ascribes to him a very interesting attempt to do so. By contrast, see Read and Deans (2011). The idea that the proper way to express logical necessity is to codify it into rules constitutes later the basis of Wittgenstein's rejection of philosophical theses in a modified form. Thus, I maintain that a crucial aspect of the continuity of Wittgenstein's philosophy is found here and, *pace* the New Wittgensteinians, continuity is not to be explained with reference to the notion of philosophical therapy. For the *Tractatus*' failure, see Kuusela (2008: Chapters 2.1 and 3.1). For Wittgenstein's later account of philosophy without theses, see Kuusela (2008 Chapters 3-7 and 2018b).

axiomatic account of logical inference and its justification no longer arises in Wittgenstein's system.⁶⁶ Rather than justified with reference to the laws or principles of logic, comprehended as necessarily true propositions that figure as axioms in inferences, in Wittgenstein's system the justification of inferences depends on the propositions themselves (on their logical forms). This halts the regress. For similar reasons there is no need, in the context of Wittgenstein's account of logic, for Russell's theory of types as a set of logical prescriptions. Whether a function can be applied to itself or to some other expression depends on the function and the expression themselves, not on any further rules prescribing their use. Problems relating to Frege's and Russell's postulation of logical objects and the problem with Frege's account of negation as a second-level function are resolved, too, through Wittgenstein's introduction of the operation of joint negation as a rule for the construction of propositions. Further, the *Tractatus* dissolves problems with Frege's and Russell's accounts of logical necessity, the *a priori* character of logic and knowledge of logic. As explained, logic for Wittgenstein is something always already assumed in thinking and speaking. Logic is therefore not a possible object of scientific or metaphysical theses, including the science of logic. Accordingly, there is no need to postulate substantial but self-evident logical truths (Fregean and Russellian axioms) to explain why logic is binding on us.⁶⁷

I hope that it is now becoming clear how Wittgenstein's introduction of his logical language in the *Tractatus* can be compared with the introduction of the heliocentric account of our solar system. Just as Copernicus (or Tycho Brahe) introduced a new account of the

⁶⁶ The problem can be summarised as follows. If the laws or axioms of logic are considered as true/false propositions or thoughts that figure as premises in inferences, as Frege and Russell do, one can always ask what further law licences an inference from a law of logic together with the other premises in an inference. The same question can be repeated about this further law added to the premises, and so on, generating an infinite regress. See Kuusela (2018b: Chapter 2.2.1) for discussion.

⁶⁷ See TLP: 3.24, 3.331-3.333, 4.031-4.0311, 4.0621, 4.441, 5.13-5.132, 5.4-5.44, 5.4731, 6.126, 6.1271. Several of these problems and their Wittgensteinian dissolution are discussed in Kuusela (2018b: Chapters 2.2.1-2.2.3).

principles governing the movements of heavenly bodies, so too the *Tractatus* introduces a new account of the logical principles governing thought and language. In both cases the achievement can be described as consisting in the introduction of a new mode of thinking or representing the objects of investigation with the purpose of addressing relevant problems. Consequently, various problems that arise for Frege's and Russell's accounts of logic no longer arise in the context of Wittgenstein's new way of thinking about logic. A natural way to describe the situation is to say that the problems have been dissolved, rather than answered in the terms in which they were formulated. As in the context of the Copernican system there is no longer any need to explain the movements of planets in terms of complex epicycles, similarly in the context of Wittgenstein's account of logic there is no longer a need, for example, to explain logical knowledge and logic's bindingness in terms of self-evidence. Like epicycles, the problematic notion of self-evidence falls away, and is no longer needed. Similarly, in the *Tractatus* there is no explanatory factor additionally to names themselves – a cement of the kind that Russell was looking for, identifying as candidates for the job the verb, the act of judging and logical form – that explains the unity of propositions.⁶⁸ Hence, rather than answered in Russell's terms, the problem is dissolved in the Tractarian system. It no longer arises as a problem requiring an answer, because the system has been designed so that there is no room for the problem to arise. From the *Tractatus*' point of view one might therefore say that the problem was not a genuine problem to be answered, but a confusion arising from a misunderstanding of logic. Wittgenstein's response to the other mentioned problems with Frege's and Russell's philosophies of logic can be explained in the same way.

The *Tractatus* therefore provides us with an example of a response to philosophical problems that does not consist in putting forward true/false theses, as if answering a well-

⁶⁸ For Russell's various attempts to solve the problem, see Candlish (1996), and for Wittgenstein's response to Russell's problem, Zalabardo (forthcoming).

defined scientific problem. This, I believe, is what Wittgenstein means by dissolving problems. But if this is what he means, it has little to do with merely demonstrating to someone that what their words made no sense. With regard to the point of the therapeutic interpretation that philosophy involves liberation from entrenched views and tendencies of thinking, someone who comes to accept an alternative way of thinking about an issue (in the sense in which the *Tractatus*' account of logic constitutes an alternative to those of Frege and Russell) may aptly be described as having been liberated from their earlier view, and from the problems to which that view gave rise. But this is not therapy or liberation that merely shows the interlocutor to have been confused, as Carnap tries to do in the case of Heidegger, and as Goldfarb and Read et al propose to understand the *Tractatus*. Rather, the basis for saying that the interlocutor was confused is the alternative way of thinking which shows that the problem need not be posed in the original terms, for example, in terms of self-evidence or some kind of logical or mental cement. This is not a matter of, or even compatible with, liberating someone without offering them a new way of thinking about the issue, and somehow curing their tendencies of thinking without offering anything better instead. Rather, as Wittgenstein says in the quote from the *Big Typescript* in section 3, 'we see a system that (systematically) excludes those structures that have always made us uneasy, those we were unable to do anything with, and that we still thought we had to respect.'

It is therefore crucial to Wittgenstein's dissolution of problems with Frege and Russell that he does introduce a new way of thinking about logic. Of course this new way of thinking is not (intended as) a thesis, as explained. But it is wrong to assume that the only alternative in philosophy to philosophical theses is therapy that leads one to abandon one's views as confused. Or indeed, that the only way to express a positive view in philosophy is a philosophical thesis, so that in the absence of proper theses we must postulate paradoxically nonsensical theses as somehow capable of doing the job. Moreover, a therapy aimed merely

to reveal a philosophical view to be nonsense seems unlikely to succeed. As Wittgenstein emphasises, one cannot simply take away a person's way of thinking about something, and leave nothing in its place (see quote below). And to be sure, a correct understanding cannot be reached merely by pointing out the confusions relating to some view. There is no mythical state of clarity that emerges when the nonsensicality of one's words is pointed out. To achieve a correct understanding, and to spell out a better alternative to a problematic view, requires work.

Wittgenstein remarks on relevant difficulties towards the end of his career: 'Nothing is more difficult than facing a concept without prejudices. – For the prejudice is a system – that is, a form of understanding, even though not of the correct understanding.'⁶⁹ Left with no way to understand a matter at hand consequent to philosophical therapy, a person seems likely to only turn back to their old account and to resuscitate it, because she needs some way to think about the issue, and even a problematic account is better than none. A therapy that merely aims to demonstrate the nonsensicality of a view therefore seems set to merely result in a cycle of attempts to fix the old view with new therapy-sessions purported to show that the fixes do not work.

A few pages after the remark on the solution to philosophical problems and Copernicus Wittgenstein writes:

When I say: Here we are at the limits of language that always sounds as if resignation were necessary at this point, whereas on the contrary complete satisfaction comes about, since *no* question remains.

The problems are solved in the literal sense of the word – dissolved like a lump of sugar in water.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ MS 136: 18b, from 1947, cf. MS 137: 77b.

⁷⁰ BT: 310/TS 213: 421.

It is difficult to understand this remark, unless it is read against the background of the remark on Copernicus. In particular, it seems impossible to make any sense of it in the context of the view that philosophical therapy merely shows something to be nonsensical without offering a better way of thinking in its place. Problematic as the old way of thinking may have been, it nevertheless offered a way to understand the matter at hand. Accordingly, giving it up for no alternative way of thinking seems bound to require resignation. By contrast, assuming that a problematic view has been dissolved by offering a better alternative, Wittgenstein's point that 'no question remains' and no resignation is needed becomes immediately comprehensible.⁷¹

The difference between Wittgenstein's and Carnap's approaches should now be evident. Clearly, Wittgenstein did think that Frege's and Russell's accounts of logic involved serious confusions. The notions of a substantial logical truth and logical theses comparable to scientific theses, for example, would according to him count as nonsensical. But far from merely trying to convince Frege and Russell about the nonsensicality of their views, Wittgenstein took them seriously and developed what he thought to be a better alternative. By contrast, Carnap seems to fail to seriously consider what Heidegger is saying about nothing, not to speak of offering a better way to think about nothing. Seen in this light, it can be no improvement to Wittgenstein's approach to modify it with Carnap's and to try to mix a therapeutic medicine out of the two.⁷²

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⁷¹ As Wittgenstein points out, one might still be left with a resignation of feeling. However, no room is left for intellectual resignation (BT, 300/MS 213, 407).

⁷² A short early version of this article was presented in September 2017 at Roma Sapienza University in a symposium to celebrate the publication of the *Norton Anthology of Western Philosophy*. I would like to thank James Conant for his response and other participants for their questions and comments. Further, I am grateful to Juliet Floyd, Rupert Read, Genia Schönbaumsfeld, and José Zalabardo for comments on later versions.

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