

- 10 For a further discussion of the issues here, see Diamond (1989).
- 11 This reading of Wittgenstein on perspicuity is, in some respects, close to that of G.P. Baker, criticized by P.M.S. Hacker in Hacker (2001: 346). Hacker dismisses all such readings of Wittgenstein on perspicuity by appeal to Wittgenstein's writings and lectures of the early 1930s. For a discussion of this view of the relevance of Wittgenstein's thinking about method in the early 1930s to his understanding of philosophy in the *Investigations*, see Schulte (2002).
- 12 Again, see Schulte (2002) on the various strands in Wittgenstein's conception of his 'method'.
- 13 This paper was read at the conference on Wittgenstein's later philosophical methods, in Venice in September 2002. I am very grateful for the helpful comments and discussion on that occasion. I am also grateful for comments and suggestions from James Conant.

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ALL KINDS OF NONSENSE

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Throughout his career, Wittgenstein propounded two main claims concerning nonsense. First, all metaphysics is nonsensical. The proper task of philosophy is not to answer metaphysical questions by producing theses, doctrines or theories, but to show that they rest on conceptual confusions. Second, 'the negation of an a priori proposition', e.g. '7 + 5 = 12' or 'Some objects are red and green all over at the same time', is not a necessarily false proposition, but a nonsensical combination of signs (see §§251–2). By the same token, the a priori or necessary propositions themselves do not exclude a genuine possibility, since in their case no such possibility can meaningfully be specified (TLP 3.03–3.05; AWL 139–40, 165–6). Instead, the later Wittgenstein argued, such propositions ban a certain combination of words as meaningless from our language. Necessary propositions are not necessary truths, but norms that exclude certain sign combinations from our language.

Both of these ideas have been vigorously contested by mainstream analytic philosophers. In recent years, Wittgenstein's conception of nonsense has also been the central focus of the proponents of a 'New Wittgenstein' (Creary and Read 2000). Two claims set the New Wittgensteinians apart. The first is a reading of the *Tractatus*. In the final sections, Wittgenstein condemns the propositions of the *Tractatus* itself as nonsensical (6.54–7). According to a standard interpretation, his reason was that these propositions try to express truths about the essence of language which, by Wittgenstein's own lights, cannot be expressed in philosophical propositions, but which manifest themselves in non-philosophical propositions properly analysed. According to the New Wittgensteinians, by contrast, the *Tractatus* does not consist of illuminating nonsense, nonsense that vainly tries to hint at ineffable truths, but of 'plain nonsense' (Diamond 1991: 181; Conant 1992: 198), nonsense in the same drastic sense as gibberish like 'ab sur ah' or 'piggly tiggly wiggly'. The purpose of the exercise is therapeutic. By producing such sheer nonsense, Wittgenstein tries to unmask the absurd nature of philosophy and to wean us off the temptation to engage in it.

The second claim is an interpretation of Wittgenstein's conception of nonsense. According to the New Wittgensteinians, his conception of nonsense, both early and late, was 'austere' rather than 'substantial' (Creary and Read 2000: 12–13; Diamond 1991: 111–12; 2000: 153, 165; Conant 2002: 380–3). There are two aspects to this contrast. First, according to the austere conception, nonsense is always a matter of *privation*. Whereas the substantial conception of nonsense allows for 'positive nonsense', nonsense that results from combining meaningful expressions in illegitimate ways, the austere view allows only for 'negative nonsense', nonsense which results from our not having assigned a meaning to expressions in a certain context. Second, the austere conception of nonsense is *monistic*. Whereas the substantial conception distinguishes between different types of nonsense, the austere view insists that from a philosophical or logical point of view there is only one kind of nonsense: 'all nonsense is just nonsense' (Diamond 2000: 165); logically or semantically speaking there is no difference between the statements of metaphysicians and the babblings of a drunkard.

Finally, it should be noted that the New Wittgensteinians not only ascribe these views to Wittgenstein, they also *subscribe* to them. They think that the statements of the *Tractatus* are, indeed, nothing but plain nonsense. They also endorse the austere conception of nonsense, with its exclusive emphasis on privation and its monism.

In this chapter, I explore Wittgenstein's conception of nonsense with particular emphasis on the later work. Two ideas provide succour for the austere conception. The strong contextualism of the *Tractatus* according to which a word has a meaning only in the context of a proposition *can* be used to support the privation view. And several passages in the later work endorse a monistic conception of nonsense. Nevertheless, my account differs sharply from that of the New Wittgensteinians, both exegetically and substantially. Wittgenstein never *actually* used contextualism to support the privation view. On the contrary, both early and late he allowed that nonsense can result not just from failure to assign a meaning, but also from combining meaningful expressions in a way that is prohibited by the rules for the use of these expressions. Furthermore, the monistic conception of nonsense is off-set and superseded by a pluralistic one, especially in the *Philosophical Investigations*. More importantly, the two ideas that favour the austere conception are mistaken, and they are incompatible with some central insights of the *Investigations*. Strong contextualism is ruled out by Wittgenstein's insistence that the meaning of a word is determined by its use in the language. Monism is incompatible with *reductio ad absurdum* arguments, including Wittgenstein's own, but also with his recognition that there are different degrees of linguistic understanding. There are many kinds of nonsense, and one of them results from the illicit combination of meaningful words.

The structure of my chapter is as follows. I shall first touch on the relation between combinatorial nonsense and contextualism. In section 2, I shall argue

that the later Wittgenstein allows for combinatorial nonsense. He rejected a certain explanation of such nonsense, the 'meaning-body' conception, but this rejection is compatible with the idea that a string of words can be nonsense because of what its components mean. The third section tackles the question of how many kinds of nonsense there are. It explores the tension between monistic and pluralistic views in the later Wittgenstein and maintains that, by contrast to gibberish, we understand not just the syntactic construction of philosophical nonsense, but also its components. Otherwise we could not operate with latent nonsense in order to transform it into patent nonsense. What unites latent with patent nonsense is that there is, ultimately, no way of explaining it coherently. But this does not prevent us from handling such constructions in a *reductio*, no matter whether it occurs in mathematics or in the elenctic arguments of the *Investigations*. The final section raises two unresolved issues: How should we classify different types of nonsense? And how can latent nonsense feature in a *reductio*, given that it is incapable of being either true or false?

1 Combinatorial nonsense and contextualism

Both the German *Unsinn* and the English 'nonsense' can mean at least three different things. In one sense, they apply to statements or beliefs and mean something like patently false or unreasonable. In this capacity, the term was widely used in the enlightenment, to brand superstition and religious dogma. At present, it is popular among politicians, who tend to disparage uncomfortable allegations for example as 'absolute and utter nonsense'. I shall refer to this as *absurdity*.

In a second sense, the term applies to actions of all sorts, including linguistic utterances, and means something like 'obviously pointless' or futile. I shall refer to this as *futility*.

Both these usages retain a connection to the original meaning of *Unsinn*, in that a nonsensical statement or action betokens lack of sense or even sanity. In a third and historically most recent sense, the term applies to linguistic expressions or utterances and means something like 'meaningless' or 'unintelligible'. I shall refer to this as *linguistic nonsense* or simply as nonsense.

Wittgenstein seems to have been the first major thinker to link philosophy in general to linguistic nonsense in particular. Many philosophers of the past have disparaged the theories of their predecessors as false, unfounded or futile. But according to Wittgenstein metaphysical theories suffer from a more basic defect, namely that of being nonsensical. It is not just that they provide wrong answers, but that the questions they address are misguided questions to begin with, what the logical positivists later called 'pseudo-problems' (see §§109, 119; TLP 4.003, 3.323f.).

Kant already held that many of the questions that give rise to metaphysical theories are misguided to begin with (*Critique of Pure Reason* B82–3).

The idea that these questions are not just futile but linguistically nonsensical, however, seems to have entered Wittgenstein's thought through Frege and Russell. Russell's theory of types introduced a systematic dichotomy between propositions which are true or false and statements which are meaningless, although they may be impeccable as regards vocabulary and syntax.

(1) The class of lions is a lion

is not just obviously false, it is 'meaningless' or 'nonsense', since it predicates of a class what can only be predicated of individuals. Russell's theory of types blocks such nonsense by prohibiting sentences which predicate of a thing of one logical type – e.g. classes – properties which can only be predicated of things of a different type e.g. individuals.

The *Tractatus*, for its part, rejects as nonsensical not just sentences like (1), but also Russell's attempt to prevent such sentences by type-restrictions like

(2) The class of lions is *not* a lion.

Indeed, the famous finale condemns the propositions of the *Tractatus* itself as 'nonsensical'. This is not the place to go into this extraordinary conclusion (see Hacker 2000; Glock 2004 and 1996b: 258–64, 330–6). In order to become clear about Wittgenstein's later views on nonsense, however, we must attend to the question of whether the *Tractatus* allows for combinatorial nonsense. There are two arguments in favour of the view that the book only admits of negative nonsense. The first is provided by the following two passages (Diamond 1991: 196–7; Conant 2002: 404, n. 92, 411).

Logic must look after itself. If a sign is *possible*, then it is also capable of signifying. Whatever is possible in logic is also permitted. (The reason why 'Socrates is identical' means nothing (*heißt nichts*) is that there is no property called 'identical'. The sentence is nonsensical because we have failed to make an arbitrary determination, and not because the symbol, in itself, would be illegitimate.) In a certain sense we cannot make mistakes in logic.

(TLP 5.473)

Frege says: every legitimately formed proposition must have a sense; and I say: every possible proposition is legitimately formed, and if it lacks a sense, *this can only be* (my emph.) because we have given no meaning to some of its constituents. Hence 'Socrates is identical' means nothing (*sagt nichts*) because we have not given a meaning to 'identical' as an *adjective*. For if it appears as identity-sign, it symbolizes in a completely different manner and way – the signifying relation is a different one, – hence, also the symbol is entirely

different in the two cases; the two symbols only accidentally share the sign.

(TLP 5.4733)

Contrast

(3) Socrates is identical

and

(4) Socrates is identical with the husband of Xanthippe.

According to our passages, that (3) 'means nothing' or 'says nothing' is exclusively due to the fact that we have failed to give 'identical' any adjectival meaning. Of course, we could lay down such a meaning by an 'arbitrary determination', stipulating, for example, that 'identical' is to mean 'human'. In that case, however, in (3) and (4) the tokens of 'identical' symbolize in an entirely different manner; the sentences merely have a sign in common. The failure of (3) to say something is due not to the meaning 'identical' has in statements like (4), since there is no sign with the same meaning in those two propositions. Instead, it is due to 'identical' not having been assigned a meaning in (3). This, in turn, suggests that lack of sense in a propositional sign can only result from privation, from failure to assign a meaning to one of its constituents.

According to the second argument, this restriction to negative nonsense is no coincidence, but explained by the contextualism shared by Frege and Wittgenstein (Diamond 1991: 98–100; Conant 2002: 398–405; Whitherspoon 2000: 321–5). In the *Foundations of Arithmetic*, Frege adopted a strong, restrictive form of contextualism: 'Only in the context of a proposition do words mean something' (1953: §62). Frege himself never adapted this context-principle to his later division of content into sense and meaning. The early Wittgenstein did just that, although it is essential to his distinction between sense and meaning that propositions do not have a meaning, and that names do not have a sense. Within these altered parameters, the *Tractatus* repeats Frege's restrictive principle: 'Only the proposition has sense. Only in the context of a proposition has a name meaning' (3.3, see 3.314).

The restrictive principle that a word has meaning only in the context of a proposition seems to clinch the case for an austere conception of nonsense. It provides the crucial premise for the following argument:

- P₁ A word (name) has meaning only in the context of a proposition
- P₂ A proposition is a sentence with a sense
- C No component of a sequence of signs that lacks a sense can have a meaning.

The TLP is definitely committed to P_2 : a proposition is, by definition, a propositional sign with a sense, one that has been projected onto reality (see 3.1ff., 3.3ff., 3.5, 4). Furthermore, the argument is valid. Finally, from (C) it follows that no part of (3) has a meaning, since (3) does not have a sense. It also follows that no part of (3) could mean what it does in a meaningful proposition like (4).

In the wake of Frege and Wittgenstein, the restrictive context-principle (P_1) has been repeated by countless philosophers of language, Quine and Davidson pre-eminent among them. Nevertheless, it has one major shortcoming: it is wrong! Consider the following two columns:

to be	to abide
to have	to arise
to do	to awake.

Two things about these words are indisputable. First, they are *not* part of a proposition. Second, they are neither meaningless nor nonsensical, but *do* have a meaning. The words in the first column are the auxiliary verbs of English, the words in the second are the first three items from the dreaded list of irregular English verbs.

Next, consider the following extract from the *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*:

nonsense *n* 1 a: words or language having no meaning or conveying no intelligible ideas b (1): language, conduct, or an idea that is absurd or contrary to good sense (2): an instance of absurd action 2 a: things of no importance or value: trifles b: affected or impudent conduct.

It would be absurd to maintain that the words printed in bold at the beginning of dictionary entries are meaningless, all the more so since the text that follows specifies what they mean.

These objections cannot be defused by invoking the distinction between type and token. Not only is it obvious that, for example, the type 'to awake' has a meaning in English, it is equally obvious that the particular token printed above is a meaningful word of English, rather than a mere scribble or collage of letters, even though it occurs on its own, outside the context of a proposition.

In ordinary parlance, we ascribe meaning primarily, though not exclusively, to words. Dictionary definitions, the very paradigm of explanations of meaning, paraphrase words or phrases rather than sentences. This is no coincidence. Far from being the 'primary vehicle of meaning' or the 'units of significance', as certain contextualists have it, most sentences are complex signs. Their meaning depends on the meaning of their constituents (Dummett 1981: 3, 593; cf. Quine 1980: 38–9; Diamond 1991: 108–11). By and large,

we master sentences by learning how to construct them from familiar words. Furthermore, understanding the components and mode of composition of a sentence is a *necessary* condition for a genuine understanding of the whole sentence, even if, as the later Wittgenstein argued, it is not always *sufficient* (see §§350–1; BB 105 6; RPP II §§93 4).

It may be objected that my animadversions against the restrictive principle are based on our *ordinary* notion of meaning, whereas Frege and the *Tractatus* were operating with *theoretical* notions to which our standard criteria for meaningfulness do not apply. This response is not available to those who maintain that the *Tractatus* consists of plain nonsense, since such nonsense cannot constitute a theory. But Frege and Wittgenstein *did* operate with notions of meaning that differ from the ordinary one and are part of philosophical systems. Yet this does not make them immune to my objection. For they are also committed to claims that involve our ordinary semantic notions. Otherwise, their pronouncements would simply lack the relevance that they and their followers have attached to them.

If Wittgenstein's notions of sense and meaning were simply stipulations, his notions of senselessness and nonsensicality would be equally free-floating. In that case, his claim that philosophical propositions and questions are nonsensical because they contain words without meaning would not have to worry metaphysicians. Even if true, it would not show that these propositions and questions lacked the *kind of sense* that metaphysicians thought they possessed. Similarly, one cannot invoke the restrictive principle to condemn 'identical' in (3) as meaningless, unless that principle is based on the established notions of sense and meaning. But if we use the word 'meaning' 'as it is normally used (and how else are we to use it?)' (see §246), words can and do have a meaning outside the context of a sentence.

The reason why the early Wittgenstein's restrictive principle fails to heed this point lies indeed in his *extraordinary* use of the word 'meaning'. According to the *Tractatus*, meaning is something possessed by 'simple signs' or (logically proper) 'names'. The meaning of such a name is the (simple, unanalysable) object it stands for (3.203, 3.22). The sense of an elementary proposition is a function of its constituent names, i.e. of their meanings – the objects they represent – and of their form, their combinatorial possibilities (3.318). The flipside of this compositionality is that the role of names is to contribute to the determination of the sense of the elementary proposition. Outside the context of a sentence, Wittgenstein seems to have held, they cannot have such a role.

This line of reasoning rests on two assumptions, namely, first, that the ultimate constituents of propositions are all names and, second, that the meaning of a word is the object it stands for. Both assumptions were conclusively criticized in the *Investigations* (§§1–8, 40). Even if we accept them, however, the *Tractatus* is entitled at most to hold that names must be *capable* of occurring in propositions. It is not entitled to hold that they only have meaning

when they *actually* occur in propositions, as the restrictive principle requires. Like a person, an expression can *have a role* without actually *fulfilling that role* at every given instant.

The early Wittgenstein may have overlooked this fact because of an important feature of the picture theory. The picture theory conceives of propositions as a kind of picture or model. A paradigmatic example of such a model is provided by the initial inspiration for the picture theory, namely, the law-court reconstruction of traffic accidents with the aid of dolls and toy-cars (NB 29.9.14). It is, indeed, the case that the individual elements of such a model do not have what the *Tractatus* calls a meaning outside of the model. It is only within a particular reconstruction that a doll or toy-car has a meaning, i.e. deputizes or goes proxy for a particular person or object. Outside of such a reconstruction, for example in a box, it certainly does not represent, e.g. Ms Smith or the lorry of Mr Anderson.

Words of a natural language, however, are different in this respect. Adjectives and verbs have a meaning even outside the context of a proposition. This even holds for proper names, the use of which is more flexible. They have a denotation generally, because of their role in a persisting practice, not merely on a case-by-case basis. It is not just on a particular occasion, through a fiat relating to its occurrence in a specific token-sentence, that tokens of 'Socrates' stand either for the Athenian philosopher or the Byzantine theologian or the Brazilian footballer. At most, it is possible to alter the denotation of proper names on a specific occasion.

In the *Tractatus* we already find ideas that are at odds with the restrictive principle, namely its compositionality. One understands a proposition 'by understanding its components', and in translation from one language into another we translate not each individual proposition but 'the constituents of propositions'. The meanings of simple signs (words) must be explained to us if we are to understand them. With propositions, however, we make ourselves understood' (4.024–4.026). This suggests that the early Wittgenstein did not take TLP 3.3 as literally as the proponents of the austere conception suppose, and as they themselves need to do in order to construct the aforementioned argument against combinatorial nonsense.

Wittgenstein's later conception of meaning militates even more against the restrictive principle. According to the *Investigations*, the meaning of a word is its use. 'For a large class of cases – though not for all – in which we employ the word "meaning" it can be defined thus: the meaning of a word is its use in the language' (§43, see §30; BB 69). Alternatively, the later Wittgenstein declared that the meaning of a word is *determined by* its use, or by the rules for its correct use. There are important differences between these formulations, and the second one is superior (see Glock 1996a). But both concur on two points: *whether* a sign is meaningful depends on whether *there is* an established use, whether it can be employed to perform meaningful linguistic acts; and *what* meaning it has depends on *how* it can be used. For us, the

crucial point is this: it is individual words and phrases rather than whole sentences that have a rule-governed use in the language. By parity of reason, it is individual words rather than whole sentences that have a meaning. The same moral emerges from the dictum 'The meaning of a word is what is explained by the explanation of meaning' (§560). As TLP 4.026 already recognized, we typically explain the use of individual words or phrases rather than of whole sentences.

To be sure, in the *Investigations* Wittgenstein quotes Frege's restrictive principle with approval 'A word has meaning only as part of a sentence' (PI §49). But, with occasional exceptions, Wittgenstein explains the context-principle in a non-restrictive way, one that is compatible with the idea that individual words can mean something without *actually* occurring in a proposition (see M 54; BT 1; PG 1, 44; cf. PR 59). What he insists on is that they must be *capable* of occurring in propositions. He also suggests that such occurrences of words are *semantically primary* in the following sense. A proposition is the minimal unit by which a move is made in the language-game: only propositions can *say* something. There are no half-propositions in the sense in which there is half a loaf of bread. By the same token, naming an object is no more a move in a language-game than putting a piece on the board is a move in chess. Naming *alludes* to a sentential context in that it is essentially a 'preparation' for sentential use (Waismann 1965 13–4, 199, 318–20). There is a *general* dependency of words on sentences in that the practice of explaining words is a preparation for their employment in sentences. On the other hand, any *particular* sentential employment presupposes that the component words have a meaning in advance, on account of an antecedent practice.

The kernel of truth in contextualism is that the meaning of a word is determined by *how* it can be used within sentences. But it does not follow that the word has meaning only in the context of a sentence. On the contrary, it is the *individual word* which has such a use. If it is clear what role tokens of a type-word *would play* in a proposition, tokens of that type have a meaning, whether or not they actually fulfil that role. There is a difference between *having a use in the language* and *being actually used on a particular occasion*. There is also a difference between a word *having a meaning* and a sentence being used to *say something*. Wittgenstein was well aware of this. He distinguished sharply between meaning and sense in the *Tractatus*, and even in his later work he tended to speak of the *Bedeutung* of words and the *Sinn* of sentences.¹

Hence, the privation conception of nonsense cannot be defended by appeal to contextualism. But perhaps it has intrinsic plausibility. One might concede that 'Socrates' might have a meaning outside the context of a meaningful sentence, while insisting that it lacks meaning when it occurs *within* the context of a nonsensical sentence like (3). One problem with this rejoinder is that it is at odds with the privation view. If in (3) 'Socrates' is meaningless not because we have failed to assign a meaning to it but *because of its context*,

then its lack of meaning is not just a matter of privation, it is a matter of being in inappropriate company, just as the combinatorial view has it.

Furthermore, the claim that 'Socrates' lacks meaning in (3) is implausible. One can establish who 'Socrates' stands for by consulting an encyclopaedia, and establish what the term 'identical' means by consulting a dictionary (Hacker 2003: 10, 20). One can also translate (in the case of 'identical') or transpose (in the case of 'Socrates') the constituents of (3) into another language. Consequently, there is no obstacle to 'Socrates' meaning the same in (3) as it does in (4); in both cases, it is probably the name of the snub-nosed Athenian philosopher.

Of course, on some occasions words might be used with a meaning that differs from their normal one. In that case, their *literal meaning* will differ from their *speaker's meaning*, their meaning on occasion of utterance. That meaning is to be gleaned from the speaker's explanations. For instance, if someone utters both (3) and (4), and explains the term 'identical' in both as meaning *human*, that is what he means by it. And then *his* utterance of (4) is nonsensical, because of the meaning *he* has given to 'identical'. The explanations speakers give of their words cannot be discarded as being of merely psychological importance (cf. Diamond 1991: 99, 106). What a speaker means by a word in a specific utterance is *not* determined by what words or images happen to cross her mind; but it *is* determined by how the speaker would explain her utterance when challenged. As the later Wittgenstein realized, the proper way to avoid psychologism is not to sweep the topic of understanding and meaning something by a word under the carpet, as Frege and the *Tractatus* had done. Rather, it is to realize that understanding and meaning something depend not on mental accompaniments of words, but on *speaker's explanations* (Glock and Preston 1995).

The privation conception entails that all components of (3) are *totally* and *equally* bereft of meaning. But when we approach (3) in the spirit of the *Investigations*, namely by considering how we would react to it, we reach a different conclusion. If someone uttered (3), our first response would be to treat it as an incomplete sentence. We would be liable to ask 'Identical with whom?', precisely because 'is identical' is *not* a meaningless sign, but part of a two-place predicate. Imagine that our interlocutor responds by insisting 'Not identical with anybody; he is just identical period!'. Being philosophers, we might then suspect that by 'identical' he means 'self-identical'. If he denied this, however, we would be at a loss. The trouble with (3) concerns 'identical' rather than 'Socrates'. No substitution for 'Socrates' would render (3) meaningful, given the literal meaning of 'identical'. By contrast, replacing 'identical' by any number of one-place predicates restores sense. It is 'identical' rather than 'Socrates' that is being misused in (3), and it is the combination of 'Socrates is' with 'identical' that makes for nonsense.

Once we take to heart the shortcomings of strong contextualism and the difference between literal and speaker's meaning, the insistence that lack of

sense is always the result of privation is either false or trivial. It is false if it means that none of the components of (3) have a literal meaning, and the same meaning as in (4), or that the nonsensicality of (3) cannot result from combining 'identical' with 'Socrates is'. It is trivial and inconsequential if it means that we *could always give a meaning* to any combination of words, by assigning a new meaning to one or more of its constituents, or to the combination as a whole.

2 Combinatorial nonsense in the later work

Of course, one cannot rule out that 5.473 and 5.4733 were meant to preclude combinatorial nonsense simply by noting that such a preclusion would be unwarranted. But it is clear from other passages as well as from Wittgenstein's later comments that the *Tractatus* condoned combinatorial as well as negation nonsense (see Glock 1996b: 214–16, 260; Hacker 2003: 12). Even more pertinent to my present concerns is evidence from the later period, which suggests that the import of 5.473 and 5.4733 does *not* lie in the rejection of combinatorial nonsense. In his record of Wittgenstein's lectures of 1930–1, G.E. Moore reports:

Later on [Wittgenstein] said that for any sign whatever there *could* be a method of projection such that it makes sense, but that when he said of a particular expression 'That means nothing' or is 'nonsense', what he meant was '*With the common method of projection that means nothing*', giving as an instance that when he called the sentence 'It is due to human weakness that we can't write down all the cardinal numbers' 'meaningless', he meant that it is meaningless if the person who says it is using 'due to human weakness', as in 'It is due to human weakness that we can't write down a billion cardinal numbers'.

(M 58)

Here Wittgenstein starts out by making the point of 5.473. (3) is not 'illegitimate in itself', because the sign can be projected onto reality by making an appropriate stipulation. Nevertheless, (3) can be condemned as nonsense, because, in the parlance of the *Tractatus*, there is a *common* or *standard* method of projecting the sign onto reality. In the parlance of the later Wittgenstein, (3) is nonsense because there is a common or standard way of using 'identical', and in this standard way the sign cannot be meaningfully combined with 'Socrates is...'. This squares well with the fact that 5.473 declares (3) meaningless on the grounds that 'there is no property called "identical"', i.e. by reference to the fact that 'identical' is not standardly used to signify a property. A sign that has a method of projection, that is used to signify something, is a symbol. Accordingly, nonsense here results precisely

