

**The Richness of Our Tradition:
Replies to Preston, Gomez-Torrente, and Hanks
Scott Soames**

Reply to Preston: A New Vision for Analytic Philosophy?

I am pleased to reply to Aaron Preston's insightful essay, which places my treatment of ethics in the context of some of my other historical and philosophical work. Because I believe philosophy has made great progress, I have tried, in my historical work, to identify its achievements and failures in order to learn from them. My effort has led me to a broader perspective on the whole of western philosophy, which reflected in my next book, *The World Philosophy Made*.¹ This has meant coming to grips with what is essential to the discipline, and the role it is capable of playing in our lives.

Aware of analytic philosophy's impressive achievements in some areas, Preston takes it to have been "badly deficient in addressing matters of morality and existential meaning." I agree that it has done more to advance theoretical knowledge than it has to improve our understanding of moral matters, or to help us live better and more fulfilling lives. But the same, I am afraid, is true western philosophy as a whole. For this reason, I'm not fully on board with his next remark.

For most of its history the overarching goal of philosophy has been the rational construction of a comprehensive "worldview" capable of providing reasonable answers not only to metaphysical but also moral questions, and thereby serving as a roadmap to "the good life," a life of *eudaimonia*, or flourishing...Because *informing the good life* is, on this view, an integral and overarching aim of the quest for philosophical truth and knowledge, we can call this the *eudaimonistic* perspective on philosophy.

To be sure, western philosophy was born with the audacious attempt by Socrates and Plato to link the quest for theoretical knowledge with the personal quest for meaning. And yes, many philosophers have tried to connect the two. But while philosophy's

¹ Princeton University Press.

contributions to the theoretical enterprise have been spectacular, its contributions to advancing our moral and existential projects haven't been as impressive.

By the time of Augustine, philosophy as a way of life, integrating theoretical knowledge with wisdom in the art of living, was in decline, after which, for many centuries, Christianity took the lead in charting the individual's path to virtue and happiness.² Platonic metaphysics was already embedded in Christian theology, and would remain so for the next thousand years. But the wide-ranging philosophical search for theoretical knowledge that emerged in Greece stayed in the background until, in the 13th century, Christian thinkers adopted Aristotle as a guide to reason and observation-based knowledge. The result was a rebirth of Greek philosophy that fed work in logic, language, mathematics, and the study of nature, while, temporarily, leaving morality and the meaning of life to the Church. In time, independent philosophical investigations of the latter would revive, as, centuries hence, leading philosophers--including Locke, Hume, Smith, Kant, and Mill--would take up moral matters to good result. But such contributions haven't matched philosophical contributions, to logic, mathematics, and empirical science. The yawning gap between philosophy as a source of theoretical knowledge and philosophy as a guide to meaning and morality didn't begin with the analytic-continental divide. It pervades our tradition.

Preston notes my previous ambivalence about the diminution of moral and existential matters in earlier decades of the analytic tradition. For me, Moorean anti-naturalism and the prescriptivism of Carnap, Ayer, Stevenson, and Hare were always unpersuasive. But I was also unconvinced by objectivist alternatives, while being sympathetic to the

² See John Cooper, *Pursuits of Wisdom*.

tractarian view that what contributes most to contentment and personal wellbeing isn't knowledge, moral or otherwise, but one's attitude toward life.

Preston rightly takes my chapter on Schlick's *Problems of Ethics* to signal a change.

One of his comments got my attention.

[SS] uses Schlick's views to thread the needle between what he finds attractive and what objectionable about noncognitivism...Inspired by Schlick's vision for a science of ethics, Soames finds logical space to combine non-cognitivism about values with *cognitivism about moral judgment*. [ATP2 359-63] The possibility of doing so was already adumbrated in *PATC*, [318-19] but here Soames begins to actualize...the early analytic project of establishing a "*science of ethics*." (My emphasis)

What is the new view? Although I can't defend it here, I can state it.³ I now think judgments about what -- prudentially, morally, or all-things-considered -- one ought to do are judgments about what one has the most self-interested, other-directed, or all-things-considered, reasons to do.

Prudential reasons target advancing one's welfare and developing the capacities needed to thrive as a well-functioning human being. The proper mix depends on one's special characteristics plus one's shared human nature. Because we are intensely social animals, our welfare includes health, safety, companionship, freedom of action, development of our capacities, and the enjoyment of sensual pleasures. However, it also includes opportunities for excitement, the pursuit of difficult goals in concert with others, and the conviction we are contributing to something we value that will outlast us. That said, we are, of course, often ignorant of, or mistaken about, about what our welfare consists in, and what will advance it.

What is the connection between one's welfare and one's reasons for action? First, the fact that doing X would increase one's welfare provides one with a reason to do so -- the greater the increase the stronger the reason -- whether or not one recognizes it. Second,

³ Further discussion is found in chapter 13 of *The World Philosophy Made*.

recognizing that doing *X* would increase one's welfare nearly always generates some desire to do it, even though (a) the intensity of the desire needn't be proportionate to the strength of the reason, and (b) even when it is, one may have strong reasons to do something else. Putting moral reasons aside, we may take a prudential use of *A ought to do X* to be true iff A's doing *X* would most advance X's welfare (where A may be oneself). In order to derive moral *oughts*, we need factual truths about what A's welfare consists in plus truths about what outcomes for A and others would be produced were one to perform various actions. Biology, psychology, and social science can help us articulate, not a science of human flourishing, but a scientifically informed philosophical theory of *the good life*. Since the values in question are ours, the theory can be descriptive and normative at the same time.

To extend this idea to morality we must find facts about normal human agents that generate reasons they are capable of recognizing that support the truth of claims about actions they *morally ought* to perform. In looking for such facts, we look for *other people* an agent cares about plus *relationships, activities, and institutions* the agent values in which he or she is involved with others. Those one cares about may be family, friends, loved ones, fellow citizens, or all humanity -- anyone whose welfare one values whom one thinks may be affected by one's actions. Relevant relationships, activities, and institutions encompass any that involve reciprocal or coordinated action, either directly or indirectly, from which participants derive value that wouldn't be available if they couldn't count on others to play their expected parts.

Moral reasons for actions are facts about the impact of one's actions on the welfare of others and one's relationship to them, including one's participation in cooperative activities or institutions. The fact that an action one can perform would have a positive

effect on the welfare of those one cares about is a moral reason for performing it, as is the fact that it conforms to the activity, relationship, or institutional-based expectations of those with whom one voluntarily interacts. Imagine a voluntary group activity that benefits all if each plays his or her part, but which may fail to be beneficial if some opt out. Wishing not to incur the anger and negative consequences that would result from discovery that one is shirking, one has a self-interested reason not to do so. When one cares for some of the participants, or doesn't want to be the kind of person who would let them down -- the kind one would condemn if the shoe were on the other foot -- one has a moral reason to do one's part. The strength of this reason is proportionate to the importance of one's role in the activity, the benefits produced for others, and the centrality of the activity in shared social life. In general, one morally ought to perform acts one has a strong moral (i.e. other-regarding) reason to perform, provided that doing so doesn't require sacrifices disproportionate to the benefits for others they achieve.

This brief sketch is an invitation to develop, not a science, but a scientifically-informed theory that brings philosophers together with biologists and social scientists. The theory I imagine takes our biologically-determined nature and our early childhood experience to have made us intensely social animals who have strong attachments to others, and who derive great value from cooperative social relationships. These facts provide us with strong moral reasons capable of motivating action.

The fact that our other-regarding interests arise from our social attachments, and so are central to our self-conceptions, magnifies their force. Human psycho-biology plus facts of the human condition provide us with a motivational base in which our intertwined self- and other-regarding interests tie us to others. The challenge for philosophically-minded social scientists is to verify, precisify, and deepen this conception

of human nature, informally suggested by philosophers like Aristotle, Hume, Hutcheson, and Smith. The political challenge is to continue developing social and economic institutions that blend self-interest with reciprocal respect for others in larger systems of cooperation, broadening our productive contact with previously unrecognized others, and thereby enlarging our moral universe. The philosophical challenge is to bring all this together by articulating precisely how our affection for, need of, and different ways of reciprocally interacting with, others provide inherently motivating moral reasons in terms of which we can define what it is morally good to do, what we morally should do, and what we are morally obligated to do.

In his penultimate paragraph, Preston asks what exactly I am proposing. In moral theory, the sketch just offered is a beginning. In finding meaning and happiness, there is more to be said, but it too, can profit from a better scientific understanding of human nature.⁴ I don't, however, go all the way to Preston's "*eudaimonistic* perspective on philosophy" in which "*informing the good life* is...an integral and overarching aim of the quest for philosophical truth and knowledge". Informing the good life can, I hope, become a more important part of contemporary philosophy. But even if it does, it will only be one important part. Philosophy is deeply connected to all significant and systematic intellectual quests. The moral and existential are among them, but they are neither pre-eminent, nor closely connected with many other equally important quests.

Reply to Gomez-Torrente: Tarski, Carnap, and Quine on Truth, Meaning, and Apriority

I much admire the second section of Mario Gomez-Torrente's essay in which he assesses my, fairly standard, discussion of Quine's critique of truth by convention, and the linguistic doctrine of the apriori. In addition to accepting that critique as refuting a

⁴ For further discussion, see chapter 14 of *The World Philosophy Made*.

familiar form of *explicit* conventionalism, he nicely extends it to rule out what might, at first sight, appear to be plausible *implicit* forms of the doctrine. He then turns to a discussion of what he calls "finitary conventionalism," convincingly arguing that it has a better chance of avoiding Quine's critique than other forms of conventionalism, while also noting a kinship between conventionalists and finitists in mathematics. His point isn't that finitary conventionalism is correct, but that it's not obviously incorrect, and is worth examining further. I agree.

However, we do disagree about some matters raised in the first section of his essay, where he questions my interpretation of two founders of formal and natural language semantics. Although Gomez-Torrente and I mostly agree about the real relationship between linguistic meaning, our ordinary notion of sentential truth, and Tarski's defined notion, he doubts that Tarski and Carnap were guilty of certain confusions I attribute to them.

Our disagreement can be illustrated by letting S be a sentence of a fragment EF of English for which ' T_{EF} ' is a Tarskian truth predicate. One then reasons: (i) $\lceil 'S' \text{ is true in } EF \text{ iff } S \rceil$ and $\lceil 'S' \text{ is } T_{EF} \text{ iff } S \rceil$ can both be known to be true simply by understanding and reflecting on them. (ii) So for each S , one can establish $\lceil 'S' \text{ is true in } EF \text{ iff } 'S' \text{ is } T_{EF} \rceil$ just by understanding and reflecting on it. (iii) Since no more empirical information is needed to establish (ii), $\lceil 'S' \text{ is true in } EF \rceil$ and $\lceil 'S' \text{ is } T_{EF} \rceil$ are conceptually equivalent and, thus, are necessary and apriori consequences of one another.

This is the core of a more elaborate illusion (*ATP2*: 248-58) to which I take Tarski and Carnap to have been susceptible. In fact, (i) fails because one who understands $\lceil 'S' \text{ is true in } EF \text{ iff } S \rceil$ needs the further information that ' EF ' names the language one is speaking, in order to determine its truth; (ii) fails because to establish it on the basis of

(i), one must also understand S, which is not guaranteed by understanding its quote name; and (iii) fails because $\lceil 'S' \text{ is true in EF} \rceil$ isn't necessarily or apriori equivalent to S, but $\lceil 'S' \text{ is } T_{EF} \rceil$ is.

Gomez-Torrente has no quarrel with this, but he doubts Tarski would have thought otherwise. One reason I give for thinking Tarski might have is his remark:

The desired definition does not aim to specify the meaning of a familiar word used to denote a novel notion; on the contrary, it aims to catch hold of the actual meaning of an old notion. We must then characterize this notion precisely enough to enable anyone to determine whether the definition actually fulfills its task.⁵

Gomez-Torrente objects:

But Tarski says this right after saying very clearly that he will consider a definition of truth satisfactory if it is *materially adequate* (his emphasis) and formally correct.

Yes, he does say this, but Tarski's definition of *materially adequate definition* implicitly relies on claims of sameness of meaning.⁶ A definition, in a metalanguage M, of Tarski's predicate 'T_L' for an object language L is said to be *materially adequate* iff, for each sentence S of L, there is a sentence P of M for which $\lceil 'S' \text{ is } T_L \text{ iff } P \rceil$ is a consequence of the definition, where P is a translation of S.

Tarski *didn't* just say that a formal definition of a truth predicate 'T_L' for L is materially adequate iff 'T_L' is coextensive with 'true' over L. Instead, he took material adequacy to provide a test that would "*enable anyone to determine*" that the defined predicate was coextensive with 'true' (over L). Since the languages for which he gave truth definitions were already used and understood by working mathematicians, he assumed they could tell when P translated S, thereby determining whether a *translational* T-sentence $\lceil 'S' \text{ is } T_L \text{ iff } P \rceil$ was derivable. From this plus the tacitly assumed schema *If S*

⁵ Page 13 of the reprinting of Tarski (1944) in Linsky (1952).

⁶ Pp. 187-188 of the translation and reprinting of Tarski (1935) in Tarski (1935, [1983]). The same definition is used in section D-7B of Carnap (1942).

means in L that P , then S is true in L iff P we see that if the definition is materially adequate, then 'T_L' and 'true in L ' are extensionally equivalent.⁷

Extensional equivalence was, of course, all Tarski needed for his meta-mathematical results. Moreover, the claims about sentence meanings on which his test of adequacy relied were unobjectionable. Unfortunately, however, this traffic in sentence meanings led Carnap and Tarski into confusion. This was first revealed in a paper (on Tarski) that Carnap delivered at the 1935 Paris conference at which Tarski unveiled his theory of truth.⁸ Carnap's 1935 paper, which, when translated into English and combined with Carnap (1946), became Carnap (1949), advanced theses A, B, and C.

- A. Our ordinary truth predicate restricted to sentences of L means essentially the same thing as a Tarskian truth predicate for L .
- B. $\lceil S \text{ is true} \rceil$ and $\lceil S \text{ is true}_{\text{Tarski}} \rceil$ are logically equivalent to S , and so to each other. They are "different formulations of the same factual content." "[N]obody may accept one while rejecting the other." "[T]hey convey the same information."⁹
- C. $\lceil \text{John knows that 'S' is true} \rceil$ and $\lceil \text{John knows that 'S' is true}_{\text{Tarski}} \rceil$ are logically equivalent.

No one who took Tarski's truth predicate to be merely extensionally equivalent to our ordinary truth predicate would advance these theses.¹⁰

In the book, I suggest that the following passage from Carnap (1942), in which Carnap takes himself to be talking about Tarski-truth, is an instance of the same confusion, because the passage makes sense only if it concerns ordinary truth.

The rules [of a semantical system] determine a truth condition for every sentence...In this way sentences are interpreted...because to understand a sentence, to know what is asserted by it, is the same as to know under what conditions it would be true.¹¹

⁷ Here 'P' is a schematic letter, while 'S' and 'L' are variables.

⁸ The relevant papers are Carnap (1935, 1946, 1949).

⁹ This is repeated on p. 26 of Carnap 1942.

¹⁰ See section 6 of chapter 9 of *ATP2*.

¹¹ Page 22 of Carnap (1942).

Gomez-Torrente maintains that this criticism ignores the repeated claims in Carnap (1942) not to be speaking of historical languages, but only of semantic systems established by stipulative Tarskian definitions. So understood, Gomez-Torrente takes Carnap's Tarski-truth conditions to be necessary and apriori, while endowing the sentences of the system with meaning. That cannot be.

Gomez-Torrente illustrates an allegedly analytic stipulation using our ordinary truth predicate: *I stipulate that the new sentence 'Ret' is true iff rain is wet.* But if, as Carnap insisted, analyticity requires the stipulated biconditional to be necessary and apriori, the stipulation isn't analytic. I make this point in the book when discussing what Gomez-Torrente takes me to ignore -- the use of stipulation in defining semantic systems in what Carnap calls *pure semantics*. Here is part of my discussion.

Suppose I stipulate rules for a version of the propositional calculus, thereby endowing sentences with meanings and truth conditions. It will still be a contingent fact that they are governed by my stipulations, and so have the meanings and truth conditions they do, which *you*, my audience, can know only aposteriori. Even I know them [only] aposteriori -- by knowing I have made the stipulations. What about stipulative utterances, e.g. *I stipulate that 'R' is to name Rudolf?* If I have the authority to stipulate, my statement can't fail to be true -- not because it is analytic, but because to sincerely say one is stipulating *that so-and-so* is, within limits, to stipulate, and hence make it true, both *that one is stipulating that so-and-so* and *that so-and so*. My knowledge of the resulting semantic properties of sentences is a posteriori, because it must be justified by my aposteriori knowledge of what I have done.¹²

Next consider an imagined stipulation [*I stipulate that 'Ret' is T_s iff rain is wet*] where 'T_s' is a Tarskian truth predicate for the semantic system S. According to Gomez-Torrente, the stipulation "*determines an interpretation for and provides the stipulator with an understanding of 'Ret'*". No it doesn't, because there is a priority problem. A Tarskian truth predicate is one for which a materially adequate definition has been given. Since this requires 'Rain is wet' to translate 'Ret', which has no meaning without the

¹² ATP2, p. 294. See in addition chapter 10, section 1.2 *What is it for a sentence to be true in virtue of meaning alone?* and section 3, *Did the Logical Empiricist Account of the Modalities Rest on Mistake?*

stipulation, there is no Tarskian truth predicate available for use in stipulating the desired result.

Couldn't we *simultaneously* stipulate both a *Tarskian meaning* for 'T_s' and that 'Ret' is to mean that (or be true iff) rain is wet? No. We could stipulate (i) that 'T_s' is to mean *true* and (ii) that 'Ret' is to be T_s (i.e. true) iff rain is wet. But then 'T_s' will just be a new orthographical form of our ordinary truth predicate, rather than a Tarskian substitute. The problem is compounded if we try to stipulate for an entire language (system) -- *I stipulate (i) that 'T_s' is to mean 'true' and (ii) that for all sentences S of L, S is to be understood such that S is T_s (i.e. true) iff...* where what follows is the definiens of a Tarskian definition. From this I can derive *infinitely many consequences* [*'S' is T_s (i.e. true) iff P*] *for each sentence S*. Which of all those biconditionals pairs S with a meaning-giving translation? Since the stipulation doesn't tell us, no sentence meanings result.

Could one take the formal Tarski-style definition to be a stipulative definition of 'T_s' alone, if the object-language L were uninterpreted prior to the stipulation? Yes, but then the stipulation will merely determine that a subset of the well-formed sentences of L bears a purely set-theoretic relation to all sequences of objects constructed from a given domain, *without telling us anything about what those sentences mean, or constraining assignments of meaning to them*. If L is already interpreted, one's stipulation will ensure that 'T_s' is coextensive with 'true' over L, but to know this one will already have to know what the sentences of L mean. If you are ignorant of what the sentences of L mean, you can't learn what they mean by being given a Tarski truth definition for L.

Having shown that Carnap was confused about truth, I offer a passage from Carnap followed by one from Tarski to illustrate a way in which Tarski shared the confusion.

We use the term ['true'] here in such a sense that *to assert that a sentence is true means the same as to assert the sentence itself*; e.g. the two statements "The sentence 'The moon is

round' is true" and "The moon is round" are merely two different formulations of the same assertion.¹³

Consider a sentence of English whose meaning alone does not raise any doubts, say the sentence 'snow is white'. For brevity, we denote this sentence by 'S', so that 'S' becomes a name for that sentence. We ask ourselves the question: *What do we mean by saying that S is true or that it is false?* The answer to this question is simple: in the spirit of Aristotelian explanation, *by saying that S is true we mean simply that snow is white, and by saying that S is false we mean simply that S is not white.*¹⁴

In one sense, Carnap and Tarski are right. In many contexts (in which everyone understands English and knows it is being spoken), if one were to assertively utter "'The moon is round' is true", or "'snow is white', is true", one would be counted as asserting or as meaning (among other things) that the moon is round, or that snow is white. But what Carnap and Tarski suggest -- namely, that *the sentences* S and \lceil 'S' is true \rceil mean the same thing -- is false. This is often overlooked because (i) typically one who explicitly asserts p also implicitly asserts trivial but relevant consequences of p, (ii) what one asserts by assertively uttering S is a function of both what S means and what the communicating parties presuppose, and (iii) assertive utterances of sentences are typically made in contexts in which it is obvious that everyone understands them. Nevertheless, the contingency and aposteriority of \lceil 'S' is true iff S \rceil shows that the two *sentences* don't mean, remotely, the same thing.

By contrast, \lceil 'S' is Tarski-true iff S \rceil is necessary and apriori, but merely knowing *that S is Tarski-true* provides no grounds for accepting S. Also, to explicitly assert *that S is Tarski-true* isn't to implicitly assert what one would assert by uttering S. This is so, unless one knows, and presupposes, something over and above the Tarskian definition itself -- namely that it is materially adequate. Given that information, one can conclude that 'Tarski-true' is extensionally equivalent to 'true' (over the language), and hence that S

¹³ Carnap (1942), p. 26.

¹⁴ Tarski (1969) p. 64, my emphasis.

is true. If, in addition, everyone knows which metalanguage sentence P translates S, one who asserts *that S is Tarski-true* may assert what both P and S are used to assert. These facts likely played a role in Tarski's and Carnap's misleading remarks about meaning.

Tarski adds that "'snow is white' is true iff snow is white" and "'snow is white' is false iff snow is not white" *provide satisfactory explanations of the meanings of the terms 'true' and 'false' when these terms are referred to the sentence 'snow is white'. We can regard these [biconditionals] as partial definitions of the terms 'true' and 'false'...*[indeed definitions that have] *the form of logical equivalence.*¹⁵ This is strange, if, as Gomez-Torrente maintains, Tarski's talk of meaning is always to be understood as talk of extension. Surely, Tarski wouldn't have said that "'snow is white' is true iff grass is green" and "'snow is white' is false iff grass is not green" *provide satisfactory explanations of the meanings of the terms 'true' and 'false' when these terms are referred to the sentence 'snow is white'.* Nor would he have said that they can be regarded as *partial definitions of the terms 'true' and 'false' that have the form of logical equivalence.* Sometimes, it seems, when Tarski spoke of meaning, he meant *meaning*.

With this in mind, I return to section 13 of Tarski (1944), where he endorses Carnap's idea that Tarski-truth can be used to define *consequence*, *synonymy*, and *meaning*. Gomez-Torrente dismisses this, noting that the definition of synonymy in the relevant section, 12, of Carnap (1942) was merely *codesignation*. Although that is true, Gomez-Torrente fails to note that the notion of designation introduced in section 12 is presented as a technical extension of the standard notion. The new notion is one in which predicates designate, not sets (ordinary extensions), but properties, and sentences designate not truth values (ordinary extensions) but propositions. For example, Carnap

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 64.

says that a certain sentence in his formal language designates *the proposition that Chicago is large*, and that sentences of different languages (e.g. meta and object languages) designate the same propositions if they are *translations* of one another (in the ordinary sense).¹⁶ In short, his definition of synonymy was intended to capture what we ordinarily take to be sameness of meaning. Thus, when Tarski endorsed Carnap's suggestion that his formally defined notion of truth could be used to define synonymy and meaning, he was unwittingly signing on to the Carnapian confusion I identify.

Reply to Hanks: The *Tractatus* on Objects and Propositions

There is no one with whom I would rather discuss the topics in the *Tractatus* than Peter Hanks, whose erudition and clarity of thought are much in evidence in his review. This, of course, does not prevent us from disagreeing about some things. After initially summarizing my reconstruction of Wittgenstein's substance argument, he takes me to task for invoking the tractarian collapse of the modalities, which isn't broached until later in the work, when non-elementary propositions are considered. After that he offers his own reconstruction. I will take these in order.

In the 1's and early 2's, the *Tractatus* tells us that facts are objects standing in relation to one another, that the world is the totality of atomic facts, that every such fact is independent of all others, and hence that each such fact can obtain, or not, whether or not the other facts do. A corresponding conceptions of the completeness and independence of true atomic sentences can be inferred. The context makes clear that the modality in terms of which independence is defined includes, at least, metaphysical possibility. Whether epistemic and logical possibility follow suite isn't made explicit. But, since Russell (1914a,b) had already assimilated metaphysical and epistemic possibility to logical

¹⁶ Pp. 52-53 of Carnap (1942).

possibility, the collapse-assumption was already common ground for many readers of the *Tractatus*.¹⁷ My interpretation explains the assumption and why, since he accepted it, Wittgenstein might take it for granted in giving his argument.

A signal that he did so comes from the two tractarian passages preceding the argument: (a) that "the object is simple" -- i.e., all objects are simple, and so whatever seems composite is really a multiplicity of simple objects standing in relations -- and (b) that every statement that seems to be about a complex can be *analyzed* into statements about its parts. The notion of *analysis* in the Russell-Wittgenstein milieu was one in which a complete analysis laid bare the epistemic and metaphysical content carried, in a less explicit form, by the statement being analyzed. This content has to be true and known to be so, if the analyzed statement is true and known to be so. It is this notion of analysis – mentioned at the outset of the substance argument – that carries the weight of the tractarian modal collapse.

To see this, we add the then familiar assumption that the meaning of a genuine name is its referent. This tells us that if a linguistically simple name 'n' names something composed of objects a,b,c standing in relation R, the epistemic and metaphysical content of S(n) will be given by *an analysis* that includes the statement *that Rabc*, the truth which is necessary for S(n) to have the meaning it does. Since *the analysis* gives the epistemic content of S(n), Wittgenstein concludes that to know the meaning of S(n), and thereby to know that n has meaning, one must know that *Rabc*. But that is only the beginning. Because *tractarian* propositions always involve uses of sentences or other artifacts, we now need names for a, b, and c. If each names something composite, the process must be

¹⁷ The assimilation of the modalities to logical modalities in Russell's philosophy at the time, and its relation to the *Tractatus*, are discussed at pp. 5 and 6 of *ATP2*.

repeated for each. So, if there were no simples, the regress would be unending, and we could never know the meaning of any sentence, or even that it is meaningful. Since this is absurd, Wittgenstein concludes, there are simples. This, I believe, is how he intended the argument to be read.

Hanks tells a different story. In his reconstruction, we begin by assuming, for reductio, that there are no simples. We then consider an atomic sentence '*Rab*' which is said to be true if a positive state of affairs in which *a* bears *R* to *b* obtains, while being false if the negative state of affairs "in which *a* fails to bear *R* to *b*" obtains. Unlike Hanks, I don't credit loose tractarian talk about negative states of affairs. Negation isn't part of any state of affairs. Hence, the state of affairs in which *a* fails to bear *R* to *b* to isn't *a*'s not bearing *R* to *b*. Presumably its also not *a*'s bearing *Q* to *b*, *a*'s bearing *R* to *c*, or *d*'s bearing *R* to anything. Hence, I conclude, there is no such state of affairs. .

Next Hanks asks us to assume, for the sake of argument, that the name '*a*' stands for something composite. But instead of going down my modal road, which follows from treating '*a*' as a genuine name, he imagines that what Wittgenstein says in 3.24 when talking about *descriptions*, should, in the context of the substance argument, be imagined to apply to names. To a certain extent, I agree. Wittgenstein *could* have made the substance argument by using 3.24, which comes much later, to reach the reductio in the substance argument. My point is that he didn't need to, since the notions he needed -- *independence* and *analysis* (along with the familiar idea that the meaning of a name is its bearer) -- were already available.

Hanks's second criticism is that my reconstruction of the tractarian identification of a proposition with *a propositional sign in its projective relation to reality* can't be correct. He doesn't seem to dispute my contention that the tractarian view *needs* reconstruction. It

clearly does, since in telling us that propositions are propositional signs *in some relation to reality*, the *Tractatus* fails to identify any entities, other than propositional signs, for propositions to be -- despite *denying* that propositional signs are propositions. However, Hanks does argue that my reconstruction of propositions as cognitive acts (including uses of sentences in accord with the conventions governing them) to represent things as being certain ways can't accommodate Wittgenstein's doctrines (i) that truth functional connectives don't represent, or stand for, anything, and (ii) that a proposition is identical to its double negation. Maybe, but maybe not.

First, some background. The simplest examples of cognitive propositions involve predicating properties of objects. Objects and properties are items in the world; predicating a property of objects is a cognitive doing. We can also perform subpropositional acts of negating, conjoining, and disjoining properties. Suppose that for any property *P*, there is a property *not being P* that one cognizes by performing the act of negating *P*. Since this property which, like *P*, is a constituent of reality, it's not obvious that it, any more than *P*, contains a constituent designated by 'not'. More likely, it is a way objects are when they don't have *P*, e.g. *red* -- a property one counts as cognizing when thinking of something in some way that one recognizes as precluding its being red (e.g. as green, as brown, or as colorless). If something along these lines is correct, then, when we negate *not being P*, thereby cognizing *not being not being P*, the property we are cognizing may simply be *P*. Similar stories might be told about conjoining and disjoining properties, with the result that *P* may be identical with the property *being P and being P* and with *being P or being P*. So perhaps nothing is designated by 'and', 'or', or 'not' when we use them to conjoin, disjoin, or negate properties.

What about simple cognitive propositions? Consider (i) the complex act consisting of (a) identifying o and redness, and (b) predicating redness of o , (ii) the complex act consisting of (a) as before, (b) negating redness, (c) negating *not being red* to arrive at *not being not being red*, and (d) predicating the result, namely redness, of o , and (iii) the complex act consisting of (a) as before, (b) conjoining redness with redness to get the property *being red and red*, and (c) predicating that property (i.e. redness) of o . Although the complex acts are different, they all culminate in an act that represents the same thing, o , as being the same way, red. This suggests that the proposition we are after may be an abstract act type, *representing o as being red* (and nothing more), which is performed in all three cases, even though it can be performed by performing different complex representational acts.

Perhaps the idea can be extended to include the double negation of propositions by reasoning as follows: Just as to cognitively operate on (negate) a property P in a certain way is to cognize a related property (P 's negation), so to cognitively operate on a proposition one is entertaining -- e.g. *that aRb* -- in a certain way is to cognize the 0-place property *being such that aRb* , which applies to everything or nothing depending only on whether or not a stands in R to b . The negation of the original proposition may then consist of in the *indiscriminate* predication of this property of everything -- where the only items one must cognize to predicate in this way are a , R , b and the 0-place property. To negate the resulting proposition, one repeats the process (ignoring the representationally irrelevant *everything* predication targets) to get the property *not being such that not being such that aRb* , which one predicates of everything.

Is this the original proposition *that aRb* or not? The fact that the sequences of acts performed in the two scenarios are different doesn't show that the two different

performances aren't different ways of entertaining the same proposition. The fact that the two complex acts represent a as standing in R to b , and nothing more, may suggest that the same proposition is performed/entertained in the two cases. This, one might think, is the criterion we need for propositional identity. One and the same proposition is entertainable in two different ways. If one thinks that one should capture that tractarian doctrine that the double negation of a proposition is identical with that proposition, one might do so in this way.

This might be generalized to other truth functional operators. If successful, the result would capture the doctrine that truth functional operators on propositions don't stand for, or represent, anything in reality, despite the fact that they have a representational effect on propositions they are applied to. The idea would be to get all this without embracing either the disastrous tractarian doctrine that necessarily equivalent propositions are identical, or the mystery-inducing doctrine that atomic propositions must always be independent of one another.¹⁸ The result would also avoid the tractarian failure to give any plausible account of non-elementary propositions -- a failure which resulted from deriving the truth conditions of elementary propositions from which objects they represent as being what ways, while refusing either to extend that account to complex propositions or to take those propositions as predicating truth or falsity of simpler propositions.¹⁹

My reason for reconstructing the tractarian account of propositions was not to embrace all of Wittgenstein's major doctrines about them, or to summarily dismiss them, but to illuminate the brilliant insight embedded in his account of elementary propositions,

¹⁸ See pp. 19-23 of *ATP2*.

¹⁹ Chapter 2, section 4.3 of *ATP2*.

and to illustrate how it might be extended beyond them. To do this, I tried to strip away the shortcomings of the tractarian account and develop its valuable core more effectively than Wittgenstein did. He was right to think that propositions aren't *sui generis* sources of intentionality, conceptually independent of us, but seen in the mind's eye. His idea that they are artifacts we use to represent things as being various ways was a real advance. My reconstruction suggests that he would have done better to start with *uses of such artifacts* to represent things as being thus-and-so -- e.g., sentences used in accord with conventions. Taking these uses to be cognitive acts of a certain type, he could next have considered act types of different degrees of abstraction -- including cases in which the representational cognitive acts are performed without the help of artifacts. In chapters 2 and 3, I show how he could have extended these ideas to incorporate both elementary and non-elementary propositions. Here, in responding to Hanks, I sketched avenues by which some attractive doctrines about logical constants might prove reachable.

By following this path, we can, I hope, do a better job accomplishing some of Wittgenstein's goals than he did. But I don't pretend that my reforms would have pleased him. Indeed, I close chapter 2 by explaining why he was deeply attached to certain views that my reconstruction pointedly repudiates. If this surprises some readers, I remind them that understanding something, and finding value in it, doesn't needn't mean accepting every part of it. My aim with the *Tractatus* was first to understand it, warts and all, and then to engage its author in fruitful argument in order to extract a load of philosophical gold from the work that has, heretofore, largely been overlooked.

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