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VOLUME ONE

Second Edition



Edited by
BOB HALE, CRISPIN WRIGHT
and ALEXANDER MILLER

WILEY Blackwell

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PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE
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VOLUME TWO
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SECOND EDITION

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Edited by

Bob Hale, Crispin Wright,
and Alexander Miller

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Preface to the Second Edition

We have taken advantage of Wiley-Blackwell's generous offer to publish a second and significantly expanded version of the first (1997) edition of the *Companion* to update the original chapters and to publish a range of new chapters that both broaden and deepen the coverage provided in the earlier edition.

Of the 25 chapters in the first edition, 21 have been updated, either by the original author or by a new author specifically commissioned for that purpose. Many updates take the form of postscripts to the originals, although a few simply revise and update the text from the first edition. The first edition chapter on intention and convention has been replaced by an entirely new chapter on the topic by Stephen Schiffer. The only first edition chapters reprinted unchanged are those by Christopher Peacocke, Robert Stalnaker, and Jason Stanley.

In addition to the 21 updates to the first edition and Schiffer's new chapter on intention and convention, there are 16 wholly new chapters covering both foundational issues and issues relating to specific linguistic phenomena. We have retained the tripartite structure of the original and have added a few new entries to the glossary.

We're grateful to all of our authors, both old and new, for their excellent chapters, updates, and glossary entries, and to Mark Cooper and Allison Koska at Wiley-Blackwell for their support and patience. Thanks, too, to Marielle Suba for her work on formatting final versions of the chapters, and to Marguerite Nesling and Giles Flitney for assistance with copy-editing and proofreading.

Bob Hale, Alex Miller, and Crispin Wright

Preface to the First Edition

The recent proliferation of dictionaries and encyclopedias of philosophy has resulted in no shortage of companionship for the philosophical tourist whose desire is merely for a short excursion. Our *Companion* is intended as a guide for a more determined and ambitious explorer. Thus this is no alphabetized compendium of brief statements of the principal theoretical positions, concepts, and protagonists in recent and contemporary philosophy of language, but comprises, rather, 25 extended essays on a nucleus of the most central issues in the field, each of which has seen and continues to see important work.

All of our contributors are active in research on their selected topics. Each was invited to contribute a chapter somewhat along the lines of the *State of the Art* series which *Mind* initiated in the mid-1980s: a survey and analysis of recent trends in work on the topic in question, offering a bibliography of the more important literature and incorporating a substantial research component. Accordingly, these are chapters for a philosophically experienced – advanced undergraduate, graduate, or professional – readership. Each chapter is, however, written so as to presuppose a minimum of prior knowledge of its specific subject-matter, and so offers both a self-contained overview of the relevant issues and of the shape of recent discussion of them and, for readers who want it, an up-to-date preparation for extended study of the topic concerned. There are, naturally, numerous points of connection among the chapters, some of which will be obvious enough from their titles or from a quick glance at their opening sections; others have been indicated by explicit cross-referencing. We have attempted, in the glossary, to provide concise explanations of all of the more important technical or semi-technical terms actually employed in the various chapters, and of a good number of other terms of art which, though not actually used by any of our contributors, figure centrally in other published work on the issues. The result, as we hope, is an anthology which will both stimulate research in the philosophy of language and provide an up-to-date textbook for its advanced teaching for many years to come.

Few would now subscribe to the idea which prevailed for a while in some Anglo-American philosophical circles during the 1970s, that the philosophy of language is First Philosophy, and that great issues in, for instance, metaphysics, epistemology, and the philosophy of mind, are to be resolved by, in effect, recasting them as matters for treatment within the theory of meaning. But there is no doubt that philosophy of language continues to occupy a position of central importance in contemporary philosophy, nor that some of

the best and most influential philosophical writing of the latter half of this century, by some of the foremost philosophical thinkers of our time, has been accomplished in this area. The threefold division into which we have organized the chapters closely reflects the landscaping which these leading authors have given to the subject. Part I, on *Meaning and Theories of Meaning*, comprises chapters which are all concerned, in one way or another, with issues connected to the nature of language mastery that have loomed large in the writings of Davidson, Dummett, and Grice. Part II, on *Language, Truth, and Reality*, pivots around more metaphysical issues to do with meaning: with the ongoing debate about meaning-skepticism that has drawn on the writings of Kripke, Putnam, Quine, and Wittgenstein, and with the connections between issues to do with meaning and the various debates about realism, whose excavation has been led by Dummett. Finally, Part III, on *Reference, Identity, and Necessity*, focuses on issues which take center stage in – or at least, loom large in the stage-setting for – Kripke's *Naming and Necessity*. Together, the three parts cover almost every topic that anyone familiar with contemporary work in the philosophy of language would expect to receive extensive discussion in a volume of this kind. There are nevertheless some vacancies which we would have liked, ideally, to have filled. There is, for example, no chapter focusing on the concept of a *criterion* which the first generation of commentary elicited from Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*, nor – perhaps more grievous – did we succeed in the end in commissioning a suitable study of semantic externalism or of notions of supervenience.

It remains to express our gratitude to our contributors, both for their patience with our editorial suggestions and for the excellence of their contributions and valuable assistance with glossary entries; to our publishers for bearing with us while we put together a volume which has been inevitably subject to many delays; to the secretarial staff of the Philosophy Departments of the Universities of St Andrews and Glasgow for assistance with the preparation and standardization of typescripts; and to each other.

Bob Hale and Crispin Wright

PART I

Meaning and Theories
of Meaning

Metaphysics, Philosophy, and the Philosophy of Language

MICHAEL MORRIS

1 Two Positions

Michael Dummett famously declared (Dummett, 1993, p. 4):

What distinguishes analytical philosophy, in its diverse manifestations, from other schools is the belief, first, that a philosophical account of thought can be attained through a philosophical account of language, and, secondly, that a comprehensive account can only be so attained.

He had earlier claimed (Dummett, 1978e, p. 458):

Only with Frege was the proper object of philosophy finally established: namely, first, that the goal of philosophy is the analysis of the structure of *thought*; secondly, that the study of *thought* is to be sharply distinguished from the study of the psychological process of *thinking*; and, finally, that the only proper method for analysing thought consists in the analysis of *language*.

In sharp contradistinction, Timothy Williamson, taking metaphysics to be “central” to philosophy (a point to note before moving on), asserts (Williamson, 2007, pp. 18–19):

Much contemporary metaphysics is not primarily concerned with thought or language at all. Its goal is to discover what fundamental kinds of thing there are and what properties and relations they have, not to study the structure of our thought about them – perhaps we have no thought about them until it is initiated by metaphysicians. Contemporary metaphysics studies substances and essences, universals and particulars, space and time, possibility and necessity. Although nominalist or conceptualist reductions of all these matters have been attempted, such theories have no methodological priority and generally turn out to do scant justice to what they attempt to reduce.

We seem to have here the following stark contrast: Dummett thinks understanding language is central to philosophy, whereas Williamson apparently does not. Dummett is

endorsing some form of what has been known as the “linguistic turn”¹ – the dominant tendency in English-speaking philosophy in the middle of the twentieth century – whereas Williamson is rejecting it.

I offer here a selective critical history in which I trace the difference between the tendency which Dummett represents and the philosophers among whom Williamson is naturally placed to a difference in metaphysics which has much longer roots.² In fact it turns out that those who reject the tendency Dummett represents also often give a central role to the philosophy of language. This is questionable too, though on other grounds.

2 Dummett and Thought

I will not dwell on the fact that Dummett counts it a distinctive mark of *analytic* philosophy in particular to give priority to the philosophy of language. (I take it that he is here aiming to contrast analytic philosophy both with the philosophy which preceded it and against which it was a reaction (most obviously Hegelianism in various forms), and with the older philosophers in the phenomenological tradition (who may be said to give priority instead to a proper attentiveness to the actual character of experience).) Nor will I linger over the fact that his characterization of analytic philosophy is odd from a classificatory point of view, since it both excludes some of the most prominent analytic philosophers – Dummett himself acknowledges that Gareth Evans is left out, only counting as analytic “as belonging to this tradition” (Dummett, 1993, p. 4) – and includes some philosophers it would be odd to call analytic (Derrida is the obvious example here). I will simply take him here to be declaring in another way his view of how philosophy *ought* to be done.

When we set that issue aside, what is most immediately striking about what Dummett says is not the importance he gives to the philosophy of language, but the importance he gives to providing a philosophical account of *thought*. It seems more natural to think that the business of philosophy is to make sense, in the first instance, not of thought, but of the *world* – which is to say, of the *objects* of thought. Of course thought itself may be thought about, and so itself be an object of thought, but it is natural to expect philosophy to be concerned with thought chiefly when it is the object of thought, which is not all that often. Why, then, does Dummett give such central importance to the task of making sense of thought?

His official reason appears to be that “Thoughts [in the sense of *what is thought*] differ from all else that is said to be among the contents of the mind in being wholly communicable” (Dummett, 1978e, p. 442). But we have seen that Dummett takes recognizing the importance of the philosophy of language to depend on the antecedent recognition of the importance of an understanding of thought, whereas this remark makes thought important only in so far as we are interested in communication – an interest which looks as if it depends on an interest in language.

We might suggest that the importance Dummett gives to thought depends on his interest in Frege.³ In Frege’s later philosophy, thoughts – understood as the senses of sentences, what are expressed by sentences – might be taken to be the principal focus of his concerns; and thoughts are certainly the primary bearers of truth for Frege (Frege, 1977). But again it is hard to see how this can be the ultimate explanation of Dummett’s focus on thought. First, Frege seems to be concerned with thought only because he is already concerned with

language, so, as before, this fails to explain why Dummett should want to explain the importance of the philosophy of language in terms of the importance of understanding thought. And second, the first and most striking case where Frege seems to give language a central importance is a case in which a claim about language is used directly to make a claim about the nature of the *world*, without any detour through thought. One of Frege's crucial claims in the *Foundations of Arithmetic* is that numbers are objects (Frege, 1953). It is already clear that Frege takes numbers to belong to the world – to what would later be counted as the realm of reference – rather than to anything psychological (and at this point he had not isolated a distinct realm of sense). The claim that they are objects depends just on two further claims: first, that objects are nothing but the referents of singular terms; and, second, that number words are best understood as singular terms. This is a case of a philosophical account of language being taken to be the only way of achieving a philosophical account of the *world*, not of thought.

So if we are to make sense of Dummett's giving such central importance to the task of making sense of thought we need to look elsewhere. I think the place to look is obvious enough, when we think of Dummett's links to verificationism and to other strands of the empiricist tradition.⁴ I suggest that the ultimate source of the kind of role Dummett gives to thought is Hume's skeptical view of necessity, with its famous consequences for metaphysics.⁵

Hume's view depends on empiricism about our grip on reality, combined with a particular theory of perception which he shared, in general outline at least, with the other classical empiricists, and with most other philosophers down to the middle of the twentieth century. His general empiricism requires that if we are to have any knowledge of something in the world – something which is, in some sense, independent of us – it must be made available to us through sense-perception. (This also, of course, limits what can be included in the world – in what is truly independent of us – at least in so far as we can have knowledge of it.) So if necessity and possibility (the necessity and possibility which concern us, at least) are to be in the world – to be, in the relevant sense, independent of us – they have to be made available to us through perception. And conversely, if necessity and possibility are not made available to us through perception, then when we take ourselves to be thinking of necessity and possibility we cannot be thinking of something which is properly independent of us. The theory of perception adds further constraints to this general empiricist picture in two stages. It first limits what can genuinely be perceived to what can be constructed from what is distinctively available to each of the senses (color to sight, sound to hearing, and so on). It then limits what can genuinely be perceived still further by insisting that what is genuinely or immediately perceived must be constant between genuine, veridical perception, on the one hand, and illusion or hallucination, on the other (so if something could have looked the same even if it hadn't had some feature, then it is impossible genuinely or immediately to perceive that it has that feature). The theory of perception makes it hard to believe that necessity and possibility can be made available to us through perception, and the general empiricism then means that what we think of when we take ourselves to be thinking of necessity and possibility cannot be independent of us in the way which is required for them to be real, or really part of the world. The conclusion Hume draws seems inescapable (Hume, 1978, p. 165):

Upon the whole, necessity is something, that exists in the mind, not in objects; nor is it possible for us ever to form the most distant idea of it, consider'd as a quality in bodies.

As this brief quotation makes clear, Hume contrasts what is genuinely in the world, in some sense independent of us – in this case as a ‘quality in bodies’ – with what depends on us. (There may be a question whether this contrast can be maintained consistently with all of the rest of his philosophy, but we do not need to pursue that question here.) If realism about something is the view that its nature is independent of us and of the way we think about it or represent it, and the correlative anti-realism is the rejection or non-acceptance of realism, Hume is naturally seen as favoring a general realism about the world – at least relatively speaking⁶ – while adopting an anti-realist view about modality in particular: the world is real and independent of us, but possibility and necessity are not strictly part of the world.

This contrast, in turn, looks as if it forces us to accept a sharp division between kinds of discipline or enquiry, if we want to allow that there are any necessary truths at all. On the one hand, there are those disciplines or investigations which provide knowledge about the world. On the other hand, there are those disciplines or investigations which enable us to draw conclusions of necessity and possibility. The Humean combination of realism about the world and anti-realism about modality requires that these two kinds of discipline are fundamentally distinct: in so far as some discipline enables us to draw modal conclusions, it cannot be concerned with the real world; and in so far as it provides knowledge of the real world, its conclusions cannot be modal. This is, in effect, Hume’s Fork.⁷

This sharp distinction looks as if it causes deep problems for metaphysics, on a natural understanding of metaphysics. On that natural understanding, the central business of metaphysics is to discover how the world must be – to discover its necessary features (see, e.g., Kant, 1997, B19–24, and Williamson, 2007, p. 134). On this conception, it is essential to metaphysics that it provide us with knowledge of truths which are both genuinely about the world and necessary. Hume’s view then makes metaphysics impossible, as he noted with some glee (Hume, 1975, p. 165). Kant recognized this too, and attempted a defense of metaphysics in the face of the threat of Humeanism (Kant, 1997, B19–20). The Humean problem arises from the contrast between realism about the world and anti-realism about modality. Kant’s solution – at least, on an orthodox interpretation – is to remove the contrast by weakening the realism about the world. The essence of Hume’s view of necessity remains in place: it is just that the world, while being allowed to be real enough for everyday concerns, is no more real – no more independent of us – than necessity and possibility.

Hume seems to have to think that modal conclusions can only be based on reasoning concerning “abstract relations of our ideas” (Hume, 1978, p. 413), and ideas, for Hume, are components of thought. Kant, similarly – on the received interpretation I am following – seems to have taken the conception of the world in which modality has its home to be derived from judgment, whose structure and character is then inevitably reflected in the world which we think about. And this gives us reason to give thought a special place in philosophy, in so far as we think that philosophical conclusions are modal. If we follow the Humean view, and restrict the range of modal truths in his way, philosophy can only be about or expressive of thought and conceptual relations, and cannot reveal the nature of the world. If we follow Kant, and hope for a more ambitious metaphysics, we may be able to acquire knowledge of necessary truths about the world through philosophy, but in so far as the truths are necessary, they will reflect something in the structure of thought.

This conception of things is reflected in the key terms Kant used, which were to shape views of the nature of philosophy up until the latter part of the twentieth century. Crucial here are the terms ‘analytic’ and ‘synthetic.’ The class of analytic truths coincides roughly with what Hume would count as truths concerning ‘abstract relations of our ideas.’ And the

class of synthetic truths coincides roughly with truths which can be said to be genuinely revealing of the world. On Kant's account, necessary truths have to be *a priori* (Kant, 1997, B3), so in order to make sense of the possibility of metaphysics, we have to make sense of the possibility of synthetic *a priori* truths (Kant, 1997, A9–10; B13–14). Because he insists that what we need for metaphysics is something which is at least *a priori*, and he understands the *a priori* as what does not depend on sense-experience, Kant is in effect accepting the Humean view of the importance of the division between what does and what does not depend on sense-experience. In effect, he accepts the empiricist view that the world – at least as we can have knowledge of it – will be what we can have sense-experience of. Since Kant takes the *a priori* to be, roughly speaking, what we bring to experience, rather than what we get from it, allowing that there can be synthetic *a priori* truths already seems to commit him to the view that the world as we can know it depends on what we bring to experience.

If we interpret Dummett's conception of philosophy against this background, the importance he gives to the philosophy of language seems ultimately to depend on an antecedent commitment to the importance of metaphysics (or the nearest we can get to it) within philosophy as a whole, even if it goes by way of a form of anti-realism about modality. We can offer the following roughly formulated argument on his behalf:

- (1) Metaphysics (or the nearest we can get to it) is the most fundamental philosophy;
- (2) Metaphysics (or the nearest we can get to it) is to be pursued through an understanding of thought;
- (3) Thought is to be understood through the philosophy of language; *so*
- (4) Metaphysics (or the nearest we can get to it) is to be pursued through the philosophy of language; *and*
- (5) The philosophy of language is the key to the most fundamental philosophy.

We were struck earlier by the importance Dummett gives to an understanding of thought. That is expressed here in (2), which gives voice to a form of anti-realism about modality. But we can get a similar general view about the importance of the philosophy of language within philosophy as a whole without talking much about thought at all. We get a more direct argument for the same conclusion if we simply omit (2) and (3), taking (5) to follow directly (as it does) from (1) and (4). I suggest that this second, more direct argument expresses a long-standing and still widely prevailing view. This more direct argument is itself, strictly speaking, neutral on the question of realism about modality.⁸ It has certainly been understood through the lens of a broadly Humean anti-realism about modality, and I will look first at versions of the view which might seem to depend on that kind of understanding: these were dominant in the English-speaking world in the middle third of the twentieth century. But I will then turn to more recent approaches to philosophy, which also give a central role to the philosophy of language; these can also be understood as adhering to something like the more direct argument of (1), (4), and (5), and they are at least compatible with some form of realism about modality.

3 Wittgenstein, Early and Late

If you adopt a Humean combination of general realism about the world and anti-realism about modality, while thinking of metaphysics as the discovery of necessary truths about the world, you are likely to count metaphysics as being of relatively slight importance. If you

also hold (1), that metaphysics (or the nearest we can get to it) is the most fundamental philosophy, you will count philosophy in general as being of slight importance. This kind of view is associated with Ludwig Wittgenstein, in both his earlier and his later philosophy. And in both cases the approach to philosophy comes with the view that the most fundamental philosophy is to be approached through an understanding of language. I will suggest that although the early philosophy was one of the direct inspirations for a neo-Humean movement in philosophy – known variously as logical empiricism or logical positivism – it is in fact more Kantian than Humean. The later philosophy, however, can be seen as more simply Humean. I will begin with the later work, because this will enable us to understand more clearly how Wittgenstein's work as a whole connects with the Humean tradition.

Here is one of the most simply revealing sequences in Wittgenstein's later philosophy (2009b, 315):

I can know what someone else is thinking, not what I am thinking.

It is correct to say "I know what you are thinking," and wrong to say "I know what I am thinking."

(A whole cloud of philosophy condenses into a drop of grammar.)

The first sentence here makes a modal claim: it asserts that something is *possible* (knowing what someone else is thinking) and that something else is *impossible* (knowing what one is thinking oneself). This seems to be exactly the kind of modal claim which Hume thought was spurious: it appears to say something about what is possible and what impossible *in the world* (some things really *can* be known, others really *cannot*).⁹

The second sentence then offers a parallel claim about what it is correct or incorrect to *say* – a claim about the rules for the use of the word 'know.' And the third sentence, in effect, claims that the sentence about linguistic rules gives the essence of the apparently modal claim of the first sentence. A way of putting the point here would be to say that what seems to be a modal claim about the world is really no more than an expression of a truth about the rules for using a word. This is naturally understood as a form of *projectivism* about necessity. Projectivism about a given subject-matter is the view that what we take to be real features of the world are in fact just projections of features of our ways of thinking of or representing the world. It gets its classic statement in this sentence of Hume's (where he is asserting a form of projectivism about value) (Hume, 1975, p. 294):

The one [reason] discovers objects as they really stand in nature, without addition or diminution: the other [taste] has a productive faculty, and gilding or staining all natural objects with the colours, borrowed from internal sentiment, raises in a manner a new creation.¹⁰

Wittgenstein seems to be saying that what we take to be a necessary truth about the world is really a projection onto the world of an aspect of the rules of our language.¹¹

What we have here is something like the classic Humean contrast between realism about the world and anti-realism about modality. In this case, the claim is not that "Upon the whole, necessity is something, that exists in the mind, not in objects," but, in effect, that, upon the whole, necessity is something that exists in linguistic rules, not in objects. And this is not without consequences of its own, of course. What it means is that when someone seems to say something which we might think of as the negation of a necessary truth, it is not that they have said something which is necessarily false, but that they have broken the

rules, and so have really failed to say anything at all: they have just been misusing the words, producing something which is ungrammatical, or nonsense.

What is notable about this view of Wittgenstein's is that there is no detour, as there was in Dummett's case, by way of thought. The source of what seems to us to be necessity in the world is, according to Wittgenstein, nothing but the rules of a particular language; and the key thought here is that these are in a fundamental way arbitrary and historical (Wittgenstein, 2009a, 372). The relevant kind of arbitrariness is just that the rules of a language are not dictated by the way the world is (Wittgenstein, 2009b, 366); so the arbitrariness which Wittgenstein finds in linguistic rules is just another aspect of his anti-realism about necessity – for if linguistic rules had not been arbitrary in this sense, they would have reflected a deeper necessity in the world. Once this is appreciated, there seems an obvious reason to find the source of necessity in language, rather than in thought: the rules of particular languages are more naturally taken to be arbitrary than the rules of thought. If we had taken linguistic rules to be a reflection of the structure of thought, it would have been natural to take them to be determined by the way the world is; it would have been natural to take linguistic rules to be an expression of the necessity of that part of the world which is the way we think.

This fundamentally Humean view of necessity leads naturally to a downgrading of the importance of philosophy, and that is indeed characteristic of the later Wittgenstein. It has recently become common to read a similar attitude to philosophy back into his earlier work,¹² but this is hard to square with some central features of that earlier work. The central claim of the *Tractatus* is that the form of language is the same as the form of the world: in other words, that the ways things can be combined in the world are the same as the ways words can be combined in language. The important thing here is that this is a modal claim: the possibilities for things in the world are the same as the possibilities for elements of language. This immediately makes it impossible to claim that one set of possibilities is less real than the other. The broadly Humean view of the later philosophy, which is naturally characterized as the view that what seems to be necessity in the world is nothing but a projection of the grammar of a language, cannot be made intelligible if the necessity of grammar and the necessity of real combination are the same thing.

In the light of this, people are often tempted to understand the *Tractatus* as a thoroughly realist work: the grammar of language is taken to be a mirror of the form of the world, with the form of the world being imagined to be determinate independently of language (see, e.g., Pears, 1987). Myself, I think this is wrong. Wittgenstein says “what the solipsist *means*, is quite correct” (Wittgenstein, 1922, 5.62), and I see no reason to deny that he is here expressing his own view, even if, strictly speaking, “it cannot be *said*, but it shows itself”: in effect, Wittgenstein is a kind of transcendental idealist. It is true that the theory of the *Tractatus* means that nothing can strictly be said about the form of the world – about what is objectively necessary – and the result is that there are almost exactly the same restrictions on the proper range of philosophy as Hume himself would have imposed. But the reason is not, I think – as it seems to have been for Hume – that metaphysical pronouncements are the bogus misrepresentation of features of our system of representation as features of the world, but that what metaphysics would say if it could say anything is too deep in the structure of things to be said. And in any case, there is exactly the same restriction on saying anything about the form of *language* as there is on saying anything about the form of the world – as what I have called the central claim of the *Tractatus* clearly requires. We have a view which looks as if it is Humean, when its spirit is the very opposite of Hume's (see

Carnap, 1963, pp. 25–26). For all that, it does look as if at the heart of the work is an anti-realist view of modality: it is just that – if I am right that Wittgenstein at this point ends up with a form of transcendental idealism – anti-realism about modality leads to a more general anti-realism.

Once again, though – despite Dummett’s insistence to the contrary (Dummett, 1978e, p. 442) – there is no detour here through consideration of thought. Thoughts are indeed mentioned (they are introduced at Wittgenstein, 1922, 3, before the official introduction of language at Wittgenstein, 1922, 3.1), but they seem to be kinds of sentence in the mind, rather than the content of sentences (which is what they are for Frege).¹³ And at every juncture it is the relation between the world, on the one hand, and *language*, rather than thought, on the other, which is important.¹⁴ Why should this be? It cannot be to support an anti-realist view of necessity by allowing grammar to be arbitrary relative to the world – the view which is to be found in the later philosophy – for in the *Tractatus* neither grammar (here just syntax) nor the form of the world is arbitrary. I suspect that there are two key reasons, both derived ultimately from Frege. First, whatever else it is about, the *Tractatus* is about logic, and the formal representation of logic is one of its chief concerns: this immediately gives an important place to language – or at least to the refined symbolism of the fully analyzed language whose sentences will consist just of names of simple objects. The other reason is the Context Principle. In its loosest forms, this principle says little more than that there is no more to the meaning of a word than its contribution to the meaning of sentences of which it can form part.¹⁵ But Wittgenstein adopts the strictest possible interpretation of it: “only in the context of a proposition [sentence] has a name meaning” (Wittgenstein, 1922, 3.3). The core thought here is that there is something basic about sentences – what distinguishes them from lists – which cannot be captured by thinking of sentences as constructed out of independently intelligible words. It is tempting to think that this inevitably puts language at the center of the picture: sentences simply strike us as units. As for thought and the world, on the other hand, even if we acknowledge counterpart kinds of unit – judgments or thoughts, and facts or states of affairs, respectively – it is only as the counterparts of sentences that they are intelligible as units.

4 Carnap and Quine

Even if it is in fact questionable whether the *Tractatus* is a Humean work, it was certainly taken up in a Humean way – most notably by its most famous philosophical reader, Rudolf Carnap. The striking influence of the *Tractatus* on Carnap is evident if we compare his first book (Carnap, 1967a) with an article published in the same year (Carnap, 1967b). The first version of Carnap (1967a) was written between 1922 and 1925, before Carnap had read the *Tractatus*. Carnap (1967b), however, was written in 1927, after he had read the *Tractatus*. There are two striking differences which are relevant here. First, Carnap (1967a) is not centrally about language: although the book embarks on its project by considering the form of scientific *statements*, and advances further in the same way, what it aims to construct is a system of *concepts* – and hence of their correlative objects – on the basis of a set of fundamental *concepts*. And second, although the book does contain (Carnap, 1967a, §106) the characteristic Humean division between the modal and the world-involving, and with it a rejection of metaphysics as Kant conceives of it, in its main treatment of philosophical issues it is surprisingly permissive, merely insisting that they belong to metaphysics and not to science. Carnap (1967b), however, is much more aggressive. Carnap’s dismissal of