The Logical Attempt at a New Formulation of Philosophy: A Critical Remark
Roman Ingarden

Translated by Bernard Linsky

This is the first English translation of Roman Ingarden's paper presented at the 8th World Congress of Philosophy held in Prague in 1934: "Der Logistische Versuch einer Neugestaltung der Philosophie: Eine Kritische Bemerkung", translated here as "The Logical Attempt at a New Formulation of Philosophy: A Critical Remark". Also translated here are brief discussions by Rudolf Carnap and Otto Neurath. These essays were published in the original German in the Proceedings of the Congress in 1936. This statement of Ingarden's criticisms of the doctrines of the Vienna Circle has been mentioned in print, but his views have not been discussed, or indeed accurately reported to date.

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Roman Ingarden was a professor of Philosophy at the University of Lwów in Poland (now L'viv in Ukraine). As a student of Edmund Husserl, he is best known to English speaking audiences for his *The Literary Work of Art*, first published in German in 1931. A translation of a review of that work by Leon Chwistek, then a colleague at Lwów, has been published in this journal as "The Tragedy of Verbal Metaphysics".

In this paper Ingarden presents criticisms of physicalism and the verification principle. Ingarden argues that to attribute meaning to inscriptions, "mounds of ink", one can not solely rely on experience, as the meaning of an expression is not definable in physicalistic terms. A second criticism is that one must know the meaning of an expression before it is possible to determine its verification conditions, contrary to the order these are given by the verification principle. Carnap responds that determining the verifiability of a sentence does not require a prior determination of its meaning, but instead is a purely syntactic question about the deductive relationship between the given sentence and empirical sentences, as he explains in his newly published *Logical Syntax of Language*. Furthermore, Carnap asserts that the Vienna Circle has come to part ways with Wittgenstein, and now holds that the meanings of sentences can be described in syntactic sentences and are not unsayable. Neurath, on the other hand, responds that statements about meanings and analytic truths are simply empirical claims about what people say, endorsing a view like that of "empirical semantics." (In this translation the term "*Sinn*" is systematically translated as "meaning", except for the few cases in which "sense" fits more naturally, as in "in another sense".)

Ingarden's paper and the responses of Carnap and Neurath are discussed in "Verification: The *Hysteron Proteron* Argument" by Francis Jeffry Pelletier and Bernard Linsky, also published in this volume of the journal.

Translator's Acknowledgements

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[1]Roman Ingarden, "Der Logistische Versuch einer Neugestaltung der Philosophie: Eine Kritische Bemerkung." In *Actes du huitième Congrès internationale de Philosophie à Prague, 1934*, pp. 203–08. Prague: Comité d'organization du Congrès, 1936. DOI: 10.5840/wcp8193636, and Rudolf Carnap and Otto Neurath, "Discussion," pp. 244–45. DOI: 10.5840/wcp8193642.

The Logical Attempt at a New Formulation of Philosophy
A Critical Remark
Roman Ingarden (Lwów)

The logical attempt by "methodological Positivism" to set Philosophy on a new path, to a significant extent, presents itself as a revival of the older positivist tendencies (and the strong influence of a hidden materialistic metaphysics), that are combined, in a peculiar fashion, with some nominalistic views and results of formal logical investigations. It is based essentially on the following theses:

I. All science is empirical natural science, that in all its divisions is the *one* science and all of its results can be expressed in a "physicalistic" language.

II. Mathematics and logic are not sciences, but rather systems of "tautologies" that serve for the re-formulation of scientific sentences and for setting them in relationship to one another.

III. Philosophy has no area of knowledge of its own and no sources of knowledge of its own. It is also not a science. Its job consists in the clarification of scientific concepts and sentences by means of "logical analysis".

Remark regarding III: Whether the results of this "logical analysis" are to be presented in sentences that make a claim to truth, seems to be in contention within "methodological positivism". M. Schlick seems to give a negative response to this question, while the other representatives of this position do not take an explicit position on this issue. As a matter of fact, however, the results of "logical analysis" are construed as sentences and are presented as truths.

IV. Philosophy in any other sense is to be rejected as "meaningless" [*sinnlos*] metaphysics.

A "metalogical" theory of language (and in particular of sentences) serves to justify this position, as well as a series of epistemological theses. Both can be briefly summarized as follows:

1. Sentences are meaningful if and only if they are "verifiable" and if they are constructed according to "logical syntax" (this appears to be built into the notion of verifiability).

1a. A sentence is verifiable if we can relate it to something immediately given, either directly or indirectly, by way of sentences that are logical consequences of the given sentence.

1b. What it means to say that a sentence has a legitimate construction in logical syntax is only indicated by a few negative examples, which do not satisfy an adequate logical syntax, (e.g., "or is under", "Caesar is a prime number"), but this is not clearly defined.

1c. Sentences that are not verifiable, or do not satisfy logical syntax, are not false sentences but not sentences at all (pseudo-sentences).

2. The meaning [*Sinn*] of a sentence *is* its verifiability.

Remark regarding 2. This is a sharper thesis than 1., in that 1. seems to give only a condition (which is distinct from the sentence) for the meaningfulness of a sentence, whereas 2. *identifies* the verifiability of a sentence with its meaning.

3. Science forms a system of "intersubjective" sentences. No non-intersubjective sentence belongs to science.

4. All and only those sentences that concern the physical are intersubjective (intersubjectively verifiable?).

4a. Sentences that contain words or expressions which seem to refer to what is not physical (for example, the mental), are either meaningless, or can be translated into sentences about the physical (into physicalist language).

Remark regarding 4a. The concept of translation or of the conditions of translatability of one language into another, has, to my knowledge, never been defined. In the attempts to translate particular non-physicalistic sentences into physicalistic sentences, however, one appears to use a claim related to the thesis of extensionality:

4b. Two expressions f_1 and f_2 are sense-identical, if f_1 is ultimately verifiable only through the same immediate facts as f_2.

5. What is immediately given is not known, but rather only experienced [*erlebt*]. Only those formal relationships that are

communicable (intersubjectively verifiable?) are known. What is not communicable is not knowable.

6. Experience does not provide *epistemic* foundations for scientific sentences.

As a consequence of the understanding of philosophy thus characterized, different foundational problems (among others, the problem of "other minds", the problem of a real, autonomously existing world, all problems of norms and values) are seen to be "pseudo-problems", that are empty of any meaning.

Against this one should critically remark:

A. All "metalogical" sentences about sentences are either "meaningless" [*sinnlos*] (in the specific sense determined by methodological Positivism), and so metaphysical, or else nonsensical [*sinnwidrig*] or, finally: they impart meanings in a hidden way.

Metalogical sentences are meaningless, in case 1. only sentences about the physical are intersubjectively verifiable, 2. sentences are not something physical. Sentences, however, also according to methodological positivism, cannot be physical, if their meaning is the same as their verifiability. For verifiability is nothing other than the possibility of verification, and no possibility is something physical or—in terms of correspondence—something perceived or perceptible by the senses.

If one assumes, however, that verifiability is to be understood merely as the existence of a coordination of a strictly determined manifold of what is given with a sentence, then this coordination again is not something physical or perceptible by the senses. In this case as well, therefore, metalogical sentences are "meaningless" [*sinnlos*] , hence "metaphysical".

If one maintains, however, that these metalogical sentences are also verifiable by physical facts, then the sentences, about which the metalogical sentences say this or that, must themselves be something purely physical, for instance, mounds of ink on paper or sound waves. Then the metalogical sentences

are not meaningless [*sinnlos*], but nonsensical [*sinnwidrig*]. They are not contrary to meaning merely in the sense [*Sinn*] in which "traditional philosophy" would understand this, but even in the sense [*Sinn*] in which methodological positivism understands it. For neither mounds of ink nor mere sound waves are verifiable, either in themselves or through themselves. No purely physical object or process can stand in a relation of direct or indirect coordination with anything given, unless this relationship is supposed to be purely geometric (spatial) or causal. How the methodological positivists think about this, can't be made out with sufficient clarity because the concept of verification has hardly been worked out at all. And this is understandable because the fundamental concept of the given is not at all clarified and appears to have a different meaning for the different defenders of methodological positivism. From our point of view, however, we have to remark that neither the purely geometrical (spatial), nor the causal relations between a sentence and that which is immediately given, can be identified with the coordination between the two that forms the basis for verification of a sentence, or is even identical with the verification. In order to make this coordination possible, the sentence in itself has to have a sense that can neither be identified with the physical properties of the tiny hills of ink, nor with the physical properties of a sound wave, nor finally with the verifiability itself. The real foundation of verifiability resides in the meaning [*Sinn*] that is intrinsic to the sentence on the one hand, and in the content of what is immediately given, on the other. A conception of a sentence as tiny hills of ink or sound waves would violate the concept of a sentence within methodological positivism, as well as against the interpretation that is provided by "traditional philosophy".

Actually, however, it seems that the metalogical sentences impart, in a disguised way, precisely that which makes them sentences in the proper sense and what methodological positivism officially denies them: that is, the meaning that the sentences have independently of verification and which is nothing phys-

ical and is in no way detectable in sense perception. It is not possible to trace it back to something physical or nearly physical. In other words, metalogical sentences cannot be "translated" into physicalistic language, unless they should become meaningless or nonsensical.

It has to be shown, however, that methodological positivism indeed tacitly presupposes precisely the meaning [*Sinn*] of the sentences that it explicitly denies. The sentence "In the interior of every electron there is a nucleus, that always exists but has absolutely no effect on anything exterior to it" is (according to Schlick) an example of a "meaningless" [*sinnlos*], that is to say, unverifiable, sentence. It can be granted that this sentence is not verifiable. Why, however, is it not verifiable? Well, because it has a meaning that does not allow for any verification because the nucleus of the electron is specified in the meaning as an object with "absolutely no external effects". That is to say, in order to decide about the nonverifiablity of the aforementioned sentence one must presuppose two things: 1. that this sentence has a meaning that precludes verification, 2. that it is possible to identify this meaning independently of its verification (the possibility of which has just been denied). One must thus either give up the identity of the verifiability and the meaning of the sentence, or one must introduce, in addition to the meaning = verifiability, another meaning for the sentence. If one does not do this explicitly, but only in a disguised way, then one illegitimately substitutes different meanings.

If one admits this, then the anti-metaphysical campaign of methodological positivism fails at least in part. On the other hand the thesis that philosophy has no distinct domain of knowledge and no distinctive sources of knowledge collapses—even if it restricts itself to "logical analysis". For in order to grasp the sense of a sentence in its relation to what is immediately given, and hence to be able to do logical analysis, one must acknowledge a realm of knowledge distinct from the physical and not investigated by any positive (natural) science.

B. One might object, however, that I am assuming 1. the sense of a sentence and 2. a coordination between the meaning of a sentence and the directly given that is not physical and cannot be known in any sense experience. With this I violate the chief theses of methodological positivism: α) there are only physical objects or objects of physics and, β) there is only one sort of experience, namely, sense experience.

I answer: 1. I only show that if one does not arbitrarily adopt the metalogical sentences about the meaninglessness of many sentences (the pseudo-sentences) as unfounded claims, but rather wishes to somehow "verify" them, then one must give up both (α) and (β). 2. In order to adjudicate the dispute between me and methodological positivism on the plausibility of theses (α) and (β), one must admit that it is possible to know the many subjective experiences [*Erfahrungserlebnisse*] and to form "scientific", that is to say, intersubjectively verifiable, sentences about those very experiences. With that one must abandon the thesis that subjective experiences [*Erlebnisse*] are not knowable, and, as a consequence, give up the standpoint of "physicalism".

C. Finally: One might object that the difficulties I have indicated only follow from the false supposition that the metalogical sentences are in fact sentences that make claims to truth. The metalogical sentences, however, are philosophical results. And philosophy is not a science and its results cannot be presented in sentences that make claims to truth.

I answer: If this is so, which I do not at all believe, then the topic of the disagreement disappears, and we can all keep silent (including the methodological positivists). This is the consequence of the logical attempt to give a new formulation of philosophy.

I will not here enter into other difficulties that are bound up with "methodological positivism".

Remark: I do not present my remarks in the "formal" rather than "material" mode because, 1. the "formal" mode is much too complicated to use in such a short paper, 2. it is only claimed, but has never been demonstrated, that the "material" mode is "incorrect".

Summary: The speaker argues against the standpoint of methodological positivism, in that he attempts to show that "metalogical" sentences are either meaningless or nonsense or illegitimate substitutions of sense. It is necessary to distinguish between the verifiability of a sentence and its meaning. Because the meaning of a sentence is nothing physical, one must acknowledge a realm of knowledge distinctive to philosophy if the task of philosophy is supposed to consist in "logical analysis". It must also be admitted that the given or the subjective experiences [*Erlebnisse*] are knowable and that it is possible to assert intersubjective sentences about them.

Discussion, pp. 244–45

MM. R. Carnap, O. Neurath

R. Carnap (Prague): I am pleased that the clear presentation of Mr. Ingarden gives me the opportunity to clarify in more detail some points in our position. Several of the questions and objections touch on points that are more fully explained in my recently published "Logical Syntax of Language." Therefore I will be brief here. I must admit that until now clear definitions of the concepts "syntactical sentence" and "translation" have been lacking. I have tried to offer such definitions in the aforementioned publication. Verifiability as a criterion of meaning applies only to synthetic sentences. Syntactic (or meta-logical) sentences in part belong to *pure* syntax; in this case they are analytic sentences of combinatorics, thus sentences of pure mathematics; these do not require any empirical verification. For the other part, they belong to *descriptive* syntax; in this case they refer to linguistic entities as physical processes and are verifiable by observations. Syntactic sentences are therefore meaningful in both cases. When Wittgenstein says that the meaning of a sentence is its verifiability, it is thereby meant that the sentence does not mean anything more than what is verifiable in it. To determine whether a given sentence is verifiable or not, one does not need to already know its meaning. This can be established purely formally: one checks whether the given sentence, on the basis of the rules of the language of concern, stands in a deductive relationship with sentences of a particular form, namely the so-called "observation sentences". Physicalism does not assert: "There are only physical objects" but rather: "Every sentence can be translated into the physical language". (The first sentence belongs to the material mode of speaking, the second to the formal mode.) Physicalism does not assert that "Subjective experiences are unknowable", and we are also of the opinion that a human being can know the thoughts and feelings of another. Physical-

ism does not assert: "there is only sense experience": it says nothing about what kinds of experience there are; for that is an empirical question that is to be investigated by the psychologist. It only says something about the logical character of *sentences*. I agree with Mr. Ingarden: if the results of philosophy are not sentences, then we must remain silent. In distinction from the (at least former) view of Wittgenstein our circle now holds the view that one can present the results of philosophy, of logical analysis, in exact sentences, namely as syntactic sentences. Setting aside other differences, it appears to me that the main difference between the phenomenological position and that of our circle consists in the fact that we maintain that in between the empirical, synthetic sentences and the analytic sentences there are not scientific sentences of a third kind, namely the supposed results of the phenomenological "intuition of essences" [*Wesensschau*].

O. Neurath (The Hague): To complement Carnap's comments it must be emphatically stressed that "sentences about sentences" have a place in physicalism, insofar as they are speaking in the "material mode of speech"—about sentence structures, while the empirical sentences are about other things. Metalogic becomes a science of certain "ornaments" [*Ornamenten*]. One insists appropriately that mistakes are possible in this area. One can have overlooked relations between signs that one only notices later. One can make a mistake when one considers a sentence to be analytic within a given system. While we value the efforts of Kaufmann, who is in many respects close to the Vienna Circle, because he helps to critically clarify many issues, we do not think the proposed procedure is to be recommended for the social sciences. The assertions of Rickert and others are problematic above all because of their metaphysical content. If one begins from concrete sociological investigations, then "method" appears in a different light. The "totality", the "differentiation" [*Ausgliederung*] do not occur in the concrete sociological analysis that helps us to make progress. Othmar Spann's work on the fate of the unmarried in Frankfurt a. M. shows us a useful social method that can be analyzed independently of his speculations about the metaphysics of alienation. Young social scientists, armed with an "Index verborum prohibitorum" [index of prohibited words], should strive to make concrete predictions and find out which methods can help them with their task. From a critical analysis of existing metaphysical sociology they can expect little support.