

# WITTGENSTEIN ON HEIDEGGER AND COSMIC EMOTIONS

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At least since Richard Rorty's *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*,<sup>1</sup> it has been common in the United States to group together (the later) Wittgenstein and Heidegger in a narrative of 20<sup>th</sup>-century philosophy that pits them against analytic philosophy narrowly conceived, i.e., a tradition that derives its concepts, problems and methods mainly from Frege, Russell, Ramsey, and Carnap, for which we can use Robert Brandom's expression 'the classical project of analysis'.<sup>2</sup> Since this is an all American affair, Dewey is often invoked alongside Wittgenstein and Heidegger,<sup>3</sup> and the lot is by the same token labelled as 'pragmatists'. Although Rorty sounds at times as if he merely classified Dewey, Wittgenstein and Heidegger as the "great edifying, peripheral thinkers" of our times,<sup>4</sup> substantive links have been drawn. For example, there is an American 'pragmatist' reading of Heidegger, notoriously revolving along key moves such as the appropriation of Heidegger's distinction between '*Zuhandenheit*' ('readiness-to-hand' or 'handiness') and '*Vorhandenheit*' ('presence-at-hand'), a reading that first gained notoriety in the philosophy of cognitive science with the work of Hubert Dreyfus and John Haugeland.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> (Rorty 1980). In these opening remarks, I mention only attempts at relating Wittgenstein and Heidegger that are related to Rorty's; I am of course aware that there are others, perhaps less influential – see, e.g., (Mulhall 1990) for whom Heidegger's *Zuhandenheit* also plays a key role – but this paper is not an overview of the literature.

<sup>2</sup> Brandom characterized the 'classical project of analysis' as aiming to "exhibit the meanings expressed by various target vocabularies as intelligible by means of the logical elaboration of the meanings expressed by base vocabularies thought to be privileged in some important respects – epistemological, ontological, or semantic – relative to those others" (Brandom 2008, 3). The hope was that by so doing one will have 'analysed away' the conceptual difficulties raised by the target vocabulary (Brandom 2008, 2); another important feature is the privileged role given to logic in this reduction of the target into the base vocabulary. Phenomenalism, for example would fall under that description as the project of reducing the physicalist target vocabulary of how things objectively *are* to the phenomenalist base vocabulary of how things *appear*.

<sup>3</sup> Again, since Rorty's book. See, e.g., its introduction, (Rorty 1980, 3-13).

<sup>4</sup> (Rorty 1980, 368). I

<sup>5</sup> For their work on Heidegger, see, e.g., (Haugeland 1982) or (Dreyfus 1990). I would not like to sound as if dismissing altogether all work that goes under the heading 'pragmatist reading', there are some very valuable studies, e.g., (Blattner 1999).

This view of the matter has received renewed currency recently in, e.g., Brandom's John Locke Lectures, *Between Saying and Doing*, where he argues that "the most significant conceptual development" in this tradition [the 'classical project of analysis', M.M.] – the biggest thing that ever happened to it – is the *pragmatist challenge* to it";<sup>6</sup> a challenge, we are now told, that was initiated by Dewey, Wittgenstein, and Sellars. The narrative being confined to 'analytic' philosophy, Heidegger does not get mentioned, but Brandom predictably drafts him into the cause in *Tales of the Mighty Dead*, e.g., paper entitled 'Dasein, the Being that Thematises' in which we are told that "*Being and Time* can be understood as propounding a normative pragmatism"; a paper that even drew a sharp rebuke by the late John Haugeland, who had been an initiator of this sort of reading.<sup>7</sup>

The contrast that Brandom wanted to draw, overlapping as it does his distinction between 'representationalism' and 'inferentialism', may have intrinsic interest, but this is not the place to discuss this: it is the historical picture on the basis of which it is presented that I find deeply suspicious. It would be wrong to see such narratives as mere descriptions of the course of 20<sup>th</sup>-century philosophy, analytic or not. There is an underlying agenda here and this narrative is nothing but pure ideology. Like any ideology, it distorts what it purports to represent, in particular it does not for a second help us improving our understanding of Heidegger or Wittgenstein, it just serves to legitimize uses of their names and views, insofar as they are distorted in order to fit, within a context that was not theirs. It is also currently fashionable to see things this way because of the widely felt need to undercut the false dichotomy between 'analytic' and 'continental' philosophy. But if the distinction is (historically) a false one, then it was already an ideological distinction and it seems to me rather wrongheaded to fight it with another piece of ideology.

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<sup>6</sup> (Brandom 2008, 3).

<sup>7</sup> See (Brandom 2002, 324). For Haugeland's critique, see (Haugeland 2005).

It is of course impossible to undermine this picture within a single paper, so I shall resort to the study of only one aspect, namely Wittgenstein's own comments on Heidegger. These comments have an argumentative context that must be reconstructed so that one see the point of making them, a bit like a reconstruction of a chess game allows one to understand the point of a given move, over and above the fact that it followed the rules of the game. I propose to do this, and provide by the same token a small contribution to Wittgenstein scholarship, showing that his comments prove that he had (only) read Heidegger's inaugural lecture at Freiburg, 'What is Metaphysics?', on July 24, 1929.<sup>8</sup> It has been a pleasure and privilege to have known Kevin Mulligan for so many years and, although I have steered away from areas in the history of philosophy in which he made so many seminal contributions – in short Austrian philosophy from Bolzano to Wittgenstein –, wanting to find my own niche, so to speak, I was greatly helped through the years by his kind, astute advice and vast historical knowledge. The issues raised by Wittgenstein comments on Heidegger involve one topic to which he contributed enormously, emotions. As a matter of fact, it involves a peculiar sort of emotions that I shall call, following W. K. Clifford, using Henry Sidgwick's phrase, 'cosmic emotions'.<sup>9</sup> These are, Clifford tells us, emotions "felt in regard to the universe or sum of things, viewed as a cosmos or order".<sup>10</sup> It gives me added pleasure, therefore, to offer this contribution to scholarship in honour of Kevin.

The point of it is to show that, given an appropriate understanding of their contexts, Wittgenstein's comments on Heidegger indicate that he did not perceive himself as embarked, in any possible way, in the same enterprise as Heidegger; they are not on the same side but on opposite sides of the spectrum. As a matter of fact, he singles out Heidegger as *ripe for a*

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<sup>8</sup> (Heidegger 1976/1993).

<sup>9</sup> Clifford mentions indeed Sidgwick as having coined the expression 'cosmic emotion' (Clifford 1886, 394), but he did not provide any reference. I was not able to find that expression in Sidgwick's writings, but a letter from Clifford to Sidgwick kept at Trinity College, Cambridge (Trinity/Add.Ms.c/93), and dated November 25, 1877, indicates that Clifford remembers Sidgwick using it in conversation sometime before 1871.

<sup>10</sup> (Clifford 1886, 394).

*psychoanalytic therapy* and as a *prime example of (ethically) bad taste in philosophy*. No re-description of them in ‘pragmatist’ terms can obviate this, because, from a standpoint such as Wittgenstein’s (as clearly distinguished from the agenda of his contemporary commentators) nothing Heidegger has to say is receivable. (The reverse is arguably also true.)<sup>11</sup> No amount of fudge can disguise the fact Heidegger never wrote with the intention to provide contributions to problems in, say, contemporary ‘analytic’ philosophy of language or the philosophy of cognitive science. This is perhaps an obvious thing to say, but Heidegger’s pronouncements were exactly of the sort of ‘metaphysics’ that has been abandoned in ‘analytic’ philosophy, narrowly conceived, i.e., within the ‘classical project of analysis’, or even more widely conceived; they have certainly nothing to do with the current revival of metaphysics within ‘analytic’ philosophy. To refer to Carnap’s classic paper ‘The Elimination of Metaphysics through the Logical Analysis of Language’, published in 1931, what I mean here is that no one would use any statement by Heidegger as a ‘working hypothesis’.<sup>12</sup> Such statements would, by any ‘analytic’ standard, be judged defective in many respects, including for the lack of supportive arguments – arguments, however poor, are not always lacking; there is, for example, an appeal to ‘cosmic emotions’ in the passages discussed below – or simply because of their failed attempt at forming a ‘theory’. One should recall here that Carnap characterized metaphysics in his 1932 paper in exactly those terms:

[...] through the form of its works it pretends to be something that it is not. The form in question is that of a system of statements which are apparently related as premises and conclusions, that is, the form of a theory.<sup>13</sup>

This is certainly reminiscent of Wittgenstein and a *rapprochement* here is a delicate matter, but for the moment it is worth emphasizing that, although one would now insist that Carnap’s

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<sup>11</sup> See, e.g., (Morrison 1969) for an early work, or, on the same topic, truth, the more detailed (Dahlstrom 2001). Since I discuss Carnap’s critique of Heidegger in ‘The Elimination of Metaphysics through the Logical Analysis of Language’ (Carnap 1931b), I should also point out that Heidegger replied to Carnap in both a postscript to ‘What is Metaphysics?’ reprinted in (Heidegger 1976) and in his 1935 lectures published as (Heidegger 1983). For a discussion of a possible reply by Heidegger to Carnap, see (Philipse 1998, 9-15).

<sup>12</sup> (Carnap 1931b/1959, 232/72).

<sup>13</sup> (Carnap 1931b/1959, 240/79).

critique was flawed because of its reliance on a principle of verifiability, Heidegger's pretence has been exploded: a phrase such as '*Das Nichts nichtet*' – translated as 'The nothing itself nihilates' or 'The nothing noths' below – does *not* describe anything, and it cannot be said to form part of any 'theory' in any legitimate sense of the word. But it had been Heidegger's intention that this would be a description forming part of a theory.

Still, some might argue that there is a sort of 'non-metaphysical'<sup>14</sup> reading of Heidegger's remarks under which they become somehow more palatable. But even if one were to make sense within a contemporary 'non-metaphysical' context of some of Heidegger's pronouncements, we are still owed reasons why we should endorse them. This is why it is ironic to use phrases every bit like '*Das Nichts nichtet*' suitably misconstrued as 'pragmatic' theses within a 'pragmatic' critique of the 'classical project of analysis'; that Heidegger is thus misrepresented as having said, say, *p* may be fine, but it is no argument in favour of *p*. (This points to a conclusion of a more general nature about some recent uses of history of philosophy.)

Given that Wittgenstein thought that, by saying *p*, Heidegger was in need of a therapy and displaying bad taste, one is even tempted to say that the fact that Heidegger said *p* is in itself an argument against *p*. I would not go that far, however, because Wittgenstein's reasons are highly idiosyncratic and not likely to be shared. Furthermore, Wittgenstein's critique (or Carnap's for that matter) may involve a misunderstanding of Heidegger. This may be true, so followers of Heidegger need not be shocked at all with the following; it is open to a rejoinder. I will not deal with the question whether Wittgenstein understood Heidegger correctly, however, because it seems to me the least interesting aspect of his comments on Heidegger.

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<sup>14</sup> I am thinking of the type of reading fostered since (Hartmann 1976) about Hegel, to which the 'pragmatic' readings of Heidegger mentioned above belong.

Like almost anything else he wrote or reportedly said, these comments are interesting primarily in what they tell us about Wittgenstein himself.

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Not that they were particularly cosmopolitan, but Wittgenstein and Heidegger lived in philosophical worlds that were already far apart, and there were very few reasons why they would have encountered each other's work. I know of no reference to Wittgenstein in Heidegger's work, and Wittgenstein commented on Heidegger only twice, on both occasions rather briefly. The first occasion was a conversation in Vienna with Schlick and Waismann, which took place in December 1929, of which Waismann recorded a few lines in Gabelsberger shorthand.<sup>15</sup> The second occasion is in a section entitled '*Über den Charakter der Beunruhigung*' or 'On the Character of Disquiet', which forms part of a dictation to Waismann known as the *Diktat für Schlick*.<sup>16</sup> (Section titles are not from Wittgenstein.) According to Gordon Baker,<sup>17</sup> this dictation probably took place three years later in December 1932, but it might actually date from 1933-34.<sup>18</sup> Heidegger is not mentioned by name in this section but the phrase '*Das Nichts nichtet*' occurs three times,<sup>19</sup> which comes from Heidegger's 'What is Metaphysics?';<sup>20</sup> as a matter of fact it is the only specific phrase discussed and the whole section might be seen as a commentary on Heidegger's inaugural lecture. Indeed, that section opens also with a mention of the question: '*Was ist früher, das Nichts oder die Verneinung?*',<sup>21</sup> which is central to Heidegger's 'What is Metaphysics?', as we shall see.

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<sup>15</sup> (Wittgenstein 1967/1979, 68-69).

<sup>16</sup> (Wittgenstein 2003, 68-77).

<sup>17</sup> (Wittgenstein 2003, xvi).

<sup>18</sup> According to Joseph Rothhaupt, in private communication, there are important similarities with the book formed by MS 140, MS114(II), and MS115(I).

<sup>19</sup> (Wittgenstein 2003, 68, 73 & 75).

<sup>20</sup> The actual phrase is: '*Das Nichts selbst nichtet*' (Heidegger 1976/1993, 114/103).

<sup>21</sup> (Wittgenstein 2003, 69).

Although Wittgenstein dictated to Waismann the content of the *Diktat für Schlick*, it is Waismann who is responsible for its final wording. For this reason, one might doubt that the *Diktat* faithfully represents Wittgenstein's views. After all, Waismann's editorial interventions may have twisted the meaning of Wittgenstein's remarks, bringing them closer to those of the Vienna Circle than they really were.<sup>22</sup> Given that the *Diktat* was written after the publication of Carnap's 'The Elimination of Metaphysics through the Logical Analysis of Language', where the phrase '*Das Nichts nichtet*' famously comes in for critical analysis,<sup>23</sup> it is thus quite possible that Wittgenstein did not think of Heidegger at all when dictating the content of this passage to Waismann and that it is the latter who introduced Carnap's own example, in order to bring Wittgenstein's comments in line with those of Carnap and Schlick's circle. I shall give below reasons to believe that, although the worry about the authorship of the *Diktat* is, of course, a legitimate one, this cannot be the case and the section on 'On the Character of Disquiet' can legitimately be taken as faithfully representing Wittgenstein's views.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, the views expressed in that section, although bearing in some aspects resemblance with those of Carnap, diverge significantly on other aspects, and these differences, I hope to show, form precisely what is interesting, i.e., revelatory about Wittgenstein, in this passage.

One might legitimately ask: What text was Wittgenstein reacting to? What prompted his comments? Surprisingly, very little attention has been given to these questions. The occurrence of the phrase '*Das Nichts nichtet*' in the *Diktat* gives us a good idea but, as we just saw, the point is moot. The shorthand transcript of the December 1929 conversation begins thus:

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<sup>22</sup> This worry was raised to me by Joachim Schulte in conversation.

<sup>23</sup> (Carnap 1931b/1959, 229/69).

<sup>24</sup> To answer the previous point, there is no reason on the other hand *not* to think that Wittgenstein deliberately chose the phrase '*Das Nichts nichtet*'.

To be sure, I can imagine what Heidegger means by being [*Sein*] and anxiety [*Angst*]. Man feels the urge to run up against the limits of language. Think for example of the astonishment that anything at all exists. This astonishment cannot be expressed in the form of a question, and there is no answer whatsoever. Anything we might say is *a priori* bound to be mere nonsense. Nevertheless we do run up against the limits of language. [...] This running up against the limits of language is *ethics*.<sup>25</sup>

The editor of Waismann's notes, Brian McGuinness cites in a footnote a passage from §40 of Heidegger's *Being and Time*<sup>26</sup> as a possible source for Wittgenstein's comment:

*That about which one has Angst is being-in-the-world as such. How is what Angst is anxious about phenomenally differentiated from what fear is afraid of? What Angst is about is not an innerworldly being  
[...] What Angst is about is the world as such.*<sup>27</sup>

If this is meant to provide an idea of the text that formed the basis of this conversation, there are reasons to think that this is misleading, and it is instead Heidegger's inaugural lecture 'What is Metaphysics?'.<sup>28</sup> This passage was probably chosen because it relates Heidegger's concepts of 'being' and 'anxiety', mentioned by Wittgenstein, with the view of the world *sub specie aeternitatis*, within which the latter indeed thinks about these issues, as we shall see. But it implies knowledge of Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* (at least up to § 40, which is difficult to understand on its own) and it seems to me extremely unlikely that Wittgenstein had first-hand knowledge of that book or even that Schlick or Waismann brought the book with them and made him read sufficient parts of the book on the spot.

Furthermore, Heidegger speaks in the above quotation of the disclosure or revelation through 'Angst' of our 'Being-in-the-world' or '*In-der-Welt-sein*',<sup>29</sup> a notion not alluded to by

<sup>25</sup> (Wittgenstein 1967/1979, 68). A sentence is omitted because it refers to Kierkegaard, a proper analysis of it would needlessly complicate matters here.

<sup>26</sup> (Heidegger 1977, 184-191).

<sup>27</sup> "Das Wovor der Angst ist das In-der-Welt-Sein als solches. *Wie unterscheidet sich phänomenal das, wovor die Angst sich ängstet, von dem, wovor die Furcht sich fürchtet? Das Wovor der Angst ist kein innerweltliches Seiendes. [...] das Wovor der Angst ist die Welt als solche.*" (Heidegger 1977/1996, 186-187/174-175). The translation cited in (Wittgenstein 1979, 68 n.25) is from an earlier translation, now superseded by (Heidegger 1996); I merely quoted here the same phrases but in the newer translation. Given how controversial translations of Heidegger are, I have resorted to quoting the original in footnotes. I believe, however, there are no serious translation problems raised with the passages discussed in this paper.

<sup>28</sup> Joseph Rothhaupt had already made a similar claim in (Rothhaupt 2008, sec. 9.2).

<sup>29</sup> Amazingly enough, Heidegger is not responsible for the first occurrence of '*In-der-Welt-sein*'. Wanting to teach some basic ideas about Daoism, Zen and the tea ceremony to Americans, as he was living in America at the time, Kakuzo Okakura wrote *The Book of Tea*, published in 1906 and now considered a classic on Japanese aesthetics. In chapter 3, he described some central ideas of Daoism in those terms: "Chinese historians have

Wittgenstein. Heidegger also makes numerous other claims in §40 on behalf of this highly non-ordinary concept of ‘*Angst*’ as a “disclosive attunement”, e.g., that it reveals *Dasein* as “being free for”, etc.<sup>30</sup> The upshot of the discussion in *Being and Time* is the idea that through ‘*Angst*’ one realizes that one is thrown into the world and that one must therefore face head-on the eventuality of one’s death.<sup>31</sup> Again, none of this is alluded to by Wittgenstein, who speaks instead of the ‘urge to run up against the limits of language’ and ‘the astonishment that anything at all exists’, none of which being mentioned in §40.

It seems better, therefore, to explore the idea that Schlick and Waismann simply brought to the December meeting a copy of Heidegger’s ‘What is Metaphysics?’ and read from it. Close attention to what Wittgenstein says, including in the lines quoted above, reveals that he is indeed referring to that text. Before coming to that, however, it is worth pointing out some facts about the year 1929, at the very end of which that conversation took place. These will be the key events for our purposes:

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always spoken of [Daoism] as the “art of being in the world,” for it deals with the present — ourselves. It is in us that God meets with Nature, and yesterday parts from tomorrow. The Present is the moving Infinity, the legitimate sphere of the Relative. Relativity seeks Adjustment; Adjustment is Art. The art of life lies in a constant readjustment to our surroundings. [Daoism] accepts the mundane as it is and, unlike the Confucians and the Buddhists, tries to find beauty in our world of woe and worry” (Okakura 1964, 23-24). Okakura had translated ‘*Shosei*’ by ‘art of being in the world’; this being the sole occurrence of the expression in the whole book. This English expression, in turn was translated in German as ‘*Kunst des in-der-Welt-Seins*’ in *Das Buch vom Tee*, published in 1919 (Okakura 2002, 45). Kichinosuke Ito, a Japanese student who had hired Heidegger for private tuition gave him a copy of this translation and, since, it is felt in Japan that Heidegger did not acknowledge his source. Tomonobu Imamichi, as student of Ito, recounts the story as follows in his autobiography: “Ito Kichinosuke, one of my teachers at university, studied in Germany in 1918 immediately after the First World War and hired Heidegger as a private tutor. Before moving back to Japan at the end of his studies, Professor Ito handed Heidegger a copy of *Das Buch vom Tee*, the German translation of Okakura Kakuzo’s *The Book of Tea*, as a token of his appreciation. That was in 1919. *Sein und Zeit (Being and Time)* was published in 1927, and made Heidegger famous. Mr. Ito was surprised and indignant that Heidegger used Zhuangzi’s concept without giving him credit. Years later in 1945, Professor Ito reminisced with me and, speaking in his Shonai dialect, said, “Heidegger did a lot for me, but I should’ve laid into him for stealing.” There are other indications that Heidegger was inspired by Eastern writings, but let’s leave this topic here. I have heard many stories of this kind from Professor Ito and checked their veracity. I recounted this story at a reception held after a series of lectures I gave in 1968 at the University of Heidelberg at the invitation of Hans-Georg Gadamer. Japanese exchange students attended these lectures, and I explained that there were many other elements of classical Eastern thought in Heidegger’s philosophy and gave some examples. I must have said too much and may even have said that Heidegger was a plagiarist (*Plagiator*). Gadamer was Heidegger’s favorite student, and we ended up not speaking to each other for four or five years because he was so angry with me” (Imamichi 2004: 123-124). See also (Imamichi 2008, 436). Maybe the two notions diverge, but it remains that the first occurrence of the concept was in ... English.

<sup>30</sup> (Heidegger 1977/1996, 188/176).

<sup>31</sup> This comes out clearly in (Heidegger 1977/1996), §53.

- In March-April, an '*Arbeitsgemeinschaft*' takes place at Davos, Switzerland, where Heidegger debated with Ernst Cassirer on the interpretation of Kant's philosophy.
- On July 24, Heidegger gives his inaugural lecture at the University of Freiburg; it was published during the summer, in Bonn, as 'What is Metaphysics?'
- On November 17, Wittgenstein delivers his 'Lecture on Ethics' at the Heretics Society in Cambridge.
- On December 30, Wittgenstein meets Schlick and Waismann in Vienna and discusses Heidegger.

The meeting at Davos brought together numerous philosophers from across Europe, e.g., from France: Léon Brunschvicg, Jean Cavailles, Maurice de Gandillac, Emmanuel Lévinas. For that reason, it was a rather significant event, even though its precise significance, which is usually described in terms of the young Heidegger having publicly slain the last representative of Neo-Kantianism, thus drawing an era in German philosophy to a close, is open to debate.<sup>32</sup> As it turns out, Carnap also attended the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft*, and he even took the opportunity to have private conversations with Heidegger. As a matter of fact he felt initially attracted towards Heidegger, whom he described in his diaries as "serious and objective" ('*Sachlich*') and "very attractive"; he even claimed to have convinced Heidegger of the universality of physicalist language, during a conversation which took place in a café.<sup>33</sup>

So we know that Carnap was not just vaguely aware of Heidegger's existence, but personally acquainted with him as well as a direct witness to his growing reputation within the German-speaking philosophical community as the result of the debate at Davos. That Heidegger was to take Husserl's chair at Freiburg in the following month could only have increased his prestige. But the publication of his inaugural lecture, 'What is Metaphysics?', later on during the summer must have alarmed him, and the rest of the Vienna Circle by the same token, as it contained a virulent attack on logic. Indeed, Heidegger distinguishes in his lecture between two meanings of 'negating' – in the idiom of the English translation: between two ways of 'nihilating' –, these being the metaphysical '*Nichts*' or 'nothing' and the

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<sup>32</sup> See, e.g., (Friedman 2000) or (Gordon 2010).

<sup>33</sup> These passages are quoted in (Friedman 2000, 7).

‘*Verneinung*’ or ‘negation’ of logic, and then claims literally to have ‘proved’ the following ‘thesis’:

[...] The not does not originate through negation; rather, negation is grounded in the not that springs from the nihilation of the nothing. [...] In this way the above thesis in its main features has been proven: the nothing is the origin of negation, not vice-versa.<sup>34</sup>

And this ‘thesis’ implies, in his mind, no less than the disintegration of logic:

If the power of the intellect in the field of enquiry into the nothing and into Being is thus shattered, then the destiny of the reign of “logic” in philosophy is thereby decided. The idea of “logic” itself disintegrates in the turbulence of a more original questioning.<sup>35</sup>

One will have noticed, *en passant*, that Heidegger himself seems not to have noticed that, if logic is thus disintegrated, then his own claim to have ‘proved’ the above ‘thesis’ becomes utter nonsense. However, since metaphysics is now said to reside in an “*abgründiger Grund*”, Heidegger was led to an even more fanciful claim:

The presumed soberness of mind and superiority of science becomes laughable when it does not take the nothing seriously.<sup>36</sup>

[...] no amount of scientific rigor attains to the seriousness of metaphysics.<sup>37</sup>

And one should not forget either that the above ‘thesis’ that ‘*das Nichts*’ is prior to ‘*die Verneinung*’ was part of Heidegger attempt at rejecting the principle of non-contradiction, as being merely an act of the intellect (‘*Verstandeshandlung*’), so that one is now presumably free to think without that constraint...<sup>38</sup>

Such claims must have baffled the Viennese. Carnap’s initial attraction towards Heidegger, which was quite normal given their shared opposition to the particular neo-Kantian philosophy represented by Cassirer, must have given place, in light of Heidegger’s recent apotheosis in Davos and Freiburg, to some amount of anxiety: initially looking a likely

<sup>34</sup> “*Das Nicht entsteht nicht durch die Verneinung, sondern die Verneinung gründet sich auf das Nicht, das dem Nichten des Nichts entspring. [...] Hierdurch ist in den Grundzügen die obige These erwiesen: das Nichts ist der Ursprung der Verneinung, nicht umgekehrt*” (Heidegger 1976/1993, 116-117/105).

<sup>35</sup> “*Die Idee der »Logik« selbst löst sich auf im Wirbel eines ursprünglicheren Fragens*” (Heidegger 1976/1993, 117/105).

<sup>36</sup> “*Die vermeintliche Nüchternheit und Überlegenheit der Wissenschaft wird zur Lächerlichkeit, wenn sie das Nichts nicht Ernst nimmt*”(Heidegger 1976/1993, 121/109).

<sup>37</sup> “[...] *erreicht keine Strenge einer Wissenschaft den Ernst der Metaphysik*” (Heidegger 1976/1993, 122/110).

<sup>38</sup> (Heidegger 1976/1993, 107-108/97). As far as I know, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century only Derrida made such a preposterous claim.

ally, he turned out to be the arch-enemy and a dangerously popular and well-respected one at that. There is also another cause of concern, the political dimension. It is a matter of dispute how well-known Heidegger's political views were in 1929 or even if he had any, as the official line has it that he did not until shortly before he became rector in 1933 (and then only until very shortly after he resigned). But Michael Friedman, who insists on the importance of the cultural and political context to our understanding of Carnap's reaction to the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft*,<sup>39</sup> only provides evidence that Neurath and Carnap were aware of Heidegger's politics dating from 1931 and 1932. Certainly there is no trace of awareness of Heidegger's politics in Carnap's diaries of April 1929, as we saw, but it is quite clear from later passages from his diaries, quoted by Friedman,<sup>40</sup> that by 1931 he had consciously chosen Heidegger as the target of his critique of metaphysics, in 'The Elimination of Metaphysics through the Logical Analysis of Language', partly for political reasons. This shows that the claim that Heidegger had no such views prior to 1933 is at best dubious (otherwise how would others be aware of them?), but still does not show that this was already cause for extra worries for Carnap and the Vienna Circle as early as the summer of 1929.<sup>41</sup> On the other hand, the Viennese social scientist and philosopher Othmar Spann, also seen as an enemy by Carnap and Neurath, was already quite vociferous in 1929, and it is possible that Carnap and Neurath saw the political implications of Heidegger's philosophy very quickly. After all, the critique

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<sup>39</sup> (Friedman 2000, 15).

<sup>40</sup> (Friedman 2000, 20-22).

<sup>41</sup> It is also worth recalling that Heidegger's reaction to Carnap's 1931 paper was, on the other hand, overtly and deeply political. He had the presence of mind in 1953 to cull out from the printed version of his 1935 lectures, *Einführung in der Metaphysik*, a passage explicitly dealing with it – but eventually printed in the *Gesamtausgabe* edition of that work and quoted since in (Friedman 2000, 21-22) – where he described Carnap's philosophy as standing "in internal and external connection with Russian communism" as well as celebrating "its triumph in America": "*Kein Zufall ist auch, daß diese Art »Philosophie« im inneren und äußeren Zusammenhang steht mit dem russischen Kommunismus. Kein Zufall ist ferner, daß diese Art des Denkens in Amerika seine Triumphe feiert*" (Heidegger 1983, 228). The theme of the planetary role of Germany against Western liberalism and Eastern communism was standard Nazi propaganda. On a more philosophical note, Heidegger describes it as leading "to the definitive profaning of the world": "*Diese Auffassung der Wahrheit als Sicherung des Denkens führte zur endgültigen Entgötterung der Welt*" (Heidegger 1983, 228). This suppressed section, along with numerous other ones, show that Heidegger had not given up his Nazi sympathies after he resigned from the Rectorate.

of logic and the principle of non-contradiction in ‘What is Metaphysics?’ *is* a politically very dangerous form of *irrationalism*. At all events, these political innuendos, if any, did not carry over to Wittgenstein’s comments and I shall not discuss them further.<sup>42</sup> (One consolation is that, although he refrained from displaying any political awareness, Wittgenstein was on the right side.)

The foregoing give good reasons to believe that Schlick and Waismann were anxious to hear what Wittgenstein had to say about Heidegger when they met at the end of the year. This still does not tell what specific text they read at that meeting. For this we have to turn to internal evidence. But before doing this, I should say a few words concerning another event in the list above, Wittgenstein’s ‘Lecture on Ethics’,<sup>43</sup> in November. Indeed, in order to see that Wittgenstein actually refers to ‘What is Metaphysics?’ in his December meeting with Schlick and Waismann, we need to understand how he recast Heidegger’s claims in his own terms; terms that he had fresh in mind a month after giving that lecture.

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Much of the ‘Lecture on Ethics’ is devoted to making a distinction between ‘relative’ and ‘absolute’ good or, more generally, value, and the argument that the ‘absolute good’ cannot be a state of affairs, that “a certain characteristic misuse of our language runs through *all* ethical and religious expressions”,<sup>44</sup> etc. The conclusion being that:

I see now that these nonsensical expressions [purporting to express some absolute value, M.M.] were not nonsensical because I had not yet found the correct expressions, but that their nonsensicality was their very essence. For all I wanted to do with them was just *to go beyond* the world and that is to say beyond significant language. My whole tendency and I believe the tendency of all men who ever tried to write or talk Ethics or Religion was to run against the boundaries of language.<sup>45</sup>

We can of course see that this is exactly what Wittgenstein says in relation to Heidegger in December:

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<sup>42</sup> For a more detailed discussion, see (Friedman 1996, 52*f.*) or chapter 2 in (Friedman 2000).

<sup>43</sup> (Wittgenstein 1993, 37-44).

<sup>44</sup> (Wittgenstein 1993, 42).

<sup>45</sup> (Wittgenstein 1993, 44).

To be sure, I can imagine what Heidegger means [...] Man feels the urge to run up against the limits of language. [...] Anything we might say is *a priori* bound to be mere nonsense.

Contrary to what some believe, this is not yet indicative of any approval of Heidegger; nor does this tell us what text Wittgenstein is commenting upon. To see this we need to look at the part elided in this last quotation and consider first the part of Wittgenstein's argument in the 'Lecture on Ethics' which involves an appeal to three 'experiences':

- "I wonder at the existence of the world";
- "feeling absolutely safe";
- "feeling guilty".<sup>46</sup>

It is perhaps apposite to note immediately that the first of these is but same as the 'astonishment that anything at all exists' mentioned in the December conversation with Schlick and Waismann. At all events, Wittgenstein makes two comments concerning these 'experiences' that are relevant here. First, although he calls the first in the above list "my experience *par excellence*" and "my first and foremost example", he also recognizes that others may "recall the same or similar experiences so that we may have a common ground for our investigation".<sup>47</sup> In other words, he did not seek to undermine claims that such experiences exist (as some are tempted to think), but rather *presupposed their existence*. This does not contradict the *Tractatus*, where he certainly does not deny the existence of an '*Unausprechliches*'.<sup>48</sup> As a matter of fact his *Geheime Tagebücher* show that he has gone through such experiences during the war.<sup>49</sup> (I think all of this undermines the currently fashionable readings, pioneered by Cora Diamond and James Conant, and whatever goes under the now old name of 'New Wittgenstein' that fits with it,<sup>50</sup> because the upshot of that reading is that there is nothing – no such experiences – about which one could utter nonsense,

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<sup>46</sup> (Wittgenstein 1993, 41-42).

<sup>47</sup> (Wittgenstein 1993, 41).

<sup>48</sup> (Wittgenstein 1961, 6.522).

<sup>49</sup> (Wittgenstein 1991).

<sup>50</sup> I am thus referring to interpretations of the *Tractatus* that rely in an essential manner on papers collected in (Diamond 1991). The expression 'New Wittgenstein' comes from the title of (Crary & Read 2000).

because the concept of ‘nonsense’ deployed in the *Tractatus* is interpreted as a sort of total gibberish undistinguishable from a syntactically inadmissible combination of words such as ‘Caesar is and’ or, to use Diamond’s own example, ‘piggly wiggle tiddle’, for which, of course, one would not be taken to refer to anything at all.)<sup>51</sup>

To this one may add that, although Wittgenstein claims, as we saw, that to try and talk about such ‘experiences’ is to attempt *per impossibile* to ‘run against the limits of language’, i.e., to reach beyond the bounds of sense, Wittgenstein remains respectful of that tendency:

It is a document of a tendency in the human mind which I personally cannot help respecting deeply and I would not for my life ridicule it.<sup>52</sup>

So, if there are any disagreement with Heidegger, it will not be about the tendency itself to speak where one should keep silent, but precisely because Wittgenstein thought one should learn to remain silent, while Heidegger writes, *inter alia*, the sentences of ‘What is Metaphysics?’ (and thus produces the sort of ‘inarticulate sound’ with which one would like to begin in philosophy, as we shall in the last section of this paper). This is a point worth emphasizing inasmuch that there is some common ground between the two here about the need to address these issues, only that one chose to argue for silence, while the other chose to write as if speaking is possible and needed.

Secondly, Wittgenstein points out these three ‘experiences’ can be couched in religious terms, i.e., respectively:

- “God had created the world”;
- “[feeling] safe in the hands of God”;
- “God disapproves of [my] conduct”.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> That cosmic emotions have no linguistic ‘content’ does not mean that they don’t exist, i.e., that nobody ever *really* feels them. This would be a plain *non sequitur*. And there is no way – unless one is blind to the textual evidence – one could read Wittgenstein as pretending to, but not really feeling these cosmic emotions. Therefore, unless our reading of the *Tractatus* makes room for them, it be, I think, an insult to Wittgenstein to claim that he was ‘chickening out’ because he felt cosmic emotions.

<sup>52</sup> (Wittgenstein 1993, 41-42).

<sup>53</sup> (Wittgenstein 1993, 44).

But to say that such ‘experiences’ can be described in religious terms is also to imply that religious terminology is not necessary; one can have them without belief in God. (Of course, one may never have such ‘experiences’, but then one would risk lacking the empathy needed to understand what either Heidegger or Wittgenstein are talking about.)

Now to call these ‘experiences’ is not wrong, still it is worth pointing out that these are experiences in which one feels an *emotion*, respectively, ‘wonder’, ‘safety’, ‘guilt’; an emotion the feeling of which is neither denied nor even demeaned by Wittgenstein, as we just saw. Furthermore, if we forget for a moment the third one, it is possible to argue that these ‘experiences’ involve what I have called earlier ‘cosmic emotions’; I need now to explain what I mean by this. As I said, the expression comes from Sidgwick and Clifford, who defined them as emotions “felt in regard to the universe or sum of things, viewed as a cosmos or order”.<sup>54</sup> Clifford further distinguished between two sorts of cosmic emotions. Those of the first sort, which he describes as “awe, veneration, resignation, submission”, are experienced when

[...] we try to put together the most general conceptions that we can form about the great aggregate of events that are always going on, to strike a balance among the feelings which these events produce in us, and to add to these the feeling of vastness associated with an attempt to represent the whole of existence.<sup>55</sup>

And cosmic emotions of the second sort are experienced when

[...] we consider the totality of our own actions and the feelings that go with them or spring out of them, if we frame the highest possible generalisation to express the character of these which we call good, and if we contemplate this with the feeling of vastness which belongs to that which concerns all things men do.<sup>56</sup>

These emotions of the second sort are, however, of lesser interest for the purpose of this paper, and I would like to retain instead, as the vantage point from which to provide a commentary of Wittgenstein’s remarks on Heidegger, the first sort as defining ‘cosmic emotions’, i.e., emotions that are felt when one contemplates the world as a whole or, to use

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<sup>54</sup> (Clifford 1886, 394).

<sup>55</sup> (Clifford 1886, 394).

<sup>56</sup> (Clifford 1886, 394).

Wittgenstein's phrase, as a "limited whole" Clearly, the first two of the above list of emotions from the 'Lecture on Ethics' are 'cosmic emotions'. (Perhaps the third item on the list is of Clifford's second sort.)

Since Clifford's paper, the expression 'cosmic emotion' has been frequently used and discussed,<sup>57</sup> but often with meanings attached to it that bring the notion closer to religious mystical experience as such, e.g., in R. M. Bucke's *Cosmic Consciousness*, and then by William James.<sup>58</sup> But one ought not to confuse the two. Mystical experience has been variously described as the 'disappearance of the ego', 'the void', 'absorption into God', etc. but no such thing is involved in cosmic emotions as defined here. Making this distinction allows us to steer clear of issues related to the meaning of 'mysticism' in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*, if one is to agree that what Wittgenstein refers to as "*das Mystische*", i.e., "feeling the world as a limited whole",<sup>59</sup> is given with experiencing 'cosmic emotions'.<sup>60</sup> Recall that 6.44 equates it with the 'wonder at the existence of the world':

6.44 – It is not *how* things are in the world that is mystical, but *that* it exists.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> For example by William James, (James 1902, 79) & (James 1907, 276).

<sup>58</sup> In this book Bucke describes 'cosmic consciousness' as "a consciousness of the cosmos", i.e., of "the life and order of the universe", but also in terms reminiscent of mystical experience, e.g., as when he speaks of an "intellectual enlightenment which alone would place the individual on a new plane of existence" or of "a sense of immortality, a consciousness of eternal life" (Bucke 1901, 2). Worse, Bucke sees this 'cosmic consciousness' as a new faculty, a "third form" added to 'self-consciousness' and 'simple consciousness' (Bucke 1901, 2). Postulating a 'faculty' may not be a particularly clever philosophical move, it is also, more importantly, superfluous for our understanding of these emotions. One should note that Bucke (like Clifford) is discussed by James in *Varieties of Religious Experience* (James 1902, 398f.), a book that Wittgenstein knew quite well. He commented on it already in 1912 in a letter to Russell: "Whenever I have time I now read James's "Varieties of religious experience". This does me *a lot* of good. I don't mean to say that I will be a saint soon, but I am not sure that it does not improve me a little in a way in which I would like to improve *very much*: namely I think that it helps me to get rid of the *Sorge* (in the sense in which Goethe used the word in the second part of *Faust*)." (Wittgenstein 2008, 30). Wittgenstein's allusion is to Faust's struggle with (the spirit of) *Sorge* or Care in the fourth scene of *Faust*, Part II, Act V: too many scruples will stop you from acting; an idea not unrelated to Horace's *atra Cura* in *Odes* III.1.40. Wittgenstein's struggle with Care is thus similar to Faust's. 'Sorge' is also a well-known, key theme in Heidegger's *Being and Time*, Division I, Part VI, but one should not see a connection here, especially in light of the fact that Heidegger's notion is clearly distinct from Goethe's. On this last point, see (Picardi 2001).

<sup>59</sup> (Wittgenstein 1961, 6.45).

<sup>60</sup> On this issue, see (McGuinness 1966). About (Hadot 2004), see footnote 59.

<sup>61</sup> (Wittgenstein 1961, 6.44).

Moreover, as understood here, cosmic emotions can be very well experienced by anyone without any regular practice of so-called ‘spiritual exercises’, and, although they are often described with help of a religious vocabulary – we just saw that this was Wittgenstein’s point – they need *not* involve any religious belief at all.<sup>62</sup> At all events, all that is required in what follows is simply the minimal assumption that some of us do experience them.

Likewise for Heidegger, for whom, as we can see from the passage from *Being and Time* quoted above, ‘*Grundstimmungen*’ such as ‘*Angst*’ are ‘cosmic emotions’. Indeed, ‘anxiety’ is not like ‘fear’ directed at a particular object but, in first approximation to one’s experience as a whole.<sup>63</sup> As a matter of fact one of the central claim of ‘What is Metaphysics?’ is that “Anxiety reveals the nothing”.<sup>64</sup> One should note that Heidegger’s argument in support of this claim is rather poor. According to him,

When *Angst* has quieted down, in our everyday way of talking we are accustomed to say ‘It was really nothing’.<sup>65</sup>

This is a fallacious piece of reasoning based on equivocation on ‘nothing’ in the expression ‘it was nothing’; nobody would claim that ‘*worum wir uns ängsteten war eigentlich nichts*’ entails that ‘*das Nichts war da*’. The point is more obvious in French, where one would say ‘*ce n’est vraiment rien*’, and not use the word ‘*néant*’. Such considerations show that ordinary language does not support Heidegger’s claim that anxiety reveals the *Nichts*.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> On this point, see (Hulin 1993), who speaks of ‘*mystique sauvage*’. One should note a renewal of interest in the notion in French philosophy, in the writings of Pierre Hadot. See, e.g., (Hadot 2001), where the theme is recurrent. It is *not* a coincidence that Hadot was the first in France ever to write on Wittgenstein, with papers in 1959 on mysticism in the *Tractatus logico-philosophicus*, now collected in (Hadot 2004). Distinguishing cosmic emotions from mystical experience as such will help us seeing how barren such readings are.

<sup>63</sup> We can see from this passage that Heidegger distinguishes ‘anxiety’ (*Angst*) from ‘fear’ (*Furcht*), thus the former as ‘*Grundstimmung*’ from the former as ‘*Gefühl*’. He thus distinguishes between ‘mood’ and ‘emotion’ and one has to be careful with use of the expression ‘cosmic *emotion*’ to refer to the former.

<sup>64</sup> “*Die Angst offenbart das Nichts*” (Heidegger 1976/1993, 112/101).

<sup>65</sup> “*Wenn die Angst sich gelegt hat, dann plegt die alltägliche Rede zu sagen: »es war eigentlich nichts«*”(Heidegger 1977/1996, 187/175).

<sup>66</sup> The point is worth emphasizing since one hears often Heidegger being praised for remaining close to ordinary usage while introducing a galore of new concepts. (And it is no use to point out either that Heidegger would only recognize Ancient Greek and German as philosophical/metaphysical languages.) Carnap had already noticed that

More importantly, one must realize that, for Heidegger cosmic emotions are *metaphysical cognitions*. This can already be seen from the claim that ‘anxiety reveals the nothing’, or from passages such as this:

Such being attuned [throughout emotions such as anxiety, boredom and joy just discussed by Heidegger], in which we “are” one way or another and which determines us through and through, lets us find ourselves among beings as a whole. The founding mode of attunement not only reveals beings as a whole in various ways, but this revealing – far from being merely incidental – is also the occurrence of our Da-sein.<sup>67</sup>

As the last sentence of this quotation makes amply clear, for Heidegger these emotions play a key *cognitive* role; here, the ‘*Befindlichkeit der Stimmung*’ reveals beings (‘*Seiende*’) as a whole (again we see here the ‘cosmic’ nature of the emotion).<sup>68</sup> ‘Anxiety’ is said also to ‘reveal’ (or ‘disclose’) the “openness of beings”:

In the clear night of the nothing of anxiety the original openness of beings as such arises: that they are being – and not nothing.<sup>69</sup>

But this “and not nothing” we add in our talk is not some kind of appended clarification. Rather, it makes possible in advance the revelation of beings in general.<sup>70</sup>

In other perhaps less obscure words, ‘beings’ reveal themselves as ‘beings’ over the background of ‘nothing’ when one feels ‘anxiety’.

It is also crucial that one understand that such claims about ‘anxiety’, e.g., that it ‘reveals the nothing’ are *not incidental*, because Heidegger wanted to show in his inaugural lecture, which is after all an attempt at answering the question raised in its title, the relevance of

in “*Das Nichts nichtet*” the verb “*nichten*” or ‘to nothing’, is a deviation from ordinary language (Carnap 1931b/1959, 230/71).

<sup>67</sup> “*Solches Gestimmtsein, darin einem so und so »ist«, last uns – von ihm durchstimmt – inmitten des Seienden im Ganzen befinden. Die Befindlichkeit der Stimmung enthüllt nicht nur je nach ihrer Weise das Seiende im Ganzen, sondern dieses Enthüllen is zugleich – weit entfernt von einem bloßen Vorkommtnis – das Grundgeschehen unseres Da-seins*” (Heidegger 1976/1993, 110/100).

<sup>68</sup> This key role of moods and affects (about which one should keep in mind footnote 60 above) has been studied by a student of Heidegger, Otto-Friedrich Bollnow (Bollnow 1995). See also the less orthodox (Smith 1986).

<sup>69</sup> “*In der Hellen Nacht des Nichts der Angst ersteht erst die ursprüngliche Offenheit des Seienden als eine solchen : daß es Seiendes ist – und nicht Nichts*” (Heidegger 1976/1993, 114/103). It is interesting to note here Heidegger’s allusion to mystical experience in the way he expresses himself: “In the clear night of the nothing of anxiety”. This may be seen as a failed attempt at sounding deep and poetic, but it also shows that Heidegger wanted to emphasize the links with the mystical experience that I argued would only confuse the underlying issues.

<sup>70</sup> “*Diese von uns in der Rede dazugesagte »und nicht Nichts« is aber keine nachgetragene Erklärung, sondern die vorgängige Ermöglichung der Offenbarkeit von Seiendem überhaupt*” (Heidegger 1976/1993, 114 /103).

‘anxiety’ for the answer to *the* question, which is, according to him, the most fundamental of all metaphysics:<sup>71</sup>

Why are there beings at all, and why not rather nothing?<sup>72</sup>

Carnap is perhaps wrong, therefore, to dismiss the role of emotions in Heidegger’s text.<sup>73</sup>

On the other hand, the above is just the *interrogative form* of the ‘wonder at the existence of the world’ or the ‘astonishment that anything at all exists’ discussed by Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus*, the ‘Lecture on Ethics’ and the December conversation with Schlick and Waismann. Recall that in the latter he reportedly said:

Think for example of the astonishment that anything at all exists. This astonishment cannot be expressed in the form of a question, and there is no answer whatsoever.

We can now see both that Wittgenstein was thus referring here to ‘What is Metaphysics?’ – since the question does not occur in *Being and Time* – at least not in its § 40 –, and that he actually disagreed with Heidegger: where the latter asks the question and tries to give an answer involving ‘anxiety’, Wittgenstein claims that one cannot ask the question to begin with. His reasons for this are laid out in 6.5-6.521 of the *Tractatus* and in the ‘Lecture on Ethics’; they have to do with the fact that the answer to a question such as ‘Why are there beings at all, and why not rather nothing?’ has to do with *dissolving it*, i.e., with showing that one cannot answer it, and therefore that one cannot ask it:

6.5 – When the answer cannot be put into words, neither can the question be put into words.[...] If a question can be framed at all, it is also *possible* to answer it.<sup>74</sup>

This being his solution to the “problem of life’. Perhaps one could sum up the differences between Heidegger and Wittgenstein saying that for the latter it is not so much that cosmic emotions are not metaphysical cognitions but that they can’t be made into metaphysical

<sup>71</sup> This is the claim of the opening sentences of *Einführung in die Metaphysik* (Heidegger 1983).

<sup>72</sup> “*Warum ist überhaupt Seiendes und nicht vielmehr Nichts?*” (Heidegger 1976/1993, 122/110).

<sup>73</sup> (Carnap 1931b/1959, 231/71). The whole passage is worth re-reading, however, because Carnap is nevertheless on strong grounds, as he points out that Heidegger’s use of ‘nicht’ in conjunction with ‘und sonst nicht’ in some of the passages he quotes show that he is presupposing logical negation after all. But this is to miss Heidegger’s point, in favour of a cogent criticism of his own manner of expression.

<sup>74</sup> (Wittgenstein 1961, 6.5).

cognitions, because their content cannot be linguistically articulated, it is ‘*Unausprechlich*’, while the former thinks that they ground his metaphysical assertions (and the latter presumably involve the introduction of new vocabulary).

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I hope that the foregoing gives sufficient reasons for the belief that Wittgenstein was merely commenting on Heidegger’s ‘What is Metaphysics?’ in his conversation with Schlick and Waismann. To this I may add one small point. One could counter that Wittgenstein also pointed out in that conversation that the “running up against the limits of language is *ethics*”, while Heidegger is not known, on the other hand, for any contribution to ethics; he has been, one might claim, unjustly bunched up all along with those who “tried to write or talk Ethics or Religion” and who thus ran “against the boundaries of language”.<sup>75</sup> To this one could reply, however, that Heidegger does make a claim (again, one which is not incidental), that can be seen as ethical:

Without the original revelation of the nothing, no selfhood and no freedom.<sup>76</sup>

And for that reason Wittgenstein’s remark is not entirely out of place.

I would like to turn now to the section ‘On the Character of Disquiet’ of the *Diktat für Schlick* and look at the evidence therein. For this, I need merely to recall one last passage from Heidegger’s ‘What is Metaphysics?’, where he insisted on the fact that the ‘*Nichts*’ is not just a foil for the ‘*Seienden*’, that it is *not passive*. This is precisely the passage where Heidegger claims that ‘*Das Nichts selbst nichtet*’:

This wholly repelling gesture towards beings that are in retreat as a whole, which is the action of the nothing that oppresses Dasein in anxiety, is the essence of the nothing: nihilation. It is neither an annihilation of beings nor does it spring from a negation. Nihilation will not submit to calculations in terms of annihilation and negation. The nothing itself nihilates.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> (Wittgenstein 1993, 44).

<sup>76</sup> “*Ohne ursprüngliche Offenbarkeit des Nichts kein Selbstsein und keine Freiheit*” (Heidegger 1976/1993, 115/103).

<sup>77</sup> “*Diese im Ganzen abweisende Verweisung auf das entgleitende Seiende im Ganzen, als welche das Nichts in der Angst das Dasein umdrängt, ist das Wesen des Nichts: die Nichtung. Sie ist weder eine Vernichtung des*

Given the ‘revelatory’ or ‘disclosive’ role of ‘anxiety’ presented above, Heidegger concludes in typically assertoric fashion:

In the Being of beings the nihilation of the nothing occurs.<sup>78</sup>

Now, the section ‘On the Character of Disquiet’ opens with clear references to ‘What is Metaphysics?’:

If we want to deal with a proposition such as ‘The nothing nots’ or with the question ‘Which is prior, the nothing or negation’, then to do it justice we ask ourselves: What did the author have in mind with this proposition? Where did he get this proposition from?’<sup>79</sup>

Again, neither the sentence nor the question occur in *Being and Time*. What is particularly interesting is how Wittgenstein proposes his own simile to express the apparently active character of the ‘*Nichts*’ in the above quotations (again a silent indication that the text referred to is ‘What is Metaphysics?’):

Anyone who speaks of the opposition of being and nothing, and of the nothing as something primary in contrast to negation, has in mind, I think, a picture of an island of being washed by an infinite ocean of the nothing. Whatever we throw into this ocean will be dissolved in its water and annihilated. But the ocean itself is endlessly restless like the waves on the sea. It exists, it is, and we say: “It noths”. In this sense even rest would be described as an activity.<sup>80</sup>

This provides more support to the claim that Wittgenstein did indeed read Heidegger’s ‘What is Metaphysics?’ and that probably this is the only text by Heidegger he ever read. I would like now to conclude by pointing out that this section of the *Diktat* contains some further reasons to believe that Wittgenstein saw himself to be at odds with Heidegger. Of particular interest, therefore, is the fact that he goes on providing two critiques.<sup>81</sup> First, although not named, Heidegger is here singled out as the perfect example of the metaphysician who is unable to renounce speaking about cosmic emotions, while he should have kept quiet. (He is of course not the only one for Wittgenstein, McTaggart and

*Seienden, noch entspringt sie einer Verneinung aufrechnen. Das Nichts selbst nichtet*” (Heidegger 1976/1993, 114/103).

<sup>78</sup> “*Im Sein des Seienden geschieht das Nichten des Nichts*” (Heidegger 1976/1993, 115/104).

<sup>79</sup> (Wittgenstein 2003, 69).

<sup>80</sup> (Wittgenstein 2003, 71).

<sup>81</sup> There is also an interesting discussion of the metaphor of foundations in terms of ... problems of digestion, that I cannot discuss here, at (Wittgenstein 2003, 75).

Kierkegaard come to mind.)<sup>82</sup> The section ends up with the claim, to which I shall come back, that phrases such as ‘The nothing noths’ are but a substitute for the ‘inarticulate sounds’ with which one would like to begin philosophy.<sup>83</sup> Inarticulate sounds are precisely what would result if one were to utter propositions with signs lacking meaning, as in 6.53:

6.53 – [...] whenever someone else wanted to say something metaphysical, to demonstrate to him that he failed to give a meaning to certain signs in his proposition.<sup>84</sup>

They result from yielding to the temptation to speak *whereof one cannot speak*. For that reason, one’s soul needs to be cured,<sup>85</sup> i.e., one needs a *therapy* using a method that “resembles psychoanalysis in some sense”:

[...] a simile at work in the unconscious is made harmless by being articulated.<sup>86</sup>

But the actual examples of therapy he gives refer directly to his *Tractatus* on predication and on identity, i.e., one must point out breaches of the ‘logical syntax’ of language:

[...] if we free him from his confusion then we have accomplished what we wanted to do for him. It may seem strange to us what trivial means, as it were, serve to free us from profound philosophical disquiets. It is strange that nothing more is needed in a particular case, e.g., than replacing one word by two different ones, the word ‘is’ by the two signs ‘=’ and ‘e’, in order to get rid of the tormenting question ‘To what extend is a rose identical with red?’. But all we learn from this is how profound a confusion is when it is embodied in our language. It is strange that we can free someone from the profound and, in a certain sense, mysterious question of what the proposition ‘A=A’ means by introducing a notation in which this proposition cannot be formulated.<sup>87</sup>

Given his diatribe on logic, I sincerely doubt that Heidegger would have been cured by these ‘trivial means’! More interesting, these look, as a matter of fact, very much reminiscent of Carnap in his paper on ‘The Elimination of Metaphysics Through Logical Analysis of

<sup>82</sup> See, e.g., the remark on McTaggart in (Rhees 1984, 82). Kierkegaard holds a special place here, as one of the most important metaphysicians, precisely because, according to Wittgenstein, he saw this ‘running up against the limits of language’ and “referred to it in a fairly similar way (as running up against the paradox)” (Wittgenstein 1979, 68) The reference here is to the ‘Absolute paradox’ in *Philosophical Fragments* (Kierkegaard 1985, chap. 3).

<sup>83</sup> (Wittgenstein 2003, 75). There is a better known reference to these ‘inarticulate sounds’ in *Philosophical Remarks* (Wittgenstein 1965, § 68). It is hardly a coincidence, therefore, that this passage occurs for the first time at the very end of MS 106, written at the end of 1929, i.e., at the time of the ‘Lecture on Ethics’ in Cambridge and the meeting with Schlick and Waismann in Vienna.

<sup>84</sup> (Wittgenstein 1961, 6.54).

<sup>85</sup> Wittgenstein does speak at length of the wretchedness of his soul and the need for a cure, in passages hardly ever discussed. Thanks to Gerhard Schmezer for pointing them to me.

<sup>86</sup> (Wittgenstein 2003, 69).

<sup>87</sup> (Wittgenstein 2003, 71).

Language’ – or even like the switch from the ‘material’ to the ‘formal mode of speech’ in other writings –<sup>88</sup> and will probably re-enforce the idea that Waismann’s tampering with the material bent Wittgenstein’s intended meaning, so that his remarks would come out much more in line with the views of the Vienna Circle – if anyone can honestly claim that they agreed on something – than they really were.

This brings us back to the worry voiced at the beginning of the paper, which we are in a position to address now. The reference to psychoanalysis and the image of ‘an island of being washed by an infinite ocean of the nothing’ in the passages just quoted cannot be, I think, attributed to Waismann. Since the image is in direct reference to Heidegger’s ‘What is Metaphysics?’, this settles negatively the claim that references to Heidegger were introduced by Waismann. The same goes for the reference to Adolf Loos in what follows. This much shows that the content of the passage can reasonably be taken as reflecting Wittgenstein’s standpoint, and not as distorted by Waismann’s tampering. Wittgenstein’s commentators so have been busy for decades pitting him against Carnap, that we have lost any sense that these two may have had anything in common, e.g., a rejection of ‘metaphysics’ of the sort represented by Heidegger. As a matter of fact, most ‘Wittgensteinians’ would be rather inclined today to think that Wittgenstein had in mind Carnap when thinking about the need for some philosophers to undergo a therapy. This deeply ingrained prejudice is not borne by Wittgenstein’s text. It is Heidegger, not Carnap, who is singled out for psychoanalysis here.

Still there are noticeable differences between Carnap’s and Wittgenstein’s critique, worth underlining, not least of them is the analogy with psychoanalysis. This early reference opens a new perspective on Wittgenstein’s oversold remarks from *Philosophical Investigations*, for example:

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255. The philosopher treats a question; like an illness.<sup>89</sup>

<sup>88</sup> E.g., (Carnap 1931a) discussed below.

<sup>89</sup> (Wittgenstein 2009, § 255), see also §§ 133, 254.

First, this confirms what everyone ought to have known since the publication of fragments of the *Big Typescript* (assembled in 1933 from earlier manuscripts),<sup>90</sup> that this is *not* an idea from the *later* Wittgenstein. Secondly, it shows that Wittgenstein was aware of the limits of the analogy and that he thought that tools such as the above, very much like those set forth in his *Tractatus* and by Carnap in ‘The Elimination of Metaphysics Through Logical Analysis of Language’, can be used for the psychoanalysis. The analogy, therefore, does not imply a radical change of viewpoint, it is merely that Wittgenstein proceeds otherwise in *Philosophical Investigations*, in which ways that do not necessarily contradict his earlier ‘elucidations’ – about which more in a moment – using aspects of the logical syntax, e.g., the distinction between two meaning of the word ‘is’ as ‘=’ or ‘ε’.

Before moving to the second critique, it is worth digressing for a moment and see where Wittgenstein’s critique leaves us with respect of our own understanding of his *Tractatus*. Current readings of Wittgenstein influenced by Diamond and Conant have put the emphasis on the fact that Wittgenstein attacks at 6.54 his own remarks, inside the ‘frame’ of the book:

6.54 – My propositions serve as elucidations in the following way: anyone who understands me eventually recognizes them as nonsensical [*unsinnig*], when he has used them –as steps – to climb up beyond them [...] <sup>91</sup>

The agenda behind this emphasis is (in part) to aim at ‘ontological’ interpretations of the *Tractatus*,<sup>92</sup> of the sort Kevin Mulligan, among others, has been working out, in his case while carefully placing Wittgenstein’s book back within its own context, i.e., Austrian philosophy. This conclusion is paradoxical inasmuch as it relies on a conception of ‘nonsense’ that presupposes in turn the very definition of what it is for a proposition to be endowed with sense which he develops ‘within the frame’, so to speak, i.e., with propositions that are

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<sup>90</sup> (Wittgenstein 1993, 165), (Wittgenstein 2005, 303).

<sup>91</sup> (Wittgenstein 1961, 6.54).

<sup>92</sup> The heart of this agenda is an attack on the saying/showing distinction, as can be seen from (Diamond 1991, 181-182).

condemned here as *'unsinnig'*. I do not wish to try and dispel the air of circularity; I am not sure that this can be satisfactorily done. But I would like to point out that there is a sense in which there is an importance difference here between the propositions of the *Tractatus* and the propositions of 'What is Metaphysics?'. The former are needed for an argument in support of the final proposition of the book, "What we cannot speak about we must consign to silence",<sup>93</sup> while the latter are propositions uttered precisely at a point where one should have kept silent. (The 'therapy', if there is one, would be here to understand the *Tractatus*, to throw the ladder away, so to remain silent.) Since it is impossible to argue for silence without the former, both sets of propositions cannot be on a par.

The idea of a proposition serving as an 'elucidation' in 6.54 refers back to a paragraph inside the 'frame', at 4.112 – a set of propositions, therefore, that cannot be 'austere' nonsense themselves for fear that 6.54 itself could not even be understood:

4.112 – Philosophy aims at the clarification of thoughts.  
 Philosophy is not a body of doctrine but an activity.  
 A philosophical work consists essentially of elucidations.  
 Philosophy does not result in 'philosophical propositions', but rather in the clarification of propositions.<sup>94</sup>

I should merely remind the reader here that in 1931 Carnap also published a paper entitled '*Die physicalische Sprache als Universalsprache der Wissenschaft*',<sup>95</sup> translated later on in English as 'The Unity of Science',<sup>96</sup> an offprint of which he sent to Wittgenstein, who reacted angrily, accusing Carnap, in letters to Schlick, of stealing his ideas. One should note that Carnap was indeed very close to Wittgenstein, for example, he claimed (albeit only in the preface to the English translation in 1934), that he does not put forward "philosophical theses"; this being in line with 4.112.<sup>97</sup> The gist of Wittgenstein's angry reaction is that he did not think, contrary to what one might have expected, that Carnap distorted his ideas, but that

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<sup>93</sup> (Wittgenstein 1961, 7).

<sup>94</sup> (Wittgenstein 1961, 4.112).

<sup>95</sup> (Carnap 1931a).

<sup>96</sup> (Carnap 1995).

<sup>97</sup> (Carnap 1995, 21).

Carnap published them without proper acknowledgement so that he would end up looking, when finally publishing his own, as a plagiarist. I am not going to discuss these letters here,<sup>98</sup> but I should point out that the last item in the list of stolen ideas in Wittgenstein's letter to Schlick date August 21, 1932, is the idea of the elimination of metaphysics through the adoption of the 'formal mode of speech' is exactly equivalent to the critique of metaphysics in the last paragraphs of the *Tractatus* (6-53-7). As he writes to Schlick:

You know yourself very well that Carnap is not taking a single step beyond me when he approves of the formal and rejects the "material mode of speech". It is inconceivable to me that Carnap should have misunderstood the last propositions of the *Tractatus* and hence the basic ideas of the entire work – so thoroughly.<sup>99</sup>

What more can we ask for than Wittgenstein's own opinion on these matters? The distinction between propositions inside the 'frame' of the *Tractatus* and propositions in 'What is Metaphysics?' which is here too in evidence is, I fear, annulled with the current fashionable reading of the *Tractatus*. The latter is thus incorrect, on an *essential* point. Of course, I cannot pretend to provide a full and coherent interpretation of the *Tractatus*, even if a fully coherent interpretation were possible, but it seems to me that any reading that confuses both cannot be right.

Wittgenstein's second critique is in deeply personal terms and is even more surprising; it must be granted that he probably thought it even more damning. The passage is worth quoting in full:

And a proposition such as 'The nothing noths' is in a certain sense a substitute for this sort of inarticulate sound. [...] The need to preface our enquiries with such propositions or slogans is in a sense really a requirement of style. In certain periods houses and chests of drawers are bounded with a cornice. Calling attention to boundedness is something desirable. We finish off posts of all kinds with knobs even where this is not demanded by functional considerations. A post must not simply stop. At other times there is a need not to emphasize, but rather artificially to conceal boundedness. An object must fade into its surroundings. In this style the edge of a tablecloth was given lace borders, which were originally nothing more than scallops cut into the cloth, for we did not want it to be sharply bounded. But at other times we give a border its own colour in order to call attention to it. And that is just how it is with this argument: it is a desideratum, e.g., to trace back to a creator the coming into being of the universe even though

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<sup>98</sup> See (Hintikka 1995) or my own (Marion 2002) and, for an overview of the debates concerning the content of this letter, (Stern 1995).

<sup>99</sup> Quoted in (Hintikka 1993, 37).

this in a certain sense explains nothing and merely calls attention to the beginning. (This last reflection is of the type of those made by the architect Loos and is certainly influenced by him.)<sup>100</sup>

One can link this comment with Wittgenstein's own attitude towards '*Abschluss*' in the architecture of the house he designed for his sisters on the Kundmannngasse in Vienna, as well as with the idea that such a stylistic *faux pas* would count for Karl Kraus as the mark of moral corruption.<sup>101</sup> To put it in a nutshell his intention to avoid ornamentation – clearly in evidence in the house he designed – had an ethical dimension of this sort.<sup>102</sup> Likewise, there is an ethical dimension in learning to remain silent where Heidegger utters '*Das Nichts nichtet*', and so forth. So, one can indeed only think of Wittgenstein as condemning here Heidegger's metaphysical claims in what he would have considered his strongest possible terms.

Again, my point is not to take such criticisms for granted and possibly engage into some Heidegger bashing, but to understand them correctly in order better to understand Wittgenstein's philosophy (see, e.g., my comments on the first objection). Yet, the above underscore the fact that – for better or for worse – Wittgenstein could never have seen himself as part of the same community as Heidegger, a truth that needs to be re-iterated after decades of attempts to artificially bring them together. I understand that I have not begun to address any of the substantial parallels that have been drawn in the secondary literature between Wittgenstein and Heidegger, and that this conclusion will appear deeply unsatisfactory to some. Moreover, I have shown here that they appear at least to have opposite views on the same issue, so that they are in some sense indeed engaged in the same task. To this one could reply by citing a passage from Shakespeare's *King Lear* (Act 1, scene IV), that Wittgenstein once considered for the motto to his *Philosophical Investigations* (albeit, of course, for other reasons):

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<sup>100</sup> (Wittgenstein 2003, 75-77).

<sup>101</sup> See the *locus classicus* (Janik & Toulmin 1973, chap. 3).

<sup>102</sup> I have discussed this point and its relation to the architecture of Wittgenstein's house in (Marion 2007).

I'll teach you differences.

This issue is central and their divergence of views on this issue *is* at the very heart of the analytical-continental divide. Any attempt at overcoming this divide by ignoring this point, no matter how welcomed, would be historically inaccurate to begin with, in ways that might quite possibly vitiate that very attempt.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> An earlier version of this paper was read at a colloquium on *Wittgenstein 1889-1951* at the University of Tunis, in April 2011, organized by Mélika Ouelbani, whom I would like to thank for her comments, along with Hichem Messaoudi and Hamdi Mlika. Many thanks to Chinatsu Kobayashi for the information concerning the origin of the expression 'In-der-Welt-sein' in footnote 26, to Gerhard Schmezer, Joseph Rothhaupt, Joachim Schulte and David Stern for useful conversations, and to Herman Philipse for comments on an earlier version.

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