

WITTGENSTEIN, CONTEXTUALISM, AND NONSENSE: A REPLY TO HANS-JOHANN GLOCK

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ABSTRACT: What nonsense might be, and what Wittgenstein thought that nonsense might be, are two of the central questions in the current debate between those—such as Cora Diamond, James Conant and Michael Kremer—who favour a “resolute” approach to Wittgenstein’s work, and those—such as P. M. S. Hacker and Hans-Johann Glock—who instead favour a more “traditional” approach. What answer we give to these questions will determine the nature and force of his criticisms of traditional philosophy, and so the very shape Wittgenstein’s work has for us, as well as, to some extent, what the lesson of the *Tractatus* might be. My aim in this paper is to provide a detailed defence of the austere view of nonsense, that lies at the heart of the resolute approach, against a range of influential criticisms developed by Hans-Johann Glock and which focus on Wittgenstein’s contextualism. In so doing, I hope also to shed some light on the kind of view the austere view is, as well as how it might relate to certain other crucial aspects of Wittgenstein’s thought.

I.



ontextualism, broadly speaking, is the view that the whole—be it judgement, thought, proposition, or sentence—has priority in some sense over the individual parts—be they words or concepts—when it comes to giving an account of meaning, or of understanding. Some version of that view lies behind Frege’s context-principle, which is reformulated by Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus* and quoted approvingly in his *Philosophical Investigations* (as well as appearing in various formats and at several places in between, e.g., Wittgenstein 1993: 54; 1978: 44 and 63; 1975:

58–59; 1969: 5). In this paper, I discuss a number of influential criticisms levelled at the austere view of nonsense (“austerity”)¹ by Hans-Johann Glock, in his paper “All Kinds of Nonsense” (2004), and which focus in large part on Wittgenstein’s contextualism. I shall argue (among other things) that Glock fails to present a sound case against the austere view.

Glock, like P. M. S. Hacker, rejects the austere view of nonsense both substantially, as offering the correct account of nonsense, and exegetically too, as offering the correct account of Wittgenstein’s view of nonsense, either in the *Tractatus* or in the later work.² In short, for Glock, Wittgenstein’s contextualism, neither in the *Tractatus* nor in the *Investigations*, will serve to justify attributing to Wittgenstein an austere view of nonsense. Wittgenstein’s later (weak or “non-restrictive”) contextualism is, Glock suggests, substantially plausible, but “militates” against the austere view. And Wittgenstein’s earlier (strong, “restrictive”) version, Glock argues, though it could be used to provide an argument in support of austerity, not only relies on a notion of meaning unavailable to “resolute”³ readers (i.e., those very readers who would most want to attribute to Wittgenstein an austere view), but is also plain wrong. These points are supplemented, too, by a number of others that Glock makes, and that are aimed at undermining any independent plausibility that the austere view might be thought to have, exegetically or otherwise. I shall want to dispute much of what Glock writes, but before turning to his criticisms, I want first to note one key difference between Glock’s view and a view which is in many respects very similar to Glock’s, that of P. M. S. Hacker.

Glock identifies the following two strands to the austere view of nonsense:

- (1) *The privation view*: nonsense only ever arises from privation, from our failure to assign to the words (in that context and to date) a meaning; there is no such thing as “positive” or “substantial” nonsense, consisting of words which do in such contexts have meanings.
- (2) *Nonsense monism*: all nonsense is logically equivalent; there is only one logical kind, or there are no logically different kinds, of nonsense (Glock 2004: 222).

Against austerity, both Glock and Hacker maintain that there can be such a thing as what Glock terms “combinatorial nonsense”—nonsense, that is, that results from the logico-syntactically illegitimate combination of otherwise meaningful words (Glock 2004: 223). Hence, both reject (1), the privation view. Some nonsense results not from a simple failure to assign meanings to the words, but from using words in ways that are prohibited by, or that violate, the logico-syntactical rules for their correct use. Since in a nonsense-sentence, so the story goes, the words are being misused, they do not there stand for a meaning, but they are meaningful nonetheless in that they do have a rule-governed use in the language.⁴

But whereas Hacker nevertheless maintains, along with followers of an austere view, that nonsense “no more comes in kinds than it comes in degrees” (Hacker 2000: 365), and so affirms (2), Glock, on the contrary (and as the title of his paper suggests), takes their shared stand on the existence of combinatorial nonsense to

constitute grounds for rejecting (2), or nonsense monism. Thus, Glock writes, “There are many kinds of nonsense, and one of them results from the illicit combination of meaningful words.”⁵ For Glock, combinatorial nonsense does amount to something logically distinct from mere privation, whereas for Hacker it does not.

The reason for this difference is, I think, quite simple, and it is not to be traced (say) to Glock’s holding a stronger, more robust (or, some would say, more honest) understanding of what combinatorial nonsense consists in than does Hacker. Rather, the difference is over what would constitute a logical difference between nonsense-sentences. For Hacker, such a difference would have to be one in the end-product, as it were, in the sense of the resultant whole. And for there to be differences in that sense, one would first have to hold a genuinely substantial view of nonsense (in which the individual words of a nonsense-sentence do have their ordinary meanings and together express a logically incoherent thought), which Hacker, of course, does not. For Glock, on the other hand, a logical difference here is rather one in the cause—in what makes the string of signs nonsense. Hence, on that way of counting, strings of signs that are nonsense because we have failed to give them a meaning are a logically distinct kind of nonsense from strings of signs that violate logical syntax, say. Thus, for Glock, points (1) and (2) are much more closely related than they are for Hacker; where for Hacker, one can consistently maintain (2) whilst rejecting (1), for Glock, rejecting (1) would require one also to reject (2). The difference, then, between Glock and Hacker here is largely terminological. It is that difference that allows them to say such seemingly contrasting things about the idea of there being different kinds of nonsense, whilst nevertheless saying such similar things on many related substantial points. Although much of their discussion is aimed at the idea of substantial nonsense (and so logically distinct kinds of nonsense primarily in Hacker’s sense), I take it that followers of the austere view would reject the notion that there can be logical differences between nonsense-sentences in either sense (since giving up on (2), in either Glock or Hacker’s sense, would require one to give up on (1) also).⁶

II.

That is all that I want to say about the differences between Glock’s view and Hacker’s. I want to turn instead now to Glock’s criticisms of austerity, especially in relation to the *Tractatus*, beginning with his focus on the appeal, among resolute readers, to Wittgenstein’s contextualism, to Wittgenstein’s reformulation there of Frege’s context-principle.

That principle appears, in different guises, four times in Frege’s *Foundations of Arithmetic*: in the introduction, as one of three guiding principles—“never to ask for the meaning of a word in isolation, but only in the context of a proposition”; at §60—“we ought always to keep before our eyes a complete proposition. Only in a proposition have the words really a meaning. . . . It is enough if the proposition taken as a whole has a sense; it is this that confers on its parts also their content”; at §62—“it is only in the context of a proposition that words have any meaning”;

and in conclusion at §106—“we must never try to define the meaning of a word in isolation, but only as it is used in the context of a proposition” (Frege 1980: x, §60, §62, and §106). In the *Tractatus*, the principle becomes: “Only propositions have sense; only in the nexus of a proposition does a name have meaning” (*TLP* 3.3), and “An expression has meaning only in a proposition” (*TLP* 3.314).⁷

Although Wittgenstein himself, as Glock emphasizes, does not actually use the context-principle to justify an austere view of nonsense, it has nevertheless been used that way by resolute readers of the *Tractatus*.⁸ But there are many different interpretations of the context-principle, and of what Frege and Wittgenstein might have meant by it at different points in their writings. Glock distinguishes between strong, “restrictive” contextualism, and weak, or “non-restrictive” contextualism. Whatever exactly Glock means by each of these terms, it is clear that, for him, the former, strong version, requires at least that words only have a meaning when actually used in a proposition,⁹ while the latter, weak version, “is compatible with the idea that individual words can mean something without *actually* occurring in a proposition”—rather, they must only be *capable* of occurring in a proposition; they must have been given a (rule-governed) use in the language.¹⁰ With these two versions of contextualism come two different notions of what it is for a word to “occur in the context of a proposition”—a narrower and a broader interpretation of what that context must be exactly. In the former, strong sense, the context is that of an actual proposition, of which the word must be part. In the latter, weak sense, the context is rather that of propositions more generally—a word must only have a role in them, and need not actually be employed in that role at any one time for it to be said to have a meaning.

Then Glock’s argument is this: if the contextualism of the *Tractatus* is to be taken to offer support for the austere view of nonsense, or evidence that Wittgenstein held such a view there, then it must be taken in the strong sense—since if it is only by virtue of a general *possibility* of occurrence in propositions that a word has a meaning, as the weak version would have it, then words occurring in a nonsense-sentence may still have a meaning even though they do not there actually occur within a genuine proposition. In one sense, the stronger sense, of the phrase, we would then be able to ask after the meaning of a word taken in isolation, outside the (immediate) context of a proposition, and so too therefore in the context of a nonsense-sentence. Taken in the strong sense required by austerity, however, Glock maintains, contextualism is plain wrong: words can and do have meaning outside the context of a proposition—for instance, numbers on pages, names used in greeting or as labels on jars, entries in dictionaries, and so on. Thus, if Wittgenstein did hold this view in the *Tractatus*, then, Glock thinks, Wittgenstein was simply mistaken. And while that mistake might, at least in part, be accounted for, such an account will have to go by way of an appeal to certain technical, picture-theoretic commitments on Wittgenstein’s behalf, such as his extraordinary notion of “meaning,” and which are simply not open to resolute readers or readings to appeal to. So while there is some evidence that Wittgenstein did hold strong contextualism

in the *Tractatus*, that evidence itself, Glock argues, counts against his having held an austere view of nonsense there.

On the other hand, however, Glock continues, there is good reason perhaps not to attribute such a (strong) view to Wittgenstein at all, or, at least, there is good reason to see Wittgenstein as already, in the *Tractatus*, moving away from that strong view towards the weak version Glock thinks is to be found in the *Investigations*, since strong contextualism is at odds with certain other elements of the *Tractatus*, namely, its compositionality—the idea, expressed for instance at *Tractatus* 4.024–4.03,¹¹ that the sense of a sentence is in some sense dependent upon, or built up out of, or arrived at by reflection upon the meanings of its constituent parts, the individual words (together with the structure of their arrangement).¹² Much better perhaps, then, Glock suggests, to attribute to Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus* the weak, non-restrictive form of contextualism,¹³ thus dissolving any sense of inconsistency but, with it, too, anything that could constitute a contextual justification for the austere view of nonsense.

Glock, then, presents those, primarily resolute readers,¹⁴ who either favour an austere view of nonsense substantially or who find such a view in Wittgenstein (or, worse still, both), with something of a Scylla and Charybdis between which to navigate. On the one hand, strong contextualism would provide evidence for the austere view of nonsense, but at the expense of both plausibility and internal (to the *Tractatus*) consistency—with the only reasonable explanation of either the latter incoherence or the former error going by way of notions unavailable to resolute readings of Wittgenstein. On the other hand, weak contextualism would restore both plausibility and consistency to the *Tractatus* view, but at the expense of any justification for an austere view of nonsense.

So far, the argument, if correct, would entitle Glock to conclude only that (exegetically or otherwise) austerity receives no support from the contextualism of the *Tractatus*, not that the austere view is either wrong or not Wittgenstein's. But Glock goes further: for Glock, this argument serves also to undermine the preferred reading of *Tractatus* 5.473 and 5.4733 as explicitly stating an austere view of nonsense, as well as diminishing any independent appeal austerity might have had. And, Glock continues, the case only gets worse for austerity when we turn to Wittgenstein's later work, where Wittgenstein's uncompromisingly non-technical use of the word "meaning" renders strong contextualism untenable, and whose philosophic procedure anyway assumes the existence of combinatorial nonsense.¹⁵

III.

Glock, then, argues for two overarching conclusions: first, the exegetical claim, that the austere view is not Wittgenstein's view of nonsense, early or later; and second, the substantial claim, that the austere view is plain wrong as a view of nonsense. Glock's arguments for those conclusions can be broken down into the following steps. First, Glock's exegetical case proceeds by way of the following four steps:

The Exegetical Argument:

- (1) The attribution to Wittgenstein (early and later) of an austere view of nonsense relies on two kinds of evidence:
 - a. Apparent statements of the view—e.g. *TLP* 5.473–5.4733 and *PI* §500;
 - b. Wittgenstein’s contextualism—e.g. *TLP* 3.3 and *PI* §49.
- (2) Wittgenstein’s contextualism, (1)b, will not support the attribution to him of an austere view of nonsense.
- (3) The austere view lacks independent (and substantial) plausibility.
- (4) Hence, without the support offered by Wittgenstein’s contextualism (1)b, the evidence of (1)a is more plausibly read as supporting a different conception of nonsense.

Glock’s claim, then, is that the evidence of (1)b will not justify the attribution to Wittgenstein of an austere view of nonsense, and that the evidence of (1)a alone will not then suffice either.

Why won’t Wittgenstein’s contextualism provide an argument for his having held an austere view? Glock’s argument for (2) consists of the following points:

The Case for (2):

- (i) Wittgenstein’s contextualism must be *either* such that a word can only be said to have a meaning when it is *actually being used in* a proposition (strong contextualism) *or* such that a word *can have a meaning outside* the context of a proposition (weak contextualism).¹⁶
- (ii) Only strong contextualism can provide an argument for the austere view (since if a word can have a meaning outside a genuine proposition, as weak contextualism allows, it can also have a meaning in a nonsense-sentence).
- (iii) Later Wittgenstein’s contextualism is weak contextualism.
- (iv) Therefore, later Wittgenstein’s contextualism will not support the attribution to him of an austere view of nonsense.
- (v) If the contextualism of the *Tractatus* is weak contextualism, then it will not support the attribution of an austere view of nonsense to Wittgenstein there.
- (vi) If the contextualism of the *Tractatus* is strong contextualism, then it requires (for substantial plausibility) a theoretical notion of meaning.
($p \rightarrow q$)
- (vii) A theoretical notion of meaning is incompatible with the austere view of nonsense (since austere-conceived nonsense “cannot constitute a theory”) (Glock 2004: 227).
($q \rightarrow \sim r$)

(viii) Strong contextualism is incompatible with the austere view of nonsense.

$(p \rightarrow \sim r)$

(ix) If the contextualism of the *Tractatus* is strong contextualism, then it will not support the attribution of an austere view of nonsense to Wittgenstein there. (From (viii).)

(x) Therefore, early Wittgenstein's contextualism will not support the attribution to him of an austere view of nonsense. (From (v) and (ix).)

(xi) Neither early nor later Wittgenstein's contextualism will provide support for attributing to him an austere view of nonsense. (From (iv) and (x).)¹⁷

Point (3) is then established by the argument that, unless strong contextualism is correct, the prohibition on words having a meaning in nonsense-sentences will violate the "privation"¹⁸ element of austerity—that is, Glock suggests, if words can have meaning outside the (immediate) context of a proposition, but not in a nonsense-sentence, their lack of meaning in the nonsense-sentence will then in part be a result of their context, and not simply of our failure to give them a meaning.¹⁹ And Glock's case for point (4) then proceeds by noting other passages (and from a variety of sources) which Glock claims allow for "combinatorial nonsense"—nonsense, that is, which combines meaningful words²⁰ in illegitimate ways—and by way of the additional point that the austere view (specifically, its "monism"²¹) is incompatible with Wittgenstein's later philosophical method, and his use there of *reductio ad absurdum* arguments.²²

Finally, Glock's exegetical case is supplemented by the following substantial objections, which largely rehearse features of the former (exegetical) argument:

The Substantial Argument:

(A) The austere view must be either independently plausible or receive support from (either strong or weak) contextualism.

(B) Weak contextualism will not support the austere view.

(C) Strong contextualism is wrong (since it relies on an incorrect notion of meaning and since it conflicts with compositionism²³), so will not support the austere view.

(D) The austere view lacks independent plausibility.

(E) The austere view neither receives support from contextualism nor is independently plausible, and therefore is incorrect.²⁴

IV.

In the following pages, I will want to dispute a number of Glock's claims, focusing especially on Glock's case for (2), and his discussion of contextualism, which

forms, as it were, the lynchpin of his argument against the austere view. I want to begin with Glock's claim, repeated both in his exegetical and in his substantial arguments against the austere view, that only strong contextualism is strong enough to secure the case for the austere view of nonsense. That claim is made in step (ii), as I have numbered them, but before I turn to that step, I want to say something about Glock's understanding of the austere view itself, and the assumptions that might seem to underlie his criticisms of austerity.

The suspicion here is that Glock quite simply gets the austere view wrong, that he misunderstands the kind of view that it is, instead treating it in a way appropriate to a very different kind of view. Glock, that is, treats the austere view of nonsense not as the primarily negative view that it is, a view predominantly of what nonsense is not, but on the contrary as involving a positive thesis about nonsense, and this is shown by his conception of the kind of justificatory demand that the austere view has to meet.²⁵ Thus, that suspicion is borne out, I think, by Glock's treating the austere view as consisting of two basic premises or assumptions—as Glock calls them, the privation view and nonsense-monism—and then treating those two premises as themselves standing in need of positive philosophical justification and argument, as themselves part of a general theory of sense or meaning.

That mistake in large part comes from Glock's ignoring, or not taking sufficiently seriously, how the austere view arises, namely, out of the rejection of the very idea of a theory of sense, which might seem to be able to give us a more substantial conception of what nonsense is over-and-above our ordinary conception, insofar as there is one, and out of the rejection of the idea that Wittgenstein himself was genuinely concerned, at any period, to put forward a theory of sense or of meaning.²⁶ By not taking seriously enough the possibility of austerity's arising out of that rejection, Glock ends up treating the austere view as itself a positive philosophical theory about what nonsense is, and not as a simple affirmation of the commonsense notion of nonsense arising when our words fail to say anything, coupled with the rejection of the idea that there is any other, more sophisticated and philosophical, kind of nonsense over and above the kind involved in that ordinary notion.

What I want to suggest here, then, is that at the very beginning of his paper, in his setting-up of the issues at stake, Glock misrepresents the kind of view that the austere view is. In so doing, he closes off from consideration certain arguments in favour of the view and lays down a demand for an altogether different kind of argument, justifying austerity as part of a theory of sense or meaning and not as standing outside such theories. Glock excludes from the picture the possibility that the austere view might be the outcome of the kind of rejection that it *is* in fact an outcome of, at least in the sense in which Conant and Diamond talk of an austere view of nonsense; instead Glock thinks that the austere view, its two "premises," and the arguments in favour of them, must themselves be part of a theory of sense or of meaning.

Contrary to Glock, the conception of nonsense at work in the austere view, and invoked by Wittgenstein in his use of that word, is just our ordinary notion

of having failed to say anything by our words, of not having given to our words a meaning, in that context and to date.²⁷ That notion brings with it the idea that we could give those words a meaning—that there is nothing, as it were, internal or essential to that combination that renders it nonsensical. We could, for any combination of signs, assign to them a meaning such that the whole would make sense, and so, ultimately at least, if such a combination does not make sense it will be because of our failure to make just such an assignment. That idea, Glock (slightly grudgingly) acknowledges, is at least trivially true,²⁸ but he assumes that the austere view must be meant in some other, stronger, sense than that trivial one, and not that it simply denies the existence of any further kind of nonsense over and above this trivial kind.

Glock's claim, then, that the austere view requires the support of contextualism, and indeed his whole case against the austere view, seems to rest on a much more basic error about the kind of view the austere view is and about the kind of justification it requires. I shall want to argue, however, that even were we to follow Glock in his characterization of the issues at hand, still his arguments do not present a sound case against the austere view, exegetically or otherwise.

I want to turn back, then, to the claim of (ii), that only strong, restrictive contextualism could possibly provide an argument for the austere view. Thus, it is strong contextualism, Glock writes, that "provides the crucial premise for the following argument":

- P1 A word (name) has meaning only in the context of a proposition.
- P2 A proposition is a sentence with a sense.
- C No component of a sequence of signs that lacks a sense can have a meaning. (Glock 2004: 225)

But whether or not strong contextualism is the version that is required depends, in part at least, also on what other versions are available, and whether they too are capable of ruling out enough for the austere view. Hence, Glock's claim in (ii) in turn depends on the claim of step (i), that Wittgenstein's contextualism must either be strong or else it must be weak, and so must maintain instead that words can have a meaning outside the immediate context of a proposition. I want to raise a question about the distinction Glock draws here between strong and weak contextualism, and about his claim that the former strong version is what is required if Wittgenstein's contextualism is to provide evidence of his having held an austere view of nonsense, or in order for a substantial case for the austere view to be built upon contextualism.

Those last claims, about what is required of contextualism (whether exegetically or substantially) by an austere view of nonsense, depend upon the weak view being taken in a particular way, i.e., as holding a word has a meaning if it can be used in a proposition—if, that is, it has a role in propositions generally. That version or interpretation would leave open the possibility of Glock's combinatorial nonsense (resulting from prohibited combinations), and also of substantial nonsense (resulting from illegitimate or prohibited combinations, and expressing an incoherent

sense). Hence, if that view is the only alternative to the strong view, then it looks very much as if the strong view is what is required in order to make the case for austerity. But the contrast that Glock presents between strong contextualism and the weak variety is actually this: on the strong view, no word has a meaning except when it is actually being used in a proposition; on the weak view, words can mean something “without *actually* occurring in propositions.” Although Glock clearly associates the latter position with the view that he attributes to the later Wittgenstein, and which Glock himself endorses (i.e., the view that a word must only be *capable* of occurring in a proposition—in the sense that it has been given some rule-governed use in the language—in order for it to have a meaning), accepting this view is not the only way of denying the strong view.

There are, in effect, two ways of describing the terrain here. *Either* the weak view is just the view that words can at least sometimes mean something without actually occurring at that moment as a component of a proposition; and in that case, there will be many different ways in which one might hold such a view, many different views which might all nevertheless count equally as “weak” in that sense. On this way of counting, for instance, simply acknowledging the existence of exceptions to strong contextualism (as, e.g., Rupert Read 2000: 77 might be taken to suggest) would be sufficient for one’s view to count as weak. If we describe the terrain in this way, strong contextualism is not required to secure the case for austerity because there may be versions of the weak view, which are not yet as weak as Glock’s version of that view, but which would still provide support to austerity. *Or* we might describe the weak view as Glock’s favoured view, that to have a meaning a word must only be capable of occurring in a proposition. In that case, however, the strong and weak versions no longer between them cover all the ground there is to be had: there will be scope for a variety of positions in between those two, and neither strong nor weak. Hence, again, the strong view would not—not clearly at any rate—be required to make the case for austerity.

What Glock wants is something from each of these descriptions: from the first, he wants the idea that the two positions between them take up all the territory available, so that if one’s form of contextualism is not one then it must be the other; and he wants from the second the association of the weak view with the version of contextualism that Glock favours, which effectively closes off that position to the austere view and its followers. Needless to say, he cannot actually have it both ways. The point here, then, is just this: that if rejecting the strong view does not automatically lead to one’s adopting Glock’s own view, then it is not at all clear that the strong view *is*, as Glock says, what is required in order for contextualism to provide support for austerity. Crucially, it would not then be clear that Glock’s objections to the strong view are so much as relevant to the exegetical or substantial plausibility of the austere view of nonsense.²⁹

Clearly, the strong view would support austerity (even if, as Glock notes, Wittgenstein himself does not actually use it explicitly to provide an argument for austerity); and it is a view that, for instance, Diamond ascribes to the Frege of *The*

Foundations of Arithmetic (Diamond 1995: 73–93). Frege's view there, Diamond notes, does not allow for the meaningful use of, e.g., proper names in isolation, as in greetings (Diamond 1995: 80). But Diamond also adapts that contextualism to Frege's later treatment of sentences as complete names, and that view would, Diamond says, allow for the meaningful use of proper names in such cases.³⁰ So Diamond clearly does not take herself, or Frege, to whom she also ascribes an austere view of nonsense, to be committed to the strong view. Rather, what contextualism must rule out, if it is to be taken as providing support for an austere view of nonsense, is simply this much: as Diamond puts it, "senseless whole and parts with content."³¹ Thus, Diamond writes of Frege:

[H]e does not merely mean that a word has meaning if it contributes to the sense of any sentence in which it occurs, in accordance with general rules; that is, he is not saying that it is the *general* possibility a word has of contributing to sense that confers meaning on it. That would allow for the possibility of a senseless sentence composed of words which had had content conferred on them by general rules. But what he actually says . . . is that it is through the sense of the whole that the parts get their content, and if this means anything at all, it must rule out the combination: senseless whole and parts with content.³²

That combination is the bare minimum that contextualism must exclude if it is to provide a case for austerity. And ruling out that much requires, according to Diamond, ruling out one way of taking Frege's principle—the way favoured by Glock. But that need not (though it might actually) result in one's taking the strong view as Glock describes it.

There is, then, a question-mark over whether the contrast Glock presents between the strong and weak views is quite as straightforward as he seems to suggest, and, given that, there is then a further question-mark over whether what would be required by austerity is that strong view at all. Although strong, restrictive contextualism might be used to provide an argument for austerity, there is a deal of scope for less restrictive versions (such as that involved in Diamond's discussion above), and which are not yet as weak as Glock's own favoured version, but which would still be capable of excluding the possibility of, e.g., Glock's combinatorial nonsense. That scope for different varieties of contextualism, which would nevertheless still be potent enough to provide an argument for the austere view of nonsense, may also serve to undermine the import of Glock's objections to strong contextualism, if those objections hinge on features of that view absent from those less restrictive versions.

My claim, then, is that Glock misrepresents the contrast between strong and weak contextualism, and that in doing so, he exaggerates how much must be excluded by contextualism for it to be compatible with, or provide a case for, the austere view of nonsense. Despite that, however, the contextualism to be found in the *Tractatus* does indeed look very much like strong contextualism, that words only have meaning when actually used in a proposition, in much the same way that its ontological counterpart in the *Tractatus* seems to rule out the idea of a

simple object (“thing”) occurring not in some state of affairs. Wittgenstein asserts the parallel as follows:

2.0122 Things are independent in so far as they can occur in all *possible* situations, but this form of independence is a form of connexion with states of affairs, a form of dependence. (It is impossible for words to appear in two different roles: by themselves, and in propositions.)

If that were the case, and the version of contextualism at work in the *Tractatus* is indeed the strong version as this remark suggests, then notwithstanding the objections to Glock already posted, his criticisms of the austere view, at least in relation to the *Tractatus*, might seem to hold good (by combining steps (vi) to (ix) in the above argument with the claim that Wittgenstein’s Tractarian contextualism is indeed strong). I shall want to argue now that even if the version of contextualism to be found in the *Tractatus* is, as it seems to be, strong or restrictive, still Glock’s arguments do not amount to a sound objection to attributing the austere view of nonsense to Wittgenstein there.

V.

Glock’s argument here, then, begins with the claim that strong contextualism, at least in relation to our ordinary use of the word “meaning,” is plain wrong. Hence, in order to have any substantial plausibility at all as a view, this form of contextualism requires a theoretical notion of meaning. And that, Glock claims, is at odds with austerity and the resolute programme.

Glock’s argument here goes by way of the simple fact that, in ordinary thought and talk, words can and do very often have a meaning outside the context (in the strict sense at least) of a proposition.³³ So, for instance, Glock gives two examples. First, the following list of words:

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

Second, a dictionary entry:

nonsense *n* 1 a: words or language having no meaning or conveying no intelligible ideas b(1): language, conduct, or an idea that is absurd or contrary to good sense (2): an instance or absurd action 2 a: things of no importance or value: trifles b: affected or impudent conduct. (Glock 2004: 226)

In the first example, Glock notes, the words are not part of a proposition, but nor are they simply meaningless: rather, the left-hand column lists the auxiliary verbs, and the right-hand column the first of the irregular verbs of the English language. Of the second case, Glock writes: “It would be absurd to maintain that the words printed in bold at the beginning of dictionary entries are meaningless, all the more so since the text that follows specifies what they mean.”³⁴

Glock may well be right that, in one sense of the word “meaning,” that claim would be absurd, i.e., obviously false. But that point, one might reply, fails to engage with the strong context-principle (as invoked by Frege and the early Wittgenstein), precisely because the sense of “meaning” appealed to, or assumed there, is a quite different one. So, as Diamond writes:

You may use the word “meaning” in any way you like, but nothing that logically can be a characteristic of a word in isolation can help to explain its meaning in the sense of “meaning” in which what a sentence says depends on the meanings of its working parts.³⁵

In that sense of the word “meaning”—described broadly enough to encapsulate Frege’s different conceptions as well as that of the *Tractatus*—it clearly would not be absurd to say of “nonsense,” as it appears in bold in the dictionary entry cited above, that it is meaningless; though the text of the definition does indeed specify the various roles that word can play as a working part of a proposition, it does not there actually fulfil any one of those roles. And similar things might be said of Glock’s first example, too. For instance, some of these “verbs” can have very different propositional roles (we talk of a “to do” list, for example, or exclaim “What a to do!”) and they each could be given others, but they do not play any such role at all in Glock’s list.

That response, however, plays nicely into Glock’s hands. For Glock argues that such an objection is not open to resolute readers of the *Tractatus*—i.e., those who would most want to find an austere view of nonsense there—since it relies on adopting a theoretical notion of meaning as against Glock’s ordinary use of the term (step (vi)), and since such a notion is itself incompatible with the austere view of nonsense (step (vii)).

Glock’s claim here is just this: if one thinks of the *Tractatus* as consisting—in whole or in large part—of “plain” (i.e., austere) nonsense, then one cannot also claim to find at work there a theoretical notion of meaning since, as Glock writes, “such nonsense cannot constitute a theory” (Glock 2004: 227). That much, at least, is surely true: nonsense, however conceived, cannot constitute a theory, but it is less clear why it should follow from this that resolute readers cannot find in the *Tractatus* a technical notion of meaning.³⁶ That, on the contrary, seems to be part of the backdrop against which any reading of the *Tractatus* must situate itself. What is clear is that if resolute readers wish to discard the Tractarian statement of the context-principle as elucidatory nonsense at the climax of the book (and not all will wish to do so), then they will not also be able to rely on it as substantial evidence for the austere view.³⁷ If they do that, they might still want to rely on it as exegetical evidence, as forming part of the Tractarian ladder which one climbs up but must kick away afterwards, and if so, some story will be needed of how that is so much as possible. Still, such a story may not be as hard to find as might at first be thought, since the austere view does allow for all kinds of other differences between nonsense-sentences—differences not logical, but, say, psychological or aesthetic, for instance—and which may suffice to provide such a story. It would, however, be

fair to say that the burden here would lie with those resolute readers who followed this route (even if alternative—standard—readings are likely to themselves require a parallel story of their own). Nevertheless, it simply is not clear that no such story is possible, and Glock provides no reason for thinking it to be. Hence, even if we grant that strong contextualism is required, and if we grant too that that relies on a technical notion of meaning, that provides no clear-cut case against attributing to Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus* an austere view of nonsense.

VI.

Glock's exegetical case against the austere view in relation to the *Tractatus* is supplemented by the point that strong contextualism is at odds with, or conflicts with, another view there: namely, the *Tractatus's* compositionism. Glock's suggestion here is that that conflict undermines the attribution to Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus* of strong contextualism, and that it suggests that a substantial case for the austere view could not be built upon strong contextualism, since, for Glock, the compositionist view is clearly correct. Thus, Glock concludes that the conflict suggests that "the early Wittgenstein did not take *TLP* 3.3 [the Tractarian reformulation of Frege's context-principle] as literally as proponents of the austere view suppose," and that strong contextualism must be wrong (Glock 2004: 228 and 226).

Roughly, compositionism is the view that the sense of a sentence is, in some sense, determined by the meanings of its constituent parts and the way that those parts are put together. In the *Tractatus*, that view gets expressed in the following remarks:

- 4.024 To understand a proposition means to know what is the case if it is true. (One can understand it, therefore, without knowing whether it is true.) It is understood by anyone who understands its constituents.
- 4.025 When translating one language into another, we do not proceed by translating each *proposition* of the one into a *proposition* of the other, but merely by translating the constituents of propositions. (And the dictionary translates not only substantives, but also verbs, adjectives, and conjunctions, etc.; and it treats them all in the same way.)
- 4.026 The meanings of simple signs (words) must be explained to us if we are to understand them.
With propositions, however, we make ourselves understood.
- 4.027 It belongs to the essence of a proposition that it should be able to communicate a *new* sense to us.
- 4.03 A proposition must use old expressions to communicate a new sense.

The merit of that view, as Wittgenstein's remarks suggest, is that it seems to be the only way of explaining our ability to understand new sentences: we do, that is, understand sentences we have not previously encountered, and the most

plausible—perhaps the only plausible—way of explaining that fact seems to be that we are familiar with the constituent words and with certain patterns of combining them.

Though Glock does not expand further on the sense of contradiction between that view and strong contextualism, reasons for thinking them in conflict are not hard to find. For where contextualism (of any stripe) asserts the “primacy of the proposition,” as it were, over its constituent parts, compositionism on the contrary stresses (or seems to stress) the primacy of the individual words over the proposition.

One way of seeing how those two views might not conflict after all is to ask what follows from compositionism; that is, compositionism itself might be held to be trivially true, but what is a matter of contention is what that view then entails. On Glock’s interpretation of it, compositionism has the consequence that a word has a meaning independently of any sentence in which it occurs. On another reading, however, it might be taken to entail instead only that when a component of one sentence occurs again as a component of another sentence it must have the same meaning in both occurrences. That second reading would then clearly be compatible with strong contextualism, but it might seem to leave mysterious the very feature of natural languages that compositionism intuitively seems to be required in order to explain, namely, the fact that we can understand sentences which we have not previously encountered.³⁸ Does strong contextualism—and the latter view of the consequences of compositionism—then leave that fact a matter of mystery? One explanation of why it does not is given (again) by Diamond in her discussion of Frege.

Diamond reads Frege as maintaining not only a strong form of contextualism, but also the compositional view that “we understand a sentence only because we know the language—know, that is, the general rules fixing the content of expressions in the language.” Thus, Diamond writes:

We need to see how Frege can do both: can mean what he says about the parts getting their content through the sentence’s having sense, and can recognise that we grasp what a sentence says via our grasp of general rules determining the meaning of expressions in the language. (Diamond 1995: 109)

Diamond’s answer, in short, is that we do arrive at the sense of a sentence by means of attributing content to the parts, but that we proceed to an understanding of the sense of a sentence by attributing that content only provisionally, conditionally upon the whole sentence expressing a thought of such-and-such a form. Thus, *only if* the sentence as a whole expresses a thought of such-and-such a form will the parts have the content provisionally assigned to them.

So, for instance, Diamond takes as an example the sentence “Venus is more massive than Mercury,” and she begins by assuming that there are two kinds of general linguistic rules. The first enables us “to break down whole sentences into elements with a syntactic characterization”; the second fixes “the meanings of proper names, concept expressions and relational expressions of various sorts”

(Diamond 1995: 109). And both kinds of rule apply only conditionally. Now, faced with an utterance that we have not previously come across, we can apply each kind of rule in turn. Supposing that “Venus is more massive than Mercury” is such an example, we might apply the first kind of rule in order to give us a characterization of what the syntactic structure of the sentence might be—what combination of what kinds of expressions. So we might take certain pointers—the presence of capital letters for instance—to signal that what we have here is a proper name, followed by a relational term, followed by another proper name. But, crucially, we apply these rules only conditionally—we are, as it were, offering a prognosis, and not a diagnosis. Diamond writes:

[T]he sentence may be taken to be a two-term relational expression completed by the proper name “Venus” in the left-hand place and the proper name “Mercury” in the right-hand place, *but only if* the thought expressed by the whole sentence is that the object “Venus” stands for, whatever that is, has whatever relation it is the relational expression stands for to whatever object it is “Mercury” stands for. (Diamond 1995: 110)

The sentence will have such a syntactic structure only if the thought it expresses does actually have a form of this kind. And the same is true of the second kind of rule: we might know, for instance, that “Venus” is sometimes used as a proper name to stand for the particular object Venus; but again, that will be borne out only if the thought expressed by the sentence as a whole is a thought asserting of Venus whatever the rest of the sentence says.

On Diamond’s account, then, we do arrive at the meaning of a sentence compositionally, but crucially also conditionally, and because our hypotheses as to what the parts of the sentence mean are conditional on what the overall thought expressed by the sentence actually is, that process is perfectly compatible with even strong contextualism.

Diamond’s account here, then, suggests one way in which Glock’s objection might be countered on both an exegetical and a substantial level. I do not want to endorse Diamond’s account unconditionally; it seems to me that more needs to be said about exactly what these rules look like, how exactly (if at all) a conditional application of a rule differs from an application of a conditional rule, and perhaps too in expressing the process in a way that does not beg any questions.³⁹ That said, however, something like this account, one which explains our arriving at the meaning of the whole by way of hypotheses about the meanings of the parts, seems to me at least plausible, and also not to conflict with strong contextualism.

Moreover, the force of Glock’s exegetical conclusion here—that Wittgenstein’s compositionism suggests he did not hold strong contextualism—is further undermined by Glock’s apparent acceptance elsewhere in the same paper that Wittgenstein did in the *Tractatus* hold a strong, restrictive understanding of contextualism; a stance which Glock explains by way of certain features of Wittgenstein’s picture-theory of propositions and by Wittgenstein’s extraordinary notion of meaning (Glock 2004: 227–228). Thus, Glock might be taken to acknowledge that there are,

after all, good reasons to attribute to the early Wittgenstein strong contextualism. Furthermore, and on the same kind of *ad hominem* note, it might be thought to be undermined, too, by Glock's discussion elsewhere of the *Tractatus*'s compositionism as forming the "implicit rationale" for Wittgenstein's early strong contextualism (even if Glock goes on to say that, as a rationale, it is not strong enough to justify the strong, restrictive view) (Glock 1996: 87). Whatever the force of those two points, however, it simply is not the case that strong contextualism and compositionism are obviously in conflict, such that one would be forced to abandon one or other position; again, if Glock's point here is to work, more argument is needed.

VII.

I have argued that Glock's criticisms of the austere view of nonsense, and of the attribution of that view, at least to the early Wittgenstein, by way of the context-principle, do not succeed. Some of those arguments—for instance, against Glock's way of presenting the austere view itself, and also the contrast between the forms of contextualism Glock distinguishes—apply equally to Glock's arguments against attributing the austere view to the later Wittgenstein too. There, Glock claims that Wittgenstein's contextualism is far weaker than the version present in the *Tractatus*:

[I]n the *Investigations* Wittgenstein quotes Frege's restrictive principle with approval. . . . But, with occasional exceptions, Wittgenstein explains the context-principle in a non-restrictive way, one that is compatible with the idea that individual words can mean something without *actually* occurring in a proposition. . . . What he insists on is that they must be *capable* of occurring in propositions. (Glock 2004: 229)

There, Glock claims, Wittgenstein's view is that "the meaning of a word is determined by *how* it can be used in sentences," that a word has a meaning if it has a use. And, Glock emphasizes, "[t]here is a difference between *having a use in the language* and *being actually used on a particular occasion*" (Glock 2004: 229). Hence, words even in the context of a nonsense-sentence can, in that sense, have a meaning.

Glock recognises that "New Wittgensteinians," as he calls them, would deny that that is the extent of Wittgenstein's contextualism in his later work. Thus, the stricture is applied once more at the level of sentences (which may consist of only one word), and the range of variables making up the relevant context is extended to include the "whole language-game," though, as Lars Hertzberg writes, "there is no way of determining in advance what contextual considerations will be relevant."⁴⁰ But what Glock does not recognise is that his account of Wittgenstein's contextualism and of nonsense is susceptible to a similar objection to that put forward by Diamond against Hacker in relation to the *Tractatus* (Diamond 2005). That is, in order for Glock to make the case for the existence of combinatorial nonsense, consisting of prohibited combinations of words, he needs the words within a nonsense-sentence

to be capable of having meaning in a sense over-and-above the sense in which they simply have a use in the language; for it may be the case that the words have a use in the language, but are not being used in that way here, in some nonsense-sentence, nor in any other way, and in that case their nonsensicality would be due not to the meaning they do have, but to their not having any meaning at all in this occurrence. So, like Hacker, what Glock needs to supplement his view is either the claim that words can have at most one meaning, or a violation-conception of the rules for their use, such that any deviation from that would result in nonsense. Both of these options are incompatible with linguistic creativity, with the idea that we can give words new uses, without laying down in advance the rules governing such uses,⁴¹ and Glock provides no evidence for thinking either to be true to Wittgenstein's later view.

VIII.

I have argued, then, that Glock's objections to the austere view of nonsense, and to its ascription to Wittgenstein, early and later, by way of the context-principle, fail for a number of reasons. First, Glock's presentation of the austere view distorts what kind of view it is, and in doing so lays down a requirement for a particular kind of justification which the austere view need not meet. Further, Glock's presentation of the context-principle, and of his different versions of it, impose a version of that principle upon the austere view that it need not accept. Hence, it seems, Glock's objections to the austere view based on his understanding of the context-principle may not even be relevant to the austere view at all. Finally, I have tried to show that even were we to accept Glock's way of presenting the matters at stake, still his arguments against the austere view do not succeed—for instance, because it is not clear that resolute readers cannot make some kind of appeal to a technical notion of meaning in the *Tractatus* (though such a notion will have to be, in some sense, "overcome"), or because it is not clear that strong contextualism and composition-alism are incompatible as Glock suggests. I have also wanted to suggest, in the previous section, that Wittgenstein's later contextualism is not at all what Glock suggests, but that even were it so, that would not suffice to establish the case for Glock's understanding of nonsense there. Rather, Glock's account, like Hacker's, must be supplemented with a further idea, and it is implausible to attribute this idea to later Wittgenstein. These points serve to undermine Glock's arguments for point (2), as laid out above (section III), and their substantial counterparts (B) and (C). Without those points, and without the misrepresentation of the austere view assumed in Glock's paper, Glock's claim that the austere view lacks independent plausibility ((3) and (D)) is also undermined. Hence, Glock's case against austerity fails.

In a debate that has too often been characterized, on both sides, by a lack of genuine engagement between proponents of differing readings, this attempt to show how Glock's criticisms of the austere view of nonsense fail not only at a very general level, but also as it were on their own terms, seems to me especially important. More positively, however, I have also tried, among other things, in

arguing against Glock, to shed some light on the kind of view that the austere view is, as well as on the relations that might obtain between that view and two other central aspects of Wittgenstein's thought and of the philosophy of language: contextualism and compositionism.⁴²

ENDNOTES

1. That view, as I see it, has both a trivial and a non-trivial aspect. The trivial aspect is that any string of signs could, by appropriate assignment, be given a meaning, and hence that, if such a string is nonsense, that will be because we have failed to make just such an assignment. The non-trivial aspect is this: there is no further, non-trivial story to be told, and so nonsense is only ever a matter of our failure to give signs a meaning. Hence, on this view, logically speaking, all nonsense is on a par. The view is originally outlined in Diamond 1995: 95–114. See also, e.g., Conant 2000. Glock also finds two strands to the austere view (see below).
2. Glock (2007: 56–57) goes so far as to suggest that if Wittgenstein held the austere view of nonsense, that would provide reason for “abandoning . . . the philosophical study of his writings.”
3. Resolute readers are those who, like Diamond and Conant, reject both the idea that Wittgenstein is concerned in the *Tractatus* to communicate ineffable insights of any kind via his nonsensical “propositions” and the idea that some theory of sense is required in order to recognize those nonsensical “propositions” as nonsense. See especially Conant and Diamond 2004: 47–48.
4. See Glock 2004: 222, where he writes: “[B]oth early and late [Wittgenstein] allowed that nonsense can result not just from failure to assign a meaning, but also from combining meaningful expressions in a way that is prohibited by the rules for the use of these expressions.” See also Hacker 2000 and 2003
5. Glock 2004: 222. That Glock means *logically* distinct kinds here is to be inferred from the material preceding this remark.
6. Cf. Morris and Dodd 2007: §4. Similarly to Glock, Morris and Dodd distinguish two aspects to the austere view: (i) that nonsense arises only from the failure to give words a meaning, and (ii) that nonsense is only ever sheer lack of sense. Frege, Morris and Dodd claim (apparently on the basis of *TLP* 5.4733 and their understanding of the twin demands of compositionality and the context-principle), held (ii) but not (i), endorsing the idea of combinatorial nonsense, whereas Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus* accepts both (i) and (ii). But, again similarly to Glock, Morris and Dodd argue that Wittgenstein could only have held (i) on the basis of a strict form of contextualism, itself grounded in or motivated by the general requirement that a proposition must share a logical form with the reality it depicts. This seems to me to involve no less a misunderstanding of the austere view than Glock's (see section IV below).
7. Frege's context-principle is nowhere explicitly adapted by him to his later distinction between sense and meaning (*Sinn* and *Bedeutung*). Though the principle does appear in Frege's later work (i.e., post the *Sinn/Bedeutung* distinction), there is a question-mark over how it might be so adapted and, indeed, over whether it can be or should be so adapted. (Much

of the evidence of Frege's later contextualism is compiled in Janssen 2001, see especially 125ff.) Wittgenstein not only reformulates the sense and meaning distinction in the *Tractatus*, but also adapts the context-principle to it. Although *Tractatus* 3.3 talks explicitly of names, I do not think it absurd to hold that Wittgenstein already in this work is attacking the view that all words function as names for entities, just as he does in the opening sections of the *Investigations*. Wittgenstein's reference to Frege's context-principle in the *Investigations* comes at §49.

8. See, for instance, Diamond 1995: especially 97–100 (although this paper of Diamond's is concerned largely with the discussion of Frege, it is also intended to suggest parallels with Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* (see 112 and n7)); and Conant 2000: especially section 5, 189–195.

9. Glock 2004: 227–228 and 229. Since Glock seems to note the point that “it is individual words rather than whole sentences that have a meaning” (229; similarly, 226) as though it counts against strong contextualism, it might be thought that he associates the latter view with the absurd position (no longer, I think, a form of contextualism at all) that the individual words of a sentence no more have a meaning than do the individual letters of a word. See also here Dummett 1973: 3.

10. The most charitable interpretation of Glock is that he sees the latter view as one way of holding a weak contextualism. However, I shall argue that his argument depends on associating the two in a much stronger sense than that.

11. So, for instance, Wittgenstein writes in that passage that a proposition “is understood by anyone who understands its constituents” (4.024); or that translation between languages proceeds not by translating whole propositions “but merely by translating the constituents of propositions” (4.025); or that a proposition “must use old expressions to communicate a new sense” (4.03). See below, section VI.

12. Glock 2004: 228. Glock also notes the incompatibility of strong contextualism and compositionism as a substantial (not simply exegetical) objection to strong contextualism on 226–227.

13. Glock 2004: 228 writes as follows: “This [the compositionism of *Tractatus* 4.024–4.026] suggests that the early Wittgenstein did not take TLP 3.3 [Wittgenstein's Tractarian context-principle] as literally as the proponents of the austere conception suppose, and as they themselves need to do in order to construct the aforementioned argument against combinatorial nonsense.” (The argument Glock refers to here is given at the bottom of 225 and is cited here below, section IV.) Nevertheless, Glock also seems to concede that the early Wittgenstein *did* hold the strong view (227 and 228), but argues that that view involves a notion of meaning incompatible with the aims of a resolute reading. See below, n17.

14. But also to those, like Adrian Moore, whose allegiance is less clear, but who nevertheless ascribe to Wittgenstein an austere view. See Moore 2003.

15. Similar arguments to some of Glock's here based around Wittgenstein's interpretation of the context-principle are rehearsed by Genia Schönbaumsfeld in her paper, ‘Is Wittgenstein's Ladder Real?’ (2005), specifically in relation to Conant's work on the *Tractatus*. Like Glock, Schönbaumsfeld claims that if we take Wittgenstein's Tractarian context-principle “absolutely literally”—in the way presupposed by Conant's reading, as implying that “words *only* have meaning in the context of a proposition”—then (1) “it just has to be false”; (2) it “contradict[s] the later Wittgenstein's dictum that the meaning of a word is its

use in the language”; (3) it “renders superfluous the employment of dictionaries”; and (4) it “leaves it altogether mysterious how a *sentence* gets to mean anything in the first place” (Schönbaumsfeld 2005: 17–20). Much of my argument against Glock is also applicable to Schönbaumsfeld’s objections: thus, Glock makes points similar to (1) and (2), and point (4), though distinct from any Glock makes, effectively insists on the need for a strong understanding of the consequences of compositionality and is susceptible to similar objections to those outlined below. Schönbaumsfeld’s third point relies on equating (as Glock also seems to at one point) strong contextualism with the absurd view that the individual words of a sentence no more have a meaning than do the individual letters of a word (see above, n9), and would only be true if strong contextualism were indeed incompatible with compositionality. But of course, the strong principle actually *insists* on compositionality.

16. The latter view, Glock associates with the position he attributes to the later Wittgenstein, and which Glock himself endorses, that a word has a meaning if it is capable of occurring in a proposition—if, that is, it has a (rule-governed) use in the language.

17. As noted above (n13), it is not entirely clear which version of contextualism Glock thinks is to be found in the *Tractatus*. On the one hand, Glock 2004 writes of “the early Wittgenstein’s [strong] restrictive principle” (227), and explains its restrictiveness in terms of Wittgenstein’s early notion of meaning and in terms of the picture-theory (228). On the other hand, Glock asserts that the compositionality of *Tractatus* 4.024–4.03 contradicts the strong, restrictive principle, suggesting “that the early Wittgenstein did not take *TLP* 3.3 [Wittgenstein’s context-principle] as literally as proponents of the austere conception suppose” (228). (The purpose of the latter point may be to suggest that Wittgenstein already in the *Tractatus* had reasons to be moving towards the weak version of contextualism Glock claims is to be found in the *Investigations*. A version of the point also appears as part of Glock’s substantial case against austerity (226–227).) Glock’s argument, as I reconstruct it above, covers both eventualities.

18. See above, section I.

19. Presumably Glock means that they will be nonsense in some sense over-and-above that involved in our simply having failed to give the words a meaning in that context and to date.

20. Again, the words are meaningful here in the sense that they have a use in the language, even if they are on such occasions being misused, and so cannot be said to have, or “stand for,” a meaning.

21. See above, section I.

22. Glock 2004: 222 and 237. As noted in my 2006: 100, the latter objection, that the austere view of nonsense is incompatible with Wittgenstein’s later use of *reductio ad absurdum* arguments, ignores the fact that the problem in employing a nonsense-sentence within the context of a *reductio* is presumably not what kind of nonsense it is, but that it is nonsense at all and so lacks a truth-value. Thus, Glock’s objection would apply equally to his own account of nonsense. Indeed, Glock acknowledges that this remains an unresolved issue on his view (2004: 222).

23. Nevertheless, there is some confusion about the sense of conflict between those two views in Glock. Thus, in the same paper (2004: 227) Glock also describes strong contextualism as the “flipside” of compositionality: “The flipside of this compositionality is that the role of names is to contribute to the determination of the sense of an elementary proposition. Outside that context, Wittgenstein seems to have held, they cannot have such a role.”

Likewise, elsewhere Glock refers to compositionality as forming the “implicit rationale” behind strong contextualism, even if, as Glock goes on to say, as such a rationale, it proves insufficient (1996: 87).

24. It should be noted that this set of arguments does not exhaust the content of Glock’s paper. There is a great deal more there worth discussing, and a great deal more too that I would wish to dispute, but doing so would take me too far from my purposes in this paper.

25. The suggestion that Glock treats the austere view as itself amounting to a substantial philosophical position is also made by William H. Brenner in his review of the collection in which Glock’s paper appears. Brenner (2005: 380) writes: “I believe that Glock’s criticisms of Diamond depend on ascribing to her some special, draconian notion of nonsensicality, over and above the ordinary notion of having failed to say anything.”

26. See also here Glock 2007: 56 and 64n9.

27. Thus, far from involving some theory of sense articulating the conditions a sentence must meet in order to be considered senseful, the austere view involves nothing more than, or merely articulates one aspect of, “our ordinary capacity to think and speak” (Conant 2005: 51–52). It is, as Conant argues, part (a very basic part) of that capacity that we are able to tell when a sign with which we are familiar is employed in a sentence in a way with which we are not; if we do come to understand the sentence, that will be because we have been able to grasp the new use; but if we do not come to understand it, if it resists all our attempts to do so, we may come to suspect that the sign has not been given a meaning at all, and so that the sentence is in fact nonsense.

28. That, however, is not to say that that fact is not worth emphasizing, nor that the view itself is not worth defending, precisely because and in spite of its apparent triviality, it is nevertheless very often the case that it is assumed that nonsense can be more substantial than that, and for a variety of purposes. Moreover, that acknowledgement brings the view into line with what the later Wittgenstein has to say about what philosophy does result in, or consist of (*PI* §§126–128).

29. Thus, the rhetorical role played by Glock’s argument (2004: 225; quoted above, section IV) is crucial; it is the construction of that argument on behalf of the austere view that makes it seem as if strong contextualism *is* what is required when in fact nothing nearly so strong is.

30. That might seem like little consolation, since Frege’s later view here is widely regarded as false, as a retrograde step. My point here, however, is just that Diamond clearly does not think that the austere view of nonsense must deny that words can be used meaningfully outside propositions, and so need not take the strong view. Rather, austerity only rejects certain ways—such as Glock’s—of cashing out the idea that words can have meanings in contexts other than their immediate use in propositions.

31. Diamond 1995: 109. Of course, were Diamond talking of the early Wittgenstein here that use of the word ‘senseless’ might be misleading, given his distinction between ‘senseless’ and ‘nonsense.’

32. Diamond 1995: 109. See also Diamond 1995: 79, 81.

33. A very different kind of response to Glock here, one which could accommodate such apparently meaningful uses of words within the *Tractatus*’s account, is suggested by Michael Kremer 2002.

34. Glock 2004: 226. Again, Glock goes on to note that a further reason for thinking strong contextualism wrong is that it clashes with compositionism; I discuss this below in section VI.

35. Diamond 1995: 98. (Note, by the way, the appeal Diamond makes here to compositionism in her explanation of (some form of) contextualism.)

36. One reason for thinking that might be this: that there would then be no such thing as recognising the occurrence of a sign—such as ‘meaning’—as a logical element at all, as one symbol rather than another. That is correct, but it ignores the idea—central to Wittgenstein’s work—that we very often do, in practicing philosophy, imagine ourselves to make sense, imagine our words to make sense, where in fact we, and they, make none: our use of words can have all the appearance to us of making sense when all along we are failing to say anything. What Glock ignores is just the idea that Wittgenstein’s words might be written with the intention that they induce in the reader the illusion that they are being put to some technical use, but that they fall apart when we try to make sense of them from the inside as it were. An apparently technical notion of meaning might be utilised in this way, and may bring us to an understanding of nonsense as not consisting of words with meaning. But abandoning the idea that there was any sense behind those remarks would leave us not abandoning the austere view too, since that view follows not from a theory of sense or meaning, but from the rejection of such a theory.

37. Denis McManus, for instance, is one reader who does consider the context-principle to be elucidatory nonsense (in conversation). Glock’s point here may just be that the context-principle must eventually be discarded by resolute readers.

38. Of course, one does not wish to leave this an utter mystery, but it might be objected that Glock places a demand for an altogether different, and far stronger, kind of explanation here.

39. Thus, there is a difference between the thought that “the object ‘Venus’ stands for, whatever that is, stands in whatever relation it is the relational expression stands for to whatever object it is ‘Mercury’ stands for” and the thought that “Venus is more massive than Mercury.” The thought typically expressed by Diamond’s example is the latter, but Diamond cannot simply help herself to a direct statement of that thought in describing how we arrive at it. Thanks to Alessandra Tanesini for bringing these points to my attention.

40. Hertzberg 2005: 6. (NB: This quotation is taken from a passage omitted from the 2001 version.)

41. I argue this point at greater length in chapter two of my *Nonsense and the New Wittgenstein* (manuscript in preparation).

42. This paper is a much revised and extended treatment of the issues discussed in my “Contextualism and Nonsense in Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus*,” originally presented at the Philosophical Society of Southern Africa (PSSA) Annual Conference 2006 and subsequently published (with selected proceedings) in the *South African Journal of Philosophy*, 25(2): 91–101. I am grateful to the audience on that occasion (especially D. H. Mellor and David Spurrett) for their questions, and to the editor of *SAJP* for permission to reproduce material from that paper here. This paper was also presented at the University of Chicago’s Wittgenstein Workshops and at Hamilton College, and I am grateful to audiences on both occasions, as well as to Silver Bronzo, James Conant, Cora Diamond, Michael Kremer, Marie

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