Analysis of (')Pseudoproblems(')

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Pseudoproblems, pseudoquestions, pseudosentences (etc.) constitute an iridescent group of concepts which were prominently used by the Vienna Circle (including Wittgenstein). In the course of an explication this paper presents a compilation of the many different meanings that were given to these expressions. This includes the more prominent Viennese approaches as well as a more recent one by Roy Sorensen. A novel proposal concerning the use of the term is made, suggesting that nothing is *just* a pseudoproblem, but only *relative to* a certain state of discourse. While the paper follows an explicative methodology, several uses of 'pseudoproblem', including the explicated one, relate pseudoproblemhood to other kinds of analysis.

The headlines of most articles in philosophy are ambiguous. The ambiguity in the headline of the current article is intended. In part, the ambiguity resides in the parenthetical occurrence of quotes around the word 'pseudoproblem'. Read *without* quotes, the reader may expect to be confronted with some problems, purported to be pseudoproblems, which are then investigated in some way. Read *with* quotes, the reader may expect an investigation into the meaning of the expression 'pseudoproblem' or into the ›concept‹ of pseudoproblems. – My main interest is in what 'pseudoproblem' could mean. Thus, the reading *with* quotes is more apt for the most part of the paper. However, under the preferred analysis, pseudoproblems are those problem-like phenomena that lack an analysis in a certain sense. (Now the headline is read *without* quotes again.) Very roughly: I analyze 'pseudoproblem' as expressing the property of being unanalyzed.

This last sentence needs some clarification: 'Analysis' is an umbrella term that denotes a multitude of procedures and methods (Beaney 2003/2014). The analysis of the term 'pseudoproblem' provided in this paper is an analysis of the *explication* kind. In the first section I will elaborate on what I mean by 'explication'. The property of being unanalyzed, which is associated with pseudoproblemhood here, has to do with the *reconstruction* kind of analysis. This entire LAHP volume deals with analysis in general and with explication in particular. In accordance with this focus, the reconstruction kind of analysis will take a backseat, but in the course of the explication to be performed some remarks will be made about reconstruction. Anyway, the main part of the paper illustrates the procedure of explication by applying it to one example expression. A little less roughly than in the first paragraph: I explicate 'pseudoproblem' as expressing the property of being unreconstructed. Thus, the pseudoproblem concept is here associated with two kinds of analysis, only one of which will, hopefully, become significantly clearer.

The paper opens with a brief description of the explicative methodology it is based on (section 1). The remainder will follow this methodology, which, at the outset, will include some simple examples of alleged pseudoproblems and a historical review of uses of 'pseudoproblem' and related expressions (section 2). Next some decisions will be made about which way to go with a more regimented use of these expressions (section 3). After this, several predicates for attributing pseudoproblemhood, pseudostatementhood etc. are informally defined, relying on an intuitive understanding of some presupposed concepts (section 4). Subsequently, the adequacy of the proposal is checked (section 5). The main result, *that nothing is just a pseudoproblem, but only relative to a state of discourse or a point in time which is associated with a certain state of discourse*, will be emphasized in the final section. Some lines of future inquiry are outlined as well (section 6).[1]

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[1]   Some parts of this paper rely on results from my dissertation (Cordes 2016), as will be indicated.

1. Explication

This paper follows an explicative procedure. With philosophy's tendency to always take a step back and consider what one does from afar, it is easy to fall into the trap of turning this paper into one that theorizes *on* explication. I will try to avoid this trap. For this reason I will keep the introduction to explication as brief as possible. Nonetheless, the paper is intended not solely as an investigation into various notions of pseudoproblems but also as an illustration of the analytic method of explication.

Explication gained fame when Rudolf Carnap prefaced his *Logical Foundations of Probability* with an outline of this method (1950b, ch. 1). Especially in the last two decades there have been many publications on explication, most of them discussing metaphilosophical issues but few of them providing a ›ready-to-go‹ procedure. One of the latter was presented in Siegwart (1997a, 256-272; 1997b) and overhauled in Cordes/Siegwart (2018, sect. 2).[2] According to this conception, explication consists of three main steps: (A) preparation, (B) explicative introduction, and (C) postprocessing. Step (A) comprises up to eleven substeps: (i) posing the explicative question, (ii) assessing the need for an explication, (iii) naming the explicandum and (iv) the explicandum language, (v) treating ambiguity in the explicandum, (vi) considering its synonyms, (vii) reviewing empirical research on the explicandum, (viii) reviewing its explicative history, (ix) naming the explicatum and (x) the explicatum language, and (xi) naming the criteria of adequacy. In step (B), the explicatum is introduced into the explicatum language through meaning postulates (axioms), definitions, or metalanguage rules. During postprocessing (step (C)), the (internal) adequacy of the explication is established by vindicating the criteria of adequacy with the help of the introduction(s) from step (B).

What follows will largely adhere to this order of steps and substeps and thereby try to illustrate the applicability of the procedure. Section 2 will take the substeps (i) to (vi). Substep (vii) will be omitted due to the fact that there does not seem to be any empirical research on the use of the term 'pseudoproblem' or its relevant relatives (as they will be individuated in substep (iii)). Section 3 will execute substeps (viii) to (xi). Section 4 represents an explicative introduction of 'pseudoproblem' (step (B)). The confirmation of the criteria of adequacy (step (C)) will be attempted in the consecutive section. It should be noted that explications are often *performed* in a ragged fashion, frequently jumping forwards and backwards to different substeps in order to tune the elements to one another until a smoothened (i.e. internally adequate) explication emerges. What is *presented* to the audience is usually this winsome end-product. I will mostly keep with this tradition and only occasionally jump, assuming that these jumps help the reader.

2. What are Pseudoproblems?

The section title provides the explicative question (substep (i)). Is there a need to answer this question by providing an explication? Before observing such a need it might help to provide some examples of alleged pseudoproblems:

[1] Abstracting from whatever meaning someone might give or might have given to the word

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2 More recent papers seem to largely *contribute* to a method of explication without setting up a complete and workable procedure, e.g., Greimann (2007) and Justus (2012). There are also *structural* accounts of explication, which *describe* what an explication *is* without necessarily *prescribing* how to *perform* an explication: Brun (2016); Cordes (forthcoming).

'love', what is love really?[3]

Any attempt at answering this question will give at least some meaning to 'love', thus defeating the purpose of abstracting from all meanings of the expression. *Possibly* because of this, the reader may consider [1] to be an example of what *sometimes* goes by the appellation of 'pseudoproblem'. There are more examples: Does the external world really exist? Does god exist; and if so, is he infinite? Does the nothing noth?[4]

Especially the Vienna Circle was well known for disqualifying these and similar questions as pseudoquestions or pseudoproblems. Unfortunately, it is far from obvious what the Viennese philosophers thereby meant (and this gives a first inkling as to the need for an explication; substep (ii)). One problem in that school was that their characterizations of 'pseudoproblem' were informal in a way that made them unclear, i.e. vague or semantically patchy (cf. Hahn 2013, 38-42), as will become palpable in substep (v). Furthermore, their characterizations diverged from one another – at least from a non-Viennese point of view. Philosophers following such disparate criteria will eventually arrive at different verdicts on some alleged pseudoproblems. The trouble of ambiguity intensifies if one takes into account approaches to the concept that are not seated within the relatively homogeneous school of logical empiricism. I will expand on these ambiguity issues below (this and the next section).

For now we can note that there is a prima-facie need (substep (ii)) for explication of the explicandum term 'pseudoproblem' (substep (iii)). The realm of application of this term, by the Vienna Circle and by the larger philosophical community, is the informal portion of the writings of professional philosophers. The explicandum language (substep (iv)) can be roughly identified with this ›philosophical jargon‹. However, when considering 'pseudoproblem' in such contexts, especially in some of the classical texts, it is obvious that there are some further terms closely related, namely 'pseudoquestion', 'pseudosentence', and 'pseudostatement'. Therefore, I will, in fact, settle on these three additional words together with 'pseudoproblem' as the explicanda (substep (iii)). The undoubtedly related expression 'pseudoconcept' will be omitted as an explicandum due to the complexity of this relation. In contrast, other similar terms, like 'pseudoscience' and 'pseudorationalism', are neglected because they refer to phenomena that seem rather unrelated to pseudoproblems.[5]

With the scope broadened to include four related expressions, it is easy to see the prominence of this conceptual complex and thus the need for explication(s). In fact, some uses of these terms predate the Vienna Circle. Thus, the Circle is to be credited with making the polemical use of the explicanda popular, but not with inventing these words. However, not all earlier uses of the explicanda or similar words beginning with 'pseudo-', or its German counterpart 'Schein-', are valid predecessors of the Viennese programmatic 'Scheinproblem'. Still, there are some

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[3]   In an earlier version of the paper, the term 'pseudoproblem' was used in [1], instead of 'love'. This seemed too confusing, although it is a perfectly analogous and equally valid example.

[4]   For this example see the interposition at the end of sect. 4.

[5]   For characterizations of 'pseudoscience' and discussions of this phenomenon see Pigliucci/Boudry (2013). Alleged examples of pseudosciences are astrology, psychoanalysis, and phrenology, among others. Some connections between the concepts of pseudoscience and pseudoproblem are incidental. Laudan (1983, 124), for instance, remarks that he sees the demarcation problem (of science and non-science/pseudoscience) as a pseudoproblem. Going on the assumption that this individual occurrence of 'pseudoproblem' is a substantial (although isolated) occurrence, there is still no *conceptual* relation between Laudan's use of 'pseudoproblem' and his use of 'pseudoscience'. Laudan could as well have talked about some other demarcation problem and come to the conclusion that it constitutes a pseudoproblem. (An anonymous reviewer drew my attention to these references concerning 'pseudoscience'.) – For the intricate relationship between pseudorationalism, metaphysics, and pseudoproblems see Cordes (2016, sect. 2.1.2.3).

occurrences which quite clearly can be related to what the members of the Circle seem to have had in mind. It is worthwhile to recognize a few representatives of the pre-Viennese use of this vocabulary in order to get acquainted with the phenomenon of pseudoproblems and how it is conceptually grasped through the centuries. While not properly part of the explicative procedure, this brief excursus into the history of the idea of pseudoproblems can be seen as a narrative preamble to the subsequent treatment of Viennese and later conceptions.

Currently, the earliest known use of the term 'Scheinbegriff' or 'scheinbarer Begriff' (German for 'pseudoconcept', if one follows the customary translations of Vienna Circle writings), is to be found in Johann Heinrich Lambert's *Phenomenology* of 1764. However, if the phenomenological context is taken into account, Lambert's employment of the term may be more suitably translated as 'apparent concept', instead of 'pseudoconcept':

> Das Wahre in den Begriffen kömmt darauf an, daß sie möglich seyen, und ein für sich gedenkbares Ganzes vorstellen. Dieses macht sie richtig und vollständig. Die Merkmale, die man zusammennimmt, müssen sich können zusammennehmen lassen, und es muß keines wegbleiben, das zu den übrigen mit gehört, damit keine *Lücke* in dem Begriff bleibe. Was hiebey übersehen oder aus der Acht gelassen wird, das macht den Begriff nur *scheinbar*, oder dem *Schein* nach richtig, und es ist ein bloßer Schein, so oft in dem Begriffe noch entweder unbemerkte *Widersprüche* oder unbemerkte *Lücken* sind, oder gar beydes vorkömmt.

> The truth in the concepts depends on their possibility and that they represent a conceivable whole. This makes them correct and complete. The criteria which are combined must admit combination and none must be left out which belongs to the others, so that there remain no *gap* in the concept. What is thereby overlooked or disregarded makes the concept merely *apparent*, or correct by *appearance*, and it is a mere semblance as long as the concept holds unobserved *contradictions* or unobserved *gaps*, or even both. (Lambert 1764, *Phänomenologie*, § 104; his emphasis, my translation)[6]

Part of the quoted section can be seen as a first characterization of the non-explicandum 'pseudoconcept'. To this purpose Lambert invokes the notions of possibility, (defining) criteria and their combinability, representation, and conceivability among others. Some of these notions fit well with some approaches by the Vienna Circle: the defining criteria of a concept, for example, can be viewed as a prerequisite of a reduction of that concept (to other concepts), foreshadowing the reductionism of the empiricists[7]. Conceivability, to give another example, anticipates the Circle's concerns about the intelligibility of the content of a statement and the unintelligibility of that of a pseudostatement.

It seems like this early talk about pseudoconcepts is not as far away as the temporal distance suggests. As we get closer to the Vienna Circle one may notice Gottlob Frege, teacher of Rudolf Carnap, cautioning against "scheinbare Eigennamen" and Ernst Mach, predecessor of Moritz Schlick, highlighting "Scheinprobleme":

> I regard as no less pertinent a warning against *apparent proper names* without any meaning. (Frege 1995,

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6   Readers who know of any earlier occurrence are asked to let me know about it! One may read the comma after 'scheinbar' in a way that distributes 'richtig' to 'scheinbar' and 'dem Schein nach'. Then Lambert would be talking not about apparent concepts ("scheinbare Begriffe", i.e., pseudoconcepts) but about apparently correct concepts ("scheinbar richtige Begriffe", i.e., not necessarily pseudoconcepts). However, I see no reasons why the first reading should be less plausible than the second.

7   Lambert's own empirico-reductionist inclinations are evidenced in (1764, Semiotik, § 136). – On a sidenote: There is a thread running through traditional and modern definition theory that considers how definitions can go wrong, like Lambert does here. In such a context, Höfler (1922, 377) employs the term 'pseudodefinition' ("Scheindefinition"). It is to be expected that more examples of this kind can be found within the history of definitorics.

70; emphasis added)[8]

> In pushing the analysis of experience as far as currently untranscendable elements […] our main advantage is that the two problems of the 'unfathomable' thing and the equally 'unexplorable' ego are presented in their simplest and clearest form, which is precisely what makes it easy to see them as sham problems. (Mach 1905, 8)

> Although for our purpose of eliminating philosophical sham problems reduction to these elements seemed the best way, it does not follow that every scientific enquiry must begin with them. […] (Mach 1905, 12)

At face value, the Frege quote might as well have originated in Carnap's pen. Of course, one must take into account Frege's semantics with his idiosyncratic understanding of 'Bedeutung'.[9] But at any rate, it is quite undisputed that here Frege is concerned with words lacking a certain semantical component. This is something the Vienna Circle is concerned with, too. – The quote from the independent influencer of the Vienna Circle, Ernst Mach, already represents the programmatic aversion of the Circle towards pseudoproblems ("Scheinprobleme"), though in translation they are referred to as 'sham problems'.[10] The context of this quote is reductionist and empiricist just as in the writings of the Circle. Mach views the act of exposing a pseudoproblem as a method of disqualification. Notably, he references a kind of analysis as a method, anticipating, again, the later Viennese philosophers.[11]

This selection of three pre-Viennese quotations does not only underline the prominence of the explicanda but also suggests some synonymous expressions (substep (vi)), especially in the translations: 'apparent concepts (or problems)' and 'sham problems'. Thus, the proposed explication deals, by extension, not only with 'pseudoproblem', 'pseudoquestion', 'pseudosentence', and 'pseudostatement', but also with such synonymous expressions, as well as expressions containing 'meaningless', like 'meaningless sequence of symbols' or 'nonsensical statement'. I will, nonetheless, stick with the four previously chosen 'pseudo'-expressions in order to have a somewhat coherent set of explicanda.[12]

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[8] Talk about pseudo-claims ("Scheinbehauptungen") in a rather different sense can be found in Frege (1918, 63).

[9] The translation cited prefers 'meaning' over the alternative, and in some ways more appropriate, 'reference'.

[10] Note that 'sham' and 'apparent' are both "debunkers" in Sorensen's sense, just like 'pseudo'. (See the passage on Sorensen toward the end of this section.) – An anonymous reviewer remarks the derogatory connotation of 'pseudo-', which is less present in 'apparent' or 'Schein-', and that this might have an effect on whether, for example, 'pseudothought' would be an appropriate translation of 'Scheingedanke' (the reviewer's example taken from Frege). Accordingly, 'sham' seems to be even more derogatory than 'pseudo-', which is why it appears appropriate in the context of the pejorative Mach quote. Compare also 'quasi-' (as in 'quasiproblem'), which has an almost positive connotation. (Although a quasi-F is admittedly not an F, it comes close enough to count as one for certain purposes.) This varying connotative dimension should be more fully taken into account when conclusively subsuming two separate occurrences of even the same word, say 'pseudoproblem', under a common pattern of use. One purpose of the explication at hand is the dilution of the polemical function of 'pseudoproblem'. If positively contributing to philosophical methodology and terminology by means of an explication of a frequently used expression, it seems improper to try to preserve the derogatory connotation of that expression. Hence, the pejorative component added by Mach, which distinguishes his use of 'Schein-' from that of, say, Frege, is also the component which, after recognition, may be eliminated in the process of explication. This is justified by explication's relative freedom to stipulate.

[11] Gabriel (2012, 33, fn. 22) gives an earlier occurrence of 'Scheinproblem' in Mach (1886, XXX). The term occurs several times in this book and has an entry in the index. Gabriel additionally refers to Rickert (1892, 372) as a source of inspiration for Carnap's use of the term. It seems Schlotter (2008, 62) drew the connection between Carnap and Rickert in the first place. – Concerning precursors of the Vienna Circle, Sorensen (1993, 61) mentions "[t]he myth that dissolution originated with analytic philosophy". He refers, obviously, to the dissolution of pseudoproblems.

[12] Including 'meaningless' or 'nonsense' in the explicanda would lead to an explosion of authors and texts to be taken into account. Therefore, if 'meaningless' or 'nonsense' is used by an author, then this use is relevant only if that author also uses one of the explicanda. However, for an explication of 'meaningless', see Paasch (2016).

Notably, rarely any of the explicanda is a keyword in encyclopedias or in books on closely related topics.[13] In fact, to my knowledge, there are only three books explicitly about pseudoproblems that were not published by one of the Viennese philosophers: Cackowski (1964), Sorensen (1993), Cordes (2016). All three books extensively reference works from the Vienna Circle. Articles on the concept of pseudoproblems are very rare, too, and tend to focus on the application of the concept to individual questions (e. g. Grünbaum 1990). In what follows, I will largely disregard most standalone articles. The same goes for Cackowski's book due to a lack of language skills on my part. Anyway, the writings of the Vienna Circle together with Sorensen's book already give an impression of the multifaceted ambiguity of 'pseudoproblem' (substep (v)). An overview follows in the remainder of this section.

Beginning with the Vienna Circle, a considerable number of notions of 'pseudoproblem' were proposed some of which were only defended by some of the members, others by (nearly) all. Usually at least some of the conceptions were viewed as equivalent. This may or may not be plausible against a common logical empiricist background, but at any rate such a common background cannot be assumed once one leaves the special philosophical situation in Vienna around 1930.[14] A first list of notions of ›pseudo-ness‹ is given by criteria for something being a pseudosentence or a pseudostatement. For now, both terms will be used interchangeably (with a preference for 'pseudostatements') and references to statements must alternatively be read as references to ›alleged statements‹ in order to not presuppose a non-empty intersection between statements and pseudostatements:

[2] Notions of pseudostatements in the Vienna Circle:
  A. Statements may be pseudostatements due to a defect *in themselves*, more specifically:
    [2.1]   due to the logical form of the statement
    [2.2]   due to the grammar of the statement
    [2.3]   due to the meaning or sense of the statement or parts of it
    [2.4]   due to a lack of verifiability or confirmability of the statement
    [2.5]   due to a lack of regulation of the statement or parts of it
    [2.6]   due to the logical determinacy of the statement
    [2.7]   due to a lack of clarity with regard to the statement
    [2.8]   due to a lack of intelligibility with regard to the statement
    [2.9]   due to a lack of reducibility of the statement to certain other statements
    [2.10]   due to them not referring to the entities of a specific domain
    [2.11]   due to a lack of pronouncability of what is meant by the statement
    [2.12]   due to a lack of formalizability of the alleged statement as a (real) statement
  B. Statements may be pseudostatements due to a defect *in their neighborhood*, more specifically:
    [2.13]   due to a change in context
    [2.14]   due to a refusal, on the part of the utterer, to clarify

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[13] The index in a recent Carnapian book on ontology (Thomasson 2015) is a case in point. However, Pigliucci/Boudry (2013, 467), which is concerned with the not-so-closely related concept of pseudoscience, includes 'pseudoproblem' in the index.

[14] For instance (see numbers [2.1] and [2.2], below): Being a pseudostatement due to logical form is not necessarily the same as being a pseudostatement due to grammar, since a Viennese 'logical form' may include more (e. g. type-theoretical correctness) than what is today treated by formal grammar or syntax.

Some of the notions can be grouped together: Numbers [2.1] and [2.2] are *syntactical notions* of pseudostatements. Numbers [2.3] to [2.10] are *semantical notions* of pseudostatements. Numbers [2.11] and [2.12] are notions associated with *language insufficiency*. These two items could be filed under B, alternatively.[15]

When reference is made to pseudosentences and pseudostatements in the Vienna Circle, usually the pseudoproblems and pseudoquestions are not far away. For example, pseudostatements are often seen as the answers to pseudoquestions. In addition, pseudoproblems can be seen as abstractions from their particular formulations as pseudoquestions, analogously to how problems can be seen as abstractions of ›equivalent‹ questions (cf. Siegwart 1995). In other words: The following list of notions of 'pseudo*question*' in the Vienna Circle will mostly repeat the notions of 'pseudo*statement*' in the preceding list and furthermore it will mirror different notions of pseudo*problems*.

[3] Notions of pseudoquestions in the Vienna Circle:
    A. Questions may be pseudoquestions due to a defect in themselves, more specifically:
        [3.1]   due to the logical form of the alleged question
        [3.2]   due to the grammar of the alleged question
        [3.3]   due to the meaning or sense of the alleged question or parts of it
        [3.4]   due to a lack of regulation of the question or parts of it
        [3.5]   due to a lack of clarity with regard to the alleged question
        [3.6]   due to a lack of intelligibility with regard to the alleged question
        [3.7]   due to a lack of pronouncability of what is meant by the question
        [3.8]   due to a lack of formalizability of the alleged question as a (real) question
    B. Questions may be pseudoquestions due to a defect *regarding their answers*, more specifically:
        [3.9]   due to there being no answers
        [3.10]   due to some/all answers being pseudostatements
    C. Questions may be pseudoquestions due to a defect *in their neighborhood*, more specifically:
        [3.11]   due to a change in context
        [3.12]   due to a refusal, on the part of the questioner, to clarify

Again, some of the notions may be grouped together: Numbers [3.1] and [3.2] are *syntactical notions* of pseudoquestions. Numbers [3.3] to [3.6] are *semantical notions* of pseudoquestions. Numbers [3.7] and [3.8] are notions associated with *language insufficiency*. As before, they could be filed under C, alternatively.[16]

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[15]   Some relevant passages for the notions can be found here: [2.1]: (Carnap 1929, 50). [2.2]: (Neurath 1981, 3, 18, 409; Schlick 1986, 70; id. 2008, 217). [2.3]: (Carnap 1928, 338; id. 1929, 50; id. 1931, 220; Schlick 1936, 341, 352; id. 2008, 633). [2.4]: (Carnap 1936/1937, 33-35; id. 1963, 875, 882; Neurath 1981, 377, 414; Schlick 1936, 341, 352; id. 2008, 217). [2.5]: (Schlick 2008, 682; Waismann 1976, 40, 43). [2.6]: (Schlick 2008, 51-52; Wittgenstein 1921, 4.461). [2.7]: (Schlick 2008, 681-682). [2.8]: (Schlick 1986, 69). [2.9]: (Neurath 1981, 431-432; Schlick 1986, 71). [2.10]: (Neurath 1981, 431, 467). [2.11]: (Neurath 1981, 613; Schlick 2008, 34-36). [2.12]: (Carnap 1931, 230; Schlick 1986, 71). [2.13]: (Carnap 1963, 875, 935; Neurath 1981, 652; Schlick 1936, 340; Waismann 1976, 38-39; cf. Carnap 1942/1943, 52). [2.14]: (Carnap 1928, 337; id. 1950a, 25, 37; Schlick 2008, 634; Waismann 1976, 53). – For a more comprehensive motivation of the lists [2] and [3], see Cordes (2016, sect. 2.1).

[16]   The relevant quotations: [3.9]: (Carnap 1963, 935; Schlick 1936, 352; id. 1986, 64, 66-67, 69; id. 2008, 216-217, 627-634; Waismann 1984, 245; Wittgenstein 1921, 4.003); [3.10]: see main text; all other numbers: see the analogues in fn. 15.

The two lists should give an impression of the various uses of the explicanda within the Vienna Circle. There was some awareness of this ambiguity (Carnap 1936/1937, sect. 27), but for the most part the notions were not clearly distinguished. To some extent this could be justified by the Empiricist philosophy which allowed some equivalences that are not available to philosophers working in a different paradigm. From an external point of view one cannot help but to ask: Which of the criteria is the one that is decisive for something to be a pseudoproblem?

Unfortunately, outside the Vienna Circle the answer to this question is not very easy. This can be seen in the only book that is available in English and that explicitly deals with pseudoproblems according to its title (Sorensen 1993). The author offers two quite comprehensive classifications of either kinds or notions of pseudoproblems. The first one focuses on the ambiguity of *problems as tasks* and *problems as bad situations* (ibid., 47) and on four different functions that a *debunker prefix* like 'pseudo-' can perform: A pseudo-F may be (i) something that is apt to be misclassified as an F or (ii) something that does not exist, though it might be correctly considered an F, at least if it existed, or (iii) something that is an F alright, but its classification as an F may invoke misleading associations, or (iv) something that is an F but its alethic status is false (this is conceivable for 'pseudostatement', but not straightforwardly applicable to Fs that do not admit alethic statuses, like problems) (ibid., 25). The combination of the two ambiguities leads to eight (six, discounting the last debunker function) basic readings of the term 'pseudoproblem'. Note, that the result of this systematic classification may lead to some categories that are philosophically uninteresting or do not relate to the Viennese tradition.

However, Sorensen's second classification considers the debunking of pseudoproblems as dispute dissolution scenarios. The defects warranting a dispute's dissolution are converted into nine categories of dissolution scenarios, equivalent to nine notions or kinds of pseudoproblems:

1 Meaninglessness: no question has been expressed.
2 Equivocality: different questions are being unwittingly addressed.
3 Presupposition Failure: none of the question's direct answers is true.
4 Compatibility: too many of the direct answers are true.
5 Insincerity: one side is being deceptive about his true position.
6 Inaccessibility: the answer is out of reach.
7 Powerlessness: debate cannot force both to the same answer.
8 Unworthiness: the question does not deserve discussion.
9 Inefficiency: the dispute should be modified to eliminate waste. (Sorensen 1993, 82)

Some of the categories (meaninglessness, equivocality) echo different criteria for pseudoproblems that were proposed in the Vienna Circle. However, Sorensen's approach is much broader. He is trying to fit many different dispute defects into one scheme and thus includes phenomena that did not seem relevant to the Circle members (insincerity, unworthiness). More ›traditional‹ phenomena like syntactical well-formedness and physicalistic reduction are of less or no relevance to Sorensen (but see Sorensen 1993, 95-97, on syntactic meaninglessness). This does not mean that he ignores the Logical Empiricists. In fact, he refers to Wittgenstein and several of the Circle members. Still, his classifications do not entirely cohere with the Vienna Circle approaches. Maybe this is because radical forms of Logical Empiricism are less common today. Or it is because in the literature it still remains rather obscure what the Circle was talking about when they talked about pseudoproblems.

Whatever the case may be, currently we are stuck with a multitude of uses of 'pseudoproblem' and of the other explicanda. To choose among the different notions only one that is supposed to be explicated is problematic because it always means giving up other ideas. However, treating ambiguity in an explicandum (substep (v)) is not concerned solely with listing its different

meanings, but also with making an explicative choice. This choice will partly determine how the rest of the explication plays out. What the choice does not do is to generally thwart other choices which ultimately lead to explication alternatives (Cordes/Siegwart 2018, sect. 3.a). In order to conclude substep (v), I determine that the notion(s) of the explicanda that will serve as the antetype(s) within the remainder of the procedure are those that associate pseudostatements and pseudoquestions with a lack of formalizability and with meaninglessness in a reconstructive language. This (in a loose sense) incorporates several of the various pre-explicative notions.[17]

3. Toward a Unifying Theory of Pseudoproblems

Up to this point, an explicative question concerning pseudoproblems has been posed, the need for an explication recognized, explicanda and explicandum language have been individuated, ambiguity has been treated and synonyms have been named. There does not seem to be any empirical data available on the use of the explicanda (substep (vii)). However, there are four more substeps which prepare the explicative introduction (sect. 4). These are more directed toward the endowment of a specific meaning instead of reporting on handed-down meanings. Nonetheless, substep (viii) includes the consideration of the explicative history, which, in the case of pseudoproblems, consists in looking at the few instances (possibly only one) when a given philosopher cared enough to explicitly formulate a definition of one of the explicanda (though not in a formal framework).[18] Most of the sources for the criteria listed in the previous section do not come close to a definition. However, there is one quite explicit definition of 'pseudostatement' by Carnap:

> *Definition.* We say that an expression *A* is a *pseudo-statement* if *A* is devoid of cognitive meaning, but has the grammatical form of a declarative sentence and may therefore lead to psychological effects which are similar to those of a genuine statement. (Carnap 1963, 874)

The definiens consists of three conjuncts. The first employs the term 'cognitive meaning' and must be understood against the background of Carnap's theory of meaning, which is a substantial philosophical theory. The second conjunct attributes a declarative grammatical structure to the alleged pseudostatement. If this is taken to refer to traditional English grammar, which seems appropriate, then it is less philosophically charged than the first conjunct. The third conjunct enters the realm of psychology and vaguely alludes to effects "of a genuine statement". For two reasons this definition is problematic: (a) In order to make the concept of 'pseudostatement' more agreeable for non-Carnapian philosophers, a genuine Carnapian theory of meaning should be avoided. (b) Whether there are generic psychological effects produced by genuine statements, is not clear, and a philosophical explicator who has no psychological training should avoid venturing into that science which he has no training for.

On the positive side, one can take two things from the definition: (a) The *semblance* of being a "genuine statement" is something that needs to be represented in any definition of 'pseudostatement'. It might be appropriate to primarily rely on something like the second conjunct for that purpose: If something is a pseudostatement, then it has the grammatical form of a statement. What this amounts to will be clarified to some extent later, but it does not necessarily involve

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[17] From the first list ([2]): items 2.1-2.3, 2.5, 2.11, 2.12, and possibly some of the others.
[18] An informal clarification of 'Scheinproblem', which comes close to an informal definition, can be found in Walther (1985, sect. 1.6). However, Walther seems to be aware of the discrepancy between his proposal and the Viennese view (ibid., 300, endnote 15).

mental attribution. (b) The other aspect to salvage from the definition is the implicit reference to a different linguistic realm with regard to which terms like 'cognitive meaning' may be explicitly definable or at least more clearly applicable. Whether something is a pseudostatement or not has to do with a correspondence between itself and some linguistic entity, possibly a formula in a formal language, whose cognitive meaning can be assessed.

Definitions of one of the explicanda on a level of explicitness comparable to the one quoted do not seem to exist. Even Sorensen (1993) does not include a definition at any point. What is presented in his book does not amount to an *explication* of 'pseudoproblem' (cf. Legg 1995), but rather an inquiry into dispute dissolution. The book has no effect on substep (viii).

The positive observations made with regard to Carnap's definition (the semblance of being a genuine statement and the implicit relation to another, possibly formal, linguistic entity) suggest that the explicanda can be relativized to some person (who falls victim to the semblance) and a correspondence relation (establishing the contact to other linguistic entities). If so, then something is not ›just‹ a pseudoproblem in the first place, but it is so relative to a person and a correspondence relation. Thus, a ternary predicate seems appropriate. Here are the four primary explicata (substep (ix); cf. Cordes 2016, sect. 5.1.1):

[4]   The primary explicata:
        p is taken in by μ as a pseudostatement relative to r
        p is taken in by μ as a pseudosentence relative to r
        p is taken in by μ as a pseudoquestion relative to r
        p is taken in by x as a pseudoproblem relative to r

The choice of variables is intended to convey that 'p' be instantiated by names for persons or discourse participants, 'μ' by names for expressions of a given language, 'r' by names for correspondence relations, and 'x' by names for problem-like entities. Below these categories will become slightly clearer. For now, one can see from this selection that sentences and statements will be distinguished and problems are not considered to be expressions.

The talk of primary explicata suggests that there are secondary explicata – and indeed there are. Secondary explicata can be considered explicata *sensu lato*. They are defined by means of the primary explicata. Sticking to 'pseudo*problem*' for the moment, the associated secondary explicata include the following:

[5]   The secondary pseudoproblem explicata:
        p is taken in by x as a pseudoproblem in s
        p is taken in by x as a pseudoproblem at t
        x is a pseudoproblem in s
        x is a pseudoproblem at t

's' shall be instantiated by names for states of discourse and 't' by names for time points or time spans. – Neither the primary nor the secondary explicata include unary predicates. This means that the explication that is being proposed does not establish a way to talk about pseudoproblems unrelativized. It can be seen as the main result of the explication that unrelativized verdicts of pseudoproblemhood are not countenanced. To repeat in a slightly adjusted wording: Nothing is *just* a pseudoproblem; it is a pseudoproblem *relative to* some person, correspondence relation, state of discourse, or time.

Despite the use of variables, the explicata should be considered part of informal language. When

in use, the variables will not be present in most cases. A typical use of one explicatum will look like this: Heidegger was taken in by 'does the nothing noth?' as a pseudoquestion at the time he published his inaugural lecture in Freiburg.[19] Evidently, the ›philosophical jargon‹, which was invoked earlier as the explicandum language, can be seen as the explicatum language (substep (x)). This suits the purpose of this particular explication, i.e., to provide vocabulary for the application within normal philosophical discourse. With explicandum language and explicatum language being the same, this explication is an intra-language explication (Cordes/Siegwart 2018, sect. 3.a).

The last substep in the preparation of the explicative introduction is the presentation of criteria of explicative adequacy (CEA), i.e., general statements usually salvaged from explicandum usage that are seen (by the explicator) as essential to the meaning to be explicated. These criteria are supposed to turn out true post-explicatively. Within an explication the naming of the CEA is a somewhat divisive issue as different discourse participants may take different aspects of the explicandum to be essential. It is worthwhile to establish the following procedure to deal with such conflicts: (a) Explicators may go ahead with their chosen CEA without being bothered by contrary assessments as to what is essential in the use of an explicandum. As such the naming of the CEA has a stipulative character. (b) After presenting an explication and confirming its CEA in the third step (assessment of adequacy), the explication may be criticized externally by the repudiation of (parts of) the CEA and criterial explication alternatives may be proposed. – With these precautionary words being said, a suitable set of CEA may look like this (cf. Cordes 2016, 223):

[6]   A.   if p is taken in by μ as a pseudostatement or pseudosentence or pseudoquestion relative to r, then μ is a natural language expression

B.   if p is taken in by x as a pseudoproblem relative to r, then x is not an expression

C.   an expression cannot be assessed as a pseudostatement, pseudosentence, or pseudoquestion for syntactical reasons without the employment of a reconstruction

D.   if μ is a natural language expression and p takes μ to be a statement or a sentence and there is no reconstruction of μ in s as a well-formed expression and p is not able to provide such a reconstruction on request, then μ is a pseudostatement or pseudosentence in s

E.   there is a natural language expression μ and a state of discourse s such that μ is neither a pseudostatement nor a pseudosentence in s, although there is a reconstruction of μ in s as syntactically ill-formed

F.   there is a μ and an s such that μ is a pseudostatement in s and there is a reconstruction of μ in s as syntactically well-formed *and* there is a μ and an s such that μ is a pseudosentence in s and there is a reconstruction of μ in s as syntactically well-formed

These CEA are already formulated under the use of the explicata which accounts for their rather technical style. However, the first two items just repeat the sortal suggestions from above. The other four CEA give an essential role to reconstruction and a non-essential but sometimes decisive role to syntactic (in)correctness. The role of reconstruction with regard to ›pseudoexpressions‹ derives from the decision made in substep (v). Intuitively, reconstruction consists in a hermeneutically conscious formalization of a text. It is these reconstructions that are taken to be relevant in order to assess whether something is a pseudostatement, a pseudosentence, a pseudoquestion, or (indirectly)

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[19]   Currently this sentence about Heidegger only serves as an example. Its truth or falsity is irrelevant. However, post-explicatively it will turn out true.

a pseudoproblem. However, as criteria E and F proclaim, the syntactical well- or ill-formedness of an expression under one reconstruction does not decide ›pseudoness‹. Note that criterion C is not formulated under the use of the explicata. This is justified by C being a metastatement about the post-explicative use of the explicata.

4. Definitions for the Explicata

After having concluded the preparation of the explication, it is time to execute the explicative introduction, i.e. to define the explicata. Here I will rely substantially on the results included in (Cordes 2016, ch. 6). The explicatum language is the philosophical jargon. As such one cannot expect any crisp, axiomatically introduced base predicates in the definientia for the explicata. Accordingly, I am forced to use inexact predicates and have to rely in great parts on a "pre-discursive consensus" (Gethmann 1978, 298) regarding the use of these words. Nonetheless the prerequisite concepts will be outlined (not defined!) step by step as required by each next explicative definition. A rough itinerary for this section: The four prime explicata will be defined first, then three of the secondary explicata limited to the pseudostatement case. The pseudoproblem case will necessitate special attention. In the end there will be some remarks on unary 'pseudo-'-predicates. Consecutive to this section is an interposition which can be read parallel to the explicative definitions. Alternatively, if the reader finds the examples too digressive or too briefly stated to merit consideration, the interposition can be omitted and the general outline of the explicata be taken on its own.

All of the definitions in the current section have to do with reconstructions. I do not intend to go into the details of reconstruction methodology. However, as stated before, a reconstruction of a text or an expression is a hermeneutically conscious formalization of that text or expression. Usually, the expression reconstructed is not a singular atomic expression but has at least the length of a natural language sentence, a paragraph, or even larger portions of text. The aim of a reconstruction is to develop a formal textual counterpart which can be ascribed to the author to the best of the reconstructor's knowledge.[20] For the purpose of distinguishing between ›hermeneutically better‹ and ›worse‹ reconstructions, the talk of 'qualified reconstructions' will be employed. A qualified reconstruction has to adhere to certain hermeneutical standards. In particular, if a reconstruction reconstructs some μ as syntactically ill-formed one cannot consider the reconstruction a success, or in other words: The reconstruction is *not qualified*. – I will also talk of some reconstruction being a reconstruction *of all parts* of the text being reconstructed. A reconstruction includes a mapping of the expressions being reconstructed to the expressions which are the result of the reconstruction. If these results fall under some category X, then I will also speak of a reconstruction *as an X*. A reconstruction may *belong* to a (state of) discourse.

In order to put forth the first two definitions, it is necessary to explain the difference between statements and sentences, which serves the purpose of having a meaningful distinction between pseudostatements and pseudosentences at one's disposal. The distinction is based on the speech-act theoretic insight that utterances usually convey a *content* and have an *illocutionary mode* which can be identified as the discursive function of the utterance. While in formal languages both aspects can

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[20] Reinmuth (2014) is a methodological introduction to the procedure of reconstruction. It provides abundant references.

be communicated precisely by distinct expressions[21], natural language has no standard way to do this. However, it is still sensible to talk about somebody *taking* some natural language expression *to be a statement*; it just means that this somebody explicitly or implicitly considers the expression at hand to communicate some kind of content (be it intelligible or not). If somebody takes something to be a *sentence*, then this person implicitly or explicitly takes the expression to additionally have an illocutionary mode, although this mode might be unclear at the moment. This rough sketch may suffice to make the following two definitions instinctively comprehensible:[22]

[7]   *p* is taken in by μ as a pseudostatement relative to *r* iff

μ is a natural language expression and *p* takes μ to be a statement and *r* is not a reconstruction of μ

[8]   *p* is taken in by μ as a pseudosentence relative to *r* iff

μ is a natural language expression and *p* takes μ to be a sentence and *r* is not a reconstruction of μ which ascribes an illocutionary mode to μ

Note that these definitions are relative to a given *r*. If in the ›vicinity‹ of *r* there is another *r´* which is a reconstruction of the desired kind, then *p* is still taken in by μ as a pseudostatement relative to *r* (although not relative to *r´*). Whether such a reconstruction is ›qualified‹ by further constraints is irrelevant for now (but see [11] below).

In order to define the primary explicatum for pseudoquestions one needs to see the *interrogative function* of an expression as a discursive function/an illocutionary mode. I will presuppose that in natural language such a mode will always be expressed by *a question in the sense of traditional grammar*. Thus, anything that is a pseudoquestion has this traditionally grammatical form and nobody can be taken in by something as a pseudoquestion (relative to *r*) which is not a question in this minimal sense. However, through the reconstruction a question in this minimal sense can be transformed into a *formal question* – provided there is such a category in the formal target framework.

[9]   *p* is taken in by μ as a pseudoquestion relative to *r* iff

μ is a question in the sense of traditional grammar and *p* ascribes an interrogative function to μ and *r* is not a reconstruction of μ which reconstructs μ as a formal question

Most formal languages do not have a category of questions. This means that most formal languages cannot keep anybody from being taken in by a natural language question as a pseudoquestion. As a consequence, the predicate just defined seems to lack distinctive potential. But this apparently disappointing result can be rephrased constructively: In order to prevent everybody from being taken in by questions as pseudoquestions relative to reconstructions in nearly all formal frameworks, one should extend these frameworks to allow for the formalization of questions.[23]

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[21]   This distinction, though often marginalized, exists in formal logic since Frege distinguished between judgment stroke and content stroke (1879, § 2). For more recent examples from less idiosyncratic frameworks, see Cordes (2014).

[22]   Again, for exemplary applications see the interposition consecutive to this section.

[23]   This does not put a conceptual onus on anybody working in formal frameworks, only on those who use these frameworks for *reconstruction* (not just formalization) of texts which include questions. Incidentally, Carnap's attempts at reconstruction (1931, 230) lack any reference to frameworks that accommodate questions. His use of '?' seems rather ad hoc (cf. interposition at the end of this section). See Wiśniewski (1995, ch. 3) for an easy to handle approach to formalizing basic questions.

As was stated in the criteria of adequacy, problems are not expressions; and the same holds for pseudoproblems. However, since the Vienna Circle the concepts of pseudoproblems and pseudoquestions were always close allies (or even identical: Walther 1985, 300). The only thing that can be taken to separate them is a representation relation: Problems are represented by questions and pseudoproblems by pseudoquestions. The representation relation should be relativized to the discourse at hand: in a given state of discourse a question *represents* a problem. If such a representation relation is provided, then one can define:

> [10]   *p* is taken in by *x* as a pseudoproblem relative to *r* iff
> there is a μ and an *s* such that μ represents *x* in *s* and *r* belongs to *s* and *p* is taken in by μ as a pseudoquestion relative to *r*

This definition concludes the introduction of the primary explicata. For each primary explicatum there are four secondary explicata as illustrated in [5]. Most of them can be defined in a similar fashion as illustrated below. For that purpose further base predicates are needed. Since the relativity to singular reconstructions is now replaced by a relativity to (states of) discourses or times, there need to be a way to associate reconstructions with discourses and times. Thus, a *state of discourse* is considered to be a number of texts which may or may not include one or many reconstructions. For example the state of discourse identified by the two texts (Heidegger 1929) and (Carnap 1931) includes the ›reconstruction‹ provided in the table at (Carnap 1931, 230). Of course, philosophers do not always reconstruct everything they say.[24] They only do so very selectively, e.g., when a certain issue treated in a specific text becomes the subject of debate. For all other cases, philosophers should receive the benefit of the doubt in the sense that as long as they are not asked to be explicit about a certain locution (i.e. to reconstruct it *ex post*) without being able to heed that request, they should not be considered taken in by pseudostatements:

> [11]   *p* is taken in by μ as a pseudostatement in *s* iff
> μ is a natural language expression and *p* takes μ to be a statement and there is no qualified reconstruction of μ in *s* and *p* is not able to provide a qualified reconstruction of μ upon request

Note that without relativizing to specific reconstructions there may be a need to adopt constraints on the relevant reconstructions. In other words: Not every reconstruction in *s* counts. This is why in definition [11] ›qualifiedness‹ is required.

The remaining relativity is to times, i.e., primarily points in time, but the definition below can be easily adapted to accommodate time spans. The concept of time/discourse association can be seen as a function: for each time point *t*, expression μ, and person *p* there is a uniquely determined set of texts such that at *t* *p* recognizes these texts (and only these) as relevant to the utterance of μ and to the reception of utterances of μ. This state is *the state of discourse associated with t by p relative to* μ.

> [12] *p* is taken in by μ as a pseudostatement at *t* iff
> there is an *s* such that *s* is the state of discourse associated with *t* by *p* relative to μ and *p* is taken in by μ as a pseudostatement in *s*

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24   Such an attempt would be equal to "the folly to define each and every concept" (Scholz 2016).

The two binary pseudostatement explicata are defined by simple existential quantification of the 'p'-argument. I will only do this for one of the secondary explicata:

[13] μ is a pseudostatement in s iff
  there is a p such that p is taken in by μ as a pseudostatement in s

The definition of the secondary pseudosentence and pseudoquestion explicata runs completely analogous to the last three definitions. The case for pseudoproblems is somewhat different because problems and pseudoproblems are not expressions which can be located within a text. This is why the representation relation needs to mediate again.

[14] p is taken in by x as a pseudoproblem in s iff
  there is a μ such that μ represents x in s and p is taken in by μ as a pseudoquestion in s
[15] p is taken in by x as a pseudoproblem at t iff
  there is a μ and an s such that s is the state of discourse associated with t by p relative to
  μ and μ represents x in s and p is taken in by μ as a pseudoquestion in s

The other secondary pseudoproblem explicata can be defined by existential quantification of the 'p'-argument. This will be omitted here.

Finally, there is the question of unary predicates. One might feel the urge to formulate some pseudoproblem verdicts unrelativized. Strictly speaking, i.e., speaking exclusively about precise and correct applications of the explicata in philosophy, any unrelativized use is incorrect. Having said that, one may allow for unrelativized talk of pseudoproblems in contexts where the relativity can be reestablished without much exegetical effort. For stylistic reasons, e.g., to emphasize a point, it may even be sensible to omit relativity to the current moment (t) or to the specific discursive situation (s). – To iterate one main result of this explication: irredeemable omission of the relativities will lead to a situation which may resemble the worse days of the Vienna Circle: 'pseudoproblem' will be used as a polemic term and it will be unclear what factors contributed to something being a pseudoproblem.

Interposition: Illustrative Examples of the Explicata

For illustrative purposes, very brief examples of the defined concepts will be given in this parenthetical subsection. The examples are not stylized picturebook examples, as can be found frequently in the literature (e.g., Carnap 1928, 333). Instead they stem from the very real philosophical controversy between Carnap and Heidegger. Due to this essential embedment within the history of philosophy I feel compelled to require of the reader some acquaintance with this controversy. More specifically, in order to understand the applications of the explicata it seems expedient to have at hand a copy of Carnap's *Überwindung* paper (1931), especially pages 229-230.[25] With this, the essentials presented in the following should enable the reader to minutely retrace the applications. Hence, the examples are not illustrative in the sense that they give an *instant grasp* of the exemplified concepts – how can this be possible with any example if the exemplified notion is of a somewhat rich complexity? Rather the examples are illustrative in the

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[25] References will be kept to a minimum, mostly to said pages in *Überwindung*. However, see also Heidegger's original text (1929). The referenced text is the edition of 1992 which includes the afterword of 1943 and the introduction of 1946 documenting Heidegger's later attitude towards the issues. These texts are also included in Heidegger (1976).

sense that they provide all that is needed to assistedly arrive, though with the reader's humbly requested own effort, at first ›real‹ applications of the explicata.

Example of [7]: Martin Heidegger is taken in by 'das Nichts ist ursprünglicher als das Nicht und die Verneinung' (engl.: 'the nothing is more primordial than the not and the denial') as a pseudostatement relative to Carnap's reconstruction table in (Carnap 1931, 230). The table does not include any reconstruction of said expression. – *Counterexample*: Heidegger is *not* taken in by 'wir kennen das Nichts' (engl.: 'we know the nothing') as a pseudostatement relative to Carnap's reconstruction table. The table includes a reconstruction of said expression. – Note that Carnap appears in these examples to be the arbitrator of whether somebody is taken in by something as a pseudostatement. However, this appearance is deceptive. In the first place, the examples just happen to be relativized to Carnap's reconstruction table; they could equally well be relativized to somebody else's reconstruction, which may lead to different results. Furthermore, the assessments are very weak, since the existence of a reconstruction *however good or bad* is sufficient to save Heidegger from being taken in. It is doubtful whether Carnap's reconstructions are good (or ›qualified‹) at all.[26]

Example of [8]: Heidegger is taken in by 'Wir behaupten: Das Nichts ist ursprünglicher als das Nicht und die Verneinung.' (engl.: 'We claim: The nothing is more primordial than the nothing and the denial.') as a pseudosentence relative to Carnap's reconstruction table. Note the presence of an explicit, though informal, illocutionary force indicator: 'We claim:'. – *Counterexample*: Heidegger is *not* taken in by 'Wie steht es um dieses Nichts?' (engl.: 'What about this nothing?') as a pseudosentence relative to Carnap's reconstruction table. Carnap reconstructs this phrase as '?(Ni)'. Apparently, the question mark does a double job of marking the vacant predicate position and of communicating the illocutionary mode (interrogative mode). However, it should be remarked, that Carnap did not systematically employ force indicators.

Example of [9]: Heidegger is taken in by 'Gibt es das Nichts nur, weil es das Nicht, d. h. die Verneinung gibt?' (engl.: 'Does the nothing exist solely because the not, i.e., the denial exists?') as a pseudoquestion relative to Carnap's reconstruction table. – *Counterexample*: Heidegger is *not* taken in by 'Wie steht es um dieses Nichts?' (engl.: 'What about this nothing?') as a pseudoquestion relative to Carnap's reconstruction table.

For the following exemplification of [10] suppose that in the state of discourse that consists of Heidegger (1929) and Carnap (1931) the expression 'Wie steht es um dieses Nichts?' (engl.: 'What about this nothing?') represents *the problem of the nothing* and the expression 'Gibt es das Nichts nur, weil es das Nicht, d. h. die Verneinung gibt?' (engl.: 'Does the nothing exist solely because the not, i.e., the denial exists?') represents *the problem of the existence of the nothing*. – *Example*: Heidegger is taken in by the problem of the existence of the nothing as a pseudoproblem relative to Carnap's reconstruction table. – *Counterexample*: Heidegger is *not* taken in by the problem of the nothing as a pseudoproblem relative to Carnap's reconstruction table.

Example of [11]: Heidegger is taken in by 'das Nichts nichtet' (engl.: 'the nothing noths') as a pseudostatement in (Heidegger 1929)/(Carnap 1931). This presupposes that Carnap's reconstruction of 'das Nichts nichtet' as 'ni(Ni)' is not qualified, which is plausible from Carnap's own

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assessment. – However, suppose that in another text somebody proposes a reconstruction of 'the nothing noths', as Scherb (2008) does by reconsidering a proposal by Desmond Paul Henry. Further suppose that this new reconstruction is qualified (sed contra: Cordes 2010), then we get a *counterexample*: Heidegger is *not* taken in by 'das Nichts nichtet' as a pseudostatement in (Heidegger 1929)/(Carnap 1931)/(Scherb 2008).

Suppose that Heidegger in 1932 recognizes his own (1929) and Carnap's (1931) as relevant to 'das Nichts nichtet'. – *Example* of [12] (with adjusted ordering of the relata): In 1932, Heidegger was taken in by 'das Nichts nichtet' as a pseudostatement. – *Counterexample* (based on the supposition of ›qualifiedness‹ in the preceding paragraph): In 2008, Scherb was *not* taken in by 'das Nichts nichtet' as a pseudostatement.

Example of [13]: 'das Nichts nichtet' is a pseudostatement in (Heidegger 1929)/(Carnap 1931). Note that this does not mean that Carnap has to take this pseudostatement for a genuine statement. – *Counterexample* (based on the supposition of ›qualifiedness‹ above): 'das Nichts nichtet' is *not* a pseudostatement in (Heidegger 1929)/(Carnap 1931)/(Scherb 2008).

Example of [14]: Heidegger is taken in by the problem of the existence of the nothing as a pseudoproblem in (Heidegger 1929)/(Carnap 1931). – *Counterexample* (this time counterfactually presupposing that Carnap's reconstruction table *is* qualified): Heidegger is *not* taken in by the problem of the nothing as a pseudoproblem in (Heidegger 1929)/(Carnap 1931).

Suppose that in 1932 Heidegger recognizes his own (1929) and Carnap's (1931) as relevant to the questions representing the problems of the nothing and of the existence of the nothing. – *Example* of [15]: In 1932, Heidegger is taken in by the problem of the existence of the nothing as a pseudoproblem. – *Counterexample* (based on the supposition of ›qualifiedness‹ above): in 1932, Heidegger is *not* taken in by the problem of the nothing as a pseudoproblem.

5. Explicative Adequacy

The introduction of the explicata was performed with sparse commentary and very tight examples in the interposition. This is caused (a) by space concerns, (b) by the prototypical character of this explication, and (c) by the criteria of explicative adequacy (CEA) providing the principle measure of success. These CEA will be confirmed now. Remember that the concepts used to define the explicata in the preceding section were only vaguely introduced. The test of adequacy will rely on these prerequisite concepts and will presumably have an influence on how they are understood by the reader.

A. The first CEA is inscribed into the definitions: If p is taken in by μ as a pseudostatement or pseudosentence or pseudoquestion relative to r, then μ is a natural language expression. This means that expressions from formal languages cannot be pseudostatements (etc.). Undecidable formulas pose an illustrative counterexample – lack of decidability does not cause them to be pseudostatements.

B. If problems are not expressions but are only represented by expressions (more specifically by questions), then the second CEA is true, too: if p is taken in by x as a pseudoproblem relative to r, then x is not an expression.

C. The third CEA is a metastatement about how correct talk about pseudostatements (etc.) proceeds post-explicatively: An expression cannot be assessed as a pseudostatement, pseudosentence, or pseudoquestion for syntactical reasons without the employment of a reconstruction. This is trivially true when applied to the primary explicata which are all relative to reconstructions. With regard to pseudostatement verdicts that are relative to a state of discourse, it

has to be conceded that this state may include no reconstruction of the relevant μ. If this is so, then μ is a pseudoproblem in that state, but syntactical ill-formedness is not the reason. The point of the third CEA is to emphasize that only with a reconstruction can one make syntactical ascriptions (of the non-traditionally grammatical kind) to the natural language expressions that are being reconstructed. Note that reconstructions on the basis of which pseudostatementhood is attributed to some expressions for syntactical reasons may be considered ›unqualified‹ reconstructions for that very reason, e.g., when the reconstructed expression is syntactically ill-formed.

D. These considerations directly confirm the fourth CEA: If μ is a natural language expression and *p* takes μ to be a statement or a sentence and there is no reconstruction of μ in *s* as a well-formed expression and *p* is not able to provide such a reconstruction on request, then μ is a pseudostatement or pseudosentence in *s*. This CEA exploits the connection between syntactical well-formedness of results of reconstructions and the ›qualifiedness‹ of these reconstruction.

E. There is a natural language expression μ and a state of discourse *s* such that μ is neither a pseudostatement nor a pseudosentence in *s*, although there is a reconstruction of μ in *s* as syntactically ill-formed. This CEA can be verified by providing suitable instances for μ and *s*. An easy way to provide μ and *s* is to choose them so that there is no person *p* who takes μ to be a statement or a sentence. However, a more interesting scenario emerges if there is a state *s* which includes two reconstructions of μ, one as syntactically ill-formed and the other as syntactically well-formed. Naturally, the latter reconstruction is to be preferred (at least according to hermeneutical constraints like the principle of charity) and, indeed, it keeps μ from being a pseudostatement.

F. The opposite (in some sense) of the fifth CEA holds, too: There is a μ and an *s* such that μ is a pseudostatement (etc.) in *s* and there is a reconstruction of μ in *s* as syntactically well-formed. This is simply true if syntactical ill-formedness is not the only way for a reconstruction to fail to be ›qualified‹. Reconstructing μ in a way that disregards stated intentions of μ's author may be a cause of failure, too.[27]

6. Consecutive Explications of 'pseudoproblem'

In this article, I tried to perform an informal explication of 'pseudoproblem'. The explication relied on prerequisite conceptions of a reconstruction, a qualified reconstruction, the statement/sentence distinction, the illocutionary mode, and some more. In that sense, it must be admitted that the explicata belong ›only‹ "to the ordinary language, although perhaps to a more exact part of it" (Carnap 1963, 935). The considerable remaining unclarities associated with the prerequisite concepts define one line of future investigations. They lead to other fields of philosophy, but also allow for consecutive explications of 'pseudoproblem'. An independent desideratum for any philosopher interested in the concept of pseudoproblems or in the polemics of the Vienna Circle is the translation of Cackowski (1964) into English.

It should be clear by now that the present proposal is not submitted with the expectation of having provided an unalterable cornerstone of future talk about pseudoproblems. However, one aspect of the definitions from section 4 seems to be worth to be transferred to any follow-up: the relativity of the explicata. The absolutism regarding 'pseudoproblem' in the Vienna Circle may account for a lot of the polemics in that school. However, the relativism proposed in this paper suggests: *What counts as a pseudoproblem may change with any conceptual development and any interpretation that affects the use of the words employed to formulate alleged pseudoproblems;*

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[27]   The (counter)example of [11] in the interposition, using (Scherb 2008), may or may not be a case in point.

nothing is ›just‹ a pseudoproblem. Still, this outlook does not promote a methodology of ›anything goes‹, but a flexibility which is still measured by qualified reconstructability.[28] In a way, the relativity endorsed could be implicitly framed in the words of one anonymous reviewer (emphasis adjusted): "What might *seem* a pseudoproblem at one point in time might become a genuine problem at a later time." However, according to my proposal, it would be more appropriate not to speak of whether something *seems* to be a pseudoproblem at one point in time, but to go and assess whether it *is* a pseudoproblem at that point in time. But to keep close to the quote, any such relative but *factual* ('is' instead of 'seems') case of pseudoproblemhood can, at another point in time, *factually* become a genuine problem. So the proposal of relativity is also a way to avoid debates about the distinction between appearance and reality.[29]

From a methodological point of view, the article gives an instance of an informal explication executed in accordance with a specific explicative procedural pattern. While explication is one of the main activities of philosophers, it is rarely performed under explicit procedural guidance. One aim of the text was to fill the gap resulting from this situation. By scholars of analysis the article can be considered an object of study and critique, as well as a cause for further refinement of procedural descriptions of explication.[30]

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[28]   In a sense, this reflects both the liberalism and the limitation of Carnap's principle of tolerance (1934, 45).

[29]   Note, if something *seems* to be a *pseudo*problem, this suggests already *two* layers of appearance concealing one bedrock reality.

[30]

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