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## **Carnap's Methodological Platonism: An Explication of his Linguistic and Semantic Realism**

### **Abstract**

In this paper, I will argue that Carnap is a methodological Platonist despite his neutralism in the Platonism/nominalism debate. The sense of 'Platonism' that I attribute to Carnap has two aspects. He is a Platonist both in a linguistic and semantic sense. For him, it is preferable that the language of science be augmented with a language for numerical singular terms—whether or not these can be understood nominalistically. In this sense, Carnap is a linguistic Platonist. He is also a semantic Platonist since he accepts a semantic metalanguage which allows that number-symbols designate numbers understood as objective, extra-linguistic, and mind-independent entities. I will also show that Carnap's methodological Platonism leaves his ontological neutralism intact.

### **Introduction**

In this paper, I will argue that Carnap's ontological neutralism is not compromised by his Platonist inclinations with respect to natural numbers. Carnap has been helpfully described by Stathis Psillos as being neutral<sup>1</sup> regarding the realism/anti-realism controversy. His neutralism stems from his adoption of the principle of tolerance. The principle allows Carnap to sidestep the purportedly unanswerable problem of whether a scientific language with numerical singular terms is the "correct" language for science or not. Instead, the suitability of such a "number language" is to be judged by its scientific utility. Inconvenient language proposals get eliminated over time, while useful forms are incorporated into the scientific language. According to Carnap, there should be no a priori

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<sup>1</sup> Psillos, Stathis. "Carnap's Neutralism." *Scientific Realism: How Science Tracks Truth*. (1999) pp. 40-69.

prohibition of any language proposal, and we should not seek evidence for the “correctness” of a language, unless we can decide in advance what constitutes evidence for the adoption of a language form. The conceptual engineering of language depends on practical considerations such as the overall simplicity, efficiency, and utility of the proposed language. It is Carnap’s theoretical openness with respect to the adoption of any language form and the acceptance of languages based on pragmatic considerations that makes him ontologically neutral with respect to the Platonism/instrumentalism literature.

I will argue that Carnap is a methodological Platonist and that his neutralism is preserved. This perplexing position will become clear once the sense of Carnap’s Platonism is clarified. I argue that, in addition to being a linguistic Platonist, Carnap is also a semantic Platonist. He is a linguistic Platonist in the sense that in his preferred reconstruction, the scientific language includes terms referring to numbers, without any proposed reduction of them to nominalistically more acceptable entities. Carnap is also a semantic Platonist since he chooses a semantic metalanguage for the object language of numbers that favours Platonism over nominalism. The resulting number-sentences in the object language are such that number-signs designate numbers. The Platonist inclination is in striking contrast to his semantic instrumentalism with respect to theoretical entities arising from his Ramsey-sentence approach to scientific theories.<sup>2</sup> I argue that Carnap’s two commitments—his linguistic Platonism and semantic Platonism—make him a methodological Platonist despite his ontological neutralism.

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<sup>2</sup> After the Ramsification of a scientific theory, Carnap is able to talk about electrons, protons, and so forth without naming them. “There is an electron” is really a short-hand way of speaking about logico-mathematical entities. In contrast to numbers, Carnap’s semantics for theoretical entities leans toward instrumentalism.

The paper is divided into three sections. Section I will concern the philosophical motivation of the paper. I will explain how there is a need to show why Carnap's empiricism and anti-metaphysical attitude does not prohibit him from speaking about abstract entities like numbers. The problem of abstract entities will be discussed in this section. In Section II, I will motivate Carnap's conceptual introduction of his internal/external distinction and I will address how it is supposed to mitigate the problem of introducing abstract entities. Finally, in Section III, I will propose that Carnap is really a methodological Platonist in virtue of his linguistic preference for a number-language whose semantic metalanguage favours Platonism. Numbers, in this sense will be shown to be neither linguistic nor subjective, for Carnap; yet Carnap's Platonism does not undermine his ontological neutrality.

### **I. The Problem of Speaking About Abstract Entities: Carnap's Empiricism & Anti-Metaphysical Attitude Challenged**

In his second edition of *Meaning and Necessity* (1947/1956), Carnap added a supplement of previously published articles to further clarify his semantic explications.<sup>3</sup> The supplementary articles included his famous *Empiricism, Semantics, and Ontology* (1950). It is in this article that Carnap attempts at clarifying a major problem that was especially prevalent amongst the empiricists. The problem stems from Carnap's acceptance of abstract entities. In order to provide useful semantic explications—under the influence of Alfred Tarski<sup>4</sup> and advancements made in logical-techniques—Carnap introduced talk of

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<sup>3</sup> Carnap, Rudolf. "Preface to the Second Edition." [\*Meaning and Necessity: A Study in Semantics and Modal Logic\*](#). (1947/1956), pp. V.

<sup>4</sup> Carnap was influenced by Tarski's formal semantic explications in his *The Concept of truth in Formalized Languages* (1935). However, as Carnap notes in *Schlipp's Volume* "[e]ven before the publication of Tarski's article I had realized [...] that there must be a mode, different from the syntactical one, in which to speak about language. [B]ut we had to exact systematized language for [our] purpose. In the new metalanguage of

abstract entities like propositions, properties, and so forth. The problem of introducing such entities has two interconnected worrying aspects. The first aspect is the undermining of Carnap's empiricism and the other is Carnap's betrayal of his anti-metaphysical approach to philosophy. With regard the empiricist aspect, the acceptance of abstract entities seems to be inconsistent with empiricist principles since the purported entities have no basis in "the given". They are, in other words, causally inert. For the empiricists, causal efficacy is usually a requirement for the existence of an entity. As Carnap notes, empiricists seem to have nominalist tendencies in the Platonism debate because they cannot ground abstract entities in "the given"<sup>5</sup>. Whatever is reducible to "the given" is supposedly well-founded since sense-data is experienced in an unmediated way. It is understandable why empiricists may tend to be skeptical with respect to non-experiential entities such as numbers. In Carnap's case, his talk of abstract entities would seem to betray his empiricism. Nevertheless, Carnap introduces abstract entities in order to provide useful semantic explications.<sup>6</sup> Carnap elaborates the empiricist confusion (1950),

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semantics, it is possible to make statements about the relation of designation and truth" (Carnap 1963, pp. 60).

<sup>5</sup> "The given" refers to sense-data, which is usually purported by empiricists to consist of directly perceptible objects.

<sup>6</sup> In early 1930's, Carnap was philosophically motivated to translate semantic problems—which are those problems that concern meaning—into their syntactic counterpart mode of expression. This was done to avoid pseudo-problems arising from ambiguity in the semantic mode of expression (This ambiguity problem is absent in the syntactic mode since syntactically framed problems were purely structural). It is important to note that Carnap is free to choose between the different modes of expression. (Cf. Carnap, Rudolf. "[On the Character of Philosophic Problems](#)." (Jan., 1934), pp. 5-19). Given the advancements in semantics especially after mid 1930's Carnap became motivated to provide semantic explications using newly available improved logical techniques. "Even before the publication of Tarski's article I had realized, chiefly in conversations with Tarski and Gödel, that there must be a mode, different from the syntactical one, in which to speak about language. [...] In our philosophical discussions we had, of course, always talked about these relations [that is, relations between language and facts]; but we had no exact systematized language for this purpose. In the new metalanguage of semantics, it is possible to make statements about the relation of designation and about truth" (Carnap, Rudolf. *The Philosophy of Rudolf Carnap*. Ed. Paul Arthur Schilpp, Inc. First Edition (1963), pp. 60). In 1940's Carnap did some extensive works on semantic analysis including his publication of his book, [Meaning and Necessity: A Study in Semantics and Modal Logic](#) (1947/1956).

“[When certain] empiricists found no abstract entities within the realm of sense-data, they either denied their existence attempt to define universals in terms of particulars. [...] But if this conception leads to the view that other philosophers or scientists who accept abstract entities thereby assert or imply their occurrence as immediate data, then such a view must be rejected as a misinterpretation” (*ESO* 219-220).

It is a misunderstanding for empiricists, says Carnap, to believe that abstract entities exist just in case such objects are constructed from the given. This would presume a very restricted sense of relations—more specifically, it presumes that all relations are entailed by causal relations alone. As a result, for Carnap, empiricists’ nominalist tendencies with respect to causally inert entities is ill-founded.

Secondly, the metaphysical aspect of the problem of introducing abstract entities concerns the purported nature of such entities. For example, propositions are explained to have an objective, extra-linguistic, and non-mental (or mind-independent) existence.<sup>7</sup> To save Carnap’s empiricism, it could have been argued that the abstract entities were mere linguistic or subjective mental entities. However, with the nature of entities explicated, not only is Carnap’s betrayal to empiricism more apparent, but his anti-metaphysical approach to philosophy is also called into question. He seems to unwittingly be an ontological Platonist—roughly speaking, one who accepts the metaphysical reality of abstract objects. Besides Carnap’s empiricism, his ontological neutralism seems to be undermined as well.

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<sup>7</sup> Carnap, Rudolf. “Preface to the Second Edition.” [\*Meaning and Necessity: A Study in Semantics and Modal Logic\*](#). (1947/1956), pp. 25.

Carnap conceptually introduces his *internal/external distinction*<sup>8</sup> (with respect to language forms) to remedy the problem of accepting abstract entities. His distinction is introduced in order to explain how his empiricism and anti-metaphysical attitude is consistent with the useful adoption of abstract entities. In what follows, I explain how Carnap’s distinction mitigates the conceptual confusion amongst the empiricists in particular.

## **II. The Conceptual Introduction of Carnap’s Internal/External Distinction**

The distinction has to do with two types of existential statements. The first type of existential statement is used in the ordinary sense. Such statements are made within language forms. For instance, the claim, “There are numbers,” is a statement expressible in a language form that is engineered for the purposes of speaking about numbers. It is a true statement since it is a simple construction based on the formative and transformative<sup>9</sup> language rules of the “number language.” No mathematician denies the statement, “There are numbers,” whilst doing arithmetic. In doing arithmetic—in adopting a language to speak about numbers—the answer to the language-dependent existential question, “Are there numbers?” is trivial. Carnap refers to uncontroversial statements of this type as “internal statements”.

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<sup>8</sup> In Carnap’s ESO (1950), “external statements” refer to answers to the “external question”. The question concerns the reality of language forms or the whole system of entities. This is in contrast to “internal statements” that refer to answers to questions that arise within a language form.

<sup>9</sup> Formative rules being those rules that help in the construction of initial statements. And the transformative rules are those that construct logical consequences of the already formed statements. The totality of all statements that are constructible from the formal grammar of a language form constitute the logical syntax of such a language (Cf. Carnap’s “[On the Character of Philosophic Problems](#)” (1934), pp. 10).

In contrast to the internal existential statements, there are also the “external statements.” These statements are purported to be existential statements made independent of language forms. “There are numbers,” is claimed but without resorting to the grammar of the language that is engineered to speak about numbers. Number related rules are not used for the realization that, “There are numbers”. These external statements, says Carnap, are really pseudo-theoretical utterances. Without providing a clear theoretical interpretation to the external question, “Are there numbers?” the answers, whatever it be, will also be without theoretical content. It is required for Carnap that we should be able to accept in advance as to what would constitute evidence for an answer.<sup>10</sup> Given that such a theoretical interpretation is lacking (as evidenced in the endless debates) and the prospects of finding such an interpretation seems unfavourable, Carnap dismisses the external debate between the traditional Platonist and nominalist. For Carnap, both the ontological Platonist—the one who gives an affirmative answer to the external question, “Are there numbers?”—and the nominalist—the one who negative answer to the same question—are both considered misguided. Both of the ontological theses are dismissed as being cognitively meaningless.<sup>11</sup> The statements may have emotive or motivative meaning. However, for Carnap, they do not possess any theoretical meaning.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> ‘Evidence’ is being in a broad enough sense so as to include both empirical evidence and also logical-deductive evidence. A proof in mathematics for a mathematical assertion, for example, would be considered evidence for that assertion.

<sup>11</sup> While Carnap was working on his *Aufbau* (1928), he considered metaphysical statements to essentially lie outside the scope of science, but they were not considered meaningless. They simply did not belong to the purview of science or scientific analysis. It was only after Wittgenstein’s Tractarian influence that Carnap took “the more radical conviction that they [the metaphysical theses] are devoid of any cognitive content” (*The Philosophy of Rudolf Carnap* (1963), pp. 9). It was due to Wittgenstein’s insight that the “conception [anti-metaphysics] was strengthened and became more definite and more radical” (Ibid. 25).

<sup>12</sup> In 1957, Carnap adds certain remarks to his original 1932 paper “The Elimination of Metaphysics Through Logical Analysis of Language” and it is reprinted in A. J. Aye’s *Logical Positivism* (1959). He clarifies that there are many aspects of meaning. And to say that metaphysical theses are meaningless without qualification is

Given that Carnap accepts existential statements in the internal sense only, it is difficult to charge him with (ontological) Platonism. Answering in the affirmative to the internal question, “Do numbers exist?” is categorically different than asserting that numbers *really* exist. According to Carnap’s insight, a Platonist is one who in effect supposedly constructs a “number language” only after she has theoretical motivations to believe that numbers ontologically exist. As Carnap notes,

“And indeed, if we were to ask them [the metaphysicians indulged in the realism debate]: “Do you mean the question as to whether the framework of numbers, if we were to accept it, would be found to be empty or not?” they would probably reply: “Not at all; we mean a question prior to the acceptance of the new framework.” They might try to explain what they mean by saying that it is a question of the ontological status of numbers; the question whether or not numbers have a certain metaphysical characteristic called reality (but a kind of ideal reality, different from the material reality of the thing world) or subsistence or status of “independent entities.”<sup>13</sup>

The supposed fact that numbers exist in the external sense is exactly what is supposed to motivate a number-language construction for a Platonist. Not finding any such justification leads other empiricists to be nominalists; they deny the ontological existence of numbers because they did not find any language-independent justification for the existence of numbers. Unlike Carnap, the Platonist and nominalist share the belief that the external

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to make a misleading statement. “Today, we distinguish various kinds of meaning, in particular cognitive (designative, referential) meaning on the one hand, and non-cognitive (expressive) meaning components, e.g. emotive or motivative meaning, on the other hand. In the present paper, the word “meaning” is always understood in the sense of “cognitive” meaning” (Elimination 80-81). In *The Philosophy of Rudolf Carnap* (1963), Carnap once more notes that even though metaphysical theses are not cognitively meaningful, they “may have strong psychological effects” (Carnap 44), due to various other meaning components.

<sup>13</sup> Carnap, Rudolf. “Empiricism, Semantics, and Ontology.” (1950); revised and reprinted in *Meaning and Necessity*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (1956), Supplementation A, pp. 209.

question is a genuine question. The difference between them is that Platonists allegedly find evidence in favour of an affirmative answer, while the nominalists do not (and the debate continues). It is Carnap's insight that 'existence' is an internal matter.

There is a sense, however, in which the external question is meaningful for Carnap. In the absence of a theoretical interpretation, Carnap himself proposes a legitimate practical interpretation to the external question. The external existential question, say, "Do numbers exist?" is given a practical interpretation. For Carnap, the question really means, "Shall we engineer a language form that allows us to speak about numbers?" The ontological existence question is replaced by a practical question concerning the choice of a language form. For Carnap, we should have a utility-driven experimental approach with respect to the acceptance of different language forms. He explains in his *Autobiography* (1963),

I pointed out that for these questions no interpretation as theoretical questions has been given by the philosophers. I proposed to the philosophers who discuss such questions that they interpret them as practical questions, i.e., as questions about the decision whether or not to accept a language containing expressions for the particular kind of entities. Various reasons may influence the decision about the acceptance or non-acceptance of the framework for such expressions. My main point is the rejection of the customary view that the introduction of a linguistic framework is legitimate only if the affirmative answer to the external question of existence (e.g., "there are natural numbers") can be shown to be true. In my view, the introduction of the framework is legitimate in any case.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Carnap, Rudolf. "I. Carnap's Intellectual Autobiography," *The Philosophy of Rudolf Carnap*. Ed. Paul Arthur Schilpp (1963), pp. 66.

We should, Carnap says, conceptually experiment with various language forms for their candidacy as a sub-language for science. The answer to the question, “Shall we adopt a number-language form?” is decidable through practical considerations such as the overall usefulness of the number-language. There is no question of whether the language form is “correct.” Carnap has no philosophical motivation to indulge in the external debate, unless it can be decided in advance what would determine a positive or negative answer. Until then, given that the talk of numbers is practically indispensable, Carnap is practically warranted in accepting a suitable “number language.”

The principle of tolerance allows him to select any language form. This does not mean his choice of a language form is arbitrary. Fixing scientific goals such as seeking high accuracy, objectivity (whenever feasible), simplicity, and so forth, are all scientific virtues reinforced by our experimental approach in science. Fixing these virtues leads to the narrowing of the scope of suitable languages for numbers. Besides these pragmatic considerations, certain constructions of languages can be tested. Once a language form is proposed, internal theoretical considerations can lead to the dismissals of such proposals as well. For example, in an extreme case, a language form  $L$  can be proven to be weak in its expressive power or likely to be inconsistent. Such a theoretical consideration can lead to the elimination of  $L$ .

The problem for Carnap, however, is to propose a suitable semantic metalanguage for the object language of numbers. His metalinguistic choice will determine the extent of his favouritism towards Platonism. Carnap proposes a language for numbers whose rules are such that an inspection of the constructed number-statements makes it apparent that numbers are objective, extra-linguistic, and non-mental entities. They are objective since

number-statements do not contain subjects. No theorem is of the form, “ $x$  is greater than  $y$  for  $z$  [say  $z = \text{Bob}$ ]”. That is what is meant by ‘objective’. Numbers are extra-linguistic since the number-names are not empty. A sentence such as ‘5 is a number’ is true: ‘5’ designates 5, but, for Carnap, this does not mean he is indulging in the process of hypostatization. He is not using ‘designation’ in the way the traditional Platonists use in their language-independent debate. Numbers are also not mental entities since the number-sentences in the object language of numbers do not indicate dependence of minds. In this sense, numbers are also mind-independent.

It is important to note that terms such as ‘objective’, ‘extra-linguistic’, and ‘non-mental’ are being used in the internal sense, for Carnap. He has explained even in *Meaning in Necessity* (1947) that such descriptions are not necessary and are only there for extra-systematic purposes. If the reader does not find such explanations helpful, she should not pay attention to them, for they are not essential for semantic explications. Carnap reiterates this point in his suppletion article *ESO* (1950) as well. He once more attempts at clarifying what he means by such terms.<sup>15</sup> In the following section, I will attempt at removing the conceptual confusion by proposing that Carnap is really a methodological Platonist despite his neutrality in the debate.

### III. Carnap’s Methodological Platonism

Carnap is not a Platonist in the usual sense—the sense in which one commits to the (external) ontological thesis that “There are numbers.” Nevertheless, Carnap does favour the introduction of numbers in the scientific discourse. Moreover, those numbers are neither

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<sup>15</sup> Carnap, Rudolf. “Empiricism, Semantics, and Ontology.” (1950); revised and reprinted in *Meaning and Necessity*, 2nd edition (1956), Supplementation A, pp. 210-211.

linguistic nor subjective entities. It is in these two ways—both linguistic and semantic—that Carnap has Platonist inclinations despite his ontological neutralism. I argue that Carnap is really a methodological Platonist by way of his adoption of the Platonic language form. Unlike the traditional Platonist, however, his use of the Platonist language is not motivated by an ontological thesis.

Carnap is neutral in the theoretical sense with respect to the choice of a Platonist language—in which numbers are objects that can be treated as falling within the range of values of the language's variables—or a nominalist language. He is theoretically unconstrained (unlike the traditional Platonist) to accept any language. However, from a pragmatic viewpoint, the decision is obvious: the Platonist language form is the most convenient given our scientific purposes. Unfortunately, for Carnap, philosophers seem to have a tendency to conflate Carnap's methodological commitments with ontology. For instance, Robert S. Cohen, like many others, seems to have conflated Carnap's methodological phenomenalism with traditional (ontological) phenomenalism. Carnap in his defence against Cohen, says the following:

In [Cohen's] discussion, however, he fails, like most critics of positivism and empiricism, to distinguish with sufficient clarity between two fundamentally different meanings of the term "phenomenalism".

Sometimes, and perhaps in most instances, this term refers to a certain *ontological* thesis which asserts, roughly speaking, the primary reality (in the metaphysical sense) of phenomena, e.g., sense-data, in contrast to material objects. [...]

Phenomenalism in the second, methodological or linguistic sense, may be understood as the proposal of a phenomenalistic language as the basis of the total language. Even before I came to Vienna, I emphasized in my book *Der logische Aufbau* [ 1928-1] that, although I constructed the language on a phenomenalistic

basis, taking sense-data or experiences as starting points, this construction did not imply an acceptance of the metaphysical thesis of phenomenalism”.<sup>16</sup>

Separating the methodological thesis from the ontological thesis is crucial in removing misunderstandings. Just like the choice between a phenomenalist language form and physicalist language is a practical one, so is the choice between Platonist form and nominalist form.

Critics may argue that to say that Carnap has preferred to augment a number-language form to the scientific language is to say that he is no longer neutral in this decision—he has clearly chosen to speak about numbers. This is true, ‘neutral’ is being used in a theoretical sense. That is, for Carnap, there is no “correct” language form for which we have theoretical reasons to accept a language. It is his insight that we provide a practical interpretation to the external question in the absence of a theoretical interpretation. In the practical sense, once we determine our scientific goals, certain language forms are more useful than others. The choice of language forms become decisive. Nevertheless, his ontological neutrality manifests in his theoretical openness to other language forms:

[W]hen I was working on the *Logischer Aufbau*, [I] became aware that in talks with my various friends I had used different philosophical languages, adapting myself to their ways of thinking and speaking. With one friend I might talk in a language that could be characterized as realistic or even as materialistic; here we looked at the world as consisting of bodies, bodies as consisting of atoms; sensations, thoughts, emotions, and the like were conceived as physiological processes in the nervous system and ultimately as physical processes. Not that the friend maintained or even considered the thesis of materialism; we just used a way of speaking which might

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<sup>16</sup> Carnap, Rudolf. “III. The Philosopher’s Replies.” *The Philosophy of Rudolf Carnap*. Ed. Paul Arthur Schilpp. First Edition (1963), pp. 863.

be called materialistic. In a talk with another friend, I might adapt myself to his idealistic [or phenomenalist] kind of language. We would consider the question of how things are to be constituted on the basis of the given. With some I talked a language which might be labelled nominalistic [that is, one without any talk of abstract entities], with others again Frege's language of abstract entities of various types, like properties, relations, propositions, etc., a language which some contemporary authors call Platonic. I was surprised to find that this variety in my way of speaking appeared to some as objectionable and even inconsistent. I had acquired insights valuable for my own thinking from philosophers and scientists of a great variety of philosophical creeds.<sup>17</sup>

Carnap is free to experiment with such language forms without any theoretical constraints. It is to this extent that he is neutral with language forms. Preferring a form becomes a matter of choice based on practical considerations. As he explains immediately after,

When asked which philosophical positions I myself held, I was unable to answer. I could only say that in general my way of thinking was closer to that of physicists and of those philosophers who are in contact with scientific work. Only gradually, in the course of years, did I recognize clearly that my way of thinking was *neutral* with respect to the *traditional controversies*, e.g., realism vs. idealism, nominalism vs. Platonism (realism of universals), materialism vs. spiritualism, and so on (italics added).<sup>18</sup>

It is important to note that Carnap began using the term 'neutral' in connection with metaphysical theses at a time where he did not consider such theses to be non-cognitive. Notice that just a little after Carnap mentions about his "neutrality" and "traditional controversies", he says the following: "regarding the criticism of traditional metaphysics, in the *Aufbau* I merely refrained from taking sides; I added that, if one proceeds from the

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<sup>17</sup> Carnap, Rudolf. "I. Carnap's Intellectual Autobiography." *The Philosophy of Rudolf Carnap*. Ed. Paul Arthur Schilpp. First Edition (1963), pp. 17.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* 18.

discussion of language forms to that of the corresponding metaphysical theses about the reality or unreality of some kind of entities, he steps beyond the bounds of science”<sup>19</sup>. At this *Aufbau* stage, metaphysical theses were simply beyond scientific analyses. The theses were not yet deemed cognitively meaningless. At this time, it is clear that Carnap was metaphysically agnostic with respect to the external question. It was later “[u]nder the influence of Wittgenstein, [that his anti-metaphysical] conception was strengthened and became more definite and more radical”<sup>20</sup>. It was post Wittgenstein’s Tractarian influence that Carnap considered metaphysical theses to be without any possible theoretical interpretation as it is the case with the external debate between traditional Platonists and nominalists. This allowed Carnap to have a clearer position with respect to the external debates. Carnap is ontologically neutral in the external controversies: he is free to experiment with any language form and his decision to adopt a form will be decided based on its scientific expediency.

By explicating the linguistic and semantic sense of Platonism, I hope to have shown how Carnap is a methodological Platonist and, yet, neutral in the Platonism dispute. This, I hope further clarifies misunderstandings that philosophers may have despite Carnap’s attempt at defending his empiricism and anti-metaphysical attitude in his *ESO* (1950) and *Schlipp’s Volume* (1963).

### **Conclusion**

In this paper, I argued how Carnap is a Platonist in the linguistic and semantic sense. He is in effect a methodological Platonism, while remaining ontologically neutral in

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid. 18-19.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. 25.

the Platonism controversy. Neither Carnap's empiricism, nor his anti-metaphysical approach to philosophy is betrayed by his pragmatically motivated linguistic adoption of a "number language" with a Platonist leaning semantic metalanguage. Despite Carnap's ontological neutralism, numbers are objective, extra-linguistic, and mind-independent entities.

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