

THE PHILOSOPHICAL REVIEW

SEVEN THESES OF LOGICAL POSITIVISM CRITICALLY EXAMINED II

IV

ACCORDING to the fourth thesis of logical positivism, "a logical analysis of language shows that the alleged propositions of metaphysics are pseudo-propositions (*Scheinsaetze*)";¹ and that they are "entirely without meaning".² But with respect to this thesis, too, the logical positivists are no longer in complete agreement. The most radical view has been advocated by Neurath, who seems to regard any "false and meaningless" proposition as "metaphysics".³ His is the boldest attempt to repudiate metaphysics by definition.⁴ Popper, on the other hand, spurns all "antimetaphysical" doctrines⁵ and believes that at times metaphysical notions may be a distinct aid to empirical science.⁶

Carnap denies the possibility of metaphysics and presents the following argument to back up his contention: "All [meaningful] propositions may be divided into . . . tautologies . . . and empirical propositions. . . . Any attempt to formulate a proposition which is neither a tautology nor an empirical proposition must automatically lead to meaningless assertions. But metaphysics does not deal with analytical propositions, nor does it enter the field of the empirical sciences. Metaphysics, therefore, must necessarily deal with pseudo-propositions (*Scheinsaetzen*)."⁷

¹ Carnap, R., "Ueberwindung der Metaphysik durch logische Analyse der Sprache", *Erkenntnis* II (1931) 200.

² *Ibid.* 220.

³ Neurath, O., "Soziologie im Physikalismus", *Erkenntnis* II (1931) 394.

⁴ Gamertsfelder makes a similar charge against the entire Viennese group. Cf. Gamertsfelder, W. S., "Current Skepticism of Metaphysics", *The Monist* XLIII (1933) 116.

⁵ Popper, K., *Logik der Forschung* (1935) 9.

⁶ *Ibid.* 11.

⁷ Carnap, *op. cit.* 236.