The Carnapian project and Downfall

A. Motivating the project

- Like Frege, Carnap was interested in providing a firm foundation for mathematics and the natural sciences.
- Carnap and the Vienna Circle also wanted to expose the ‘nonsensical’ ideology supporting 1930’s panGerman nationalism/facism.

B. The Method

- Logical analysis and verification principle of meaning.
- Translate all purportedly cognitively meaningful discourse into a language meeting Carnap’s necessary and sufficient conditions.

C. The hoped for results

- Distinguish languages with “emotive” content from those with “cognitive” content.
- Mathematics is a strictly logical language.
- Theories of natural science are built up from simple observation statements, e.g. red here now, using logic and set theory.

D. Significant Carnapian quotes:

“Therefore, no god and no devil can give us metaphysical knowledge (p. 143)

“Metaphysicians are musicians without musical ability” (p. 147)
E. Wittgenstein’s objections

- The logical positivist’s conception of meaning “has its place in a primitive idea of the way language functions” (2nd col., p. 146)
- Philosophy should not interfere with the actual, ordinary use of language
- Abandon the search for essential definitions of language and meaning; languages are like games and meaning is like a move within a game.
- We don’t perceive sense data; we perceive concept-laden entities.