

Handout for Week 2

The “trinominals” (from 1912 *The New Realism: Cooperative Studies in Philosophy*):

Ralph Barton Perry (1876-1957, Harvard Ph.D, Harvard)

Edwin Bissell Holt (1873-1946, Harvard Ph.D., Harvard, Princeton)

William Pepperrell Montague (1873-1953, Harvard Ph.D., Columbia)

Edward Gleason Spaulding (1873-1940, Bonn Ph.D.)

Walter Taylor Marvin (1872-1944)

Walter Boughton Pitkin (1878- 1953).

Roy Wood Sellars (1880-1973, U.Michigan Ph.D., Michigan) spearheaded the countermovement whose 1920 manifesto was *Essays in Critical Realism: A Co-operative Study of the Problem of Knowledge*, with Arthur O. Lovejoy (Johns Hopkins), George Santayana (Harvard), James Bissett Pratt, Arthur K. Rogers, and Durant Drake. (RWS says in his essay that Drake and Strong were panpsychists.) Maurice Mandelbaum (Yale Ph.D. 1936), longtime Johns Hopkins philosophy professor, continued the critical realist tradition.

Rudolf Carnap (1881-1970): In his 1926 monograph “Physical Concept Formation” (*Physikalische Begriffsbildung*) (in *The Collected Works of Rudolf Carnap—Volume 1: Early Writings*), p. 347, Carnap writes [Bolding is BB’s]: “A symbol is introduced—or, if its already in use, is subsequently legitimized—by determining under what conditions it is to be employed in the representation of a state of affairs [Sacheverhalten]. The introduction or legitimization [Legitimierung] of the word “horse” for example, comes about by determining the conditions which must hold if we are to call something a horse, hence through the statement of the *distinguishing features* of a horse (or the *definition* of the word “horse”). We say of a symbol that has been introduced or legitimized in such a way, or that we thin is at least capable of legitimization, that it **designates [bezeichnet]** a *concept*. So the symbol of a concept is a **rule-governed symbol**, whether it be defined or not. Its use [Verwendung] should above all be **rule-governed [Gesetzmäßig]**; the symbol should be employed not in any old, arbitrary way, but rather in a determinate, consistent way. Uniformity in the mode of employment [Verwendungsart] can be secured either by explicitly laying down rules or merely through constant habit [Gewohnheit], “linguistic usage” [Sprachgebrauch].

We have not said anything about *what a concept is*, but only what it is for a symbol to **designate a concept**. And this is all that can be said with any precision. But it is also enough; for, when talk of concepts is meaningful, it invariably addresses concepts designated by symbols, or concepts that can in principle be so designated; and such talk is then basically always about these symbols and their laws of use.”

The formation of a concept consists in the establishment of a law concerning the use of the a symbol (e.g. a word) in the representation of a state of affairs.”

[BB: Sellars would later say: “Grasp of a concept is always mastery of the use of a word.”]

Willard van Orman Quine (1908-2000) from “Homage to Carnap”:

Carnap is a towering figure. I see him as the dominant figure in philosophy from the 1930's onward, as Russell had been in the decades before....

In his *Logical Syntax* Carnap again vigorously exploited the resources of modern logic for philosophical ends. The book is a mine of proof and opinion on the philosophy of logic and the logic of philosophy. During a critical decade it was the main inspiration of young scientific philosophers. It was the definitive work at the center, from which the waves of tracts and popularizations issued in ever widening circles. Carnap more than anyone else was the embodiment of logical positivism, logical empiricism, the Vienna Circle.

Carl (Peter) Hempel (1905-1997), member of the Vienna Circle (and Pitt Philosophy Faculty): In his first great work, *Der logische Aufbau der Welt* (1928; [The Logical Structure of the World](#)), Carnap developed, with unprecedented rigour, a version of **the empiricist reducibility thesis according to which all terms suited to describe actual or possible empirical facts are fully definable by terms referring exclusively to aspects of immediate experience, so that all empirical statements are fully translatable into statements about immediate experiences.** Prompted by discussions with his associates in Vienna, Carnap soon began to develop a more liberal version of empiricism, which he elaborated while he was professor of natural philosophy at the German University in Prague (1931–35); he eventually presented it in full detail in his essay “**Testability and Meaning**” (1936–37). Carnap argued that **the terms of empirical science are not fully definable in purely experiential terms but can at least be partly defined by means of “reduction sentences,”** which are logically much-refined versions of operational definitions, and “**observation sentences**,” whose **truth** can be checked by **direct observation**. Carnap stressed that usually **such tests cannot provide strict proof or disproof but only more or less strong “confirmation” for an empirical statement.**

Hebert Feigl (1902-1988). An original member of the Vienna Circle, and a student of Moritz Schlick. His distinctive position in the Vienna Circle (started in 1924, reading first *Tractatus*, and then 1926-28 ms. of Carnap's *Aufbau*) was *realism* about theoretical entities, as against their instrumentalism. In his 1931 article (with Albert Blumberg) “*Logical Positivism: A New Movement in European Philosophy.*” (He had just arrived at Harvard in 1930 on a Rockefeller Research Fellowship) He later distinguished logical *empiricism* from logical *positivism*—or, rather, arguing that the former name, rather than the latter, is more apt. Carnap adopted his view. From 1931 to 1937 (in 1938 he became Associate Prof, and stayed at Iowa until 1940) he was first a lecturer and then an Assistant Professor at the University of Iowa. It was in 1936 that he offered Wilfrid Sellars (then a graduate student at Harvard) a position at Iowa. In 1940 Feigl became Full Professor at the University of Minnesota, and in 1953, with Sellars, founded the Minnesota Center for the Philosophy of Science, with its influential book series.

Rich Creath reports **Sellars** saying that he and Feigl were for years discrete parts of a single entity.

Wilfrid Sellars (1912-1989): Some footnotes from early draft of “Realism and the New Way of Words”

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p. 12: I shall adopt the current convention [BB: Who does he mean?] of calling this dimension of language analysis pragmatics. May I, however, express a caveat concerning the growing use of the expression ‘**pragmatic metalanguage**’? [BB: Who does he mean? How “growing”?] **I hope to show in a subsequent paper that the concept of such a metalanguage is a bogus one**, and that the sentences it is supposed to contain actually consist of conjunctions of sentences some of which are in the (psychological) object-language, while the rest are in the semantic metalanguage. See also the footnote on p. 13 below. [BB: *This* footnote ends on p. 13, and the other footnote on this page is not the one he means. He means the footnote on p. 15, reproduced below.]

First, ftnt on p. 14: Indeed we must distinguish carefully between three things (1) language qua formal system (language in posse); (2) linguistic tokens (3) language in use of (language in actu) which consists in a relation of (1) to (2).

Ftn on p. 15 (referred to above): We have spoken several times of a language as working, as functioning successfully. We have referred to such facts about a language as pragmatic characteristics of the language as a whole. Two questions will be asked: (1) What is it for a language to work? And (2) **In what language can it be said of a language that it works?** The answer to the second question is that if the language is rich enough qua object language, it can be said in the language itself (object language plus semantic metalanguage). Thus, qua language of psychology, the object language can talk about the psychological context of events which in point of fact are tokens of types belonging to the object language (though as object language it cannot say that they are); as object language it can also characterize these events as cases of certain shapes or sounds; and as semantic metalanguage it can claim these kinds of **shape or sound as constituent elements in the object language (type)**. In answer to the second question we can say that to characterize a language as working involves statements of all three types listed immediately above; but that the emphasis is on the statements in **the psychological object language concerning the psychology of verification and acceptance**. Semantic statements are necessary in order to say what is verified, or what is accepted; but formal considerations of semantics or syntax are pragmatic only in so far as they related to psychology facts.