

## LECTURE 13: CARNAP DECLares WAR ON METAPHYSICS

1. Two kinds of *pseudo-statements* (Scheinsätze)
  - (a) Those that violate syntactic rules
  - (b) Those that contain meaningless words
2. A word *a* is *meaningful* only if:
  - (a) *a* has a well-defined syntactic role;
  - (b) for any sentence  $S(a)$  in which the word *a* occurs, we know:
    - i. inferential relations between  $S(a)$  and other sentences,
    - ii. truth conditions for  $S(a)$ ,
    - iii. procedures for determining if  $S(a)$  is true, and
    - iv. the meaning of  $S(a)$ .
3. In some [all?] cases, the meaning of a word must ultimately be cashed out in terms of observation/protocol sentences.

(p. 63) “If the word is to receive an exact meaning, nothing less than the criterion of application must be given.”

(p. 76) “...the meaning of a statement lies in the method of its verification.”
4. How symbolic logic can cure our confusions

(p. 68) In a *correctly constructed* language all nonsensical sequences of words would violate some explicit grammatical rule.

(p. 68) Metaphysics could not even be expressed in a *logically constructed* language.
5. Some implications of logical syntax
  - (a) Existence is not a predicate
  - (b) “Nothing” is not a subject
  - (c) Not every predicate and subject can be combined [typing]
6. Exhaustive classification of meaningful statements  
(Carnap seems to derive this idea from Wittgenstein.)
  - (a) Tautologies and contradictions
    - Say nothing about reality

- (b) Those whose truth-value is determined by the truth value of protocol sentences.
  - (p. 76) “With respect to all other [meaningful] statements the decision about truth or falsehood lies in the protocol sentences.”
  - (p. 77) “...all statements whatever that assert something are of an empirical nature and belong to factual science.”

7. Some pseudo-statements from various walks of life

- (a) Claims about ethical and aesthetic value
  - (p. 77) “It is altogether impossible to make a statement that expresses a value judgment.”
- (b) Metaphysical statements
  - i. Carnap chose to criticize Heidegger as a representative of what he thinks is a political menace. (And he was right!)
  - ii. “Metaphysics does indeed have content; only it is not theoretical content. ... [These statements] serve for the expression of the general attitude of the person towards life.”
- (c) Certain types of theological statement
  - Mythical versus mystical theology
- (d) Philosophical statements, including those made by Carnap!
  - “What remains is not statements, nor a theory, nor a system, but only a *method*; the method of logical analysis.”
- (e) Carnap: pseudo-statements aren’t necessarily bad; it’s only bad when they pretend to be genuine theoretical claims.

8. How does Carnap define “metaphysics”?

- (p. 76) The task which metaphysics sets itself: “to discover and formulate a kind of knowledge which is not accessible to empirical science.”
- (p. 76) “...knowledge that pretends to reach above or behind experience.”