

Theories of Meaning

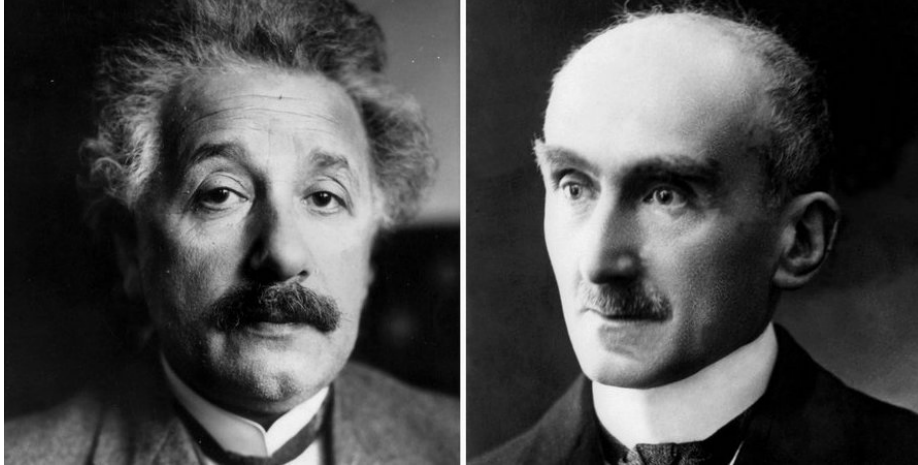


Figure 1: Science and Metaphysics

Lecture 1: Meaning and Verification

1. **Logical Positivism** What puzzle was the Logical Positivist theory of meaning supposed to solve?
2. **A criterion of factual significance** Fregean puzzle: meaningful expressions that are neither true nor false. What distinguishes expressions with factual content from those that merely seem to be about the world?
3. **The Verification Principle** Ayer: “We say that a sentence is factually significant to any given person if, and only if, he knows how to verify the proposition which it purports to express.”
4. **Observation statements** What is verification? Logical deduction from one or more observation statements. The *O* in front of me is *F*. (cf. Russell on acquaintance.)
5. **Analytic/Synthetic** Verificationism doubly presupposes a sharp distinction between empirical truths and logical truths.

6. Strong verification Significance requires being entailed by observation statements. ‘The schmoo is red’; ‘The schmoo = this thing’; ‘this thing is red’. But what about ‘All schmoos are red’?

7. Weak verification S is empirically significant if and only if S, perhaps together with other premises, entails some observation statements not entailed by those further premises alone.

8. A dilemma for verificationism Weak verification fails as a criterion: any statement whatsoever can be verified. Strong verification fails to solve the puzzle: it leaves empirical science on a par with metaphysics.