

Saturday, June 26 PM 1:30-4:30, Room 100

Session 2 (room 100): **Quine**

Gary Hardcastle, "Quine's Early Arguments Concerning Analyticity"

Greg Frost-Arnold, "Carnap, Tarski, and Quine's Year Together: Logic, Science, and Mathematics"

Jonathan Tsou, "Reexamining the Roots of the Naturalist Turn in Philosophy of Science: An Argument Against 'Epistemology Naturalized'"

Robert Sinclair, "The Challenges of American Naturalism: Quine and the Columbia Naturalists"

Menachem Fisch-Chair

"Quine's Early Arguments Concerning Analyticity"

Gary Hardcastle

—no abstract provided—

"Carnap, Tarski, and Quine's Year Together: Logic, Science, and Mathematics"

Greg Frost-Arnold

During the academic year 1940-1941, several giants of analytic philosophy congregated at Harvard University. The list is impressive: Bertrand Russell, Alfred Tarski, Rudolf Carnap, and C. G. Hempel were visiting the university that year. W. V. O. Quine held his permanent professorship at Harvard, and Nelson Goodman was finishing his dissertation. This group held public meetings under the name 'Logic Group,' and its members had private, smaller conversations as well. Fortunately, one can almost be a 'fly on the wall' for many of these conversations: Carnap often took very detailed discussion notes during this year. These unpublished documents, not previously studied by scholars, have been preserved in the Rudolf Carnap Collection, part of the Archives of Scientific Philosophy.

Unsurprisingly, these notes cover a wide range of topics. However, the largest portion of Carnap's discussion notes deal with the following question: what form should logic and mathematics take if the number of physical items in the universe is finite or possibly finite? Carnap, Tarski, and Quine together attempt to answer this question. In the first part of this talk, I outline the essential features of their efforts to construct (what they call) 'the language of science, on a finitist basis.' Since their project involves a number of issues central to analytic philosophy of logic, mathematics, and science, I discuss two such issues in the second part of this talk: (1) modern nominalism and (2) the analytic/ synthetic distinction.

Carnap's conversation notes can be seen as a record of the 'pre-history' of current nominalist projects. Why? Much modern nominalist work (e.g., Hartry Field's) consists of 'reconstructive' projects of the following sort: a certain field of natural science or

mathematics is recast in a form that does not appeal to any ‘abstract’ entities. The founding document of this program is generally recognized to be Goodman and Quine’s joint 1947 article “Steps Toward a Constructive Nominalism.” In it, Goodman and Quine mention that their project derives its initial impetus and orientation from the conversations of 1940-1941 with Carnap and Tarski. This raises interesting questions: Do the strategies pursued by recent nominalists part ways from those of Carnap, Tarski and Quine? Are the motivations and justifications for nominalism in 1941 and today significantly different? I argue that the answer to these questions is ‘yes.’ Carnap’s treatment of the analytic/ synthetic distinction has received an enormous amount of attention, both from Carnap’s contemporaries and modern commentators. In print, Carnap often cites Tarski and Quine as the major critics of this distinction. This distinction has a clear connection to the conversations of 1941: should the number of physical items in the universe (a synthetic issue) affect arithmetic and logic (which are supposedly analytic)? Unlike Tarski and Quine, Carnap says ‘no.’ I conclude by conjecturing that these 1941 conversations may have led Quine from his comparatively mild criticism of the logical/ factual distinction in 1936’s “Truth by Convention” to his later, more radical critique in “Two Dogmas.”

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“Reexamining the Roots of the Naturalist Turn in Philosophy of Science: An Argument Against ‘Epistemology Naturalized’”
Jonathan Tsou

The demise of the “received view” in philosophy of science has been accompanied by an increasing number of writers who favor “naturalist” perspectives on the sciences. At present, it is only a slight exaggeration to say that naturalism represents the dominant perspective among philosophers of science. What is shared by contemporary naturalists is a rejection of perspectives that locate philosophy of science “above” or “outside” the sciences, in favor of philosophical standpoints that are intimately connected with the natural sciences. On this view, philosophy of science is to be located within the natural sciences, such that philosophy of science is no longer conceived of as a normative discipline, but as a descriptive one. Historically, this naturalist perspective was articulated and defended most forcefully by W.V. Quine (1969) in his call for “Epistemology Naturalized,” a perspective that he presented, in large part, in opposition to Carnap’s (1934, 1936) program of “Logic of Science.”

The aim of this paper is to reexamine and reevaluate the prospects of Quine’s recommendation of naturalism in the context of contemporary philosophy of science. The paper proceeds in three sections. In the first section, I explicate the main features of epistemology naturalized and summarize the professed benefits of Quine’s perspective. In the second section, I argue that Quine’s general argument against Carnap rests on a caricature of logic of science such that the benefits cited by Quine (viz., the recognition that all statements are subject to revision, the recognition of holistic underdetermination

considerations, and a perspective on science that can exploit our best scientific theories) are neither relevant nor appropriate for evaluating Quine's naturalism as an alternative to Carnap's perspective. Moreover, I argue that on pragmatic grounds—the main ground that Quine appeals to in his attack on Carnap—naturalism fails to provide a more promising perspective on the sciences compared to logic of science. In the third section, I articulate some implications of this analysis. It is argued that: (1) Quine's arguments against Carnap should not be regarded as persuasive because they rely on a distorted image of Carnap's perspective, (2) very few of the cited benefits of Quine's naturalism have actually come into fruition since his initial call, and (3) the prospects of naturalist perspectives in philosophy of science need to be rethought.

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“The Challenges of American Naturalism: Quine and the Columbia Naturalists” Robert Sinclair

Almost 40 years ago, in an article discussing the challenges facing American philosophical naturalism, Robert Roth laments the lack of interest in the issues raised by this movement but closes with this optimistic and prophetic statement: “...Naturalism will emerge stronger than it was before, enriched by the current interest in analytic philosophy” (1964, 584). It did not take long for this prediction to come true. Roughly 5 years later, we were introduced to Quine's ‘Epistemology Naturalized’ (1969), which spawned a renewed interest in naturalism that continues to exert a wide influence in contemporary philosophical circles. The re-emergence predicted by Roth is then easily confirmed, naturalism has once again reasserted itself as an important philosophical perspective from which to consider everything from values to the nature of consciousness. However, what is more difficult to verify is the degree to which this revival should count as an enrichment of the ideals and commitments that motivated an earlier generation of naturalists.

This essay examines this specific question by wondering whether Quinean naturalism should be properly viewed as a continuation of the ideals and philosophical commitments that motivated earlier American naturalists. My discussion focuses on the ‘continuity’ between philosophy and science often cited as a central defining feature of philosophical naturalism (Capps, Maffie), and examines precisely how this emphasis on continuity enables naturalists to deal with their respective challenges and problems. I begin with Quine's naturalism, and demonstrate how he thinks the importance of continuity stems from the more conservative aim of extending the methods of natural science to epistemological issues. By contrast, once we look to the earlier philosophical projects initiated by the ‘Columbia naturalists’, such as John Dewey (1920) and Ernest Nagel (1954), we see this general commitment to continuity used for a much more revolutionary end, of reconstructing our understanding of philosophy and science so that

they can be properly viewed as vehicles of social progress. These different uses of continuity are then prompted by different challenges, indicating a profound divergence, especially along social and political dimensions, with regard to the central import underlying this emphasis on a continuity between philosophy and science.

These remarks suggest that we should be suspicious of recent claims that present Quine's naturalism as a return to earlier naturalist projects in both philosophy and science. When Quine's depiction of naturalism is taken as the sole standard from which to understand such projects, we encourage a misleading and historically inadequate portrayal of the interests that motivated earlier conceptions of philosophical naturalism. By drawing attention to these differences we can begin to recapture some of the lost history of philosophical naturalism, as well as provide further resources for the re-evaluation of both its general significance and ongoing contemporary relevance.

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