

Frameworks reconsidered: Yablo

YABLO'S READING OF CARNAP. In section IV Yablo sketches Carnap's view. While it is familiar to us by now, we should note that Yablo's Carnap does not perceive existence claims as anything unique. As any other claims, they should be given meaning—which is not possible unless framework rules are first laid out. Then these questions should become 'internal questions'. In other words: Yablo's Carnap takes philosophical questions of existence as meaningless. They are so, because posed in the absence of meaning assignment that can only be provided by linguistic frameworks. 233

YABLO'S OBJECTION OUTLINED. Frameworks may be compared to make-believe games, wherein we *pretend* that certain things exist. Why we pretend so may be for any number of reasons, beginning with play and joy and ending with making sense of our experience (hence model building). Now Quine is expected to challenge this distinction as well: adoption of a make-believe game is driven by evidence and empirical considerations as much as the adoption of 'frameworks'. Yet on the other hand, Quine must recognise the distinction: metaphysical commitments accrue only within serious talk! 232

REDUCTIONISM. Quine accuses Carnap of basing his internal/external distinction on the analytic/synthetic distinction. As the latter is bad, so should be the former. But how does this work, exactly? Yablo thinks this is guilt by association. External questions were once considered to be cognitively substantive. But no, says Carnap, they are true or false as a matter of meaning fixing (and a prior practical decision). Similarly, analytic statements were once thought to be cognitively substantive. And no again, they are true or false as a matter of meaning fixing. 235

But, Yablo complains, the analogy between analytic statements and external questions/answers is not close. There are analytic claims of existence that are not external. And there are external claims that are not analytic. 235-6

All the same, Quine's objection may be defended by saying that: the internal/external distinction relies on the possibility of tracing meaningful statements to semantic rules (which *are* analytic). So some claims directly obtainable from these rules, or the rules themselves appropriately rephrased and their negations, *will be* trivially true or false. This is the reductionist dogma resisted by Quine on the grounds that under certain conditions every claim can be challenged. Carnap's distinction thus cannot be drawn. 237

DOUBLE EFFECT AND PRAGMATISM. Carnap can resist the previous objection by stressing the practical decision behind the adoption of a particular framework. Of course, every rule and statement can be challenged. But the challenge to semantic rules can only be practical. 237

But let us look more closely at the nature of the choice. What am I deciding when I decide to adopt the framework of numbers? Surely, just this: whether to believe in numbers and to treat appropriate number-statements as true or false. So my decision is the ontological decision, an adoption of a philosophical doctrine. 238

It is no use for Carnap to reply that the adopting the framework is conditional on the given state of evidence. The ontological commitments follow that adoption very predictably, and sometimes analytically. That is: so far as the adoption of the framework is done *sincerely*, it is as good as the adoption of any ontological doctrine. 238

But, Carnap might reply, the decision is still practical and pragmatic: it is driven by the reasons of simplicity, efficiency, elegance etc. 239

So finally, Quine insists that the practical/theoretical distinction is also bogus. There is continuity: practical decisions are driven by the kind of considerations that are in play in typical theoretical contexts, 'within the framework', as it were. For example, we may wish to begin speaking about atoms, and so to adopt the atoms-framework, because this is the best way to get on with our physical investigations. The internal/external distinction collapses now, because practical decisions are shaped by theory.