

NON-AMPLIATIVE INFERENCES. Suppose that α entails ω . Then ω is less informative than α : it says less about the world. Suppose also that α is trivial. Then ω must also be trivial, even more so. Yet often it isn't. In fact, on the face of it controversial claims are often entailed by trivial ones.

A classical example of this 'Carnap's Paradox' is the existence of numbers. You innocently say, 'There are two Martian moons', quickly paraphrase it into, 'The number of the Martian moons is two', and *voilà*, you have committed yourself to the existence of numbers.

CARNAP'S RESPONSE. Well, we know the story in the outline. But Yablo adds some nice touches. Of course, α is an internal question, while ω is an external one. But why do we *hear* α as addressing an internal question and ω as an external one?

One explanation is that we distinguish between Quine's category and subclass questions. Asking subclass questions in the external vein shows some special interest about numbers (say) of a certain sort outside of the agreed-upon framework. That's analogous to asking whether a player really made a chess move outside the game of chess. On the other hand, asking category questions in the internal vein would be trivial and silly. This is Carnap's quasi-pragmatic explanation of (EAR).

Yet, can we make external questions and answers to them non-trivial and not meaningless? Yes, we can: we just have to see them as practical advices and decisions to adopt a particular framework. So far, so familiar.

Yablo turns to consider Carnap's interpretation of external questions. Sometimes, actually very prominently, Carnap claims to have clarified the meaning of ontological questions on the traditional ontologist's lips. But how does the internal/external distinction help us explain the natural-language traditional ontologist's questions? This distinction is not recognised in the vernacular, so presumably it can't explain a fragment of that vernacular.

IMPLICIT ACCEPTANCE. Carnap thinks that in our ontological talk we are in a position similar to Molière's M. Jourdain: we always speak within a framework, though we are not aware of it (before reading Carnap). That is, we implicitly commit ourselves to the rules that may, if necessary, be systematised.

There are two objections here. First, where are the alternatives? do I ever have alternatives to my thing framework, say, that I chose to discard? Secondly, and more importantly, the argument is circular. As I am speaking right now, as a moderately plain man, I am speaking from within the thing framework. So its semantic postulates are on. Well, how do I know that? Because, as a plain man, I am not interested in the alternatives and not challenging these very postulates. Well, but why am I not interested in the alternatives? Presumably because the postulates are on, hence the circularity.

It's not clear to me whether this is a convincing argument. Why can't there be a reflective equilibrium style of justification? It's not like the postulates are received on Sinai, nor is the evidence of my disinterest dogmatically unchallengeable. It's more like the postulates sit well together with my evidence. Some pieces of evidence, like my own talking, are justified by the postulates. Further, larger pieces of evidence may be brought along to justify the postulates themselves.

Remark 1. Expand on the legal/political analogy.

EASY ONTOLOGY. 'Table-denial is a skeptical hypothesis that would ordinarily be laughed out of court.' Well, not always:

What is an object? Philosophers are always saying, 'Well, just take a chair for example.' The moment they say that, you know that they do not know what they are talking about any more. What *is* a chair? Well, a chair is a certain thing over there... certain? how certain? The atoms are evaporating from it from time to time—not many atoms, but a few—dirt falls on it and gets dissolved in the paint; so to define a chair precisely, to say exactly which atoms are chair, and which atoms are air, or which atoms are dirt, or which atoms are paint that belongs to the chair is impossible. So the mass of a chair can be defined only approximately. In the same way, to define the mass of a single object is

impossible, because there are not any single, left-alone objects in the world—every object is a mixture of a lot of things, so we can deal with it only as a series of approximations and idealizations. (*Feynman Lectures on Physics*)

Downward-looking rules and Moorean sense-data: not fitting well the data. Ultimately we are back to the Carnapian position where we interpret cognition as consisting of two parts or two processes, empirical and conceptual. 484
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PRESUPPOSITIONALISM. A more realistic picture of the ‘cognitive switch’ from α to ω is achieved once we bring the idea of presupposition on board. We observe a difference between two kinds of statements, one with presuppositions safely in place, another challenging these very presuppositions. Consider: 486

- (18-1) Context: I say, ‘Here is my shiny new BMW.’
- a. But how much did you pay for it? (Answer: Well, ten million TL!)
 - b. But who did you steal it from? (Answer: Hey, what do you mean, ‘steal’?!) 486

In this instance the former question is ‘within the framework’, and it’s a smooth sailing. But the latter question, an ‘external’ one, provokes an outburst. Characteristically, it’s changing the subject: we’re not discussing your BMW any more, we are debating what you did exactly, the nature of theft etc. instead. The novel element here is that when I utter (18-1) in any average context I presuppose, though do not assert, say, or imply, that I bought the car.

Why can’t we do the same with existence claims? Consider:

- (18-2) Context: I say, ‘Here is my fancy alternative to Peano arithmetic.’
- a. But is there, in your system, just one number between 3 and 6? (Answer: No, and here is how I prove it!)
 - b. You quantify over numbers I see, but are there numbers, really? (Answer: Hey, what kind of question is this?!) 487

If the two answers sound different, then we get a response to (EAR). Moreover, we have a response to (CON): 487

(CON) Why the external question is not straightforward. 472

There is second Carnap’s neglect of (CON)—his failure to explain why the external question should seem philosophically controversial. Show me someone who doubts that we should retain the number framework! Whether numbers really exist, however, as opposed to being assumed to exist, is, on the face of it, controversial in the extreme. That is the proposed answer to (CON). 487

Here then is my thought about Carnap’s paradox: the inference seems ampliative because α is heard as presupposing the number system, whereas ω declares it to really exist. No big surprise if *controversy should erupt* when a presupposition is dragged against its will into what is asserted or alleged. 487

I am not sure I understand this response. Asserting a presupposition is, of course, often (always?) infelicitous, pragmatically, socially improper. But why should it be *controversial*, as opposed to merely improper, to assert it? For example, if you said instead of (18-2b):

(18-2b’) Yes, there are numbers,

that’s hardly ‘controversial’, just inappropriate. Secondly, we lose the Carnapian insight (which, as we saw, is running through his writings from the *Aufbau*) that external questions are meaningless. No natural account of presuppositions should see them as meaningless when they are put next to the proposition that presupposes them.

Here is an example:

S : 'Snow is white and grass green.'

P : 'Snow is white.'

$S \setminus P$: 'Grass is green.'

Now to something more difficult:

Assertive content should be understood as what the full truth-conditional content of S (the sentence uttered) adds to the portion of that content that is presupposed. 488

So consider:

S : 'Smith's murderer is crazy.'

P : 'Smith was murdered.'

$S \setminus P$: 'Smith's murderer is crazy' \otimes the 'positive' murder assumption.