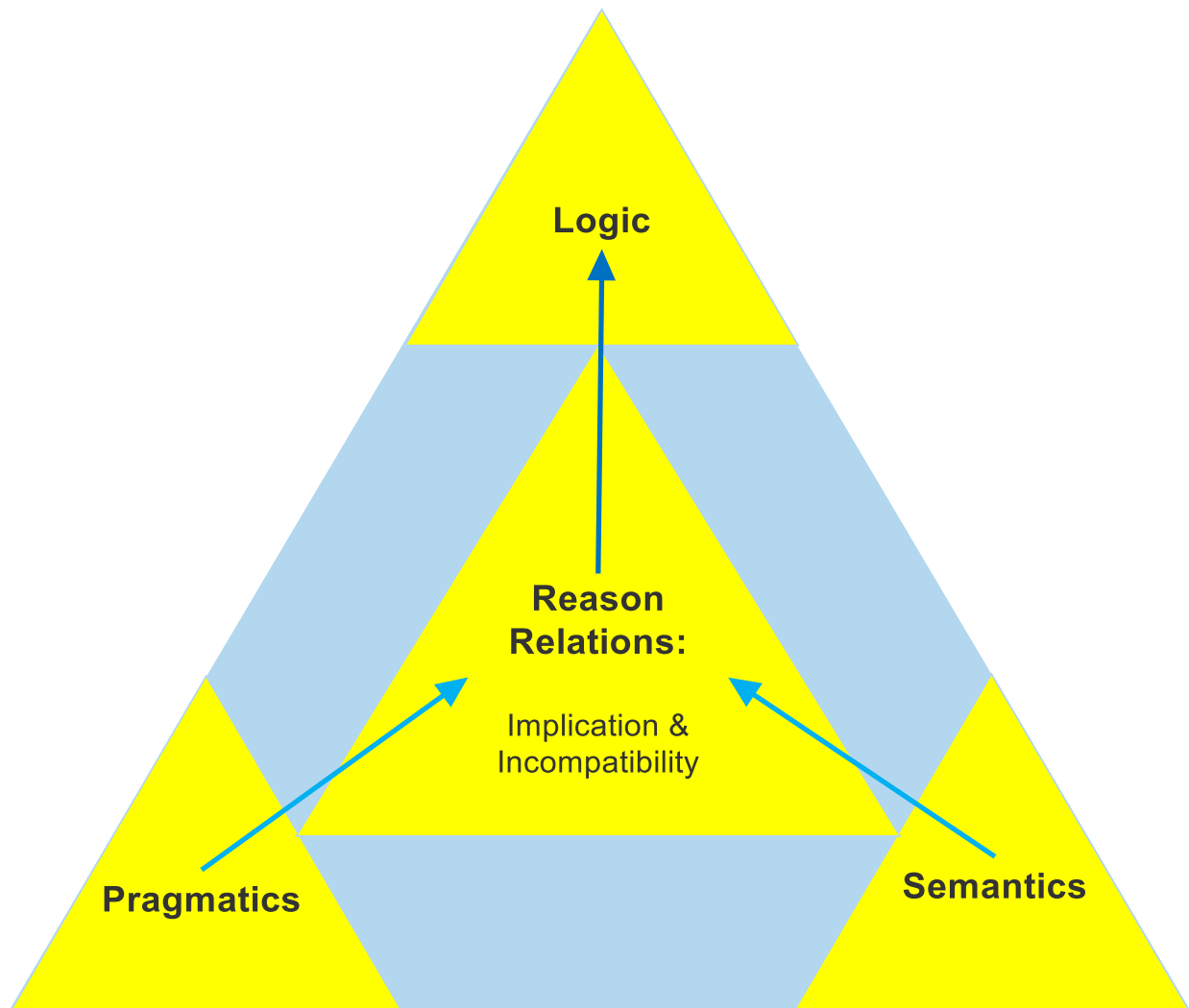


Handout for Week 1

Philosophy of Language.  
**Metavocabularies of Reason:**  
Pragmatics, Semantics, and Logic  
<https://sites.pitt.edu/~rbrandom/Courses>

**Mandala of the Metavocabularies of Reason**



- What is language?
- What is discursive practice?
- What is meaning?
- What is logic?
- What are reasons?

- Language is the medium of reasons.
- Reasons are the heart of language.

1. Metalinguistic rationalism:

- Languages—I will say, meaning it to be more general, “vocabularies”—are distinguished by the applicability to them of a distinctive constellation of explicating *metavocabularies*: pragmatic, semantic, and logical.
- Further, *what* those *metavocabularies* explicate, each in its own characteristic way, is reason *relations* of material consequence or implication and material incompatibility or incoherence.
- In the course, we will proceed roughly clockwise, starting with pragmatics, moving from there to reason relations, thence to logic, and then to semantics.
- Two documents offering an overview of the first 10 weeks or so of the course are:
  - Ulf Hlobil, Daniel Kaplan, Robert Brandom *Reasons for Logic, Logic for Reasons* (Routledge, forthcoming). Evolving drafts made available on the website.
  - Brandom ms. “On the Structure of Reasons: Pragmatics, Semantics, and Logic.”
- We will stick resolutely to the level of *sentences* (propositional logic and semantics).
- Linguistic exceptionalism.

*Verstehen/erklären.*

*Geisteswissenschaftlern/Naturwissenschaften.*

Metalinguistic rationalism aims to be a form of exceptionalism without obscurantism or dualism.

2. Two traditions in philosophical thought about language:

- The long twentieth century was, philosophically, the century of language.
  - Logico-semantic formalist tradition, e.g. Frege, Russell, *Tractatus*, Carnap, Tarski, Lewis, Fine.
  - Anthropological, natural-historical broadly pragmatist traditions, e.g. classical American pragmatism, early Heidegger, late Wittgenstein, Quine, Travis.
- The “vocabulary” vocabulary is a response to Quine’s criticisms of Carnap’s language/theory, meaning/belief distinction.
- The two philosophical traditions raise the question of how to understand the relations between
  - *semantic* *metavocabularies* (addressing meaning) and
  - *pragmatic* *metavocabularies* (addressing use)?
- Metalinguistic rationalism takes them to provide different perspectives on consequence and incompatibility.
- It is a substantive claim that what makes semantic theories *semantic* theories—whether they are of the model-theoretic or proof-theoretic sort—is that they codify reason relations.

3. A pragmatics-first explanatory progression:

- i) *Normative* character of discursive practices/abilities. Kant, Hegel, Wittgenstein.
- ii) *Assertion* or claiming as the speech act that defines discursive practices (and declarative sentences) as such—the “downtown” of language games.
- iii) *Inference*—defending and challenging claims by giving reasons for and against them—as the key to both claimings and claimables.
- iv) Reasoning vs. reason *relations*. Harman claim: “There is no such thing as deductive reasoning.”
- v) We will understand reason relations to begin with in terms of a finer-grained version of the Restall-Ripley normative bilateralist pragmatics for multisuccedent implications.
- vi) Aim is to advance to semantics by understanding sentence meanings (claimables, “propositions”) in terms of their role w/res to reason relations of *implication* and *incompatibility*.

4. What is Logic?

One tradition (Quine and Putnam) take the fundamental issues of the philosophy of logic to be a *demarcation* question and a *correctness* question:

- What makes something a bit of specifically *logical* vocabulary (or a logical concept)? and
- What is the correct logic?

I will argue that a more fundamental question is:

What is the relation between *reasons* or reasoning in general, and logic?

Here there are two approaches:

- a) **Logic-first**, reasons second. Good reasons just are *logically* good reasons.  
Logicism: Good reasons are, at base, *logically* good reasons. Behind (in *some* sense) every good argument is a logically valid argument.
- b) **Reasons-first**, logic second. Material proprieties of reasoning.  
Logical Expressivism: Materially good reasons are good reasons in virtue of the prelogical reason relations that articulate the conceptual contents of OED vocabulary.  
The job of logic is to make explicit, in an extension of the object language, those antecedent semantogenic reason relations—as well as (as a bonus) the reason relations articulating the use of the logical vocabulary that extends the base language.

5. The Structure of (Material) Reason Relations:

- a) Structure of *logical* reasons (Tarski):
  - i. CO:  $X \subseteq c(X)$ .
  - ii. MO:  $X \subseteq Y \Rightarrow c(X) \subseteq c(Y)$ .
  - iii. Closure:  $c(c(X)) = c(X)$ .
- b) Structure of ordinary reasons:
  - i. CO OK.
  - ii. MO not OK.
  - iii. Closure (transitivity) not OK.

This divergence of the structure of *logical* reasons from the structure of reasons *tout court* speaks for expressivism

But it sets a task for the logician. We will show how to fulfill that task.

6. Summary of the metarationalist approach:

- pursues a **reasons-first approach to language and logic,**
- **which views reasons as providing the defining structure of language, and**
- **understands logic as a distinctive kind of language of reasons.**
- It examines the relations among **pragmatic, semantic, rational, and logical metavocabularies** for characterizing semantogenic reason relations of consequence and incompatibility.
- And demarcates specifically *discursive* practices as those that admit that particular constellation of rational *metavocabularies*.

7. Some of what is on offer from *Reasons for Logic, Logic for Reasons*:

- a) One basic idea is that the consequence relations that govern reasoning that has not been formalized are massively substructural from a logical point of view: usually nonmonotonic and often nontransitive.

Our logics and semantics ought to be designed with this in mind, but typically are not.

Dan Kaplan has an astonishingly simple and tractable multisuccedent sequent calculus that can codify arbitrary substructural consequence relations supraclassically. (There is a single-succedent suprainstitutionistic version, too.) He is able to prove a powerful and unprecedented *expressive completeness* result for it: It is expressively complete for arbitrary substructural (open-structured) material base vocabularies.

Taking his cue from Girard's phase-space semantics for linear logic, Dan then elaborates an *implication-space semantics* that satisfies every aspiration this semantic inferentialist (Brandom) ever had for such a thing, and proves the soundness and completeness of his substructural logic w/res to that semantics.

- b) Ulf Hlobil shows that if we define consequence in just the right way, we can identify a hitherto unsuspected isomorphism between Kit Fine's truthmaker semantic framework and the normative bilateral pragmatics for sequent calculi developed by Greg Restall and Dave Ripley.

Building on Dan's work, he goes on to show how focusing on this isomorphism makes it possible for the first time to extend both those frameworks (semantic and pragmatic) to accommodate radically substructural (nonmonotonic and nontransitive) consequence relations.

- c) In roughly the last third of our meetings we will explore various ways in which these new formal tools can be used to articulate the relations among reason relations exhibited and codified by ground-level, ordinary empirical descriptive vocabularies, normative pragmatic metavocabularies, both representational and inferentialist semantic vocabularies, logical vocabularies. Of particular significance here is a "double-barreled"

or two-dimensional account of the relations between alethic modal and deontic normative metavocabularies, both

- i. to understand conceptual contents in accordance with what in *A Spirit of Trust I* called “bimodal hylomorphic conceptual realism” relating semantic and pragmatic MVs and
- ii. to understand the descriptive-representational dimension of semantic content, not only for ground-level OED vocabularies, but for all the varieties of rational metavocabulary.