

Handout for Week 14:

Conclusion: Discursive Metarationalism

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

Plan:

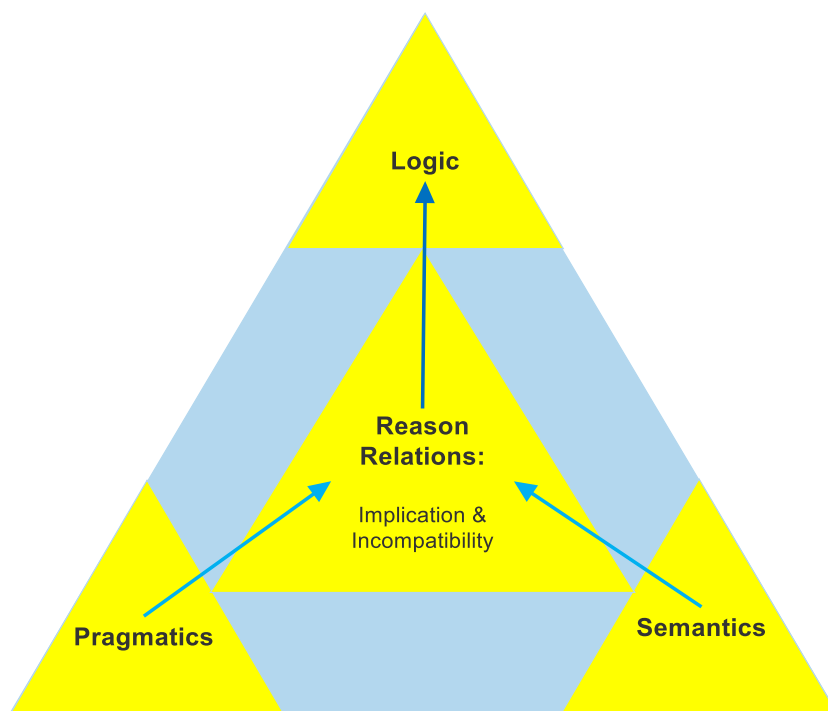
Introduction: Overview. **Discursive Metarationalism.**

- I. Demarcating Discursive Practices: **Pragmatic Rationalism**
Two-sorted deontic normative pragmatic metavocabularies.
- II. Logical Metavocabularies (MV): **Rational Logical Expressivism**
- III. **Bimodal Conceptual Realism**
- IV. **Intrinsic Implication-Space Conceptual Role Meta-Metavocabulary**
- V. Bimodal Specification of **the Descriptive-Representational Dimension of Conceptual Content.**

Conclusion: **The Internal Structure of Rational Self-Consciousness**

Introduction:

- a) **Discursive Metarationalism:** A *reasons-centered* approach to conceptual content and discursiveness generally. It includes:
- b) **Pragmatic Rationalism:** The essential core of specifically *discursive* practices is their articulation by *reason relations* of *implication* and *incompatibility*.
- c) **Semantic Inferentialism:** Conceptual contents are roles expressions play with respect to reason relations.
- d) **Metarationalist Functionalism:** Reason relations are distinguished by and *can be functionally defined* by their role in a characteristic constellation of *metavocabularies*, which count as *rational* MVs in that they make explicit various fundamental aspects of such reason relations and the conceptual contents that are roles with respect to those reason relations.
- e) These fundamental rational MVs include *pragmatic*, *logical*, and both *representational* and *conceptual role semantic* MVs.



Mandala of Rational Metavocabularies

I. Demarcating Discursive Practices: ***Pragmatic Rationalism***

a) The basic idea is that *discursive* practices are those in which some performances have the pragmatic significance of *claimings*.

Sentences are expressions whose utterance has the default significance of a claiming.

b) ***Bivalence*** of speech acts and attitudes:

Claimings essentially come in two flavors:

- *Speech acts of asserting* are paired with speech acts of *denying*.
- They express *practical attitudes of accepting and rejecting*

We can, but need not, understand those practical attitudes as taking-*true* and taking-*false*.

c) ***Critical rational*** character of claiming practices:

Claimings are subject to rational *challenge* and in need of rational *defense*.

- Challenging is making claims that serve as reasons *against* the challenged claim.
- Defending is making claims that serve as reasons *for* the challenged claim.

d) A ***two-sorted deontic normative*** vocabulary is required to specify the critical rational character of claimings:

- Claiming is undertaking a *commitment*,
- *Entitlement* to which can always be rationally *challenged* and must then be rationally *defended*.
- Entitlement has a *default and challenge* structure.

e) The critical rational character of claiming practices requires a ***dyadic structure of reason relations*** (among claimables, expressed by declarative sentences):

- Reasons *for* are claimables that *imply* the claimable they stand to as reasons for.
- Reasons *against* are claimables that are *incompatible with* the claimable they stand to as reasons against.

f) Two-sorted deontic normative vocabulary suffices for a ***bilateral*** definition of reason relations (Simonelli-Brandom developing Restall-Ripley):

- A set of sentences Γ *implies* sentence A (written: $\Gamma|\sim A$) iff *commitment to accept* all of Γ *precludes entitlement to reject* A.
- A set of sentences Γ is *incompatible with* sentence A (written: $\Gamma\#A$) iff *commitment to accept* all of Γ *precludes entitlement to accept* A.

g) ***Inferring*** is making *implicit* commitments *explicit*:

- If Γ *implies* A, we say that commitment to accept all of Γ *implicitly* commits one to *accept* A.
- If Γ is *incompatible with* A, we say that commitment to accept all of Γ *implicitly* commits one to *reject* A.

Inferring is *explicitly* accepting/rejecting (practical attitude), e.g. by asserting/denying (speech act) what one is *implicitly* committed to accept/reject by reasons that have been given for/against claimables.

II. Logical Metavocabularies: *Rational Logical Expressivism*

a) Logicism vs. Expressivism about the relations between *logic* and *reasons*:

- **Logicism** about Reasons (LR): *Good* reasons are always *logically* good reasons. Logic determines what reasons are good and explains why they are good.
- Rational **Expressivism** about Logic (REL): Logic expresses prior reason relations in some base vocabulary, making them explicit in claimable sentences that can serve as and stand in need of reasons themselves.
Logic is an *expressive tool* for talking about *reasons* generally.

b) Logical Expressive Ideal: **Universal, Comprehensive LX-ness**:

Logical vocabulary *extends* a base vocabulary, and *makes explicit* its *reason relations*.

- A **vocabulary** =_{df.} A *lexicon* (set of sentences) + *reason relations* on that lexicon.
- **Logical** vocabulary should be **LX** for *any* prelogical material base vocabulary: conservatively **elaborated from** it (L) and **explicative of** (X) its *reason relations*.
- Three subsidiary criteria of adequacy:
 - i) *Universality* of LX-ness: The logical vocabulary should be LX for *every* base vocabulary.
 - ii) *Conservativeness* of elaboration: the lexicon and reason relations of the base vocabulary should be contained as subsets in the lexicon and reason relations of the logically extended vocabulary.
 - iii) *Comprehensiveness* of explication: The logical vocabulary should be capable of explicating the reason relations of the whole logically extended vocabulary.

c) **Substructurality** or Open Structure of Reason Relations:

- Logical consequence relations traditionally (as articulated by Tarski and Gentzen) have a *closure* structure. They are *monotonic* and *transitive*.
- Logicists assume that *therefore*, reason relations in general are monotonic and transitive.
- This is wrong. *Many* kinds of *material* (nonlogical) implications are nonmonotonic or nontransitive, and many kinds of material incompatibilities are nonmonotonic.
- Logical metavocabularies should aspire to codifying *all* kinds of reason relations, including those that have open structures.

d) Logical Metavocabularies are essentially *extensions* of their base vocabularies.

It is distinctive of *logic* that it is a rational MV that *essentially* consists in *extending* the base vocabulary—which might itself be another MV, because you can logically extend *any* vocabulary. This distinguishes it from pragmatic and semantic MVs, which *can* supplement base (non-MV) vocabularies, but can also stand on their own.

e) *Conditionals* codify *implications*. *Negations* codify *incompatibility*.

- Deduction-Detachment (DD) Condition on Conditionals: $\Gamma|\sim A\rightarrow B$ iff $\Gamma, A|\sim B$.
- Incoherence-Incompatibility (II) Condition on Negation: $\Gamma|\sim\neg A$ iff $\Gamma\#A$.

f) Nonmonotonic Multisuccedent Logic (NM-MS) is a supraclassical, nonmonotonic, nontransitive logic (like Strict-Tolerant ST, but with reversible Ketonen connective definitions that mix additive and multiplicative rules). It is universally, conservatively, and comprehensively LX for the reason relations of all vocabularies, whatever their structure.

g) Dan Kaplan proved a powerful expressive completeness result for it:

For any set of sequents in the NM-MS-extended logically complex vocabulary—that is, any inferential theory on that extended lexicon—we can compute the set of base-sequents whose holding in a base vocabulary is necessary and sufficient for those logically extended sequents to be in the NM-MS-extended vocabulary (lexicon plus set of sequents).

III. **Bimodal Conceptual Realism:**

Relating *Meaning* and *Use* through Rational Semantic and Pragmatic MVs.

a) Two philosophical traditions concerning language:

- Formal semantic: Frege, Russell, *Tractatus*, Carnap, Tarski, Lewis, Fine.
- Anthropological pragmatist: Dewey, *Sein und Zeit*, *Philosophical Investigations*.

These focus on *meaning* and *use*, respectively. Synthesizing them is an open challenge.

b) **Discursive metarationalism** synthesizes these perspectives on language by thinking of the relations between these in terms of the relations between the way *semantic* and *pragmatic metavocabularies* express features or aspects of *reason relations*.

c) **Hlobil's Isomorphism** at the level of *reason relations* between Fine's *truthmaker* representational *semantic* metavocabularies codifying *meanings* of linguistic expressions and bilateral deontic normative *pragmatic* metavocabularies codifying the *use* of linguistic expressions:

Γ implies Δ in the truthmaker semantic MV iff every fusion of *truthmakers* of all the elements of Γ (premises) with *falsemakers* of all the elements of Δ (conclusions) is an *impossible* state.

Γ implies Δ in the bilateral normative pragmatic MV iff the combination of commitments to *accept* all the elements of Γ (premises) and commitments to *reject* all the elements of Δ (conclusions) is *out-of-bounds* (a position or set of normative statuses one cannot be *entitled* to).

d) **Conceptual realism:**

McDowell: "The conceptual has no outer boundary."

Wittgenstein: "When we say, and mean, that such-and-such is the case, we—and our meaning—do not stop anywhere short of the fact; but we mean: this—is—so."

Tractatus: "The world is everything that is the case. It is the totality of facts, not of things."

Frege: "A fact is a thought that is true."

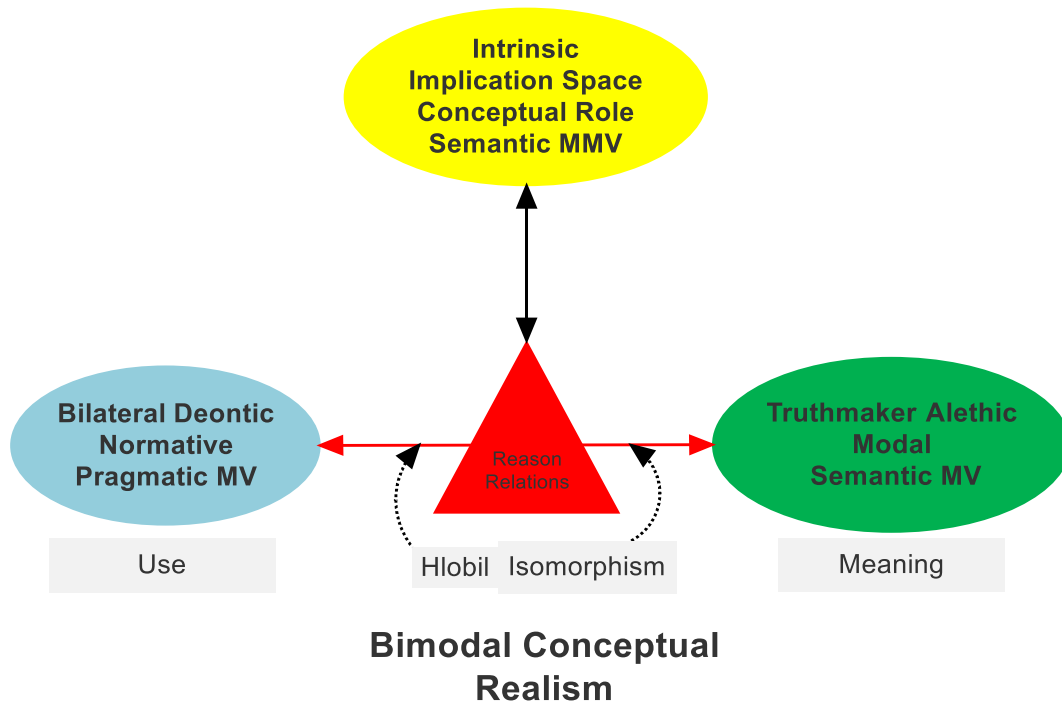
Inferentialism: To be in conceptual shape or to have conceptual content is to stand in reason relations of consequence and incompatibility to other such items.

e) **Bimodal conceptual realism is the** claim that the *very same* conceptual contents that are specified in *alethic modal semantic* MVs are specified in *deontic normative pragmatic* MVs.

- The *claimables* (conceptual contents) expressed by declarative *sentences* (used to make claims = assertions/denials that manifest acceptance/rejection of what those sentences express) should be understood as *functional roles* sentences of the lexicon play in the reason relations that define a vocabulary. (See IV below.) They are *conceptual* contents because they are roles in *reason* relations.

- The *Hlobil isomorphism* then shows that the *very same* conceptual contents specifiable in the truthmaker *alethic modal semantic MV* are also specifiable in the *bilateral deontic normative pragmatic MV*.
- f) Reason relations of consequence and incompatibility can be specified in two sorts of vocabulary:
- Deontic normative vocabulary, on the *subjective* side of discursive activity, and
 - Alethic modal vocabulary, on the *objective* side of how things are.

Because these reason relations can come in two flavors, deontic and alethic, thoughts and facts are both intelligible as conceptually articulated.



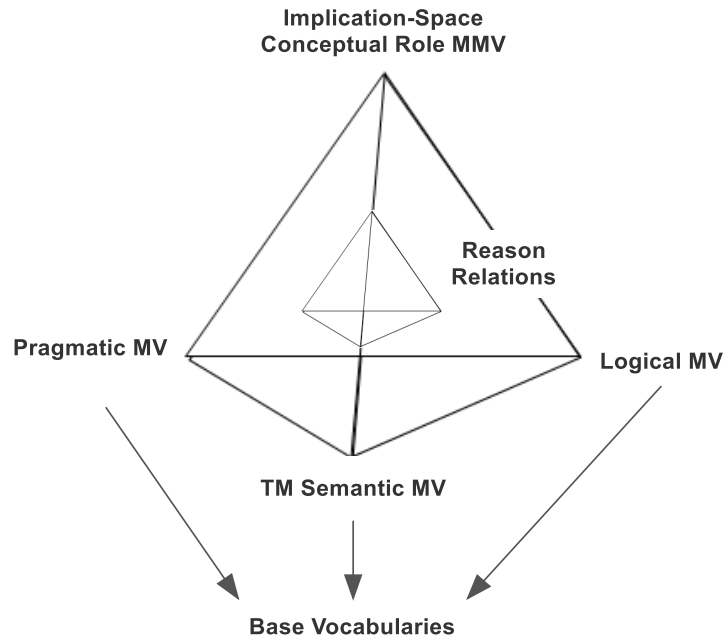
IV. Intrinsic Implication-Space Conceptual Role Meta-Metavocabulary

Dan Kaplan's implication-space conceptual role semantics is the *intrinsic* semantics of reason relations:

The *intrinsicness* ("intrinsicity"?) of the semantics consists in its needing *nothing* else in addition to the base vocabulary to determine the whole semantics:

- The *universe* is the set $\mathcal{P}(L) \times \mathcal{P}(L)$, thought of as *candidate implications* $\langle \Gamma, \Delta \rangle$. It is determined entirely by the lexicon L of the base vocabulary.

- ii) The *mereological* element of *structure* on that universe is the *commutative monoid of adjunction*, which is wholly definable set-theoretically from the structure of the elements of the implication space. $X \cup Y = Z$, where $X = \langle X_1, X_2 \rangle$, $Y = \langle Y_1, Y_2 \rangle$ and $Z = \langle Z_1, Z_2 \rangle$ iff $X_1 \cup Y_1 = Z_1$ and $X_2 \cup Y_2 = Z_2$.
- iii) Further *modal* structure on the universe is the *distinguished subset* $\mathbf{I} \subseteq \mathcal{P}(L) \times \mathcal{P}(L)$ of elements $\langle \Gamma, \Delta \rangle$ where $\Gamma \sim \Delta$, the *good implications* (including incoherent sets, so incompatibilities) of the base vocabulary.
There might be constraints on \mathbf{I} , such as that all candidate implications of the form $\langle \Gamma \cup \{A\}, \Delta \cup \{A\} \rangle$ are elements of \mathbf{I} . (That is CO.) But this is determined wholly by the base vocabulary.
- iv) The *space of semantic interpretants* of sentences and sets of sentences (to be assigned by the v function in (v)) is then the set of all sets of pairs of sets of sentences:
 $S = \mathcal{P}(\mathcal{P}(L) \times \mathcal{P}(L))$.
- v) The *interpretation function* v assigns $\langle X, Y \rangle \in v(\langle \Gamma, \Delta \rangle)$ iff $\langle \Gamma \cup X, \Delta \cup Y \rangle \in \mathbf{I}$.
- vi) In terms of these semantic interpretations of (candidate) *implications*, we can then assign *inferential roles* to individual sentences. Each sentence is assigned the ordered pair of (the v -closures of) the v -set of $\langle A, \emptyset \rangle$, A 's *premissory role*, and the v -set of $\langle \emptyset, A \rangle$, A 's *conclusory role*.
- vii) We can now define not only reason relations of implication and incompatibility for the original vocabulary, but also for the logically extended vocabulary definable (elaborated) from that base vocabulary. Dan Kaplan shows that this implication-space semantics is sound and complete for the logic NM-MS (II-f above).
- viii) Hlobil has a simplified pure conceptual role version that builds v -sets into operations.



Implication-space conceptual role semantics is *semantics without metaphysics*.

V. **Bimodal** Specification of the *Descriptive-Representational* Dimension of Conceptual Content.

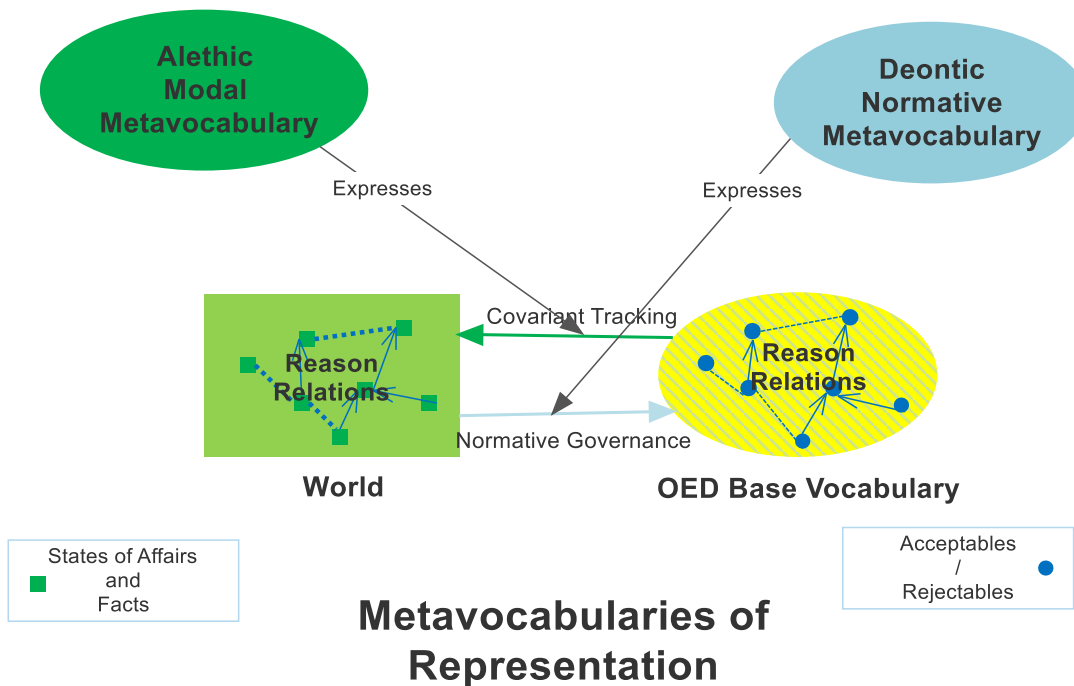
Three fundamental lessons about the concept of representation that we should see as emerging from Enlightenment investigations of it, culminating in Kant and Hegel:

1. **Representation is an essentially *holistic* concept.** The Spinoza and Leibniz were just right about this.
2. **Representation and description essentially involve subjunctively robust relations between representings and representeds, relations that are properly specified in *alethic modal terms*.** In this sense, representation and description are not purely *descriptive* terms, in the straitened sense that empiricists give to that term, expressing what Sellars took to be their mistaken descriptivist scruples.
3. Representation has **an essential *normative dimension*.**

For X to represent Y, Y must have a distinctive kind of *authority over X*. It must serve as a normative standard for assessments of the *correctness* of X as a representing of Y.

When X is in this sense *responsible to Y*, we can say that X is *normatively governed* by Y.

The basic components of *descriptive representational* relations, namely *subjunctive covariant tracking* and *normative governance*, are specified in *alethic modal* and *deontic normative* (meta)vocabularies.



Conclusion: *The Internal Structure of Rational Self-Consciousness*

- Every *vocabulary* is a **form of consciousness**. For it is a constellation of reason relations and so conceptual contents (claimables) that enables one explicitly to say and think something.
- Every *metavocabulary* is accordingly a **form of self-consciousness**. For it is a constellation of reason relations and so conceptual contents that enables one to make explicit the reason relations and conceptual contents in virtue of which its base vocabulary is capable of making anything explicit.
- **Rational metavocabularies**, that is, metavocabularies that make explicit the reason relations or conceptual contents of their base vocabularies, are accordingly **forms of rational self-consciousness**.
- **Discursive metarationalism** as filled in here is an account of the essential *internal structure of rational self-consciousness* as such.
- As pursuing a *reason-centered, pragmatics-first* order of explanation *discursive metarationalism* is a form of **pragmatic rationalism**. Explicit claimables are defined first in a pragmatic MV.
- It turns out that such a *discursive metarationalist* view can be worked out in *mathematical detail* so as demonstrably to satisfy clear, definite, and stringent criteria of adequacy for its account of reason relations and how they show up in pragmatics, logic, semantics, and the specification of conceptual roles, as well as the relations among them all.
This pragmatist way of working out a *discursive metarationalist* view yields a **mathematical** articulation of the essential *internal structure of rational self-consciousness* as such.
- *Discursive metarationalism* as here elaborated defines an interlocking, nested constellation of metaconcepts of **explicit expression of what is implicit** (in various senses of “implicit”):
 1. Making implicit *commitments* practically explicit in *inference*,
 2. *Rational explicitation* of implicit conceptual *contents*, adding as a premise what is implied,
 3. *Logical* explicit expression of *reason relations* of implication and incompatibility implicit in the *use* of base vocabularies,
 4. Explicit *semantic* specifications of reason relations and conceptual roles implicit in the use of base vocabularies.
 5. *Intrinsic implication-space* specifications of *conceptual roles* conferred by the use of a base vocabulary as specified in pragmatic metavocabularies and explained by semantic metavocabularies.
 6. *Bimodal* use of *paired alethic and deontic vocabularies* to make explicit the relations of *subjunctive covariant tracking* and *normative governance* that implicitly articulate *the descriptive representational* dimension of conceptual content.