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*Inferentialism and its problems:
a panoramic view
(not an exhaustive treatment).*

A panoramic view
of inferentialism
as a research program.

The goal of the research program
is to establish the plausibility
of a core thesis

Three parts

- 1 The core thesis of inferentialism.
- 2 Historical outline
- 3 Problems inferentialism has to face.

Jaroslav Peregrin, 'Inferentialism and Normativity' in
Oxford Handbook of The History of Analytical Philosophy (2013)

Jaroslav Peregrin, 'Inferentialism and Normativity' in
Oxford Handbook of The History of Analytical Philosophy (2013)

«the term 'inferentialism' was coined by Robert Brandom, as a name for his own sweeping and ambitious philosophical doctrine, which drew strongly on the ideas of Brandom's mentor Wifrid Sellars» p. 1082.

Jaroslav Peregrin, 'Inferentialism and Normativity' in *Oxford Handbook of The History of Analytical Philosophy* (2013)

«However, Brandomian inferentialism can be seen as a culmination of certain **trends** already latent within both logic and philosophy of language **since the outset of modern logic and analytic philosophy**» p. 1082.

See

J. Peregrin, *Inferentialism*, Palgrave Macmillan,
New York, 2014, pp. 1-278.

I

**What is the core thesis
of inferentialism?**

My short answer

The core thesis of inferentialism is that the sense of a statement consists in its role in (some) inferences, its *inferential role*.

A statement

«Bill is Michael's brother»

Can be premise of an inference

Bill is Michael's brother

Can be premise of an inference

Bill is Michael's brother

Michael is Bill's brother

Conclusion of another inference

Bill is Michael's brother

Conclusion of another inference

Michael and Bill have the same parents

Bill is Michael's brother

To understand a statement
is to apprehend
some possible inferences

Terminology

terminology

1. WORDS: smallest linguistic units endowed with meaning
2. SENTENCES: smallest linguistic units which can be used to perform linguistic acts.
3. TYPE: abstract expression, not spatio-temporally located, repeatable, many instances.
4. TOKEN - concrete, spatio-temporally located instance of a type

terminology

5. MEANING of a sentence **S**: what a speaker must grasp in order to **understand S**
6. **STATEMENT**: a meaningful sentence-token
in a particular context of use

the core thesis of inferentialism is that

to grasp the sense of a **statement** *S* is to (implicitly) know how *S* can occur as premiss or conclusion of (some) inferences.

the sense of a statement consists in its role in inferences, its *inferential role*. The sense of a word consists in the contribution it makes to determining the inferential role of any statement in which it occurs.

Sentences can be used
to perform speech acts
of different kinds

Assertion: John is sitting.

Question: Is John sitting?

Command: Be seated, John!

These speech acts have
the same sense and different force

two ingredients

of the meaning

of a speech act:

sense and force

Assertion: John is sitting.



Sense X + Assertoric force

Assertion: John is sitting.



Meaning = Sense + Force

Inferentialism
is in the first place
a tenet about sense

THE THESIS OF INFERENTIALISM
IS THE CENTRAL TENET OF A
CONCEPTION OF MEANING

INFERENTIALISM

HAS A VERY INFLUENTIAL RIVAL:

THE TRUTH-CONDITIONAL
CONCEPTION OF MEANING

Question

What does understanding a statement consist in?

Question

What is it that we grasp when we grasp the sense of **a statement**?

Question

What is it that we grasp when we grasp the sense of **a statement**?

Two kinds of answer

Question

What is it that we grasp when we grasp the sense of **a statement**?

Two kinds of answer

a truth-condition



We adopt a
truth-conditional
conception of meaning



Question

What is it that we grasp when we grasp the sense of **a statement**?

Two kinds of answer

a way of using
the statement in
inferences

We adopt
INFERENCEALISM

Question

What is it that we grasp when we grasp the sense of **a statement**?

Two kinds of answer

a truth-condition



We adopt a truth-conditional conception of meaning

a way of using the statement in inferences



We adopt **INFERENCEALISM**

Both ideas are old

Truth-conditional conception

G. Frege, 1893

Grundgesetze vol. I

L. Wittgenstein, 1921

Tractatus

Classical model-theoretic semantics

Inferentialism

Wittgenstein, 1930s

Philosophische Grammatik

R. Carnap, 1934

Logische Syntax der Sprache

G. Gentzen, *Untersuchungen über das logische Schliessen* Math. Z. **39** (1934)

Proof-theoretic semantics

II

Historical outline

Different lines of thought
intertwine and contribute
to the development of inferentialism

At the origin
three names

Inferentialism in Ludwig Wittgenstein

Inferentialism in Wittgenstein

Bemerkungen über die Grundlagen der Mathematik

«We can conceive the rules of inference – I want to say – as giving the signs their meaning, because they are rules for the use of these signs.» (*written in the nineteen-thirties*)

(Wittgenstein 1956: VII, § 30)

Inferentialism in Rudolf Carnap

Inferentialism in Carnap

Logische Syntax der Sprache

«let any postulates and any rules of inference be chosen arbitrarily; then this choice, whatever it may be, will determine what meaning is to be assigned to the fundamental logical symbols.»
(Carnap 1934: v)

Inferentialism in Gerhard Gentzen

Logical inferentialism: Gerhard Gentzen.

“Untersuchungen über das logische Schliessen” (1934)

the introduction rules of natural deduction systems “constitute, as it were, the ‘definitions’ of the symbols concerned”; i.e., of logical connectives and quantifiers

Inferentialism in Frege?

Brandom thinks that
Frege in *Begriffsschrift* (1879)
is an inferentialist

R. Brandom, *Making it Explicit*, 1994, pp. 80-2.

My opinion

There is no conclusive evidence
that in *Begriffsschrift* (1879)
Frege adopts inferentialism.

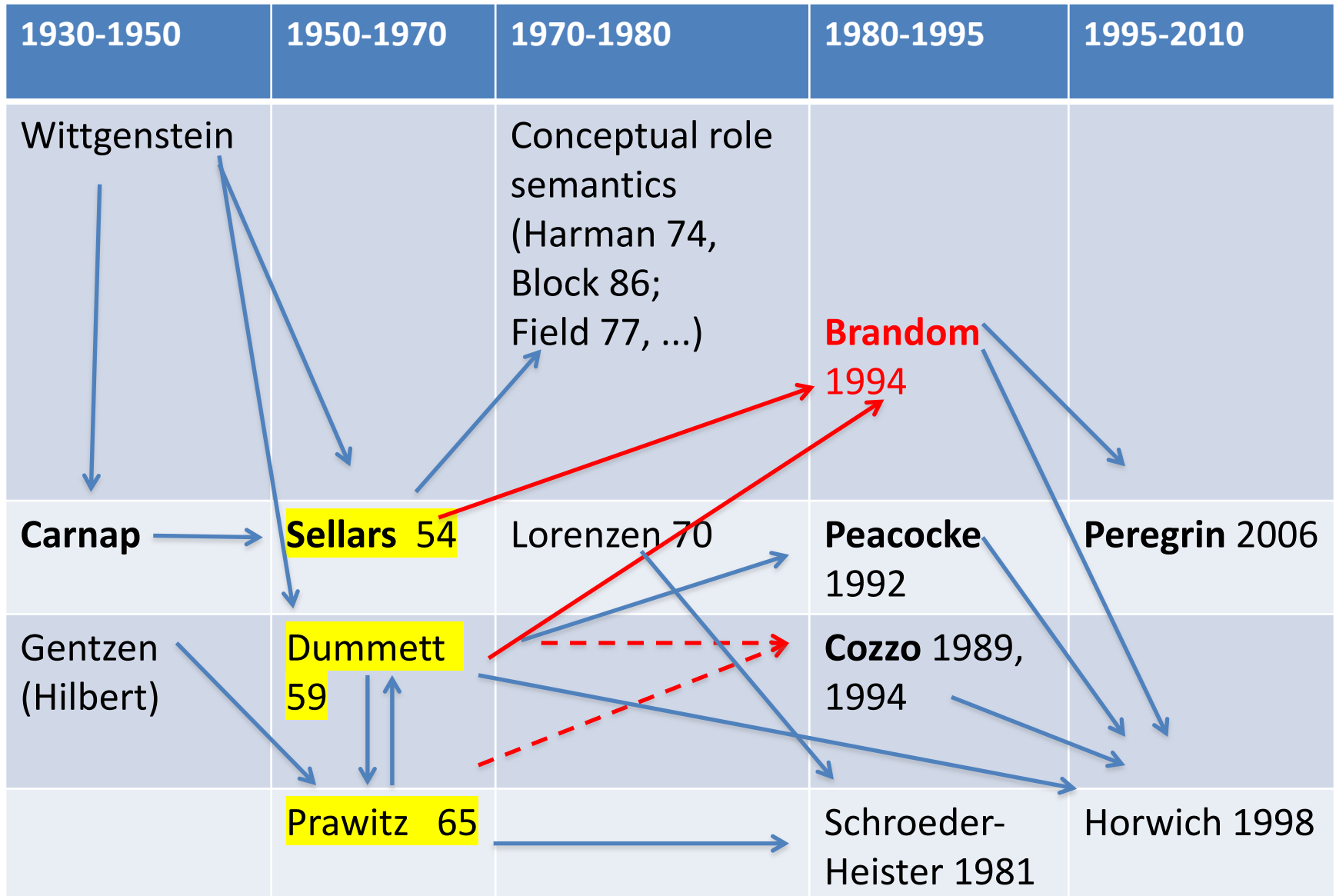
Robert Brandom
coined the term “Inferentialism”

Robert Brandom, *Making it Explicit*, 1994.

Inferentialism is an area
with many different lines of thought
and influences :

A sketchy **visualization**

Authors who advocated (views akin to) inferentialism



III

Problems for inferentialism

Some problems concerning inferentialism

- 1) Can inferentialism account for the role of sense-experience in language?
- 2) What is an inference (in the relevant sense)?
- 3) Does inferentialism lead to meaning-holism?
- 4) Does inferentialism lead to the view that some inferences are analytically **valid** (i.e. valid in virtue of meaning)?
- 5) What are the consequences of inferentialism for the choice of a logic?
- 6) Does the notion of reference play any role in inferentialism?
- 7) Does the notion of truth play any role in inferentialism?

IV. 1

**First problem:
sense-experience**

Some problems concerning inferentialism

- 1) Can inferentialism account for the role of sense-experience in language?

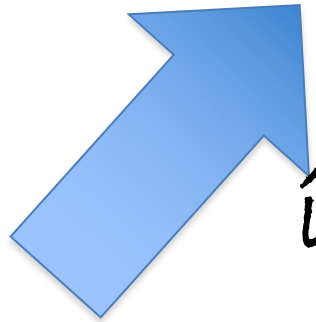
A fact

There are statements whose understanding requires an awareness that they are verified and falsified by sense-experience.

An observational report

«that is green»

«that is green»



is verified

by perception

«that is green»



verifies

we see green

«that is green»



verifies

We see green

if we are not aware of this verification-condition,
we do not fully understand the statement

The inferentialist notion of meaning-constitutive inference should be broad enough to include links with experience

Wilfrid Sellars in "Some Reflections on Language Games" (1954)

The rules of the language game are behaviouristic stimulus-response (S-R) associations of three kinds:

- 1) language entry transitions, where S is non-linguistic and R linguistic;
- 2) intralinguistic moves, where both S and R are linguistic (positions in the language game);
- 3) language departure transitions, where S is linguistic, but R is not.

In C. Cozzo, *Meaning and Argument*,
Almqvist & Wiksell, Stockholm (1994)
the notion of *argumentation step*
(Chapter 3: “Immediate argumental role”)

«An argumentation step **P** is the particular **act** of justifying a token sentence, called conclusion (possibly depending on certain hypotheses).

[...] The conclusion **C** is in general justified on the basis of some *evidence*, which can be either *linguistic* or the *non-linguistic* result of certain actions, or both. »

C. Cozzo, *Meaning and Argument*, p. 61

An argumentation step **P** has seven components, of which the first and the last are never empty:

$\langle C, NL, PR, AR, VAR, H, S \rangle$

Seven components, of which the first and the last are never empty:

$\langle C, NL, PR, AR, VAR, H, S \rangle$

conclusion

Non linguistic evidence

Premises

Arguments for PR

variables that are bound

Discharged Hypotheses

Commitment to support (conclusive or defeasible)

IV.2

Second problem:

the relevant notion of inference

Problems concerning inferentialism

2) What is an inference?

An inference: a transition
from premisses
to conclusions

There are many notions of “inference”, which differ with respect to (at least) seven factors.

See C. Cozzo, "Inference and compulsion", in E. Moriconi (ed.), *Second Pisa Colloquium in Logic, Language and Epistemology*. ETS. pp. 162-180 (2014)

Seven factors

- i. Nature of premisses and conclusions
- ii. Subject: the entity that makes the inference
- iii. Relation inference-subject
- iv. Relation premisses-conclusion
- v. Conclusiveness-defeasibility
- vi. Public or private character
- vii. Context

Two possibilities concerning the relation inference-subject

- 1) The inference is an event, or a process that happens to the subject beyond her/his voluntary control.
- 2) The inference is a conscious and deliberate act of the subject.

Three possibilities concerning the relation premisses-conclusion

- 1) An **abstract relation** between the propositions expressed by the premisses and the proposition expressed by the conclusion.
- 2) A **causal relation**: the subject's acceptance of the premisses causes the subject's acceptance of the conclusion.
- 3) A **normative relation**: *if* the subject accepts the premisses, the subject *ought* to accept the conclusion.

IV.3

Third problem: holism

Problems concerning inferentialism

3) Does inferentialism lead to meaning-holism?

Meaning holism

Meaning-holism is the thesis that in order to understand a statement one must understand the whole language.

Many philosophers think that inferentialism leads to meaning holism.

Many philosophers think
that meaning-holism
has absurd consequences

«[According to] a holistic view of language [...] there is no adequate way of understanding the statement short of knowing the entire language.»

M. Dummett, *Truth and Other Enigmas*, p. 218

“[holism] leaves it a mystery how we manage to communicate with one another as successfully as we do”

M. Dummett, *The Logical Basis of Metaphysics* ,
p. 237

On what grounds
can one claim that
inferentialism leads to meaning holism?

Holistic determination of single inferences

FACT: given any pair of statements S_1 , S_2 we cannot rule out that some part of the epistemic background may generate a new inferential link between S_1 and S_2 .

The epistemic background at time t :

all accepted assertions, arguments,
forms of inference, relevant questions
at time t .

IF

the epistemic background changes,

THEN

new inferences involving S may arise

An example:

we found something in an empty room

We found this bloodstain in room 7

We found this bloodstain in room 7

Tom was in room 7

We found this bloodstain in room 7

This inference
requires a
justification

Tom was in room 7

We found this bloodstain in room 7

This inference
requires a
justification

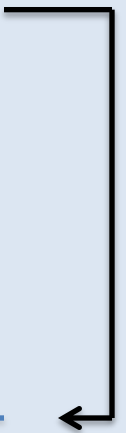
Tom was in room 7

The justification depends
on the epistemic background

EPISTEMIC BACKGROUND: molecular biology

We found this bloodstain in room 7

Tom was in room 7



An example

When molecular biology was added to the epistemic background, many new inferential links were established.

Holistic determination of single inferences

FACT: given any pair of statements S_1 , S_2 we cannot rule out that some part of the epistemic background may generate a new inferential link between S_1 and S_2 .

Holistic determination of single inferences

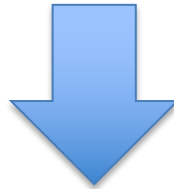
FACT: given any pair of statements S_1 , S_2 we cannot rule out that some part of the epistemic background may generate a new inferential link between S_1 and S_2 .



Holism of the set of inferential links

Holistic determination of single inferences

FACT: given any pair of statements S_1 , S_2 we cannot rule out that some part of the epistemic background may generate a new inferential link between S_1 and S_2 .



Holism of the set of inferential links

FACT: for any statement S , the set of all legitimate inferences involving S depends on the whole epistemic background

Holism of the set of inferential links

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What about inferential role ?

Does inferential role depend
on the whole epistemic background?

Does holism of inferential links
lead to holism of inferential role?

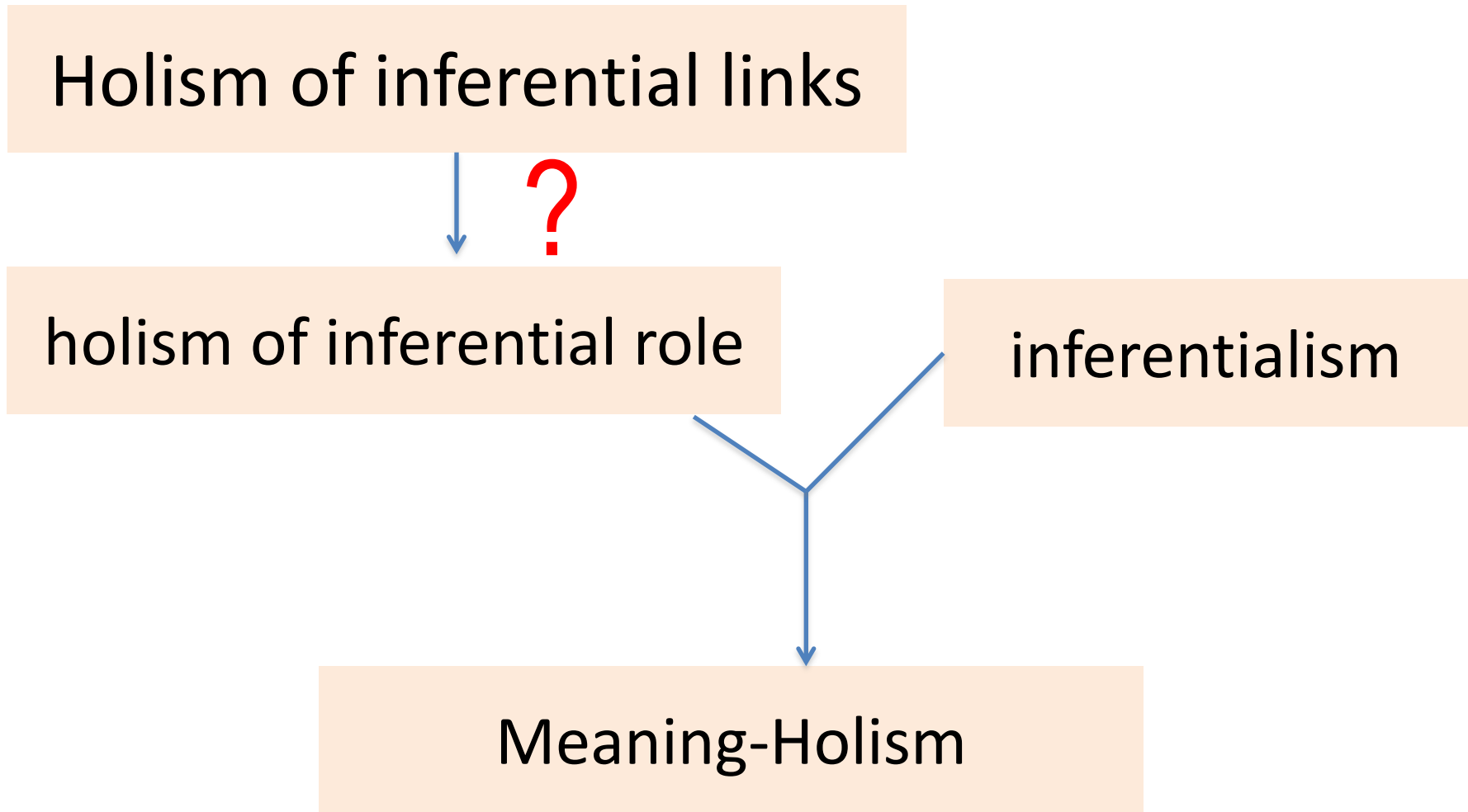
Holism of inferential links



holism of inferential role

inferentialism

Meaning-Holism



Question:

Does holism of inferential links
lead to holism of inferential role?

R. Brandom, *Articulating Reasons*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge 2000.

C. Cozzo, "Does Epistemological Holism Lead to Meaning Holism?", in **Topoi** 21, 2002, pp.25-45

A crucial question

Is the “inferential role of S” the set of **all** (legitimate) inferences involving S?

A crucial question

Is the “inferential role of S” the set of **all** (legitimate) inferences involving S?

YES: Holism of inferential links implies holism of inferential role.

A crucial question

Is the “inferential role of S” the set of **all** (legitimate) inferences involving S?

YES: HOLISTIC
INFERENTIALISM
(meaning-holism)

A crucial question

Is the “inferential role of S” the set of **all** (legitimate) inferences involving S?

NO:

ONLY **SOME** INFERENCES
ARE **MEANING CONSTITUTIVE**

A crucial question

Is the “inferential role of S” the set of **all** (legitimate) inferences involving S?

NO:

NON-HOLISTIC
INFERENCEALISM
IS POSSIBLE

Differences

HOLISTIC INFERENTIALISM

Hartry Field,

Gil Harman,

Robert Brandom

NON-HOLISTIC
INFERENTIALISM

Michael Dummett,

Dag Prawitz

Cesare Cozzo

IV.4

**Fourth problem:
analytic validity**

Problems concerning inferentialism

4) Does inferentialism lead to the view that some inferences are analytically valid (i.e. valid in virtue of meaning)?

A statement S is analytically true
if, and only if,
 S is true only in virtue of meaning.

An **inference** I is analytically valid
if, and only if,
 I is valid (preserves truth)
only in virtue of meaning.

Problems concerning inferentialism

4) Does inferentialism lead to the view that some inferences are analytically valid (i.e. valid in virtue of meaning)?

Problems concerning inferentialism

4) Does inferentialism lead to the view that some inferences are analytically valid (i.e. valid in virtue of meaning)?

Answer 1) Yes, if an inference *I* belongs to the meaning of a statement *S*, a speaker who understands *S* thereby a priori knows **the validity of *I***.

Problems concerning inferentialism

4) Does inferentialism lead to the view that some inferences are analytically valid (i.e. valid in virtue of meaning)?

Answer 2) No, an inference that belongs to the meaning of a statement, can nevertheless be wrong.

The important question

Can meaning-constitutive inferences be wrong?

The important question

Can inferences belonging to inferential roles be wrong?

The important question

Can inferences belonging to inferential roles be wrong?

Two kinds of answer

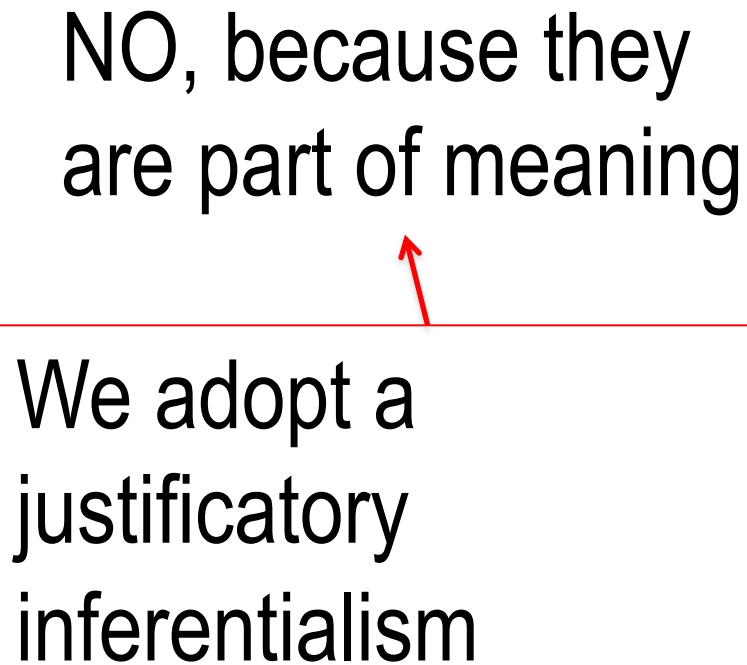
The important question

Can inferences belonging to inferential roles be wrong?

Two kinds of answer

NO, because they
are part of meaning

We adopt a
justificatory
inferentialism



The important question

Can inferences belonging to inferential roles be wrong?

Two kinds of answer

Yes. Our meanings
are fallible

We adopt a fallibilist
inferentialism




The important question

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Two kinds of answer

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INFERENTIALISM

INFERENTIALISM

```
graph TD; A[INFERENTIALISM] --- B[JUSTIFICATORY]
```

JUSTIFICATORY

INFERENTIALISM

```
graph TD; A[INFERENTIALISM] --> B[JUSTIFICATORY]; A --> C[FALLIBILIST]
```

JUSTIFICATORY

FALLIBILIST

INFERENTIALISM

```
graph TD; A[INFERENTIALISM] --> B[JUSTIFICATORY]; A --> C[FALLIBILIST];
```

JUSTIFICATORY

Meaning-constitutive
inferences are
analytically valid

FALLIBILIST

INFERENTIALISM

```
graph TD; A[INFERENTIALISM] --> B[JUSTIFICATORY]; A --> C[FALLIBILIST]; C --> D["Meaning-constitutive inferences are not analytically valid. They can be rationally criticized and rejected according to how well they contribute to organize common experience in a given epistemic situation"]; style B fill:#f8d7da; style C fill:#d4edda; style D fill:#d4edda;
```

JUSTIFICATORY

FALLIBILIST

Meaning-constitutive inferences are not analytically valid. They can be rationally criticized and rejected according to how well they contribute to organize common experience in a given epistemic situation

INFERENTIALISM

JUSTIFICATORY

Meaning-constitutive inferences are analytically valid

FALLIBILIST

Meaning-constitutive inferences are not analytically valid. They can be rationally criticized and rejected according to how well they contribute to organize common experience in a given epistemic situation

JUSTIFICATORY INFERENTIALISM



**Tolerant
inferentialism:**
meaning-constitutive
(rules of) inferences
can be chosen arbitrarily

JUSTIFICATORY INFERENTIALISM



A priori restrictive inferentialism:

Before choosing meaning-constitutive inferences, we need a guarantee that they are rightly chosen.

JUSTIFICATORY INFERENTIALISM



A priori restrictive inferentialism:

Before choosing meaning constitutive inferences we must recognize that they have a restrictive property X that guarantees that they are right.

JUSTIFICATORY INFERENTIALISM



A priori restrictive inferentialism:

only (rules of) inferences
with the special
restrictive property X
can constitute
meanings.

JUSTIFICATORY INFERENCEALISM

```
graph TD; A[JUSTIFICATORY INFERENCEALISM] --> B[Tolerant inferentialism: meaning-constitutive (rules of) inferences can be chosen arbitrarily]; A --> C[A priori restrictive inferentialism: only (rules of) inferences with the special restrictive property X can constitute meanings.];
```

Tolerant inferentialism:
meaning-constitutive
(rules of) inferences
can be chosen arbitrarily

A priori restrictive inferentialism:
only (rules of) inferences
with the special
restrictive property X
can constitute
meanings.

Are there tolerant inferentialists?

It seems that
Wittgenstein and Carnap were tolerant inferentialists

Inferentialism in Wittgenstein

Bemerkungen über die Grundlagen der Mathematik

«We can conceive the rules of inference [...] as giving the signs their meaning [...] In this sense rules of inference cannot be right or wrong»

(Wittgenstein 1956: VII, § 30)

Inferentialism in Carnap

Logische Syntax der Sprache

«let any postulates and any rules of inference be chosen arbitrarily; then this choice, whatever it may be, will determine what meaning is to be assigned to the fundamental logical symbols.»
(Carnap 1934: v)

Carnap: *Principle of Tolerance*

«It is not our business to set up prohibitions, but to arrive at conventions. [...] In logic there are no morals. Everyone is at liberty to build up his own logic, i.e. his own form of language, as he wishes »

(Carnap 1934: § 17)

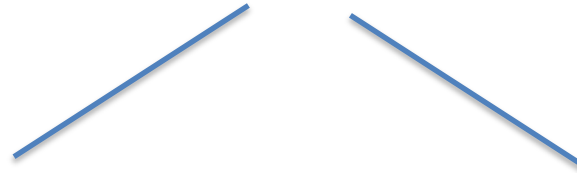
IV.5

Fifth problem: logic

problems concerning inferentialism

5) What are the consequences of inferentialism for the choice of a logic?

INFERENTIALISM ABOUT LOGIC



**PURE
INFERENTIALISM
ABOUT LOGIC**

**LOGICAL
EXPRESSIVISM**

Pure inferentialism about logic

The meaning of a logical constant (connective, quantifier, etc.) is given by some rules of inference concerning it.

Brandom's logical expressivism

logical vocabulary has a special
expressive role

Brandom's logical expressivism

NON-LOGICAL
WORDS

Brandom's logical expressivism

NON-LOGICAL
WORDS

We give meaning to
them by attributing
an inferential role

Brandom's logical expressivism

NON-LOGICAL
WORDS

LOGICAL
WORDS

We give meaning to
them by attributing
an inferential role

Brandom's logical expressivism

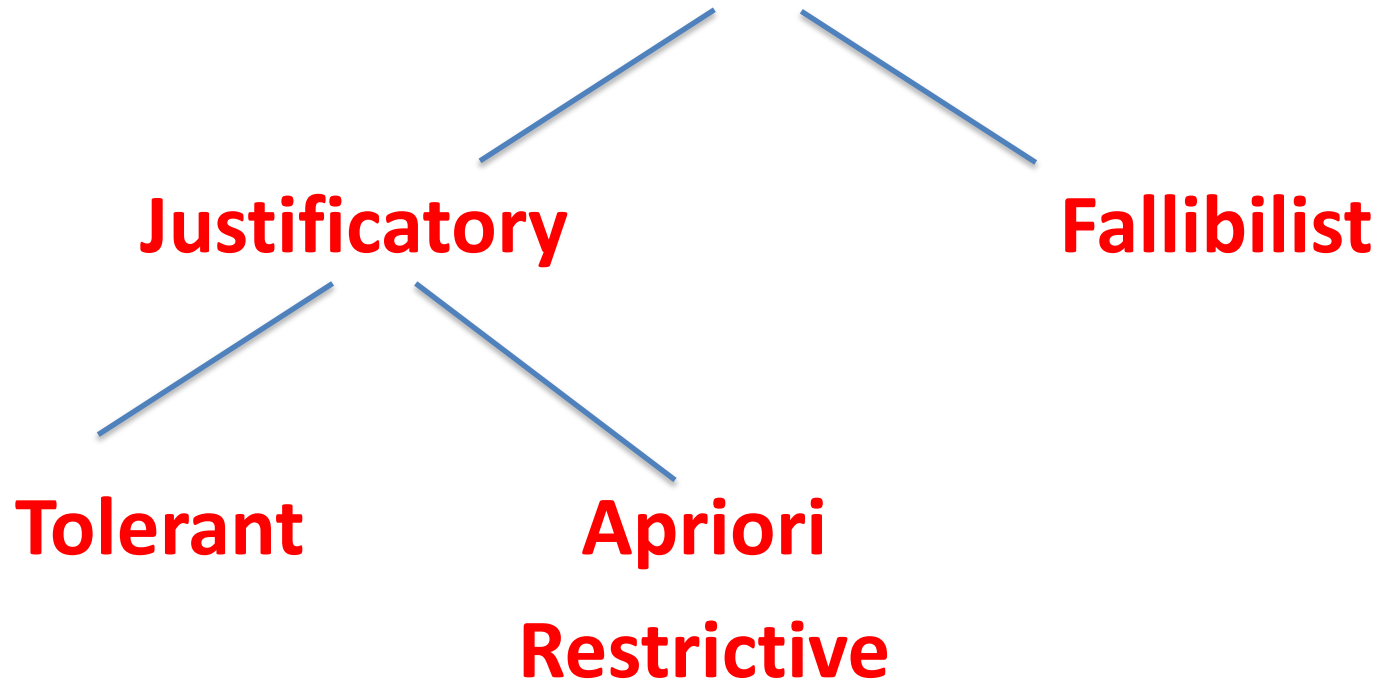
NON-LOGICAL
WORDS

We give meaning to
them by attributing
an inferential role

LOGICAL
WORDS

have an expressive role:
they express
the inferential role
of non-logical words.

PURE INFERENTIALISM ABOUT LOGIC



Tolerant inferentialism about logic

Everyone is at liberty to create meanings for logical constants, by fixing corresponding inference rules and thus to build up a logic, i.e. a form of language, where certain inferences are deductively valid in virtue of the meanings of the logical constants.

Many objections can be raised
against tolerant inferentialism

One of which is

Arthur Prior's objection

Prior, A. N. (1960), "The Runabout Inference-Ticket ", in *Analysis*, 21, pp. 38-9.

Prior's objection

If the meaning of a connective is given by inference rules, we can have paradoxical connectives, like *tonk*.

tonk -rules

$$\text{I-Tonk} = \frac{P}{P\text{-tonk-}Q}$$

$$\text{E-Tonk} = \frac{P\text{-tonk-}Q}{Q}$$

tonk -reasoning

$$2+2=4$$

(I-Tonk)

$2+2=4$ -**tonk**-**John Kennedy is still alive**

(E-Tonk)

John Kennedy is still alive

tonk -reasoning

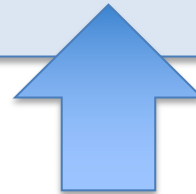
$$2+2=4$$

(I-Tonk)

$2+2=4$ -**tonk**-**John Kennedy is still alive**

(E-Tonk)

John Kennedy is still alive



This cannot be analytically valid!

tonk -reasoning

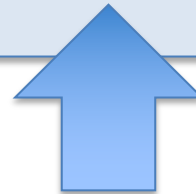
$$2+2=4$$

(I-Tonk)

$2+2=4$ -**tonk**-**John Kennedy is still alive**

(E-Tonk)

John Kennedy is still alive



This cannot be deductively valid!

The implausibility
of tolerant inferentialism
can be a reason to adopt
restrictive inferentialism

Restrictive inferentialism about logic

We specify a **restrictive property X** such that only rules of inference that have property X can really give meaning to logical constants and can generate inferences that are deductively valid in virtue of meaning.

Are there restrictive inferentialists?

Are there restrictive inferentialists?

Yes, many.

Are there restrictive inferentialists?

Michael Dummett
and Dag Prawitz
propose a theory of meaning
that can be seen as
restrictive inferentialism

For Dummett and Prawitz
all meaning-constitutive rules of inference
must have a restrictive property X

What is the restrictive property X?

What is the restrictive property X?

X is the property of being an introduction rule which can be specified in terms of sentences (premisses, discharged assumptions) of lower complexity than the conclusion (or atomic, if the conclusion is atomic).

Main problem

There are many inferences that are treated by speakers as meaning-constitutive and do not have property X.

If we think that
restrictive inferentialism is too restrictive,
we can adopt an inferentialism
that is not justificatory and not restrictive
fallibilist inferentialism

FALLIBILIST INFERENTIALISM

See

C. Cozzo, “On the Copernican Turn in Semantics”,
in *THEORIA*, 2008, 74, 295–317.

C. Cozzo, "Cogency and context", **Topoi** 38, 2019,
pp. 505–516.

FALLIBILIST INFERENTIALISM

Circumscription of meaning-constitutive:

meaning constitutive uses are all uses that are treated as meaning constitutive

Inferentialism: the sense of a statement S is given by the meaning-constitutive (immediate) argumentation steps in which S is involved.

Fallibilism: meaning-constitutive rules can be rationally criticized and rejected according to how well the resulting language organizes experience in a given epistemic situation

What is treated as meaning-constitutive?

A linguistic act *is treated as meaning-constitutive by a speaker Y* if, and only if, it is a **primitive use** for Y

A use U of E is a **primitive use of E for Y** ,

if, and only if,

Y expects of every competent speaker P that
in using E , P accepts U and
neither acknowledges the possibility, nor the
need of giving any justification of U .

Fallibilism in what sense?

Fallibilist inferentialism
is fallibilism about language

Critical evaluation of a language

We evaluate how well a language organizes common experience in a given epistemic situation through a cost-benefit analysis where different criteria of rational acceptability are considered: intelligibility, simplicity, epistemic fruitfulness, consistency, beauty, etc.

Fallibilist inferentialism
is fallibilism about LOGIC

Fallibilism about logic

The choice of a logic (which is part of the choice of a language) is a fallible choice depending on a cost-benefit-analysis.

(See C. Cozzo, "Epistemic Truth and Excluded Middle", in THEORIA, a Swedish Journal of Philosophy, LXIV, 2-3, 1998, pp. 243-82)

IV.6

Sixth problem: reference

Some problems concerning inferentialism

- 6) Does the notion of reference play any role in inferentialism?

REFERENCE

a relation between
linguistic expressions
and (non-linguistic) objects

Inferentialism

meaning should not be explained in terms of a relation of *reference*

meaning should be explained in terms of use in reasoning and argumentation

**Does inferentialism abandon
the notion of reference altogether?**

IV.7

Seventh problem: truth

Some problems concerning inferentialism

- 7) Does the notion of truth play any role in inferentialism?

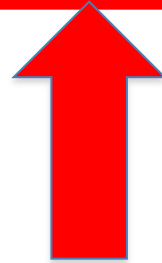
Inferentialism

meaning should not be explained
in terms of *truth-conditions*

meaning should be explained in terms
of use in reasoning and argumentation

Does inferentialism abandon
the notion of truth altogether?

The problem of reference
and the problem of truth
are connected:



the reference
of an expression E
is the contribution of E
to the truth (or falsity)
of the statements in which E occurs

The problem of reference
and the problem of truth
can be handled together,
starting from truth

Three conceptions of truth

- 1) Deflationist
- 2) Realist
- 3) Epistemic

Deflationist conception of truth

The word «true» does not serve to attribute a special property, common to all statements that are true

Deflationist conception of truth

The meaning of the word “true”
is given by principles like the equivalence thesis

E) it is true that A if, and only if, A.

Deflationist conception of truth

The word «true» has an expressive function: it enables us to say things that otherwise we could not say.

Example: Every sentence Kant wrote is true.

Deflationist conception of truth

There is nothing more to say about truth.

Realist conception of truth

True statements have an objective property in common (i.e. truth), which is independent of our epistemic practices.

Realist conception of truth

Truth is explained in terms of some ontologic notion taken as primitive.

Realist conception of truth

For example: truth is 'correspondence' with reality, with states of affairs, etc.

Epistemic conception of truth

The notion of truth is explained in terms of our epistemic practices.

Question

Which of the three conceptions
of reference and truth
will the inferentialist adopt?

Answer

Different philosophers have developed different versions of inferentialism.

Some combined with a deflationist conception of truth (and reference).

Some combined with a realist conception of truth (and reference).

Some with an epistemic conception of truth (and reference)