Carnap's notion of analyticity and the two wings of analytic philosophy

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From Kant to Quine

Kant's notion of analyticity

- For Kant, a statement of the form "A is B" is analytically true, iff B is attributing a property to A that is already somewhat contained in the notion A

- Thus, for example,

> (1)   A bachelor is an unmarried man.

is an analytic truth, for Kant

- The language (the concepts) involved here are somewhat naturally *given*

N-analytic philosophy

- The mainstream of post-WWII analytic philosophy (hereafter: **n-analytic philosophy**) shared Kant's attitude to take the language for granted

- Unlike Kant, however, n-analytic philosophers took the language to be *an empirical entity*

- Whether and in what sense (1) is an analytic truth or not depends on the empirical status of our („natural") language

Naturalism and the first dogma

- **Davidson: [1] […] the task of a theory of meaning as I conceive it is not to change, to improve, or reform a language, but to describe and understand it.**
- We do not *stipulate* meanings but *investigate* them
- There is (virtually) no truth by virtue of meaning because meaning always interferes with reference
- This leads to an empirically informed version of Kant's transcendental notion of analyticity
- → Quine (1952): **The first dogma of empiricism** has to be rejected

And Carnap?

- For Carnap, analyticity is a matter of convention and „meaning postulates":

[2] Our explication [...] will refer to semantical language-systems, not to natural languages. It shares this character with most of the explications of philosophically important concepts given in modern logic, e.g., Tarski's explication of truth. It seems to me that the problems of explicating concepts of this kind for natural languages are of an entirely different nature. (Carnap, 1952, p. 66)

Quine (desperately): Hähh!?
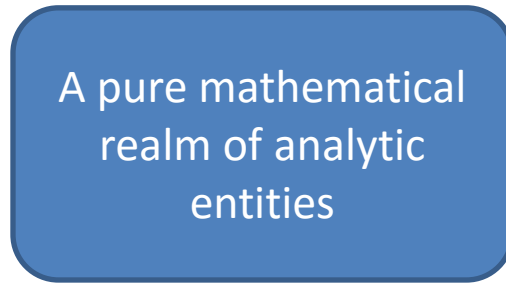[3] [W]hy all this *creative* reconstruction, all this *make-believe*?

The point is that Carnap was concerned
with something entirely different

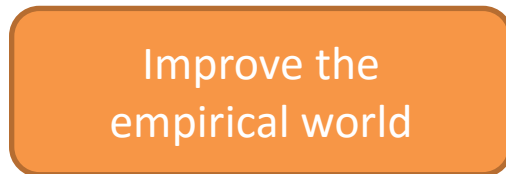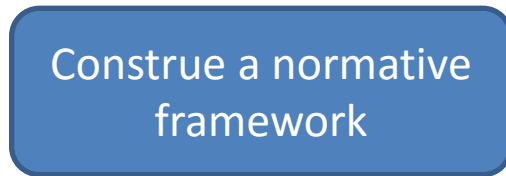# A-analytic philosophy considers artificial languages

- Carnap was simply not interested in „natural language“ (n-analyticity)

- For Carnap, analyticity *is* a property of *statements* but not of statements from any empirically given source: **analytic statements belong to an artificially construed analytic realm**

- Carnap developed a program of **a-analytic philosophy** that was based on *language planning* and the construction of *artificial languages*

- These languages *are analytical as a whole. We talk analytical, if we talk these languages* (and we do not talk analytical, of course, if we talk any natural language)

The two tasks of a-analytic philosophy

First task:
Construe the
analytic realm

Second task:
Talk analytical

A pure mathematical
realm of analytic
entities

⬇

Construe a normative
framework

⬇

Improve the
empirical world

⬅ The empirical
world

First Task: meaning postulates

- Let L be a formal language, i.e., a set of formulas being closed under logical consequence
- A sentence of L that follows from any premise is called *analytic*
- In order to increase or decrease the amount of analytic sentences we may add or remove „meaning postulates"
- (Quine: no meaning postulates beyond the laws of „pure logic"
- Carnap: such a pure logical framework would not provide any useful analytic realm at all)
- Foundationalism issue: incompleteness (ignored)

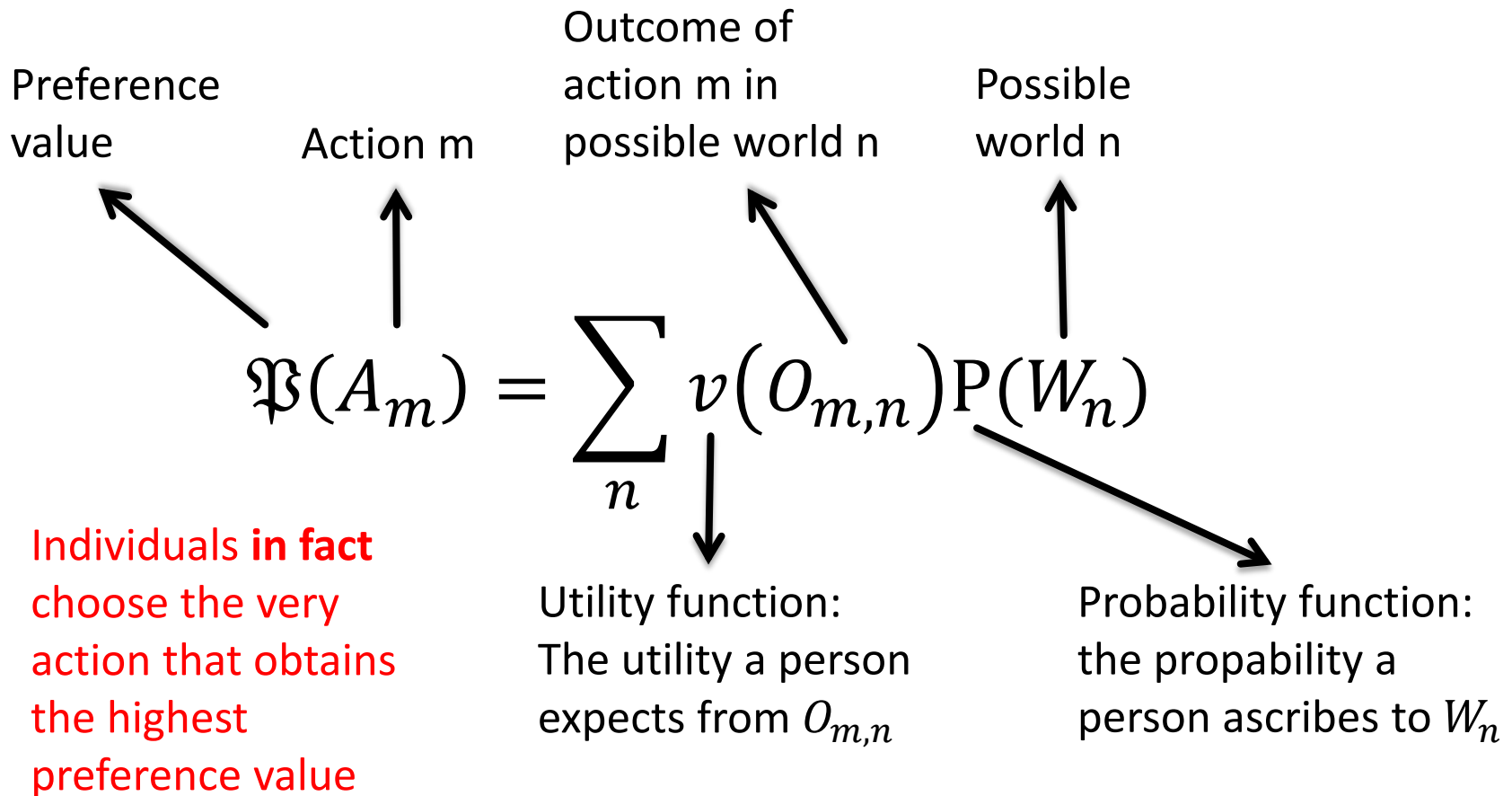# Second task:
Counteract reality in an analytical way

- N-analytic philosophy is entirely **descriptive** – the aim is *to understand* how language (and the world out there) works
  → „naturalism" (cf. Reply to Strawson, p. 933)
- A-analytic philosophy is **normative** – the aim is *to counteract reality* by means of the analytic framework (in the sense of task 1)

Example:
Decision Theory

The n-analytic version, descriptive

Preference value

Action m

Outcome of action m in possible world n

Possible world n

$$\mathfrak{P}(A_m) = \sum_n v(O_{m,n})\mathrm{P}(W_n)$$

Individuals **in fact** choose the very action that obtains the highest preference value

Utility function: The utility a person expects from $O_{m,n}$
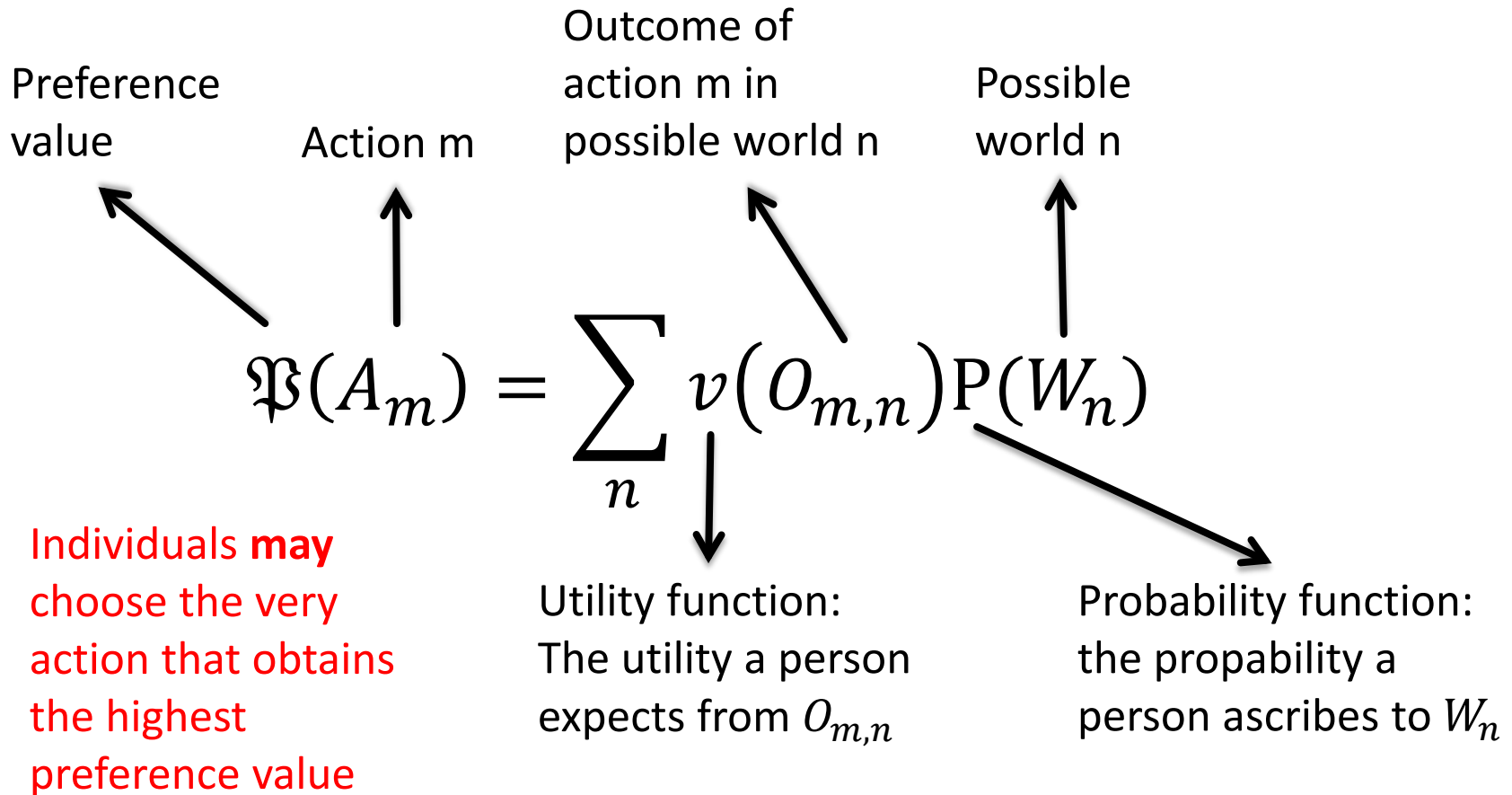
Probability function: the propability a person ascribes to W_n
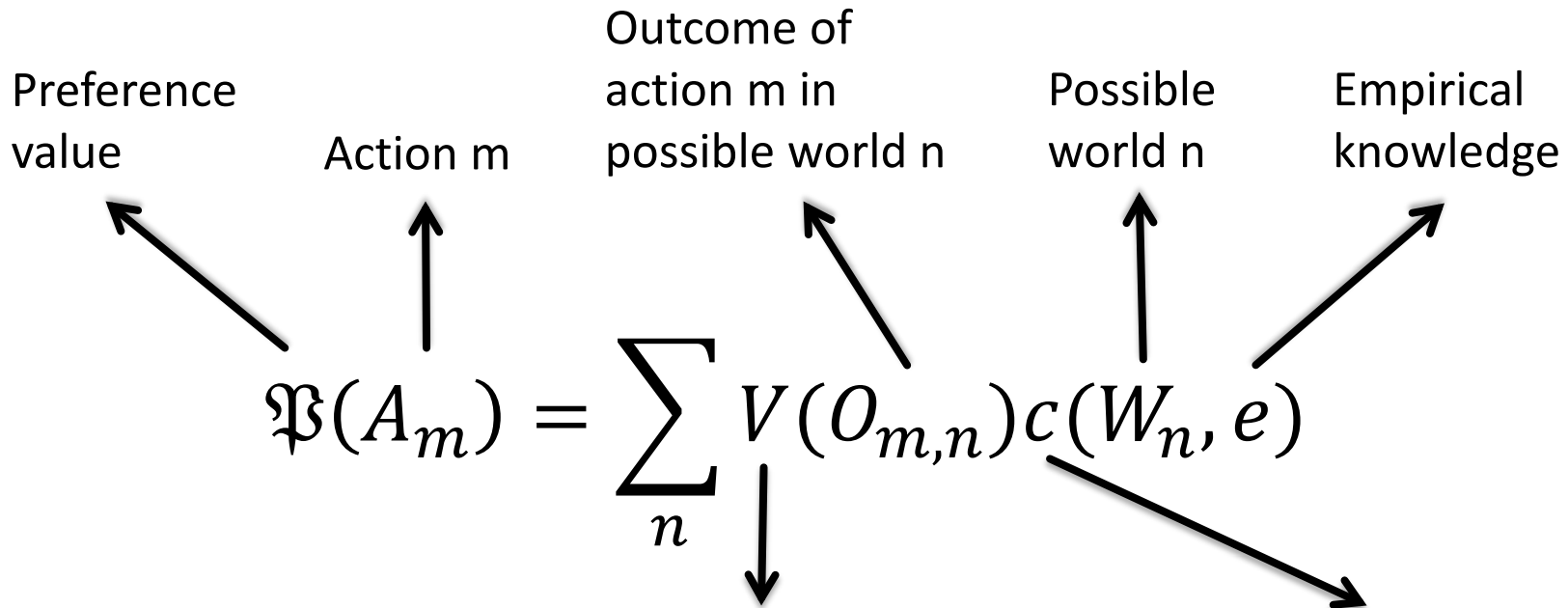
N-analytic versus a-analytic

- The n-analytic standpoint in decision theory (Savage, de Finetti) recommends a descriptive stance:

- The empirical hypothesis is that individuals *in fact* decide in such a way that they choose the action that obtains the highest preference value

- Carnap's a-analytic standpoint recommends to take the decision theoretic framework in a normative way: you may choose the very action that obtains the highest preference value

- It is not just that we somewhat have to flip the framework to the normative here:

The n-analytic version, normatively flipped

Preference value

Action m

Outcome of action m in possible world n

Possible world n

$$\mathfrak{P}(A_m) = \sum_n v(O_{m,n})\mathrm{P}(W_n)$$

Individuals **may** choose the very action that obtains the highest preference value

Utility function: The utility a person expects from $O_{m,n}$

Probability function: the propability a person ascribes to W_n

Rather, we have to construe
an entirely new framework
(which appears to be normative,
in a political way)

The a-analytic version

Preference value

Action m

Outcome of action m in possible world n

Possible world n

Empirical knowledge

$$\mathfrak{P}(A_m) = \sum_n V(O_{m,n}) c(W_n, e)$$

Choose the very action A_m that obtains the highest preference value $\mathfrak{P}$

Value function: reflects the values of a perfectly rational human being

Become a p.r.h.b.

Confirmation function: the objective degree of likeliness of W_n, against the background of e

Adopt c rather than P

The robot as a role model

[4] [Since] our goal is not the psychology of actual human behavior in the field of inductive reasoning, but rather inductive logic as a system of rules, we do not aim at realism. We make the further idealization that X is not only perfectly rational but has also an infallible memory. Our assumptions deviate from reality very much if the observer and agent is a natural human being, but not so much if we think of X as a robot with organs of perception, data processing, decision making, and acting. Thinking about the design of a robot will help us finding rules of rationality. Once found, these rules can be applied not only in the construction of a robot but also in advising human beings in their effort to make their decisions as rational as their limited abilities permit. (Carnap 1962, p. 309)

- Even perfectly rational human beings may adopt entirely incompatible value systems

- There exist perfectly rational Social Democrats but also perfectly rational Nazis

- But still, only perfectly rational human beings act in a way that their actions are always in perfect accordance with their values

- (Thus, we may desire Nazis to be irrational in some way but Social Democrats are demanded to be perfectly rational)

- **At any rate, a world where our decisions do not correspond to our values and where our values are irrationaly construed would be only a mess: let us improve the world by means of becoming perfectly rational**

Interlude:
How (the hell) might this framework be used

First purpose: explication

- An obvious purpose of frameworks like the just described is **to explicate** certain philosophical notions such as
  - Induction
  - Rational Decision
  - Perfect Rationality
  - Value
  - …
- But this is certainly not the only purpose Carnap had in mind (otherwise writings such as Carnap 1971, 1980 would have been much ado about almost nothing)

Second purpose: demonstration

- Carnap certainly had in mind that real human people may use frameworks like that, in order to improve their decisions
- On the other hand, it was certainly not Carnap's idea that people might use his frameworks in exactly this very form in which he developed them
- Rather, he wanted to demonstrate how a framework of the form he intended might be like
- It is only this second purpose that makes Carnap's framework a normatively strong one!

Political aspects

Toward a radical reform of life

- We use the decision theoretic framework in order to establish new ways of reasoning
- We want to establish human beings of a new form (following the role model of the robot)
- This is a deeply political task
- Rational planning is a way to establish a new form of life
- Decision theory meats social democracy

[5] It was and still is my conviction that the great problems of the organization of economy and the organization of the world at the present time, in the era of industrialization, cannot possibly be solved by „the free interplay of forces", but require **rational planning**. For the organization of economy this means socialism of some form; for the organization of the world it means a gradual development toward a world government. However, neither socialism nor world government are regarded as absolute ends; they are only organizational means which, according to our present knowledge, seem to give the best promise of leading to a realization of the ultimate aim. This aim is a form of life in which the well-being and the development of the individual is valued most highly, not the power of the state. (Schilpp 1963, 83)

Two wings of analytic philosophy

Carnap on language planning

[6] Only slowly did I recognize how large the divergence is between the views of the **two wings of analytic philosophy in the question of natural versus constructed languages**: the view which I shared with my friends in the Vienna Circle and later with many philosophers in the United States, and the view of those philosophers who are chiefly influenced by G. E. Moore and Wittgenstein. (Schilpp, 1963, p. 68)

Who is the enemy?

- Carnap distances himself here from the (basically British) tradition of so-called „ordinary language philosophy" (cf. Strawson's contribution to the Schilpp volume!)

- However, the rejection of language planning is by no means a unique selling point of OLP

- Thus, Carnap's definitions of „first" and „second" wing have to be modified:

- First Wing: a-analytic philosophy as being based on the **political stance of language planning**

- Second Wing: n-analytic philosophy as being based on an entirely **naturalistic and descriptive stance**

- (there is also some language planning involved in n-analytic philosophy, however, nothing political)

The first wing is the left wing

- The first wing of analytic philosophy (= a-analytic philosophy) obviously *is* the left wing of the Vienna Circle (one may add Tarski and Reichenbach here and a small number of other representatives of this movement in the US)
- The second wing of analytic philosophy (= n-analytic philosophy) converges with the right wing of the Vienna Circle
- However, the vast majority of analytic philosophy after 1945 certainly belongs to the "second wing" which almost entirely ruled out the "first wing", during the six decades past
- Cf. Reisch 2005

So: Who is right, after all?

(do not take this too seriously, if you are a naturalist)

It depends!

- n-analytic philosophy is a politically neutral project – go for it, if your task is to be a naturalist and leave the world as it is (but why are you doing philosophy then?)
- a-analytic philosophy is a philosophical project in a much more political sense – go for it, if your task is to change the world

- There is a certain amount of complementarity involved here, i.e., you may also need the frameworks of n-analytic philosophy, for your normative tasks of a-analyticity
- But the n-analytic frameworks firstly need to be transform them, in order to become a-analytically useful