

CARNAP, POPPER, AND KUHN ON THE RATIONALITY OF SCIENCE: A REVISIONIST ACCOUNT

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According to the standard account, while Carnap and Popper hold similar views concerning the rationality of science, Kuhn's views on the subject differ widely from theirs. Carnap and Popper are rationalists, the standard account goes, because they believe that science employs a universal method; true, it is said, Carnap advocates confirmationism as the method of science, and Popper favors falsificationism, but this is a relatively minor difference when compared with Kuhn's denial of any universal method. Since the standard account takes Kuhn to believe that there are no paradigm-independent reasons for choosing one paradigm over another, Kuhn becomes a relativist, and to the extent that he claims that the choice involves personal tastes, he is a subjectivist.

In my talk I argue that the standard account is seriously flawed with respect to Carnap. On the other hand, Kuhn's views regarding theory (paradigm) choice have changed considerably over time. I document this change briefly and claim that one of Kuhn's most important contributions is to redefine our notion of scientific rationality, a point not sufficiently appreciated by his critics.

As for Carnap, while the standard account I mentioned above makes him a rationalist like Popper, Michael Friedman, who has arguably given us the most sobering revisionary picture of logical empiricism, turns him into too much of a relativist than he really is. I argue that these conflicting interpretations all fail to recognize that in Carnap there are two distinct notions of justification, and *a fortiori*, two distinct kinds of rationality, and that the recognition of these distinctions is the key to the understanding Carnap's position vis-à-vis the rationality-relativism issue.