Chapter 23

ARTHUR PAP (1921-1959):
A BRIEF INTELLECTUAL BIOGRAPHY

Alfons Keupink

Arthur Pap was born on 1 October 1921 in Zürich, Switzerland. His father was a successful businessman. Pap’s talent in music showed early. For a while, he studied with the classical pianist Walther Frey. During his gymnasium (high school) years, Pap developed a passion for philosophy, with a primary interest in Hegel and (neo-)Kantian speculative philosophy. While studying at Zürich University, he took some courses in philosophy and logic from Karl Dürre.

Being of Jewish descent, life became increasingly difficult for the Pap family during World War II. They were forced to leave Switzerland and, after a long and difficult journey through the still unoccupied part of France, Spain, and Portugal, arrived in the United States in February 1941, settling in New York City. Pap wanted to study philosophy in college, but Columbia University would not admit him straightaway, because it had a quota on the number of Jewish students. He therefore entered the Juilliard School of Music before starting his study at Columbia in the fall of 1941. Pap continued to practice the piano intensively well into 1945.

After obtaining his B.A. at Columbia, Pap went to Yale University in 1943 for his master’s degree. Cassirer became his supervisor and provided the original stimulus for Pap’s work on hypothetical necessity and the functional a pri-
ori. Cassirer was guest professor at Yale during the period 1941-1944, where he held joint seminars on philosophy of history (1941-2), philosophy of natural science (1942-3, together with Henry Margenau), and epistemology (1943-4, together with Frederic B. Fitch and Charles L. Stevenson). Stevenson, who had studied with G. E. Moore and Wittgenstein in the early 1930s at Cambridge and, together with Nelson Goodman, had attended Quine’s informal seminars on Carnap’s Aufbau (Carnap 1928) at Harvard (1935), was professor
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Stevenson was an important formative influence on Pap's philosophical orientation. Stevenson introduced him to the empiricist tradition in epistemology, notably Hume, Moore's refutation of idealism on the basis of "common sense," and through Ayer's *Language, Truth, and Logic* (Ayer 1952b) the central doctrine of the logical empiricists (verificationist theory of meaning). Pap's first papers in analytic philosophy, dating from 1946, deal exclusively with issues in meta-ethics, or the meaning-analysis of ethical judgments (Pap 1946a; Pap 1946c; Pap 1946d). Pap remained interested in analytical ethics throughout his life (see e.g. Pap 1962, chapter 21 and Pap 1961). Moreover, in later years, Pap tended to downplay the importance of his early papers at Yale, written under the guidance of Cassirer (Pap 1943a; Pap 1943b; Pap 1944).

In 1944 Pap decided to return to Columbia where he completed his Ph.D. thesis under the supervision of Ernest Nagel, who first rejected the manuscript. However, it won the Woodbridge prize for best philosophical dissertation and was subsequently published as *The A Priori in Physical Theory* (Pap 1946b). In the first part, entitled "The Functional A Priori," Pap develops his own interpretation of the synthetic a priori in science, referring not only to Cassirer but also to C. I. Lewis (see Pap 1968) and J. Dewey. The second part, entitled "Application of the Functional Theory of the A Priori to Newtonian Mechanics" provides an analysis of the methodological procedures of modern physics, with special epistemological attention to the counterfactual nature of the basic theoretical laws in physics.

In the remainder of 1946, Pap taught extension courses in philosophy at Columbia. He was appointed instructor at the undergraduate college of the University of Chicago the next year. There he developed a lifelong intellectual friendship with Rudolf Carnap. Pap did not stay long, however, since he was not only required to teach chemistry (a course on Huygens's theory of light) alongside philosophy, but also because he had very little latitude in how to teach philosophy. Before the year 1947 was over, Pap gave notice and left for the City College of the City University of New York. Pap later remarked that he learned most from Carnap and Bertrand Russell (Pap 1958c, p. xvi). He frequently defended Carnap's views on semantic analysis against opponents (see e.g. Pap 1955d; Pap 1955b; Pap 1955f; Pap 1960), but differed strongly with him on the possibility of being able to distinguish between analytic and synthetic meaning components of disposition concepts (see in particular Pap 1953d; Pap 1958a; Pap 1963b). Perhaps it was through Cassirer that Pap learned of Carnap's work on disposition concepts in the late 1930s. Certainly Cassirer was well acquainted with the Scandinavian branch of the Vienna Circle and in particular Eino Kaila's exchange with Carnap.

In 1948, Pap worked on what is nowadays perhaps his best known work, *Elements of Analytic Philosophy* (Pap 1949b). Herbert Feigl made early pub-