I. Introduction: "Vienna Circle" and Exile

The expression Reductionism in Exile can be interpreted in two ways: Reductionism develops in exile or Reductionism has gone into exile. Both meanings can be applied to Herbert Feigl’s philosophical development—albeit in a rather unexpected fashion. Since Feigl was a cofounder of the Vienna Circle, which is commonly linked to reductionism, the obvious conclusion is that the expression Reductionism in Exile refers to the geographical distance. But we will see that this interpretation would be too simple.

Feigl took part in almost every theoretical project of the Vienna Circle and helped set up a very influential program of philosophy of science in Minnesota, but his most important achievement is without doubt his identity theory of the mind. In the philosophy of mind, the modern identity theory is characterised as strictly following physicalist and materialist guidelines. Although this applies to Feigl’s theory as well, significant differences to reductive strategies have to be considered. It generally escapes attention that Feigl’s physicalistic approach does not converge with eliminative strategies and that his overall attitude to the mind-body problem expresses itself in not treating mental states reductively. Thus, a peculiar situation arises: Feigl’s influence on philosophy of mind is identified with a program that he did not endorse unreservedly.

In the following, the ambivalence of Feigl’s approach will be examined by outlining special features of Feigl’s identity theory—from the beginning of the Vienna Circle to his later writings—and its importance for current philosophy of mind.
2. Logical Empiricism and the Mind-Body Problem

Feigl’s approach can only be understood against the background of the goals of Logical Empiricism and its “analysis of language and meaning”1 which shaped this century’s philosophy of mind. In all of its phases, the attitude of Logical Empiricism toward the mind-body problem is determined by a definite monism. This applies to Schlick’s “double-aspect theory”, to Carnap’s phenomenalism in Der logische Aufbau der Welt as well as to his later physicalism and Reichenbach’s empirical realism.2 We should remember, however, that within Logical Empiricism the theoretical status of the mind-body problem is controversial: The problem is considered to be a pseudoproblem or, at least, one to be reduced to the logical analysis of mental terms.3

Logical Empiricism held dualistic approaches in modern philosophy responsible for the emergence of the mind-body problem. According to its criticism, dualism inevitably leads to unjustifiable metaphysics4 and semantic confusions that eventually induce the mind-body problem. That is why Logical Empiricism assumes that the mind-body problem will dissolve as soon as dualist approaches can be driven back.

Feigl has a more complex view with regard to the mind-body problem. Although his attitudes change during the development of his philosophy of mind, he adheres to the conviction that the mind-body problem is not a pseudoproblem. His different approaches are even characterised by the attempt to integrate formal structures of epistemological and linguistic dualism into a monist framework. Therefore, Feigl has to be conceded a special role within Logical Empiricism, which had understood itself – if we put aside Schlick’s early works – as the position of an uncompromising monism. Due to its radical monism the relation of Logical Empiricism to philosophy

3. Cf. Feigl, 1981a, p. 289: “The only genuine problem, Carnap claimed, was one of logical analysis, i.e., the question of the formal relations between the concepts that describe the data of first-person-experience, the concepts of physics, and those of (behavioristic) psychology.”