

# Heidegger, Carnap, Husserl, and the Foundations of Rationality

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## §1 Heidegger against Husserl

Transcendentalist ego is itself too far removed from lived experience to be useful for a phenomenological investigation towards Being as such. We must proceed from deeper ends, namely our Being-in-the-world; our thrownness; our fundamental orientation towards the world in mood; etc. This is a *hermeneutical* process because it involves an *interpretation* of our lived experience.

The goal of Husserl's investigations was epistemological - to find a firm basis for the sciences. But it is the history of philosophy - which gave rise to the sciences, and which praises them as the highest form of wisdom - which itself *limits* the phenomenological method; its reliance on *epistemology* and this field's reliance on Cartesian doubt - reconfigured in Husserl as the epoché - its reliance on the ego as disconnected, as *transcending* or *ideal* - *this* is what limits and dooms the Husserlian project. Only through an analysis of our *factual, lived* experience will we be able to understand what drives us toward knowledge.

Rorty says there is a gap left in the destruction of epistemology - this is where we *discuss* - it is where the *logos* happens. Carnap does not allow for fundamental ontology because of his dependence on a naturalistic, epistemological world-view. All of nature, reason, and logic is law-like, strict, non-contradictory. This is surely excellent for making predictions about the world, but it misses the way we actually live; it is a step *beyond* the factual world and into transcendence. Metaphysics exists *beyond* the epistemological. It exists prior to logic; it exists in *logos*, in discussion, in interpretation, in dialogue or *dialectics*. Knowledge proceeds in slow movement towards the true through contradiction and reconciliation - it is dialectical by nature. No epistemology with law-like characteristics - no naturalistic epistemology, no law of non-contradiction - can capture this.

Symbolic formalism concretizes what is essentially a time-oriented process. Knowledge and limits do not exist outside of a time structure. The accumulation of knowledge is a slow *progression*, and an *unfolding* of truth. Truth may be eternal, but it is not *static*. It depends on the time context and how truth is felt, seen, revealed to us is a matter of unfolding through time. It takes time even to formulate a thought.

Science and math feel „static in comparison to hermeneutics. Why? What is the distinction? This is contrasted to flow or wu-wei – flow can happen in any case. There is a distinct static eternality to the universal. This is contrasted with the dynamic flow of the particular. The universal *transcends* the particular and holds itself above in perfect stillness. What is the origin of this phenomenon?

## §2 On Kant

Transcendental ideas: God, the world, the soul - preconditions for rational knowledge; we cannot understand anything without presupposing these ideas. These cannot be *known* because they exceed the boundaries of possible experience.

Dialectical - to posit the limit is already to move beyond. The problem dissolves. Transcendental conditions of knowledge are revealed by dialectically opposed ideas; ideas which are rationally consistent but mutually exclusive. For example: freedom cannot be proven, but we act as if we are free; it is better if we act this way.

”To make room for faith;” a belief in the absurd! - Connections to Kierkegaard.

Todo: Draw on the Neokantian background for the origin of Husserlian phenomenology, the move away from Neokantianism towards the Vienna circle analytic thought (Marburg disillusionment with metaphysics, emphasis on physics, naturalism) and the Continental move towards Hegel (Southwest school, emphasis on history, humanities, dialectics).

## §3 Carnap against Heidegger

Carnap’s conception of logic and of the world is constructionist. We build up the world from basic, phenomenological blocks, though these phenomenological building blocks are so minimal that they are hardly worth speaking of. For Carnap in the *Aufbau*, there is only a single building block. His criticism of Heidegger then can be clearly seen as an attack on Heidegger’s violation of the logical basis of thought. It is an attack on psychologism, a trend which was deeply popular and, since Husserl, difficult to defend. Carnap is known to have been familiar with Husserl, even mentioning him in the *Aufbau*, and studying him closely before reformulating the *Aufbau* extensively around 19xx. However, Carnap, like many of his contemporaries, probably did not see the importance of the phenomenological project which underlies Husserl’s prolegomena to the *Logical Investigations*. A quote from the excellent Introduction to Husserlain Phenomenology can elucidate this point.

If logic is naturally related to possible acts of thinking, then a precise, reciprocal demarcation of the conformity of such acts with logical as well as psychological laws is not merely the preparatory task of methodological work, rather it is the central task of logic itself. The rejection of logical ”psychologism,” that is, the emancipation of

"pure" logic from its ordination within (empirical-genetic) psychology, may not be separated from its positive counterpart, the cultivation of a novel, eidetic-descriptive "psychology." (**bernet1993**)

Carnap, in rejecting psychologism, wishes to found our empirical understanding on as minimal a basis as possible. This is an admirable task. Heidegger, on the other hand, focuses heavily on the eidetic-descriptive task, outlining in detail various "modes of Being" under which we live our daily lives. For Heidegger, this is a primary task, it lies at a deeper root than logic can aspire to. For Carnap, a rich descriptive account of proto-logical thought is more or less what philosophers have already *been* doing; it leads to confusion. Philosophy's task is to make life clear, and for Carnap this lies precisely in the logical-linguistic aspect of cognition. Heidegger's focus on emotive, poetic language is not only backwards, but impossible to formulate within a perfectly clear language. It is, strictly speaking, unthinkable, and therefore it is nonsense; worse, it is "bad poetry."

## §4 Metaphilosophical concerns

It would be helpful here to talk about The Task of Thinking. A summary: Philosophy as metaphysics - the study of the Being of beings - is nearing its end. It realizes this end in cybernetics, the total technologization of human activity. By all accounts science is correct. What is left for philosophy? We have answered the call "to the things themselves," the call to examine subjectivity and its constitutive manifestations in full detail. we have received various answers and they have yielded from their speculation a totalizing science which itself subsumes the task philosophy set out to accomplish. But what remains is to understand where the underlying principles are grounded. What grounds rationality? What needs proof, and what does not? Heidegger speaks of a clearing, a space which opens for *Lichtung* to shine through. *Lichtung* is knowledge. But what is this clearing, what is it that shades and opens itself up so light can shine through? This is the task of thinking: the task of understanding *alēthia* as unconcealment.

Carnap, Husserl, Hegel and Heidegger himself were all misguided here. There is a "more originary questioning" which needs to occur.

It's important to note the shared emphasis on science, logic, and technology between Heidegger, Husserl, and Carnap. For Carnap, philosophy is the handmaiden of science. Philosophy's essential task was never metaphysics, but *logic*. Epistemology is a part of this. Ontology plays no role; objects are constructed from simple sense perception and the rest follows a constructional system. This is at least the view in the *Aufbau*; I do not believe he ever repudiated the main claim, that of constructionism. Heidegger says yes, you've got the idea: philosophy up to this point has been deeply focused on the Being of beings, in metaphysics. The end of metaphysics is science. To that end philosophy's goal - the end of philosophy - is cybernetics, the full systematization of human life.

But there is a more ordinary questioning. Logic is rationality embodied - but logic itself admits of a psychological origin in phenomenology. The critique of psychologism cannot be complete without the admittance of a transcendental intuition, says Husserl; thus the sciences must be founded on phenomenology. Well and good says Heidegger, but let's dig deeper. What is it that allows us to be *aware* of our intuition in the first place? On what grounds are the self-lighting, intuitive ideas made apparent? In a way, Heidegger is asking the hard problem: what is it that gives ground to consciousness? What grounds rationality?

He does not give us an answer. To attempt that would be deeply immature. All we can hope for is a clarification of the question. This is what Heidegger hopes to give us, and it is this question itself which Heidegger believes all Western philosophy has until this point been blind to.

Heidegger's method relies on a historically grounded analysis of language, the development of language over time and an attempt to recreate the conditions of its origination in order to reveal the intention behind its usage. For Heidegger, this allows us to seek the underlying truths which are hidden behind layers of translation and historical obscurity. It allows us to see the foundational preconditions for philosophy as such, and so to form a critique of the foundational mode of philosophical knowledge. This is what is meant by the task of thinking: we are tasked with understanding how philosophy originated so that we can undergo this same process, perhaps to extend its purview or at least to expand the clearing by which we can see what really is. This is contrasted to Carnap's linguistic method, by which we attempt to get clear on concepts in a time-independent way. We abstract from language to an *ideal* language, one which is perfect in its syntactical and semantic clarity. This is a wonderful approach, but one cannot make sense of it without the historical context in which it arose. A timeless, ideal language can only be conceptualized in the light of absolute Being, in light of the ideal. This conception is shaped by the Platonic Idea - this is apparent even in the name, "ideal." But what is an idea? From Descartes forward, an idea is a matter of subjectivity - so Carnap's goal is to find perfect clarity of rational mind: the objective principles by which subjectivity claims to understand the world. The basis of this questioning lies in the pursuit of *truth*. But what is truth? Tarski would argue that truth is something system-dependent. Truth obtains within a logical system. The early Carnap and Heidegger, at which point the debate occurs, are both laboring under the notion of an absolute truth. It is unclear whether Carnap abandons this idea, but by the time he writes *The Task of Thinking* it is clear that Heidegger has moved beyond absolute truth. As explained above, Heidegger's pursuit has moved away from Being and Time toward Lighting and Clearing. What does he take truth to be?

Insofar as truth is understood in the traditional "natural" sense as the correspondence of knowledge with beings, demonstrated in beings; but also insofar as truth is interpreted as the certainty of the knowl-

edge of Being; *alētheia*, unconcealment in the sense of the clearing, may not be equated with truth. Rather, *alētheia*, unconcealment thought as clearing, first grants the possibility of truth. For truth itself, like Being and thinking, can be what it is only in the element of the clearing. (heidegger2008a)

Here Heidegger is searching not only for the basis of the correspondence theory of truth, but also for the origin of fundamental ontology. He is looking for the basis of scientific thought as well as metaphysics. He takes truth to have multiple meanings, a meaning within science and a meaning within metaphysics. But how could it be that truth has multiple senses? There seems to be a rejection of the notion of absolute truth. Tarski would agree - and the later Carnap would famously propose a principle of tolerance, by which metaphysical confusion and confabulation can be replaced with a choice of a logical framework under which propositional statements (thus truth predicates) can be clearly and systematically articulated.