

LECTURE 8: CARNAP'S CONSTRUCTION OF THE WORLD

Background question: Given the success of the empirical sciences, how should we conceive of the aim of philosophical inquiry?

1. Who was Rudolf Carnap?

2. What is a *constructional system of concepts*?

(a) Ascension forms

§7 "...the construction of an object must be given in the logical form of a [explicit] **definition**: every object to be constructed will be introduced through its constructional definition either as a class or as a relation extension."

(b) Translatability

§2 "An object (or concept) is said to be *reducible* to one or more other objects if all statements about it can be transformed into statements about those other objects."

3. What good is a constructional system of concepts?

(a) Objectivity ("a world which is identical for all observers")

§2 "Even though the subjective origin of all knowledge lies in the contents of experiences and their connections, it is still possible, as the constructional system will show, to advance to an intersubjective, objective world, which can be conceptually comprehended and which is identical for all observers."

(b) Unity of science

§4 "...there is only one domain of objects and therefore only one science."

(c) Clarity of concepts [indicators = *Kennzeichen*]

...eventual connection with the verification criterion of meaning

(d) Metaphysical neutrality

§5 "Construction theory employs a neutral language and maintains that objects are neither 'created' nor 'apprehended' but *constructed*. ... 'to construct' is always meant in a completely neutral sense."

§9 "...construction theory is the common basis of the various philosophical positions which attempt to answer this problem, namely, realism, idealism, and phenomenalism ... these positions differ from one another only where they go beyond construction theory; that is, in the field of metaphysics."

(e) N.B. empiricist foundationalism isn't the primary aim

4. The basis of the constructional system

(a) Methodological solipsism

§3 "...through the choice of an autopsychological basis, in the construction of that which is not seen from that which is seen, and in the construction of heteropsychological objects."

§7 "We choose as basic elements of the system 'my experiences' ... envisage these basic elements as unanalyzable units." [Gestalt psychology]

(b) More than one possible basis

5. Objectivity revisited

(a) Form vs. Content

§6 "...It will be demonstrated that it is in principle possible to characterize all objects through merely structural properties, and thus to transform all scientific statements into purely structural statements."