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THE IMPACT OF HEINRICH RICKERT'S IDEAS ABOUT CHAOS ON RUDOLF CARNAP

Abstract. This research aims to address the hypothesis of the possible influence of Rickert's ideas about chaos on the philosophy of Rudolf Carnap. This paper considers arguments in favor of the hypothesis and those against it. I show that pieces of evidence exist, proving that Rickert's interpretation of chaos influenced Rudolf Carnap when he was working on *Der logische Aufbau der Welt*. I argue that Carnap's pre-Aufbau unpublished manuscript *Vom Chaos zur Wirklichkeit* demonstrates this influence. This study opens new vistas in exploring the genesis of Carnap's ideas.

Keywords: Heinrich Rickert, Rudolf Carnap, chaos, history of philosophy, neo-Kantianism, epistemology

The issue of the impact of Rickert's ideas on Rudolf Carnap is interesting and fruitful in the framework of the history of philosophy. It can provide important information about the genesis of Carnap's philosophical views. The influence of Rickert's thoughts about chaos on Carnap has not been studied yet. Thus, research

regarding this issue can reveal new aspects of connections between neo-Kantianism and logical positivism.

In my paper “Chaos in Heinrich Rickert’s Philosophy” (Kulyk, 2019), I analyzed Rickert’s understanding of the term “chaos.” However, I did not consider the issue of the influence of his ideas about chaos on other philosophers. Other researchers also do not address this question. Historians of philosophy usually explain the appearance of the term “chaos” in Carnap’s *Vom Chaos zur Wirklichkeit* by the impact of such thinkers as F. Nietzsche and H. Vaihinger. For example, Thomas Mormann (Mormann, 2016) and Mikko Leinonen (Leinonen, 2016) are proponents of this position. Thus, I have not only provided arguments in favor of my hypothesis of the influence of Rickert’s ideas about chaos on the philosophy of Rudolf Carnap, but also attempted to answer to possible objections from proponents of the thought about Nietzsche and Vaihinger’s impact on Carnap’s use of the term “chaos.”

My research question is as follows: does my hypothesis relating to the impact of Rickert’s ideas about chaos on Rudolf Carnap’s philosophy have evidence, or does it not? It is necessary to stress that I focus on the early period of Carnap’s philosophizing, when he was elaborating theories of *Der logische Aufbau der Welt* (“The Logical Structure of the World”).

In 1922, Carnap wrote the paper *Vom Chaos zur Wirklichkeit* (“From Chaos to Reality”). This paper was not published by the author; however, its manuscript is preserved in the philosopher’s archives (Carnap, 1970). In this manuscript, Carnap widely uses the term “chaos” in Rickert’s style. Both philosophers discuss ideas of the “chaos of experiences” and rational construction. Carnap’s manuscript specifically discusses the issue of the possibility of organizing (*gegliedert*) chaos with an ordering scheme (*Ordnungsschema*) and, thus, to transform it into an orderly area (Carnap, 1970, p. 11).

Carnap’s biography facts do not contradict my hypothesis about the influence of Rickert’s ideas about chaos. According to Carnap’s “Intellectual Autobiography,” theory of knowledge had been one of his main interests since 1911. It was natural

that in the beginning of the second decade of the twentieth century, young Carnap attended Rickert's lectures in Freiburg, as Rickert was one of the leading German specialists in theory of knowledge at the time. Bruno Bauch, with whom Carnap studied Kant's philosophy in Jena, was also a former student of Rickert's.

Of course, the influence of G. Frege and B. Russell on the young Carnap was much stronger than Rickert's; however, this fact does not contradict the possibility that Carnap knew and used some of Rickert's ideas. Carnap wrote *Vom Chaos zur Wirklichkeit* in 1922, two years after the first publication of *Die Philosophie des Lebens* in 1920. Thus, one cannot say that it was impossible for Carnap to have discovered Rickert's ideas about chaos.

Among possible objections to my hypothesis could be opinions that the term "chaos" that appeared in Carnap's *Vom Chaos zur Wirklichkeit* is a result of other philosophers' influence on Carnap. For example, Thomas Mormann writes that in Carnap's philosophy, "The Nietzsche/Vaihinger 'fictitious constitution of an ordered world out of Chaos' (*Vom Chaos zur Wirklichkeit*, 1) became in the *Aufbau*: a 'rational reconstruction of reality . . .' (*Aufbau*, §100)" (Mormann, 2016, p. 133). When analyzing the use of the term "chaos" in Carnap's *Vom Chaos zur Wirklichkeit*, in H. Vaihinger's *Die Philosophie des Als Ob* ("The Philosophy of As If"), and in Rickert's *System der Philosophie*, Mikko Leinonen writes, "In any case, this setting an the use of the term 'Chaos' can be traced to both mentioned works and further back to Nietzsche's writings" (Leinonen, 2016, p. 215). I shall start with considering the issue of Nietzsche's influence and then discuss Vaihinger's.

In my paper "Chaos in Heinrich Rickert's Philosophy," I have shown that Nietzsche and Rickert have different understandings of chaos. In *Vom Chaos zur Wirklichkeit*, Carnap uses the term "chaos" in the framework of Rickert's ideas on concept formation, but not Nietzsche's ideas about the "dancing star" or the development of culture. Considering the early Carnap's interest in Kant's philosophy, it seems natural that Carnap uses Rickert's version of the notion of "chaos" interpretation. I have argued in the paper "Chaos in Heinrich Rickert's Philosophy" that Rickert had developed his interpretation of chaos on the basis of

Kant's concepts of "chaos" and "cosmos." Thus, Rickert's neo-Kantian interpretation of the notion of "chaos" is closer to Carnap's philosophical position than to Nietzsche's.

I do not object to T. Mormann's arguments about the influence of *Lebensphilosophie* on Carnap in general; nevertheless, I think that Rickert's influence is a nearer explanation than Nietzsche's for the use of the term "chaos" in *Vom Chaos zur Wirklichkeit*. In his paper, Mormann himself provided many sound arguments supporting Rickert's philosophical influence on the early Carnap; however, when it comes to the term "chaos," Mormann points to Nietzsche's influence. I hope that my exploration of Rickert's use of the term "chaos" will provide researchers additional information that can clear up this confusion. Using the term "chaos" was not Nietzsche's monopoly in the early Carnap's time; other influential philosophers also used this term before Carnap.

As for the issue of Hans Vaihinger's influence on the early Carnap, T. Mormann and M. Leinonen, of course, have reasons to suggest such an existence. First published in 1911, Vaihinger's work *Die Philosophie des Als Ob* was popular in the first decades of the twentieth century. In this book, Vaihinger uses the term "Chaos" 13 times (Vaihinger, 1922, pp. 107, 140, 235, 286, 298, 372, 373, 400). He also uses the words "chaotisch" [chaotic] 7 times (Vaihinger, 1922, pp. 69, 75, 99, 108, 298, 323, 328), "chaosartige" [chaos-like] once, and "Empfindungschaos" [sensation chaos] once (Vaihinger, 1922, pp. 146, 297).

However, I cannot agree with M. Leinonen that both Rickert's and Vaihinger's interpretations of the term "chaos" go further back, to Nietzsche's philosophy. Nietzsche's influence was important for Vaihinger because of his interest in this philosopher's ideas. Vaihinger was a member of the committee of seven, constituted in 1909 to research and publish Nietzsche's works (Diethe, 2003, p. 109). Nine years before his famous *Die Philosophie des Als Ob*, in which he uses the term "chaos," Vaihinger wrote *Nietzsche Als Philosoph* ("Nietzsche as Philosopher") in which he argued for the importance of Nietzsche's philosophy. In his *Die Philosophie des Als Ob*, Vaihinger frequently cites Nietzsche. Rickert's *Die*

Philosophie des Lebens, on the contrary, criticizes Nietzsche's concepts. Thus, I cannot support M. Leinonen's idea that Rickert's and Vaihinger's interpretations of chaos are rooted in Nietzsche's. This is true for the second one, but false for the first. Nietzsche's ideas on chaos were only an impulse for Rickert to elaborate his own interpretation of chaos against Nietzsche's understanding of chaos.

It is also important to notice that Carnap uses the term "chaos" as an element of the binary system of the notions of "chaos" and "reality." This system is similar to Rickert's binary system of "chaos" and "cosmos." Actually, whether Carnap criticizes or agrees with the idea of chaos is not that important. Carnap, as well as Rickert, demonstrates the intention to construct a rational order of reality. In this part of his reasoning, he philosophizes in Rickert's manner. If Vaihinger writes in his *Die Philosophie des Als Ob* about the "fictions" of all, Rickert writes about attempts to construct a picture of the real world. It is significant that Carnap titled his manuscript "From Chaos to Reality," not "From Chaos to Dancing Star," as Nietzsche could have titled a similar paper, and not "From Chaos to Fiction of Reality," as Vaihinger could have.

I want to analyze the role of the idea of "chaos" in Carnap's philosophy. If one compares cases of using the term "chaos" by the philosophers mentioned above, they can see the following: In his 14-page-manuscript *Vom Chaos zur Wirklichkeit*, Carnap uses the term "chaos" at least 10 times (some pieces of the manuscript are currently illegible) and puts it in the title of this paper. In the 196 pages of his *Die Philosophie des Lebens*, Rickert uses the term "chaos" and similar words ("chaotisch," "Weltchaos," etc.) 21 times (Rickert, 1922). In the 790 pages of the text of *Die Philosophie des Als Ob*, Vaihinger uses the term "chaos" and similar words 22 times. Nietzsche uses the term "chaos" 2 times in the 238 pages of *Also Sprach Zarathustra* (Nietzsche, 1954a, p. 258), 3 times in the 168 pages of *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* (Nietzsche, 1954b, pp. 686, 688, 709), and 7 times in the 78 pages of *Historie für das Leben* (Nietzsche, 1954c, pp. 231, 266, 272, 283). When analyzing the frequency of the term "chaos" (considering the lengths of the texts), one can see not only that Carnap's index is closer to Rickert's, but also that Carnap

had the greatest concern with using this term among Rickert, Vaihinger, and Nietzsche. Thus, the data support my conclusion that the term “chaos” has significance for the author of *Vom Chaos zur Wirklichkeit*. Carnap’s using this term in the title of the paper is an additional argument for the conclusion.

As Carnap says in his “Intellectual Autobiography,” from 1922 to 1925, he elaborated theories out of which his famous book *Der logische Aufbau der Welt* grew (Carnap, 1997, p. 15). In 1922, when writing *Vom Chaos zur Wirklichkeit*, Carnap reflected on some main ideas of *Der logische Aufbau der Welt*. In the margins of the first page of his manuscript, Carnap’s later remark can be found: “This is the germ of the constitution theory of Log. Aufbau” (Carnap, 1970, p. 1). Thus, identifying examples of Rickert’s influence on Carnap in his manuscript can provide researchers with new information to understand the evolution of the philosopher’s views. Although Carnap does not actively use the term “chaos” in his works anymore, he continues to use the idea of converting human experiences into an order of concepts. This idea is similar to many authors, including Rickert, who expresses it when he discusses “chaos” in *Die Philosophie des Lebens*. Hence, I believe that using the term “chaos” by Carnap can show that he was influenced by Rickert’s version of the idea of converting human experiences into an order of concepts.

Conclusion

I have argued that R. Carnap in *Vom Chaos zur Wirklichkeit* uses the term “chaos” in the context of epistemological theories and that this approach to the interpretation of this term is similar to H. Rickert’s in *Die Philosophie des Lebens*. These philosophers both interpret chaos as “chaos of experiences” and seek ways to order it by mind. Moreover, I have shown that Carnap’s biography does not contradict the possibility for the philosopher to be influenced by Rickert’s ideas about chaos.

I have also argued that the ideas about Nietzsche’s or Vaihinger’s impact on Carnap’s usage of the term “chaos” are not so obvious as the thought about Rickert’s

influence. First, Carnap uses the term “chaos” not in Nietzsche’s spirit of thoughts about cultural development or the “dancing star” idea. Arguably, Carnap uses the term “chaos” in Rickert’s framework of ideas about concept formation. Second, both Rickert and Carnap use the term “chaos” as an element of their binary systems of the notions: Rickert writes about “chaos” and “cosmos,” and Carnap writes about “chaos” and “reality.”

Considering the abovementioned details, I can state that there are pieces of evidence to support the hypothesis of the influence of Rickert’s ideas about chaos on the philosophy of Rudolf Carnap. The impact of Rickert’s theories on R. Carnap is a prospective area for further research that can particularly show new aspects of connections between neo-Kantianism and logical positivism.

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