

CARNAP'S INTERNAL-EXTERNAL-METAPHYSICAL DEBATE:
A CRITICAL RE-ASSESSMENT

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Introduction

Rudolf Carnap, an analytical philosopher, explored different kinds of questions and classified them into two main types: internal and external. He also identified a third category, which he called metaphysical. Carnap argued that “external questions are metaphysical,” suggesting that while all metaphysical questions fall under external questions, not all external questions are metaphysical. (Carnap, 1937) According to Carnap, external questions relate to practical matters, often involving decisions about which linguistic or conceptual framework to use. These questions, like “Should we adopt this form of expression?” or “Should we use this language for a particular purpose?” cannot be judged as true or false and do not have cognitive value in his view. Instead, they guide choices about adopting a framework or vocabulary for specific contexts. On the other hand, internal questions are those that can be answered within an established linguistic framework, and some internal questions involve abstract entities. In these cases, Carnap considered such entities to be subject to empirical investigation within the framework, adding a layer of empirical analysis to abstract ideas. (Verhaegh, 2017) Carnap critiques metaphysics yet does not reject all traditional metaphysical claims outright. Instead, he suggests that some metaphysical claims can be reinterpreted or reconstructed in three ways:

1. Metaphysical claims can be rephrased as scientific statements within a specific linguistic framework. Here, they are treated as hypotheses that can be tested or analysed scientifically.
2. Metaphysical claims can also be reformulated as philosophical statements within a formal or semi-formal meta-framework. This allows the claims to be addressed logically and syntactically, as well as semantically and pragmatically, within a linguistic framework, but they remain external to the object framework they describe.

3. For some metaphysical claims, formal or semi-formal reconstruction is impossible. These claims resist analysis at the linguistic level, meaning they cannot be logically structured within any framework.

So, by proposing these methods, Carnap aims to make certain metaphysical claims understandable within the bounds of language and logic, while recognizing that some claims may be beyond reconstruction altogether.³⁵

According to Carnap, internal questions are meaningful and factual within a specific linguistic framework. These questions are raised by scientists and rational thinkers and are concerned with concrete, framework-dependent inquiries, such as “Does this entity exist within our defined system?” Conversely, external questions are outside any specific framework, making them meaningless or “pseudo-questions” in Carnap’s view. These questions, typically posed by metaphysicians, sceptics, or subjective idealists, are not answerable in terms of truth or falsity within a framework. The debate between internal and external questions ultimately touches on issues of reality and existence. For Carnap, discussions about the existence of entities outside a linguistic framework (external questions) lack cognitive significance because they cannot be verified or falsified. This stance aligns with Darren Bradley’s view on metaphysics: if a metaphysical hypothesis has no basis for justification, then rational debate on the topic becomes futile. (Leitgeb, 2020) Therefore, Carnap’s approach to metaphysics argues that discussions without logical or empirical grounding are essentially pointless, underscoring his scepticism towards metaphysical inquiries that fall outside structured frameworks. Thus, Carnap’s argument concerned with metaphysics ran as: Verification + Metaphysics can’t be justified = Metaphysics has no content. (Bradley, 2018, p. 2255)

Jared Warren interprets Carnap as distinguishing between two types of meaning: internal and external. According to Warren, internal meanings are associated with questions philosophers typically ask, while external meanings come from questions posed by non-philosophers. Internal questions revolve around the

³⁵ Carnap conflates internal, external, and metaphysical questions, grouping them incorrectly. While internal and external questions pertain to linguistic or pragmatic frameworks, metaphysical questions are distinct, addressing ontological commitments beyond such frameworks. Separating metaphysical questions clarifies their unique nature, avoiding unwarranted associations with internal and external inquiries.

existence of abstract entities and concepts like numbers, sets, tables, fusions, fictional characters, chairs, holes, propositions, relations, universals, time, space, non-existent things, black holes, stars, and planets. For Carnap, these questions are confined to discussions within specific linguistic or conceptual frameworks. Philosophers thus engage in ontological debates but lack authority over broader existence debates, as their inquiries are bound by the framework's assumptions. External questions, on the other hand, pertain to topics that non-philosophers typically question, such as the reality of God, Satan, angels, Zeus, fundamental particles, the soul, heaven, hell, the afterlife, and other socially or religiously significant ideas. These questions relate to what Warren calls “common existence”, referring to general debates about the reality of entities that have meaning beyond philosophical discourse. Thus, philosophical arguments about existence focus on ontological considerations within frameworks, while non-philosophical arguments address broader existential and metaphysical themes. (Warren, 2016, p. 177).

Internal questions focus on what, how, and why they delve into understanding the nature, structure, and underlying reasons of entities or concepts within a particular framework. These questions are analytical and inquire into the specifics of existence, often asking about the properties and relationships of abstract or concrete entities. In contrast, external questions address the use and application of these internal questions on a broader level, exploring whether or why a particular framework or system should be adopted. They concern the practical or philosophical value of adopting certain frameworks without necessarily committing to their cognitive truth. Metaphysical questions, however, broadly consider concepts such as being, existence, non-existence, absolutes, relations, and cause-and-effect. They inquire into fundamental aspects of reality and ontology, seeking to address the ultimate nature of existence itself and often extending beyond specific frameworks to more universal, speculative inquiries. (Carnap, 1950)

In Carnap's system, the linguistic framework functions as a “mode of medium” analogous to what Albert Einstein termed a “frame of reference”. This prompts the question: why did Carnap prioritize a linguistic frame over other possible frameworks, such as religious, social, arithmetic, ideal, mathematical, political, or moral? The answer lies in the universality of language as the medium through which

all frameworks, whether symbolic or non-symbolic, are ultimately expressed. Language, as a symbolic representation of thought, encompasses all forms of expression and conceptualization, making the linguistic framework an overarching structure that enables the representation of any framework. In the Carnapian system, language serves as the unifying medium that allows different modes of inquiry and frameworks to be articulated and analysed within a coherent, logical structure. Carnap's linguistic approach emphasizes two crucial aspects: first, the ontological commitment concerning internal questions, these are assumptions and assertions made within a particular linguistic framework about what entities exist. Second, it involves the decision and application of these commitments, meaning the choice of adopting a framework and applying its concepts in practical or theoretical contexts. This dual focus allows Carnap's system to handle complex questions of existence and applicability in a precise and structured manner, ultimately aiming to ground diverse inquiries within a universally interpretable linguistic framework. (Shimony, 1992, p. 261)

Metaphysics and Ontology

Ontology, a branch of metaphysics and philosophy, focuses on the nature of *Being* and explores questions such as what exists and what does not exist. Aristotle defined it as the study of “being as being”, emphasizing its concern with the fundamental nature of existence. Ontology examines a broad range of topics, including the existence and non-existence of properties, identity, mind, reality, ideas, numbers, and relations. Terms like being, existence, reality, and to be are often used interchangeably to describe the scope of ontology. Historically, ontology was closely associated with metaphysics in ancient Greek and medieval philosophy. It was considered the core of metaphysical inquiry. However, with developments in modern and analytical philosophy, ontology began to be viewed as addressing subjects across various disciplines rather than being confined to metaphysics alone. There is a nuanced distinction between metaphysics and ontology. While metaphysics broadly studies first principles and phenomena beyond direct human experience and observation, ontology is concerned with particular abstract entities and their nature. This distinction raises a longstanding philosophical debate: should ontological questions be treated as distinct from metaphysical ones? Some argue that ontological

problems are inherently metaphysical, while others contend that they represent a more specialized field within philosophical inquiry. (Shimony, 1992, p. 270)

While discussing shall discuss the history and importance of ontology, it is established that Ontology studies the nature of reality and appearance, concrete and abstract, determinate and indeterminate, visible and invisible, limited and unlimited, being and non-being, absolute and relative, permanence and impermanence. Ontology offers an in-depth study of those problems and things which exist in the universe but we cannot either see or touch them. Ontological issues are issues of reality and existence. Ontological issues motivate us to know more and more and enlighten us in the domain of knowledge. Nowadays, the concept of ontology has become a multidisciplinary problem which is discussed in mathematics, physics, theology, anthropology, Psychology, linguistics, social science, history and in computer sciences. Ontological questions can be of the below mentioned form

- Are there numbers?
- Do numbers exist?
- What kind of beings are there in the world?
- Does world exist?
- Does life exist and what kind of life is possible?
- What does it mean for the world to be real?
- Is universe real
- Are there more than seven planets
- Does time exist?
- Does space exist?

Ancient philosophy has not differentiated or separated ontology from metaphysics. The ontological problems were considered as metaphysical but with the advancement in scientific exploration, modern philosophy especially analytical philosophy and logical positivism have rejected metaphysics and established the foundation for a new ontology. This new ontological exploration has made it more scientific and rational than metaphysics which is absolute and categorical. The concept of soul, self, God, karmas, life after death, ghosts, angels, are now considered metaphysical but not ontological. The Ontological concepts in the analytical tradition and in logical positivism are those abstract concepts which can be verified scientifically and used in technology. The only difference between the metaphysics and ontological is that while metaphysical concepts are related to one's faith and could be answered by religious teachings; the Ontological concepts are abstract state

of affairs and could be answered by scientific methodology. Both metaphysics and ontology are the core problems of philosophy. (Price, 1997)

Heidegger didn't separate ontology from metaphysics. His concept of *Dasein* reflects being'. The *Dasein* in his terminology implies —Being in the world". Being in the world is the overall composition of subject, object and consciousness. *Dasein* implies the existence of beings through the cabinet of consciousness. What is implied is that there is no fixed abode of being and being cannot be separated from the world. Being is the contained and world is the container. According to him man is thrown into the world to complete the aspects of being. (Beth, 1963)

In contrast to ontology, metaphysics is the branch of philosophy which tries to study those concepts of philosophy which exist beyond one's observation and experience. The concept of God, soul, self, life after death, first cause, and other absolute concepts are included in it. Metaphysics is known as the science of all sciences and it was known to discuss the first cause of this universe. Aristotle is the founder of Metaphysics but some thinkers said that it is the Andronicus of Rhodes who first coined the term metaphysics'. Metaphysical concepts are opposite to material concepts. It is Plato who differentiated the metaphysical world from the physical world. A metaphysical concept exists beyond one's mind. Metaphysical entities are mostly termed as religious and absolute and cannot be understood in a physical way. Metaphysical exploration starts from the Greek period. Pythagoras was the first Greek philosopher who is regarded as the founder of Metaphysical thinking. However, medieval philosophers elaborated metaphysical problems with the religious and theological concepts. (Carnap, 1937)

Internal, External and Metaphysical questions

Carnap contends that empiricist philosophers maintain a sceptical stance toward abstract entities, such as properties, classes, relations, numbers, and propositions. Empiricists are generally more aligned with nominalists, viewing abstract entities with less commitment than realists. Thus, empiricists often restrict themselves to nominalistic language, striving to avoid explicit references to abstract entities. However, in certain scientific contexts, such avoidance becomes impractical, leading some empiricists to adopt a middle ground that permits reference to mathematical and physical abstractions when necessary. Consequently, empiricists may address abstract entities like numbers, formulas, functions, infinitesimals, and

concepts fundamental to physics, such as space, time, inertia, momentum, distance, velocity, and physical laws. (Carnap, 1937)

The issue of abstract entities has resurfaced recently within the field of semantics, particularly concerning the theories of meaning and truth. Semantics, as an analytical tool, developed to clarify systems in which the meaning of entities differs based on context. To resolve the ongoing debate between internalists and externalists, Carnap proposes that abstract entities are indispensable for scientific investigation. He reconciles this issue by introducing a linguistic framework that distinguishes between internal and external questions within that framework. Carnap employs the linguistic framework to separate discussions on absolute and abstract entities. Internalists, often seen as metaphysicians, pose questions that are internal and concern issues like humanity, nature, and divinity. In contrast, externalists, associated with empiricism, focus on external questions related to tangible entities like mountains, colors, and trees. Through this framework, Carnap systematically addresses the necessity of abstract entities while respecting empiricist constraints. (Carnap, 1952)

Carnap argued that metaphysical notions lack cognitive substance, deeming them meaningless due to their inability to be empirically verified. According to Carnap, metaphysical claims cannot be validated through observation and thus fail to meet the standards of meaningful discourse. Metaphysicians, however, inquire about the reality of entities in ways that are not experimentally verifiable, relying instead on idealistic conceptions of reality, which, in Carnap's view, entangles them in philosophical difficulties. While Carnap initially presented a firm stance against metaphysics, he later revisited and clarified his arguments to further substantiate his position. (Carnap, 1952, pp. 1-10)

To address questions concerning properties, classes, numbers, propositions, time, space, and fractions, Carnap highlights the importance of distinguishing between two types of existential questions, internal and external. Internal questions, such as "Is there a prime number greater than one hundred?", "Is there any idealist who is also a realist?", or "Is there anyone other than Plato who wrote the Republic?", are answered not through empirical investigation but through logical analysis. These

answers are grounded in the syntactical and semantic rules governing language and concepts within a specified system, making them analytically true and logically determined. (Hookway, 1988)

By drawing this distinction, Carnap reinforces his stance that meaningful scientific and logical inquiry requires internal questions that are answerable within a structured framework, while metaphysical questions lack empirical and cognitive validity within such frameworks. (Carnap, 1947, p. 208) Carnap in his work *Meaning and Necessity* defined the nature of internal questions as well as external questions as:

If someone wishes to speak in his language about a new kind of entities, he has to introduce a system of new ways of speaking, subject to new principles. We shall call this procedure the construction of a linguistic framework for the new entities in question. And now we must distinguish two kinds of questions of existence; first, questions of the existence of certain entities of the new kind within the frame work; we call them internal questions; and second, questions concerning the existence or reality of the system of entities as a whole, called external questions. Internal questions and possible answers to them are formulated with the help of new forms of expression. The answers may be found either by purely logical methods or by empirical methods, depending upon whether the frame work is logical or a factual one. An external question is of a problematic character which is in need of closer examination.

Carnap accepts abstract entities, though his view diverges from Platonic ontology, aligning more closely with a nominalistic approach. He argues that abstract entities can be both empirical and scientific when framed within appropriate linguistic and logical systems. To distinguish between different kinds of entities, Carnap utilizes semantical operators, which serve to categorize questions about entities as either internal or external. The semantical operators, in conjunction with modal operators, such as necessity, contingency, possibility, and impossibility, help define the status of abstract entities within specific contexts. Internal questions are addressed within a defined linguistic system, allowing for answers that are logically derived within that framework. In contrast, external questions pertain to broader, overarching considerations of truth that do not rely on the confines of a single system. (Quine, 1960)

The following examples would help us explain internal and external problems with reference to modal operators.

1. Plato is an idealist.

2. Plato is a philosopher.
3. Moses Spear.
4. Moses is the Prophet of Jews.
5. Soul exists.
6. Reality is spiritual.

In all these examples 1 and 3 are internal questions which need ontological commitments; 2 and 4 are external questions which need observation and investigation whereas 5 and 6 are known as metaphysical questions. In 1 and 3, linguistic frames of reference is necessary because as per other frames of reference, Plato is a realist and Moses Spear is Moses' Snake. In 2 and 4, experience and observation are necessary because by empirical investigation, we can know that Plato is a philosopher and Moses is a Prophet of Jews. 5 and 6 are metaphysical questions. These questions have answers beyond our perception and reality. (Beth, 1963, p. 475)

Internal entities are often associated with metaphysics, while external entities are considered empirical and observational. However, internal questions are not necessarily metaphysical. For example, questions like —Did Layla and Majnun exist?”, —Were unicorns real or imaginary?”, —Did dinosaurs exist?”, or —Is there a white cow in my house?” can be analysed within a linguistic framework that relies on specific spatio-temporal relations. According to Carnap, such questions pertain to observable things and events and are answerable within their respective ontological frameworks, making them empirical, scientific, and non-metaphysical. In Carnap's view, internal questions arise within a structured system and are resolved within that system's linguistic framework, reflecting a concept of reality that is grounded and non-metaphysical. This empirical nature arises because the abstract entities associated with these questions hold relevance across possible worlds. Conversely, external questions concern the existence of entities within the world as a whole. As Carnap observes, —External questions are raised neither by the common man nor by the scientists but only by the philosophers.” (Carnap, 1952)

For external questions we should take practical decisions regarding the structure of our language. External questions need the choice of the individual whether to accept or reject and use the forms of expression in the linguistic framework. Stroud remarks about Carnap:

—Hdike Kant, distinguished between two types of questions, ordinary empirical questions on one hand which are raised and answered from —whin” a framework of concepts, beliefs, and recognized procedures of confirmation. On the other hand, questions were raised by the skeptic or metaphysicians about this framework in order to speak —fm outside”. (Bird, 1995, p. 1)

Carnap argued that internal questions are meaningful and factual, holding truth within a specified linguistic framework. These questions are answerable within the system, grounded in empirical or logical criteria. In contrast, external questions, such as whether any material objects exist at all, are, for Carnap, meaningless and pseudo-questions, often posed by skeptics or metaphysicians. He contends that external questions reflect matters of faith, subjective commitments, or philosophical speculation rather than empirical inquiry. Thus, while internal questions are grounded within a linguistic system and can be resolved using its rules, external questions lack empirical or factual basis within such a framework. (Strout, 1984, p. 17)

In his essay *Empiricism, Semantics, and Ontology*, Carnap examines the empiricist’s stance on the use of abstract entities, which presents a challenge due to the empiricist reliance on sense experience. Abstract entities, such as relations, numbers, and propositions, complicate this stance. According to Carnap, internal questions are those asked from within a linguistic framework or system SSS. Examples include, —~~A~~ there bats?”, —How can I use the term bat?”, and —~~W~~at is a bat?” Such questions can be resolved either analytically, by applying the language’s rules, or empirically, by investigating the world. (Carnap, 1952)

For instance, the question —~~A~~ there bats?” is an analytic internal question, answerable through the language rules alone. In contrast, the question —~~A~~ there cats that weigh two tons?” is an empirical internal question. Here, assuming a linguistic framework that defines —~~e~~at” and —~~t~~wo tons,” one must observe the world to determine if an entity exists that fits the definitions of both —~~e~~at” and —~~t~~wo tons.” Therefore, Carnap’s distinction highlights the different methods for resolving internal questions within a structured linguistic system. (Carnap, 1966)

According to Carnap, external questions are those posed outside a linguistic framework. Examples include, —~~A~~ there really cats?” and —~~S~~hould we adopt a linguistic framework for cats?” Such questions challenge the framework’s

assumptions either theoretically, by questioning the truth of the framework, or pragmatically, by evaluating its usefulness. A theoretical external question might ask, “Is it true that there are bats?” while a pragmatic external question might be, “Is a linguistic framework for bats useful?” Carnap contends that theoretical external questions are nonsensical and meaningless, as what “exists” is determined within a given linguistic framework; hence, any entity’s existence can only be meaningfully discussed according to that framework’s rules. In contrast, pragmatic questions are meaningful and significant, as they allow philosophers or scientists to assess the efficacy of a linguistic framework in serving practical or conceptual purposes. (Price, 1997) By distinguishing between internal and external questions, Carnap addresses abstract entities without committing to their existence or non-existence. He argues that as long as abstract entities are used within the rules of a linguistic framework, there is no inherent conflict for empiricists in utilizing them. Consequently, Carnap asserts that external questions lack cognitive content; however, they can still be given meaning by reinterpreting them or, more precisely, by substituting them with practical questions regarding the preference for certain linguistic forms. In essence, Carnap’s distinction between internal and external questions becomes a division between theoretical concerns and practical considerations. (Veerhaegh, 2017, p. 876)

Let us take the system of natural numbers in the linguistic framework of mathematics which possesses logical nature rather than factual importance. The form of language in this system includes the new expressions with acceptable rules such as:

- Numerals: ‘Five’ and the sentence forms like, ‘There are five balls on the desk’.
- General number: Five is a number.
- Properties: even and odd, negative integer and positive integer
- Relations: less than, almost, utmost, at least.
- Functions: Addition, subtraction, simplification, identity, division, association.
- Numerical variables: p, q, r, s etc
- Universal quantifiers: “for every n”
- Existential quantifiers: “there is an n such that x” (Carnap, 1966)

In the case of the above statements, the framework is logical and analytical. Every proposition refers to something which further indicates that logical statements are not linguistic entities. (Veerhaegh, 2017, pp. 208-209) Carnap puts forth internal and external distinction in his essay “Empiricism, Semantics and Ontology” as:

Internal questions, according to Carnap, are broadly empirical and can be answered through empirical investigation. In contrast, external questions concerning the existence of physical space and time are meaningless. For example, the question —Are there really space-time points?— is ambiguous. It could be interpreted as an internal question, in which case an affirmative answer would be analytic and, therefore, trivial. Alternatively, it could be understood as an external, practical question: —Should we introduce such and such forms into our language?— This formulation is not theoretical but practical, focusing on a decision rather than an assertion, and would thus be misleading if framed as a matter of truth or falsity. Lastly, the question might be posed in a theoretical sense: —Are our experiences such that using these linguistic forms would be expedient and fruitful?— This is a theoretical, empirical question that requires investigation into its practical implications. Therefore, a formulation of the question as simply "real or not?" would be inadequate, as it does not address the experiential or empirical basis for using such linguistic forms. Internal questions concern the existence of entities within a given linguistic framework, based on the rules governing their use. External questions, in contrast, address whether it would be useful to adopt such entities within the framework of those rules. Metaphysical questions, according to Carnap, are of a general nature and cannot be definitively classified as true or false. These questions lack cognitive and rational meaning in the context of analytic philosophy. However, Carnap contended that some metaphysical questions could be reconstructed to become intelligible and meaningful, but only if framed within a specific reference system and using appropriate modal operators. This suggests that not all metaphysical questions are pseudo-questions. (Ryle, 1949)

Justification of Abstract Entities

Carnap argued that abstract entities, though not ordinarily experienceable, are nonetheless concrete objects. These include names, designations, references, universals, particulars, relations, functions, propositions, properties, numbers, and so on. Such abstract expressions illustrate the relationships between internal, external, and metaphysical entities. While abstract objects cannot be directly experienced, their existence or non-existence can be logically proven, rendering them subject to truth or falsity. Empiricists, however, traditionally reject the existence of abstract objects,

adopting a more lenient stance towards nominalists who assert that only names exist, not their corresponding references. Yet, scientifically, it is not feasible to dismiss abstract objects entirely. Carnap introduced abstract entities primarily to distinguish them from absolute entities, which he recognized as lacking cognitive significance within a scientific context. (Carnap, 1967)

He categorized abstract objects, such as properties, classes, propositions, numbers, relations, and identity statements, while also illustrating their operation through quantifiers and modal operators. Carnap argued that mathematicians do not always engage directly with numbers, properties, and relations but rather manipulate symbols and formulas according to formal rules. Despite this, abstract concepts are indispensable in the sciences, especially in physics and mathematics. The theory of abstract entities finds its theoretical grounding in semantics, the study of meaning and truth. Some analytic philosophers propose that certain expressions designate specific entities, with designated propositions emerging from sentences and designated properties stemming from predicates. However, Quine strongly opposed this view, arguing that it violates fundamental principles of empiricism and leads to a metaphysical ontology akin to Platonism. (Carnap, 1950)

Carnap's philosophy implies that abstract entities are distinct from physical objects. They are referenced within an artificial language, and the operations of this language correspond to the operations of abstract entities. These abstract entities can be employed across various fields, such as mathematics, biology, physics, semantics, anthropology, linguistics, politics, and others. By utilizing abstract entities, these disciplines can overcome the nominalistic doubts concerning the reality and use of such entities. The role of abstract entities is to represent state descriptions within a given frame of reference. To understand the nature of these entities, it is crucial to distinguish between two types of questions regarding their existence or reality. Carnap posited that to discuss new abstract entities within his linguistic framework, we must follow specific rules within that framework. (Quine, 1960) These questions can be classified as internal and external. An internal question concerns the existence of specific entities within the framework of the linguistic system; such questions are answered within the system's rules. In contrast, external questions concern the

existence or reality of the entire system of entities, questioning whether the system as a whole is valid or meaningful. (Flocke, 2020)

Quine's stand on Internal, External and Metaphysical Questions

Quine rejects Carnap's distinction between internal and external questions in order to defend metaphysics against the logical positivists. He offers two key arguments against this distinction. First, he reduces it to the analytic-synthetic problem, arguing that the distinction between internal and external questions is not as clear-cut as Carnap suggests. Second, Quine contends that both internal and external statements are inherently both theoretical and practical. He believes that such statements cannot be neatly separated into distinct categories, as they always involve a mix of theoretical commitments and practical considerations. (Carnap, 1947, pp. 210-211)

Quine observes in his paper *On Carnap's Views of Ontology* that, although no one has influenced his philosophical thinking more than Carnap, a persistent disagreement remains between them regarding issues of ontology and analyticity. He argues that these questions are deeply interconnected, with their interrelation becoming particularly evident in Carnap's paper *Empiricism, Semantics, and Ontology*. (Carnap, 1950) Quine supposes that Carnap's severe division between internal and external questions cannot be recognized. As per Quine, no question is purely theoretical or purely practical: just like once the result is to adjust a hypothesis in the light of new experimental data, then judgment to adjust a certain framework will be conversant by both theoretical knowledge and pragmatic criteria. (Quine, 1960) The question whether or not to accept a certain entity as real therefore is a meaningful question that can be answered with ordinary scientific ways. (Bradley, 2018) According to Quine, Carnap introduced his distinction between internal and external questions to minimize fundamental changes in ontology and focus solely on pragmatic, rather than epistemic, considerations. Quine believed that Carnap's intention was to distinguish between pragmatic external questions and epistemic internal questions. However, Quine argues that this interpretation is neither valid nor appropriate, as he contends that such a distinction cannot adequately capture the complexities of ontology and meaning. (Quine, 1960, p. 203)

Kelly argues that Carnap did not oppose ontological commitments to abstract entities. He was not attempting to resolve nominalism through quantification over such entities. However, Carnap did oppose critics who argued that a commitment to empiricism (or to any philosophical standpoint) necessitated nominalism. His rejection of external problems was essentially a rejection of any a priori limitation on the admissible ontologies for empirical science, particularly the kind of restriction that Quine and Goodman embraced in their —Steps towards a Constructive Nominalism”. (Veerhaegh, 2017)

Quine was highly skeptical about metaphysical existence statements, arguing that "metaphysical expressions" lack denotation, truth, and falsity. However, like Carnap, he sought to reinterpret traditional metaphysical questions. Unlike Carnap, Quine did not outright dismiss the concepts used by traditional metaphysicians as meaningless. While Carnap rejected nominalism on the grounds that it is metaphysical in the strict sense, Quine embraced nominalism and argued that the problems of universals should be given meaningful interpretation. Although Carnap agreed with Quine on reinterpreting nominalism as a significant problem, he was cautious about introducing this issue into logic or semantics, given that nominalism originated from the old metaphysical debate. In this way, Quine rescued metaphysics from Carnapian positivism by asserting that some metaphysical questions could indeed be meaningful within a specific frame of reference. (Alspector-Kelly, 2011, p. 95)

Conclusion

Carnap's system introduces modal logic and quantification operators to distinguish between internal and external questions, as well as to reframe certain metaphysical questions. By using modal operators and quantifiers, Carnap aims to make internal, external, and some metaphysical questions both logical and meaningful. Internal and external questions, within this system, are handled using a distinct approach to ontological discussions in analytical philosophy. Analytical philosophy, as Carnap envisions it, clarifies the internal world, the external world, and some metaphysical concepts, establishing a framework for evaluating these questions.

The introduction of “possible worlds” is essential in differentiating between internal, external, and metaphysical issues. In Carnap’s system, both internal and external questions can be answered logically through modal and quantification systems that yield truth values and meaning. The internal world, being logical and factual, and the external world, being empirical, present distinct frameworks for addressing questions. However, metaphysical questions, while they may be modelled within these systems, lack cognitive content. While it is possible to designate metaphysical questions using modal operators and quantifiers in a logical system, these questions do not have meaningful truth conditions. For instance, metaphysical questions pertain to realms beyond empirical or logical analysis, such as the supernatural. Hence, metaphysical systems represent entities within a supernatural or spiritual realm that cannot be fully understood through empirical observation or logical analysis.

Carnap’s distinction between internal and external worlds becomes more complex when incorporating metaphysical questions, which belong to a separate, non-empirical framework. This framework transcends both the internal (logical) and external (empirical) worlds, representing questions that involve supernatural or spiritual realities. As a result, we can categorize these worlds as follows:

- W1 (Internal World): Logical and mathematical questions, as well as questions from formal sciences like physics and chemistry, are discussed here. Internal questions can be answered within the linguistic framework of a specific system.
- W2 (External World): Empirical questions about the natural world, answered through observation and scientific investigation. These questions are grounded in a universal linguistic framework of observation and empirical evidence.
- W3 (Metaphysical World): This represents questions concerning the supernatural, which cannot be resolved through logical or empirical methods. The truth or falsity of such metaphysical questions is beyond cognitive analysis, and they are thus seen as pseudo-questions in Carnap's system.

For example, consider the following cases:

- W1: Mars is an internal world question. Scientists recently discovered water on Mars. This water is not the same as Earth's water (H₂O), but it is considered "M-water" in a specific linguistic framework.
- W2: The Earth, containing water as (H₂O), is an external world question. The water on Earth is observable and can be empirically analysed.
- W3: The spiritual world, as described in religious texts like heaven, may also contain water. However, this "watr" cannot be verified through empirical or logical means, and thus the metaphysical question about it lacks cognitive content and cannot be resolved.

Carnap's use of abstract entities, such as numbers, relations, and functions, serves to differentiate between the internal-external and metaphysical systems. These abstract entities play a crucial role in scientific inquiry, particularly in fields like mathematics, physics, and formal logic. Internal questions are resolvable within a particular linguistic framework, external questions are answered through universal scientific frameworks, and metaphysical questions belong to a realm outside empirical and logical inquiry. So, Carnap's system treats internal questions as logical and internal to a system, external questions as empirical and external to a system, and metaphysical questions as pseudo-questions that do not hold cognitive significance within a scientific or logical framework.

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