# Hirst, Carr and Husserl: The Problem of Pure Theory

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## Introduction

This chapter looks first at the debate between two English philosophers of education, Paul Hirst and Wilfred Carr. These professors differed on the need for educational theory or perhaps on the very nature of educational theory. Professor Paul Hirst, founder of the *Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain* and its honorary President, went on record to defend a robust version of educational theory in response to Wilfred Carr. This debate originated in a pre-conference workshop for students before the PESGB Annual Conference in Oxford in 2005. Hirst was responding to Carr whose attitude to educational theory had been chronicled in the *Journal of Philosophy of Education* over the years (See e.g. 17:1, 1983; 20:2, 1986; 21:2, 1987; 23:1, 1989). According to Hirst, educational theory responded to a crucially important need for conceptual clarification in our understanding of educational discourses and practices (2005, p. 618). Carr, on the other hand, had put forward the view that education does not need any kind of philosophical theory to underwrite it but should simply begin with educational practices, the practice of teaching, for instance, or the practice of learning this particular syllabus, or the pedagogy of using group work. Carr argued that education could derive its theory from these practices. There would be no need for higher reflection on concepts like 'human freedom' or 'general enlightenment' or 'the principle of democracy' because education would be happy with the pragmatic reflections of workers in the educational field.

The symposium had been organised in response to Carr's paper entitled »Philosophy and Education« which had appeared in the Journal of the Society the previous year (38:1, 2004) and which gave rise to a number of follow-on articles. A philosophy of education requires some level of step back from practice and I interpret this debate as arguments for two distinct levels of theory. In my view, this tension also occurs in the debate about whether teacher preparation should best take place entirely in schools,

where student teachers might become apprenticed to an experienced teacher under the supervision of the school Principal or in programmes of teacher preparation generally managed by a University. Similarly, what role should the traditional foundations of education, namely philosophy, psychology, history, sociology, play in the formation of teachers? Carr voiced his opinion that perhaps continental philosophy would be a better context for the development of educational theory, referring to Rorty's form of pragmatism as close to his ideal form of theory. Rather paradoxically I argue here that continental philosophy in the form of the disagreement between Husserl and Heidegger on the issue of pure phenomenology was also troubled by a very similar tension. There are arguments in favour of both sides.

Predictably, Hirst continued to defend 'the critical and clarificatory function' of philosophy in the establishment of educational theory (1963, p. 51). He had held that all knowledge was governed by certain forms of logical organisation which he termed »forms of knowledge« by which he meant certain fixed fields of inquiry, certain fixed concepts mediating experience, such as mathematics, physical sciences, human sciences, history, religion, literature and the fine arts, philosophy (7 in all, 1975). He continued to argue for the preeminent role of philosophy as a keeper of conceptual boundaries and a keeper of knowledge in this sense, although he was to modify this stance in the 1970s. Carr of the Sheffield School of Education remained more convinced by the salience of action research for teachers and hence refused to allow philosophy the critical role argued for it by Professor Hirst.

The impact of this issue has refused to fade away. Indeed, one could argue that foundational theory continues to be contrasted with the needs of practitioners in the field. What system is better placed to generate the theory that is to be taught to student teachers or nurses? Should we look to practitioners themselves or to the Universities?

## 1. Degrees of Step Back from Practice

Philosophy, in Hirst's view, follows propositional rules and »pick(s) out the propositional nature of the achievements that are being pursued« (2005, p. 620). Its purpose is to »focus on certain abstracted aspects of the practices of education thereby subjecting them to rational critical scrutiny« (2005, p. 616). The purpose of the philosophy of education is to examine concepts, forms of justification and presuppositions made in these processes (p. 616, Hirst quotes and agrees with Peters 1966, p. 16)

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and, true to the empirical instincts of analytic philosophy, this concern divides into two spheres, the theoretical and the practical. While theoretical reason generates the *propositional* justifications of truth claims, beliefs, and knowledge in the domain of concepts, practical reason develops *propositional* justifications of actions in the domain of practice.

Hirst's tidy account means that the purpose of the philosophy of education is to test the »rational validity« of certain first order »beliefs« or »practices« (2005, p. 618). Hence it is a »second order« activity. So, while these beliefs and practices belong at ground level within the domain of education, they are transformed by means of a propositional instrument into concepts that demonstrate themselves as coherent, warranted, robust, and valid. For Hirst, practitioners will never generate a comparable form of justification without the rigour of the propositional method, in short, without the type of »step back« theory that propositional philosophy provides, practitioners will not be able to understand clearly what they are doing. This »step back« from raw facts is governed by its own rules. This is a methodological requirement of the propositional form. Clark (2011, p. 48) may be right to say that propositional theory is not simply »reflection-on-action« (Schön,1984, pp. 61ff) and that action research is in a much stronger position to claim live relevance for a person's thoughts and to promote reflection-in-action, given that they arise from experiences on the ground. However, this form of theory – ragmatic theory – is vulnerable to the charge of relativism and Bacon's complaint about the *Idols of the Theatre*, where one draws theory out of one's own substance (Smith, 2006). What Hirst objects to in Carr's model is the assumption that non-professional philosophers are adequate to the task of generating a form of theory that would be comparable in philosophical rigour to a »philosophy« of education. He proposes instead that philosophy requires a rule-bound propositional method. Carr, however, objects that this demand is too excessive. Theory needs to avoid the bewitchment of language itself which might lead us perhaps to overstate the case, to claim clarity where none exists, to overlook blurred elements in the concrete space of inquiry that do not fit with the models proposed. Hence, in Carr's view, theory in this higher sense has to be rejected and ultimately abandoned.

It is always tempting at this stage to take a detour through Greek thinking and to draw upon the good counsel of Aristotle as the inventor of practical theory or *phronesis*. This topic featured centrally in the original debate. However, as tempting as this might be (see Long, 2008), I am now inclined to agree with Hirst and to avoid this detour. I prefer to see Aristotle as largely marginal to the critical problem at issue, notwith-

standing the ultimate role he might play in helping us to understand educational practices. The issue is really a political one between a properly propositional type of theory (Hirst) and a more practical type (Carr).

Hirst's views on theory are vulnerable to the frame of all philosophical investigations as announced by Wittgenstein, namely, how bewitched we might be by our language (1972, p. 109). This bewitchment is centrally relevant to the current question (What has philosophy to do with education?). Even if, on the advice of Wittgenstein, clarity is less likely to be entirely possible in philosophy and we are fundamentally left with the philosophical reality »I don't know my way about« (1972, p. 124.). If a particular way of using language (e.g., philosophical propositions) has become the road system, as it were, from the vantage point of which a landscape can be explored, we are inevitably drawn to endorse the perspective of the landscape created by the road system. Similarly, the words we use, words like »subject« and »object« or »theory« and »practice«become milestones marking our passage along the road, periodic stopping places that apparently open up the landscape but also covertly conceal the particularity of our formal perspectives. Overlooked by these options for clarity is the prelinguistic landscape of experience or, if you like, the views from off-road, which of course are just as valid. If we took Wittgenstein's warning to heart, we would have to conclude that »Philosophy may in no way interfere with the actual use of language; it can in the end only describe it. For it cannot give it any foundation either. It leaves everything as it is« (1972, p. 124).

This observation is not good news for Hirst who is not happy to concede that philosophy leaves everything as it is. Instead, for him, philosophical theory plays a particular role in framing experience and indeed curriculum. It provides these with their clarity and justification. Could this view be softened a little? Recent commentators have argued that some kind of softening might be achieved (Misawa, 2011; Noaparast, 2013). But when Hirst says that »theoretical reason is directed to the achievement of theoretical truths, of propositions expressing in detached, objective, spectatorial terms, what is the case« (1972, p. 171), he names the function of theory itself and announces further that propositional analysis requires this degree of step back. He does not require a spectatorial view on any exaggerated cosmic scale but yet he supports a particular rule-bound step back from practice in order to generate a theoretical perspective (Clark, 2011). This analysis may indicate that different forms of theory-making require different kinds of step back from practice but these all claim a certain propositional form. As Noaparast rather helpfully explains: »Hirst never denies that

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philosophy can deal with action, but claims that this dealing is indirect through a discourse that relates to action« (2013, p. 567). So what degree of step back qualifies as philosophy? Hirst's position is that only a propositional form of step back counts.

It is this strongly expressed propositionalism that causes worry for Carr, for it seems to exclude practitioners, as a general rule, the very people who should be encouraged to be philosophically engaged rather than summarily disenfranchised. The analytic trend, however, is always towards a propositional form of theory. Similarly, while Pring's *Philosophy and Educational Research* values description, he also insists on the extrinsic character of concepts and beliefs that in some sense are »brought to« these observations (pp. 74-76). This is a trend in all analytic philosophy, but it causes Carr to object, arguing that both Hirst and Pring effectively attribute a similar kind of extrinsicism to theory itself, even if their positions claim to have been derived from the domain of practice. Instead of this, Carr prefers Stanley Fish's expression, namely, that »beliefs are not what you think *about* but what you think *with*« (as quoted in Carr, 2006, p. 150). You can't jump out of your own skin in order to think about yourself. So, this is an argument for a lower level of step back »theory« than is perhaps favoured by propositional philosophy. However, Carr is also a propositional philosopher or at least engages in its methods, which is the issue that confuses his version of an alternative to Hirst.

There are clear echoes of Dewey in Hirst's position. In *How we think* (1910/1933), Dewey explained that in order to reflect, we must step aside from the flow of life and consider what has happened and what might happen in relative calm. This form of reflection could postulate an origin and an outcome and re-examine processes that otherwise would pass by too quickly. Hence, for Hirst, the purpose of the philosophy of education is to test the »rational validity« of certain first order »beliefs« or »practices« (2005, p. 618). While beliefs and practices belong at ground level within the domain of education, their description requires conformity with other laws at a logical level. They need to be demonstrated as coherent, for instance, relative to other claims, and since »in the exercise of theoretical reason propositional understanding is the sole concern« (2005, p. 628), it follows that a radical step back (or reflection in Dewey's sense) to this form of discussion is required, pointing to the need to forge arguments governed by the rules of propositional logic.

Carr is concerned, however, that such a strategy seldom supports the application of theory to practice with any conviction, quite simply because educational practices are caught in the flow of life and are not constrained in the same way by logical rules as

defined by propositional logic. To catch Carr's sense, perhaps the example of studying wild animals in the zoo might be appropriate. It is like taking animals from the wild, putting them in a zoo and then studying their behaviour in the zoo in order to find out how they might behave in the wild. Once constrained by propositional rules, Carr argues, philosophical conclusions are radically out of place and clearly fail to have any impact either on the ground with practitioners or slightly off the ground with policy makers. Policy makers want to see relevant ideas before they will allow themselves to be convinced by coherent arguments.

Now, Paul Hirst would suggest that philosophy has relevance for educational practices and is not entirely bound up with its own internal disputes. He supports a radical step back as this strategy operates well from a scientific perspective. Most scientific practices allow for several levels of step back from the experimental site. A physicist in the laboratory might want to step back in order to re-examine the efficiency of a particular piece of equipment. But this perceived solution to a problem might not be what is required. Perhaps it might be better to amend the experimental design itself. To find out if this is the case, the experimenter must be free to consider variables that are not yet manifest in the practice under focus, which might require some entirely new thinking on the practice and a new experimental design. In this case, a more radical step back from the experimental design offers greater practical success. What this shows is that a form of step back that is too close to the experimental site might be less successful than one that might be several steps away.

Another example of distant theory being more relevant than more proximate theory is the reality of demographic change in some schools. A sudden dip in pupil ability over a number of years can cause panic among seasoned teachers. While some staff insist on the return of customary practices to push forward the academic standards of pupils as a possible remedy for dipping academic achievement, others abandon this approach and prepare a more radical readjustment to the new conditions. What actions would make this school better? Because practitioners can easily accept quick solutions to problems based on their knowledge of the practice site rather than more considered ones that might follow from a broader scoping of the issues involved, superficial readjustments can follow too readily. What this shows is that theory close to the event may not be the most relevant kind of theory for resolving problems.

So perhaps it is not the degree of step back that is at issue for Carr but rather its formal type. It is not the critical stance that bothers Carr but rather its formal stance. Thus an

expression of anger could be effectively analysed in terms of the proposition *that* someone is angry together with descriptions of various behaviours that present evidence of their anger. As a clearer example, we might remember Searle's phrase »I am going to do it« which could mean many things depending on the context in which it is delivered. What does it mean? One immediate response might be »but you can't do that, think of your family« while another response might be »you said that before, why should I believe you now« while yet another might say »Oh thanks, that is very helpful«. After all, the phrase could house a variety of raw expressions, a »threat«, a »promise«, an »offer of help«, as Searle has noted. The form of the phrase itself does not say which of these meanings is more likely, but an altered tone of voice changes its actual meaning. For this reason, Searle argues that »there is no way of abstracting the locutionary act which does not catch an illocutionary act with it« (1973, p. 143). The relevance for our current argument is that it questions any claims to univocity of the propositional form. The child understands the illocutionary purpose of speech acts (i.e., their expressive force) long before achieving either semantic or grammatical control, even though his understanding might improve by means of further propositional clarification, such as, »No Johnny, that man is not offering to help, he is threatening to blow his brains out«. It is quite possible from the context that the drama has been captured by the child already.

Searle's example simply presents some evidence that the propositional form is not as self-sustaining as it might appear. What Carr denies is the belief that propositionalism provides a certain quality of logical precision that seeks to ground educational theory on practitioner beliefs and actions (2006, p. 137). Researchers of whatever persuasion cannot stand as neutral observers of themselves or their actions but are always embedded in the contingent norms and practices of their own historical perspective and in the performative value of their actions. Language philosophy, however, does not have to be propositional but can extend to the critique of the propositional form, which is perhaps what Wittgenstein had set out to detail in his later work. Not being bewitched by language must also mean not being bewitched by its propositional form. While Hirst is not opposed to other forms of theory per se, he insists that the philosophical form of theory has to be theoretical in a stronger sense than perhaps warranted by performative logic.

What are our conclusions, now that we have reviewed this debate? The critical reflections on this debate have largely agreed that some middle ground is the only answer. In my view, at this time, this middle ground is closer to Hirst's revised position than to Carr's. There is a need for the foundational disciplines to play some part

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in the preparation of teachers and, more critically, there is a need for properly gui-
ded philosophical reflection in this preparation. Perhaps the propositional form
might not be the best idiom for such a philosophy unless it takes into account the
value of performative logic and the ordinary use of language proposed by Wittgen-
stein.

## 2. Relevance of the Debate to current University-School Links

This issue is important in view of wider contextual queries questioning the value of
University scholarship for professional practice. Just what kind of theory is possible for
practitioners to tolerate?  Those of us engaged in teacher education constantly come
up against this question from the perspective of practitioners. The trend is to reframe
the professions by means of the slogan »Learn while you earn«. Such a policy nudges
practitioners (according to the economics of the nudge) to follow an apprenticeship
model in their early years of development and hence it leads them to accept as normal
a form of theory that is necessarily 'theory-light'. This trend favours policy strategies
that highlight the fragility of University theory for such practical endeavours as tea-
ching or managing schools. Where possible, it endorses practical concerns and only
tolerates minimal step back from the workface, with each step having to justify its re-
levance to practice. The less distant, the more relevant. Under these conditions, blue
sky thinking is set at naught, as is any opportunity to review curriculum content in a
radical manner. The preferred form of theory, if it is valued by its proximity to practice,
is then confined to the reinforcement of field notes and whatever makes sense to wor-
kers at the coal-face. This is the form of knowledge that holds sway. It favours a stra-
tegy of keeping the boat closely tied at the quayside for fear that it might get lost on
its travels. Otherwise can one guarantee that it will ever return to service the needs of
practice?

Our universities today are charged with a difficult task. Academics move into areas of
professional practice, and while learning from these contexts, they must also defend
the texture of the critical value-set context from which they have been sent. These
factors point to the need for a compromise between the providers of propositional
(heavy) theory and the practitioner providers of surface theory. A tension impacts on
the development of teachers, perhaps favouring the practitioner's voice. The message
is that whatever theory is to be offered to Newly Qualified Teachers must answer to
the professional needs identified by practitioners, whereas all anecdotal evidence

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shows that established teachers at this stage want more wide-ranging, universal theory. These trends raise the question about the educational sector's tolerance for forms of theory that operate at some remove from descriptive commentary. Perhaps a lesson might be taken from Plato. The *theoros* or ambassador mentioned in Plato's *Laws* (952b) retains authority while remaining distant, by definition, from the lands being visited, and so exercises a theoretical function in respect of them. Athenian ambassadors have to be sufficiently trusted by the society of which they are the emissaries to take on the responsibility for the integrity of its values while in a foreign setting. They can then be entrusted to remain sufficiently distant from the host society to exercise a purely theoretical function with respect to it. Universities have always embraced critique as their preferred form of theory and where they have engaged in curriculum development, they have done so on the basis of bringing a critical stance to bear on it. They act as a suitable counterbalance to the performativity imperatives of state systems. They have not in general followed the demands of currency alone (i.e., what is needed now) but have continued to allow for broader horizons that prove to be of considerable value to practitioners in the long run.

In the background of this question lies the relevance of University theory to the practice and theory of practitioners and, in particular, the relevance of philosophy to educational practice. While analytic philosophy seems to run into difficulties managing this problem due to its preference for propositional logic, could we then confidently state that continental philosophy with its preference for non-linguistic experience fares any better? This is the question to which we now need to turn.

### 3. Pure Theory and Phenomenology

While respecting Hirst's view that »in the exercise of theoretical reason propositional understanding is the sole concern« (2005, p. 628), I need to suggest that other non-propositional approaches, extending even as far back as the critical philosophy of Kant, present quite a different frame for philosophical reflection, but one that still ends up in a similar quandary with respect to the purity of theory. For Husserl, theory is required to »unify« empirical experience in the Kantian sense of unifying experience *under* a concept. Such a move opens a comparable distance between a transcendental understanding of the manifold (how the mind constructs the reality to be known) and other more spontaneous models of understanding.

Brentano added a psychological element to the multiple manifestation of being by thinking of knowing as a movement, an action of engaged outreach toward objects in the world. Brentano is here following the reflections of Aristotle on the soul, arguing that to know is to grasp and therefore to move in appetitive capture of some event. Movement is central, the movement of the mind in its operation of knowing. Husserl refined this insight by describing the motility of the outreach of knowing in perception. He began to experiment with the language of »directing oneself towards something« (*sich-richten-auf etwas*) rather than the more static metaphors of picturing and representing that predominated in the neo-Kantian movement of that time. The term Husserl adopted from for this precise type of outreach is »intentionality«. For Husserl, every act of knowledge is intentional, meaning that it is not a representation (a picture) but an act of engagement. This feature is sometimes explained in phenomenology by saying that to be conscious at all in a human sense is to be conscious *of* something. Husserl was then able to focus on several aspects of prelinguistic conscious awakening, an approach almost excluded by picture theory, and was able to extend this reflection from a primitive level of simple apprehension open to pre-linguistic beings (like infants) to its conceptually enriched form among sophisticated users of language like picture-makers and proposition users.

Imagine two children engaged in a Maths problem. The Maths problem stands as an object in the world, a simple equation written down and composed within their ability range. But how does this object fit into the children's respective worlds? What meaning does it have? What reality? It appears for the first child as something easily tackled, in no way an obstacle, so its being approaches the child as something positive and is welcomed. The child gushes at it on a wave of confidence that no problem is a match for his ability, a mere step in his forward passage to cover the course and make a success of his studies. For the second child, the same object appears against a background of dread. He is reluctant, fearful, remembering too acutely failures of the past. The same problem appears on a bed of doubt, making him nervous, fretful, stressing before what seems like an impossible task, lined up alongside other impossible tasks only too vividly impressed on the memory. The same Maths problem, the same object, but two different realities and two different worlds. So, when we come to examine the reality of the Maths problem like any object, we need to see it as part of an entire world in which the child operates as an elliptical centre, the child at one end, the object at the other. Guided by Heidegger, we can see that phenomenology primarily focuses on a particular field of consciousness that *attaches* itself to the object. The focus is on the being of what appears.

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In *Experience and Judgment*, a book whose final text he approved but which was published posthumously, Husserl explains the active nature of human reception in any act of cognition. Using unfortunate phrasing, he could explain that the ego presupposes that something has been pregiven (an object) and toward this object perception has been directed (Husserl, 1973, p. 72). This is the origin of the thematic object which cannot appear unless it is both given and perceived. Hence the »substantive« object becomes in a sense the identifier of a field which, as such, stands out and beckons for attention. Apprehension signals the motility of the entire cognitive apparatus that engages with the object perceived by noticing it and maintaining its prominence, one might say its meaning, by means of interest. The prominence of objects operates as a drawing power obtruding on the ego. Objects arise from within the field of ego awareness to confront the ego itself, beginning the process of ego definition. In this way, due to this dynamic interaction, an identity begins to stabilize as does the object in the field, which stands apart from or against the noticing act, having achieved prominence by means of it (1973, p. 77). Its ontological status (being) derives from its phenomenological prominence just as the ego's own definition derives from this act of engagement. The learner enters a learning state at the same time as she enters an identity space by announcing an ego vulnerable to the act of noticing.

In this way a prepredicative object *obtrudes* itself onto the learner by becoming part of his own perceptive reality, even if the »it« is not yet defined in its objective sphere or finished. Hence the object is touched, drawn into the mouth, licked, tasted, bitten, felt, returned and, when possible, thrown away. Just as the young child reaches out to grasp the object in this way, the intellectual instinct set in train by any intentional mood reaches out to grasp the idea of the thing. Paradoxically, the object is received in an active movement of grasping; something is brought close, toyed with, felt. As Husserl states, »receptivity must be regarded as the lowest level of activity. The ego consents to what is coming and takes it in« (1973, p. 79). We remember the child who reaches out for what suddenly attracts her attention. We remember our own actions of curiosity when inquiring about some matter. The recognition that the object stands against the ego obliges inquirers to reach out and touch, to make contact with the object in ways that are available and perhaps to assimilate it in some way by exploring its sensory responsiveness. A »turning toward« takes place which Husserl arguably identifies as a striving (1973, p. 78) but also might be understood as active engagement. The inquiring mind is the reality itself, the reality of a frame or horizon of phenomenological insight. Intentionality allows a turning toward the item of prominence while the dynamic vectoral quality of human intentionality begins to solidify around objective and subjective poles.

It is strange then for the sake of rigour that Husserl sees scientific knowledge not as a form of theory emerging from the lifeworld (which his phenomenology demands) but rather as a form of theory based on justification fed by the transcendental realm of ideas. Theory occurs, as it were, at right angles to the line defined by intentionality. From particularities it is possible, by paying attention to the object concerned, to move back and upwards to levels of generality that unify the particularity under different levels of conceptual unification. This process might produce a taxonomy as Linnaeus suggested but it might reach beyond the biological realm also. So, if I learn that the animal is a dog, I form by abstraction a general idea of dogness which I can then use to identify other animals I have yet to encounter. I use this general or universal idea of dogness (a unifying concept) to help me identify any particular animal I may see. Dogness, however, does not exist in the world but only in mental systems generally. In other words, as I understand it, when the powers of classification develop along purely eidetic lines, they end up in essences that extend cognitively to constitute regional ontologies and ultimately certain recognisable scientific forms such as Chemistry, Physics etc. The formalism is the difficulty here. In the *Lectures* of 1925, Husserl distinguishes between the principles of logic by which things are understandable at a scientific level (science = logic) and the empirical experience of things by which they are encountered and experienced *(Erfahrung*, Husserl, 1977). While *Erfahrung* (experience) refers to primitive encounter with things in the world, in the normal course of learning, things are rarely encountered without some prior historical understanding. They require transcendental readjustment and unification that gives them meaning, as Piaget would later demonstrate empirically. Husserl identifies this flexibility, the flexibility of experience, as an unhelpful blur that contravenes attempts to understand the world in a scientific or rigorous sense.

Hence »pure« phenomenology (as distinct from original phenomenology) studies the field as it *detaches* itself from the object as it manifests itself in its presenting world (remember the children with the maths problem) in order to promote understanding and clarity on the object itself. This move is comparable to Hirst's propositional formalism, his step back into an indirect form of study. This latter orientation, in Heidegger's view, drifts off from the original experience of the object and signals a singular fault in Husserl's approach (Heidegger, 1985, p. 107). On Heidegger's reading, Husserl is engaged in the quest for pure theory by which is meant something similar to Kant's transcendental reduction. On the contrary, the whole meaning of phenomenology derives from our primitive encounter with objects in the world, holding them as objects of encounter because of their closeness to us rather than their distance, and certainly not

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cut off from the empirical by a set of rule-bound procedures. The attempt to find an *a priori* basis for consciousness is for Heidegger a step too far because the whole meaning of phenomenology is to describe the being of objects in the world. Because phenomenological orientation is continually enriched by categorial thickening and the perennial influence of mood shifts and learning, evidence is seldom presented in an eidetically robust Husserlian sense and so purified phenomenology seems an impossible ideal.

Although these matters are not quite as simple as I present them here, I have made a prima facie case for comparing Hirst with Husserl on the issue of 'pure' theory. Like the mathematization of reality, where numbers and shapes can be deduced from pure transcendental forms of numbers and shapes, Hirst's insistence on the propositional form of theory tends to identify theory with transcendental logical features of thought. For Heidegger, phenomenological encounter operates in the same kind of field that Carr applauds. The objection to pure theory runs roughly parallel in both traditions and can best be understood as a battle between two formalisms. I argue here that the roots of this problem surfaced in the Hirst-Carr debate. The evidence presented as authentic to practitioners is arguably quite different from the evidence discovered by traditionally scientific but clearly more distant theoretical means.

## 4. Conclusion

Hirst's insistence that the role of philosophy is always indirect is linked to a concept of the purity of philosophical argument that is split off from the impurities of the lifeworld. Husserl's insistence on the purity of ideas promotes a method of eidetic reduction that cuts itself off from historical experience (*Erlebnis*). Certainly a field like chemistry is governed by an idea and governs in turn a territory, an arena of inquiry, a set of practices, but it is not clear how philosophy can operate as a gatekeeper for such a study. Carr's insistence on the historical messiness of educational inquiry is intended as an indicator that education no longer needs the kind of foundationalist theory Hirst had proposed. Carr writes:

» What my argument is intended to demonstrate is that educational practitioners cannot abstract themselves from this contextual setting and therefore always are, and could never be other than, rationally constrained by the epistemic norms and standards intrinsic to their shared discourse and practice (2006, p. 154).«

Granted the validity of Carr's postfoundationalist critique, if we are to consider the matter using a primitive strategy from tense logic, things might look different. Say if we were to ask which form of theory at time t1 —Hirst's or Carr's—we would prefer, then we would probably be more attracted by the robustness of Hirst's form of theory. This is because in normal circumstances, we do not situate our perspectives or theories in their broad historical context but rather focus on how a matter should be understood now, at this point in time, and for this we need some clarity of expression. Yet to be accurate about it, a timeless understanding is not available to us, as it might be of course to machines. Both the appetite for propositional clarity manifest in the analytic tradition and the ideal of mathematical clarity manifest in Husserl and derived ultimately from Descartes is only ever part of the story, perhaps even a distortion.

As I understand it, Heidegger does not support indirect theory, nor anything similar to Dewey's reflective step back from experience in order to consider the situation from a relatively safe distance. Philosophical thinking does not have the luxury of suspending time and even if reflection is possible, it is not offered as the type of step back activity imagined by Dewey. Reflection too is subject to the turmoil of life as many undigested features crowd in upon a person to distract and ultimately confuse the direction of the reflection. This simply means that reflective thinking is not best understood as a dispassionate event but is emotionally contextualised by the complexity of the agent's encounter with things and problems.

Theory shows its etymological link to *theos* (god) and to *theoros* (ambassador). Theory makers need to define the distance they have travelled from their initial area of research. They need to justify the introduction of local rules — logic in the case of language, intuitive clarity in the case of a mathematical science —in order to define their form of study. However, this justification needs to respect the original species of encounter and area of research which is, as Carr says, in the middle of educational practices.

Perhaps a doubt still hangs over the mind of practitioners about propositional theory. Perhaps the claim still lingers that such theory has become too pure and too far removed from the complexity of the many circumstances that contextualize daily practice. Perhaps this explains why policy makers are tempted to return to the 19c pattern of apprenticeship for teachers and why there is a tendency to dictate to Universities which elements of curriculum should be selected and which left aside. But in these

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times of pressure, despite diminishing tolerance for forms of theory that operate at some remove from classroom needs, the need for critique and direction has never been more acute. There are features that cannot be googled and the need for critique requires taking an ambassadorial stance with respect to any particular practiced, including teacher preparation. Indeed, the work of the *theoros* or ambassador(s) in Plato's *Laws* (952b) teaches this salutary lesson. It shows how »theoreticians« must defend their own value-set against any new ideas beckoning for their attention on the grounds of novelty alone. It shows how new ambassadors need to act as guarantors against the googled headlessness of our age and any ill-considered advice that might harm the integrity of the curriculum. Only from such a distance can theory propose novel actions that are mindful of a double duty, the duty to safeguard the coherence and justificatory value of what is proposed and the duty to read accurately the context of practice.

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