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## The Vienna Circle's Reception of Nietzsche

Andreas Vrahimis

Friedrich Nietzsche was among the figures from the history of nineteenth-century philosophy that, perhaps surprisingly, some of the Vienna Circle's members had presented as one of their predecessors. While, primarily for political reasons, most Anglophone figures in the history of analytic philosophy had taken a dim view of Nietzsche, the Vienna Circle's leader Moritz Schlick admired and praised Nietzsche, rejecting what he saw as a misinterpretation of Nietzsche as a militarist or proto-fascist. Schlick, Frank, Neurath, and Carnap were in different ways committed to the view that Nietzsche made a significant contribution to the overcoming of metaphysics. Some of these philosophers praised the intimate connection Nietzsche drew between his philosophical outlook and empirical studies in psychology and physiology. In his 1912 lectures on Nietzsche, Schlick maintained that Nietzsche overcame an initial Schopenhauerian metaphysical-artistic phase in his thinking, and subsequently remained a positivist until his last writings. Frank and Neurath made the weaker claim that Nietzsche contributed to the development of a positivistic or scientific conception of the world. Schlick and Frank took a further step in seeing the mature Nietzsche as an Enlightenment thinker.

# The Vienna Circle's Reception of Nietzsche

Andreas Vrahimis

Since at least as far back as Lou Andreas-Salomé's *Nietzsche* from 1894, some scholars have detected a "positivist" phase in Nietzsche's intellectual development (see [Hussain 2004](#), 365). This interpretation has been debated in various contexts, the most recent being an ongoing scholarly debate concerning the precise nature of Nietzsche's view of natural science (see, e.g., [Cohen 1999](#), [Clark and Dudrick 2004](#), [Hussain 2004](#)). This paper will examine an intricately connected topic in the history of contemporary philosophy, namely the reception of Nietzsche's thought by the Vienna Circle. Despite usually avoiding the use of this etic term as a self-description, the Vienna Circle largely contributed to shaping the conception of "positivism" at work in contemporary philosophy, and thereby also the conception at stake in the aforementioned debates within Nietzsche scholarship. As I will demonstrate in this paper, some of the Vienna Circle's leading members had interpreted the later Nietzsche as a positivist, as engaged in overcoming metaphysics, as an Enlightenment thinker, and as contributing to the formation of a scientific conception of the world.

Though some of Carnap's, Neurath's, and Schlick's reactions to Nietzsche have been debated by historians of analytic philosophy,<sup>1</sup> and though some comparisons between them have been attempted,<sup>2</sup> so far no comprehensive study of these various responses has been undertaken. Scholarly focus on individual

<sup>1</sup>For Carnap, see [Allen \(2003\)](#); [Gabriel \(2004, 12\)](#); [Wolters \(2004, 28, 32\)](#); [Sachs \(2011\)](#); [Mormann \(2012\)](#); [Moreira \(2018\)](#). For Neurath, see [Nemeth \(1992\)](#). For Schlick, see [Iven \(2013a,b\)](#).

<sup>2</sup>For example, [Nelson \(2018, 324–26\)](#) briefly refers to Frank's and Schlick's responses to Nietzsche. [Ferrari \(2016\)](#) discusses the differences between Schlick's and Carnap's metaethical views, mentioning that they, as well as Frank, were influenced by Nietzsche. [Mormann \(2015, 421\)](#) very briefly compares Schlick's,

figures has sometimes resulted in puzzlement: why, for example, would someone like [Carnap \(1959a, 80\)](#) refer to Nietzsche in the course of presenting how modern logic allows philosophers to overcome metaphysics? Such puzzlement is dissolved, as this paper will show, by taking into account all of the passages in which Vienna Circle members respond to Nietzsche's work in similar ways to Carnap.

In this paper, I will examine Schlick's, Frank's, Neurath's, and Carnap's various discussions of Nietzsche throughout their work. I will demonstrate that the Vienna Circle's members understood Nietzsche in light of a cluster of interrelated theses. The most important of these can be formulated as follows:

(N1) Nietzsche was an anti-metaphysical philosopher.

As I will show in what follows, Schlick, Frank, Neurath, and Carnap all endorsed N1, interpreting Nietzsche as committed to overcoming metaphysics. A detailed analysis of their articulations of N1, however, shows that they each emphasise different aspects of Nietzsche's overcoming of metaphysics. We shall see that Schlick emphasises Nietzsche's rejection of the possibility of knowledge of a "supersensible" ([Schlick 2013, 228](#)) world; Frank highlights Nietzsche's psychological and linguistic critique of metaphysical concepts; like Frank, Neurath links Nietzsche's overcoming of metaphysics to his use of psychology, as well as his critique of Kantian philosophy; Carnap focuses on

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Carnap's, and Neurath's responses to Nietzsche, only to claim (without adducing further textual evidence) that they are incompatible; nonetheless, despite the differences Mormann notes, I will demonstrate that there are fundamental points of agreement between all three (and also Frank). [Tuusvuori \(2000, 159–62, 233, 290–92, 678–80\)](#) briefly overviews some of Schlick's, Neurath's, Carnap's, Frank's and von Mises' remarks on Nietzsche, but does not discuss Schlick's (at the time unpublished) lecture notes, and does not draw connections between their views. [Fischer \(1999\)](#) only compares Schlick's and Carnap's more well-known mentions of Nietzsche. Except for [Mormann \(2015\)](#), almost none of these comparisons consider the most extensive treatment of Nietzsche by any Circle member, namely [Schlick \(2013\)](#).

Nietzsche's division of his work between empirical studies and poetry. This partly reflects disagreements within the Vienna Circle concerning the correct conception of the project of overcoming metaphysics. Clearly there are also substantial differences between Nietzsche's and the Vienna Circle's members' various conceptions of metaphysics, as well as their proposed methods for its overcoming. Although scholars later debated the question of Nietzsche's commitment to a brand of falsificationism, (e.g., Clark and Dudrick 2004, Hussain 2004), none of the Vienna Circle's members explicitly interpreted him as a verificationist. Indeed, as I explain in Section 4, Schlick presents Nietzsche as committed to the thesis that metaphysical statements are false, rather than, as the Vienna Circle's verificationism would have it, meaningless. Thus N<sub>1</sub> should be construed broadly as indicating an overall critical attitude towards the viability of metaphysics, rather than tied to a specific conception of a method for overcoming metaphysics.

A second thesis which the majority of the abovementioned Vienna Circle members explicitly upheld is the following:

(N<sub>2</sub>) Nietzsche's philosophy was intimately related to the results of specific scientific fields, including most prominently psychology.

Interestingly, in most of the relevant writings by the Vienna Circle, N<sub>2</sub> is connected to N<sub>1</sub>. In other words, Nietzsche's overcoming of metaphysics is seen as being accompanied by his high estimation of empirical sciences like psychology and physiology. As already noted, some of these writings portray Nietzsche as deploying empirical psychological explanations in support of the attempt to overcome metaphysics.

The combination of N<sub>1</sub> with N<sub>2</sub> is further connected with a third interpretative thesis:

(N<sub>3</sub>) Nietzsche was a positivist.

Here, I employ the term "positivism" in the very broad sense

found in Schlick's methodological and epistemological characterisation of Nietzsche. As I will show in Section 4, Schlick explicitly takes Nietzsche to be a "positivist" in the sense of being committed to the thesis that philosophy has no special method for acquiring knowledge, above or beyond the empirical methods of the sciences. If metaphysics is conceived as relying on such special methods, this means that N<sub>3</sub> is connected to, though it does not necessarily entail, N<sub>1</sub>.<sup>3</sup> Schlick was in fact the only Vienna Circle member to explicitly defend N<sub>3</sub>. However, Frank and Neurath defend the following weaker claim:

(N<sub>3</sub>\*) Nietzsche made significant contributions to the development of a scientific world conception.

In other words, Frank and Neurath, as I will show in Sections 7 and 8, do not make the bolder interpretative claim that Schlick makes, but instead briefly mention the significance of Nietzsche's contributions to the scientific (or "positivistic": Frank 1970, 232) outlook that they also championed. That Schlick makes the bolder claim (N<sub>3</sub>), while Frank and Neurath limit themselves to weaker claims (N<sub>3</sub>\*) may be explainable by the fact that, as we shall see in Sections 2–5, Schlick wrote extensively on the interpretation of Nietzsche's oeuvre, while Frank and Neurath did not. Carnap simply does not comment on this subject.

The fourth interpretative thesis which this paper will explore is the view that

(N<sub>4</sub>) Nietzsche was an Enlightenment thinker.

Though closely connected to all the above theses, this view was explicitly upheld, as we shall see, only by Schlick and Frank. Both Schlick and Frank understood Nietzsche to be an Enlightenment thinker insofar as: he rejected metaphysics (N<sub>1</sub>), he valued the results of specific sciences (N<sub>2</sub>), and he was either a positivist

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<sup>3</sup>For example, some varieties of nineteenth-century positivism were not committed to N<sub>1</sub>.

(N<sub>3</sub>), as Schlick argues, or committed to a scientific conception of the world (N<sub>3</sub>\*), as Frank claims. As I show in Sections 3–4, Schlick saw Nietzsche’s early Schopenhauerian metaphysics as accompanied by a critique of the Socratic culture of the Enlightenment. In Schlick’s view, Nietzsche only became a proponent of the Enlightenment when he overcame his early metaphysics and embraced a scientific world conception.

Interestingly, N<sub>1</sub>–N<sub>4</sub> broadly align with the types of philosophical views that the Vienna Circle outwardly presented as characterising their unified outlook. Inwardly there were, as most scholars agree, significant disagreements between the Circle’s members (see, e.g., Uebel 2007). Most importantly, though, they were all agreed that this had something to do with some brand of verificationism, the manner in which metaphysics was to be overcome (N<sub>1</sub>) was conceived in quite distinct ways by Schlick, Neurath, and Carnap (see, e.g., Uebel 2019). In this paper, I focus on the broad agreement between Vienna Circle members, and will therefore avoid focussing on what are otherwise incredibly significant differences between their positions.<sup>4</sup>

Though the Vienna Circle’s members did come to see Nietzsche as their predecessor in connection to the abovementioned theses, they also objected to specific aspects of Nietzsche’s ethics. Carnap’s 1929 lecture notes indicate that he discussed Nietzsche’s association with “aristocratic ethics” and “heroism” Carnap (1922–33, 33), though the notes are inadequate for further determining Carnap’s position on this topic.<sup>5</sup> Despite his high enthusiasm for Nietzsche’s genius, Schlick, e.g., (1952, 78–79) remained critical of Nietzsche’s conception of a *Herrenmoral*. After Schlick’s death, Waismann (1994a,b) would follow suit in presenting some scathing criticisms of Nietzsche’s specific view

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<sup>4</sup>My focus on commonalities may come at the expense of an analysis of Nietzsche’s influence on some of the Vienna Circle’s disagreements concerning practical philosophy. This has already been explored in Ferrari (2016).

<sup>5</sup>Moreira (2018, 268) claims that “nothing suggests that Carnap has any sympathy with these views”.

that the members of a “master race” (1994a, 47) should be exempt from all moral strictures. Nonetheless, it is important here to specify that such criticisms only concern the positive conception of ethics outlined by Nietzsche. Other aspects of Nietzsche’s ethics and metaethics, especially his critique of morality, influenced some Vienna Circle members (see, e.g., Mormann 2010, Ferrari 2016).

The Vienna Circle’s accounts of Nietzsche are at odds with the vehement rejections of Nietzsche’s thought developed by other significant figures in the history of analytic philosophy. The latter were largely a result of Nietzsche’s association with political positions to which the majority of Anglophone analytic philosophers were opposed. At the outset of the First World War, British propaganda had portrayed Nietzsche as responsible for Germany’s amoral militarism (see Martin 2006). As Akehurst (2010, 18–25, 55–58, 69–70, 96, 101–104) has shown, these outcries shaped the Anglophone analytic reaction to Nietzsche. Already during the interwar, Russell would claim that “Hitler’s ideals come mainly from Nietzsche” (quoted in Akehurst 2010, 1). Russell repeats this claim in his popular *History of Western Philosophy* (1946, 667, 746), though there he clarifies that Nietzsche was neither a nationalist nor an anti-Semite (1946, 791–92). The most direct point of contrast to Nietzsche’s reception by Anglophone analytic philosophers is found in Schlick’s work. In 1914, Schlick (2013, 77–87) defended Nietzsche against the British propagandists’ charge of militarism, and again during the 1930s against the far-right militaristic appropriation of Nietzsche (1952, 77–79).<sup>6</sup> Another important case in point relates to Neurath, who in 1944–1945 had co-published with Joseph Lauwerys a series of papers arguing that Plato’s *Republic* should be banned from education in post-war Germany, as fascists could use it to propagate their ideas (see Soulez 2019, Tuboly forthc. b). Their work predated, and influenced, similar political attacks by Rus-

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<sup>6</sup>See Wolters (2017, 11–14), Wolters (forthc.); Vrahimis (forthc. a).

sell and Popper against figures from the history of philosophy. Yet contrary to Russell (1946), Neurath and Lauwerys' (1944; 1945) heated polemic against Plato and other philosophers refrained from making political accusations against Nietzsche. Instead, they contained their commentary to a brief chastisement of Nietzsche's portrayal of "the resemblance of his own ideas with those of Frederic II" (Neurath and Lauwerys 1944, 575). By contrast to Russell and other Anglophone analytic philosophers, Schlick, and in part Neurath, resisted the far-right's misappropriation of Nietzsche. There were, however, contrasting opinions within the Circle.<sup>7</sup> Carnap's 1918 notes indicate that he conceded the propagandists' view of Nietzsche, classifying him alongside Heraclitus and Thrasymachus as an individualistic defender of "perpetual war", conceived "as a moral necessity" (Carnap 1918, 17).<sup>8</sup> Feigl (1981, 383) also briefly mentions Nietzsche as a militarist in 1952.

It is unlikely that either Carnap or Feigl had read Schlick's 1914 addendum to his lecture notes, in which he develops detailed objections to Nietzsche's portrayal as a militarist. In fact, Schlick's early work, where we find the most extensive treatment of Nietzsche's philosophy by a member of the Vienna Circle, has until recently been overlooked by scholars.<sup>9</sup> Schlick's defence of Nietzsche in his Rostock lecture notes was only published in 2013, while most of his early work has not been translated into English. This in part explains why the Vienna Circle's reception of Nietzsche, and in particular Schlick's major contribution in shaping it, has so far been inadequately studied. This article aims to rectify this omission.

<sup>7</sup>This is unsurprising, given the political complexity of the Vienna Circle; see e.g., Reisch (2005).

<sup>8</sup>See Moreira (2018, 267–68). As e.g., Wolters (2017, 21) points out, the evidence suggests that Carnap had initially been an enthusiastic about the First World War, and only converted to pacifism sometime in 1918.

<sup>9</sup>See Mormann (2010, 263–64). Exceptions include Stadler (2015, 281); Schleicher (2003); Wolters (2017), Wolters (forthc.); Vrahimis (forthc. a); Tuboly (forthc. a).

## 1. Schlick's Reading of Nietzsche

Among the Vienna Circle's members, Schlick was clearly the most avid admirer of Nietzsche's work (and though the others may have agreed with him concerning N<sub>1</sub>–N<sub>4</sub>, it is unlikely that they shared his level of enthusiasm). Schlick's first readings of Nietzsche date back to 1898, when as a 16-year-old Gymnasium student he began to be interested in philosophy (Iven 2013b, 55). Like many teenagers after him, he enthusiastically discovered Nietzsche (Iven 2013b, 17–18; 2013a, 55), and swiftly began reading first *Zarathustra* and then *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* (Iven 2013a, 18). He would later note in his (unpublished) autobiography that during his lifetime no other book would "so shake and enrapture [him] as much as *Zarathustra*" (quoted in Iven 2013a, 18, my translation), while elsewhere he thanks Nietzsche for causing in him "so many tears of high enthusiasm" (quoted in Iven 2013a, 18, my translation). As Iven (2013b, 61–63) points out, Schlick's unpublished manuscripts even contain an undated prose-poem emulating Nietzsche's writing style, in which his protagonist engages in dialogue with Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* character.<sup>10</sup>

One of the earliest scholarly acknowledgements of Schlick's influence by Nietzsche occurs in a 1938 memoir, where Feigl writes that

Without more accurate biographical reference-points, it is difficult to establish which influences had the most effect on Schlick's work. As regards his philosophy of life, in particular, I would hardly venture to name anyone apart from Guyau, Nietzsche and Ruskin. (Feigl 1979, xix–xx)

Feigl goes on to oppose his estimation of Nietzsche's influence

<sup>10</sup>In his reminiscences of Schlick, Waismann (1979, xvii) would talk of this tension between Schlick's character as a scientist and his poetic inclinations. Uebel (2020, 144–45) shows that Schlick's break with Neurath occurred when Neurath described as "poetry" some of the phrases he employed in describing *Konstatierungen*.

on Schlick's "philosophy of life" with other influences on his "theoretical philosophy". Though the division between these two aspects of Schlick's work is not entirely mistaken, the degree to which Nietzsche influenced Schlick exceeds the boundaries Feigl's division sets. As will become clear in our study of sources unavailable to Feigl at the time, Schlick's early Nietzschean concerns would continue to shape not only his philosophy of life and culture, but also his conceptions of ethics and epistemology. As [Mormann \(2010, 270–71\)](#) and [Ferrari \(2016\)](#) have shown, *Problems of Ethics* restates in a more sober tone various Nietzschean themes from Schlick's earlier *Lebensweisheit*. As I will show in Section 6, Nietzsche's influence is also felt in Schlick's epistemology, in connection with his consistent account of the value of knowledge throughout his work. Nietzsche's influence continues throughout Schlick's work, from his 1908 *Lebensweisheit* to his last unfinished book *Natur und Kultur*.

In what follows, I will divide my discussion of Schlick's responses to Nietzsche into two parts. In the first part (Sections 2–5), I will discuss Schlick's manner of interpreting Nietzsche, as it is presented in the course of his 1912–1923 lectures at the University of Rostock. Schlick's primary task here concerns the exposition of Nietzsche's thought as he interprets it, without explicitly connecting it to his own philosophical views. In the second part (Section 6), I will address the ways in which Nietzsche, now seen through the prism of the interpretation offered in the Rostock lectures, influenced Schlick's philosophical work, both in his early realist phase and after his turn to positivism during his Vienna years. The interpretation of Nietzsche found in Schlick's lectures also sheds some light on other responses to Nietzsche by the Vienna Circle's members (which I examine in Sections 7–9).

## 2. Schlick's Nietzschean Exposition of Nietzsche

In Nietzsche's work one can find a unique approach to the historiography of philosophy, which Schlick applies in his historical

study of Nietzsche himself. In various places, Nietzsche (e.g., [\(2002, 6–7\)](#); [\(1996, 109–10\)](#)) would analyse philosophical ideas as resulting from physiological drives, often unconscious, and explainable by means of physiology (e.g., by reference to dietary habits). Nietzsche thus conceives of the history of philosophy as inextricably connected to philosophers' lives. A Nietzschean history of philosophy would look to philosophers' biographies, not simply for their "valuations", but also for the drives that underlie them. Schlick's Rostock lectures take what can thus be understood as a Nietzschean approach to the thinker's life and work, by presenting one alongside the other.<sup>11</sup> In fact, [Schlick \(2013, 102–6\)](#) justifies his method by arguing that a complete understanding of Nietzsche's ideas could only emerge from an understanding of his life. Thus, for example, aside from a number of other biographical details, Schlick pays close attention to Nietzsche's state of health. Schlick uses references to Nietzsche's illness in explaining the fact that he spent a phase in which, being unable to work for extended periods of time, he wrote only fragments ([2013, 240–42](#)). Schlick also enters the perhaps unfortunate debate over whether Nietzsche's final collapse can be detected in some of his last works. Schlick ([2013, 296](#)) rejects Möbius' diagnosis that Nietzsche's pronouncements of his discovery of the doctrine of Eternal Recurrence (forgetting the origins of this doctrine e.g., in Stoicism) were a symptom of his mental illness. Schlick ([2013, 317–18](#)) nonetheless thinks that the lack of inhibition and self-praise that characterises Nietzsche's last works is a first sign of his subsequent collapse.

[Schlick \(2013, 99–101, 366–71\)](#) makes it clear that he does not rank Nietzsche among the Great Philosophers, nor does he think

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<sup>11</sup>Schlick's knowledge of Nietzsche's life comes from Raul Richter, Arthur Dews, and Elizabeth Förster-Nietzsche ([Iven 2013a, 23](#)); [Schlick \(2013, 104–5\)](#) states that the latter completely misunderstood her brother's philosophical work; see also [Iven \(2013a, 23, 33–34, 37–38\)](#), [Iven \(2013b, 65–66\)](#). For a discussion of the overall Germanophone reception of Nietzsche, see e.g., [Aschheim \(1994\)](#).

that this detracts from the value of his work.<sup>12</sup> Nietzsche was not a system-builder, and did not attempt to develop a series of interconnected, coherent, original solutions to the basic problems of philosophy.<sup>13</sup> In most cases, according to Schlick, Nietzsche simply adopted or reworked positions which had already been developed in the context of earlier philosophical debates. For example, as shown in Section 3, Schlick takes Nietzsche to have started out as a Schopenhauerian, and thus to have simply expanded Schopenhauer's outlook by applying it to the objects of his philological studies. When he later overcame his early Schopenhauerian leanings, many of Nietzsche's new philosophical positions simply rearticulated views that were originally put forth by earlier nineteenth-century positivists. The fact, however, that most of Nietzsche's answers to the traditional problems of philosophy are not highly original does not otherwise diminish Schlick's appraisal of him. Schlick plainly considers Nietzsche to be a *genius*.<sup>14</sup> Schlick first of all notes that, even though his positions had already been developed in previous debates, Nietzsche was a genius insofar as he was able to bring them together, connect them to the philosophy of culture, and articulate them with unprecedented passion. Schlick has high praise for Nietzsche's style, and agrees with his own estimation that he was one of the greatest innovators in the German language after Luther and Goethe (2013, 301–2).<sup>15</sup> Yet Schlick (2013, 100–1) insists that Nietzsche should not thereby be understood as being only a great poet. Although Nietzsche is not a great system-builder, he is nonetheless immensely significant as a philosopher of culture.

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<sup>12</sup>Nonetheless Schlick (1962, 17) elsewhere names Nietzsche as a “great thinker”.

<sup>13</sup>In *Natur und Kultur* (1952, 78–79), for example, Schlick mentions that he would obviously not turn to Nietzsche for insights into the philosophy of mathematics. See also Sachs (2011, 314).

<sup>14</sup>Schlick had earlier developed an account of genius in *Lebensweisheit* (2006, 181–84).

<sup>15</sup>Reichenbach (1978, 15) also privately praises Nietzsche's style.

Schlick conceives of changes in culture as resulting from gradual processes which may take millennia. Juxtaposed to this, Schlick talks of those rare few solitary individuals who single-mindedly rise up against the tide in attempting to overcome their own culture, effecting drastic changes. In 1911, a year before writing his Nietzsche lectures, Schlick had expressed this idea in what appears to be a criticism of Nietzsche's conception of “the transvaluation of values” (1979c, 115). Schlick argues that Nietzsche's account of “that great process on which all advances in culture and the conception and quality of life depend” (1979c, 115) mistakenly sees it in individualistic terms, as a sudden change. Instead, in Schlick's view, transvaluation

is a constantly advancing process, slowly and inexorably occurring everywhere, which only occasionally receives a slight change in velocity or direction due to quite exceptional personalities and events, a change whereby particular epochs of cultural history, or of history generally, then become separable from each other. (Schlick 1979c, 115).

Interestingly, Schlick's list of historical “transvaluation-periods” (1979c, 115) includes, after the Renaissance and the Reformation, “the dawn of a scientifically grounded world-outlook” (1979c, 115). The same picture of the long *durée* involved in the transformation of values and cultures is conjured at the outset of Schlick's 1912 Nietzsche lectures (2013, 88–91). Here, he concedes that Nietzsche was in fact one of those exceptional figures who manage to stand above the long historical tide, and effect drastic changes in their culture (2013, 91–92).

The 1911 text states something also intimated by the 1912 lectures, and which will later be repeated by other Vienna Circle members in upholding *N<sub>3</sub>\**: namely that Nietzsche's genius is connected to the emergence of a “scientifically grounded world-outlook” (1979c, 115). In 1912, Schlick (2013, e.g., 92) highlights the extent to which Nietzsche's views, radical for his time, had

already come to be commonplace during the twentieth century.<sup>16</sup> Schlick (2013, e.g., 325–28) thinks that Nietzsche looked too far ahead into the future, and thus his efforts were doomed to failure during his own lifetime.

### 3. The Tripartite Division of Nietzsche's Phases: The Artistic-Metaphysical Phase

Like many of his contemporary Nietzsche scholars influenced by Andreas-Salomé (2001), Schlick divides Nietzsche's work into the following three phases: (i) an early metaphysical phase under the influence of Schopenhauer and Wagner, (ii) an early positivist phase characterised by the overcoming of metaphysics and an appreciation of science, and (iii) a later development of a non-metaphysical account of the value of life from within the strictures of positivism. In what follows, I will elaborate on each phase as presented by Schlick, beginning with Nietzsche's early metaphysical phase.

In intertwining a biographical account with an attempt to comprehend his *oeuvre*, Schlick begins by describing Nietzsche's and his family's life (2013, 107–20). He then covers Nietzsche's career as a scholar from a fairly young age (2013, 120–28), e.g., in establishing a philological study group with his classmates at the age of 16 (2013, 120–21). He eventually presents Nietzsche's early work as tied to his career as a philologist (2013, 128–32). Schlick also gives an account of how Nietzsche came under the heavy influence of Schopenhauer (2013, 132–44) and Wagner (2013, 144–51). Schlick thinks that, by idolizing these men as his heroes, Nietzsche conjured up an idealized image of his own self, which inevitably led to disappointment when contrasted with reality (2013, e.g., 209). This disappointment marks the end of the first phase in Nietzsche's work. As I explain

<sup>16</sup>Schlick's *Natur und Kultur* (1952, 77–78) highlights the drastic technological changes from Nietzsche's day to his own, e.g., in his comparison of Nietzsche's conception of war and his contemporary military technology.

in Section 4, Schlick (2013, 139–40) detects a philosophical critique of Schopenhauer as latent quite early on in Nietzsche's intellectual development, but presents him as suppressing such criticisms in his writings until his subsequent overcoming of Schopenhauerian metaphysics. By contrast, Schlick (2013, 202, 208–11) presents Nietzsche's disillusionment about Wagner as something closer to shock effected by Nietzsche's discovery of Wagner's mystical leanings. Nietzsche's visit to Bayreuth for the rehearsals of the Ring Cycle in 1876 is presented as the catalyst for shattering the ideal image of Wagner.

Given the idolization described above, Schlick thinks that Nietzsche's philosophical contributions during this period are not highly original, but rather minute modifications of the Schopenhauerian outlook. Apart from other minor philological studies, the major work of this artistic-metaphysical phase is *The Birth of Tragedy*, which Schlick presents as an application of Schopenhauer's insights to an analysis of culture. Nietzsche's philosophical outlook towards culture is here characterised by a deeply critical view of the enlightenment. This is how Schlick interprets Nietzsche's understanding of the contrast between the balancing of the Dionysian and Apollonian in Aeschylus and Sophocles, on the one hand, and on the other hand Euripides' Socratic destruction of that balance. Schlick presents Nietzsche as equating the Enlightenment to Socratic culture. Schlick thus thinks that the *The Birth of Tragedy* sees this Enlightenment Socratic culture as guided by a "will to knowledge", which Nietzsche denigrates. According to Schlick, Nietzsche's goal during his early "romantic" (2013, 205) artistic-metaphysical phase is to overcome the Socratic-Enlightenment culture. Schlick clarifies that Nietzsche does not hold that such an overcoming can be effected through regressing to an ancient Dionysian culture. Rather, Nietzsche proposes that the Enlightenment's "will to knowledge" will be overcome through art, and more specifically through what he sees as Wagner's Schopenhauerian approach to art.



This topic is further discussed in Nietzsche's *Untimely Meditations*. Its essays belong to the artistic-metaphysical phase, since Nietzsche is still addressing themes and problems that arise from within a broadly Schopenhauerian framework. Nietzsche, for example, still attacks the Enlightenment "will to knowledge", both in his critique of David Strauss as a *Bildungsphilister* (Schlick 2013, 185–92), and in his criticisms of the "idle stroller in the garden of knowledge" as developed in "The Use and Abuse of History for Life" (Schlick 2013, 192–98). In the last two *Meditations*, Schlick detects some elements of Nietzsche's thought that gradually prepare for the second anti-metaphysical stage. In "Schopenhauer as educator", for example, Schlick (2013, 198–202) sees Nietzsche as portraying an idealized version of his former master's genius, and this ends up bearing little resemblance to Schopenhauer himself (Schlick 2013, 198–99). The same applies to his praise of Wagner (2013, 202–203), written right before Nietzsche's visit to Bayreuth finalized his disillusionment with both his heroes. Having bid farewell to both, as Schlick sees it (2013, 207–209), Nietzsche would move on to his positivist phase.

#### 4. Overcoming Metaphysics: Nietzsche's Positivist Turn

Nietzsche's middle period, according to Schlick (2013, e.g., 204), thus begins with Nietzsche's final overcoming of his Schopenhauerian metaphysics. The middle period covers over the production of three important works, *Human all too Human*, *Daybreak*, and *The Joyful Wisdom* (2013, 205). In Schlick's parallel biographical account (2013, 211–27, 243–48, 254–60, 266–76), the anti-metaphysical turn not only coincides, as we have seen, with a detachment from the influence of his "heroes", but also with a period in which Nietzsche's health rapidly deteriorates. The state of Nietzsche's health makes him incredibly sensitive to changes in climate, and as Schlick notes, Nietzsche continuously seeks environments where the climatic conditions allow his pains to

pause (2013, 225). Schlick points out that the state of his health not only will gradually force Nietzsche to abandon his academic career, but also limits the time-span which he can dedicate to writing, forcing him to compose short aphorisms.<sup>17</sup>

Nietzsche's overcoming of Schopenhauer's influence, in Schlick's account, consists primarily of the liberation of his philosophical thinking from metaphysics. Schlick (2013, 139–40) thinks that Nietzsche already formed doubts about Schopenhauerian metaphysics quite early on through the influence of his reading of Lange (2013, 139–44). Nietzsche had, nonetheless, refused to shake off Schopenhauer's system until much later in his career. Schlick finds evidence of this in Nietzsche's correspondence with Gersdorff in 1866, where he expresses such Langean criticisms, but still finds ways to answer them. According to Schlick, Nietzsche had seen that metaphysics "has no scientific value at all . . . but was to be regarded entirely as art, as concept-poetry" (2013, 139, my translation). Furthermore, he understood that

metaphysics cannot be attacked by logical objections either. "Who wants," he writes to Gersdorff, 1866, "to refute a movement by Beethoven, and who wants to accuse Raphael's Madonna of a mistake?" (Schlick 2013, 139, my translation)

It is interesting that Schlick reproduced this specific passage from Nietzsche's correspondence, in which he clarifies that artistic modes of expression are not candidates for verification. Schlick's lecture notes do not clarify that Nietzsche's reference to Beethoven and Raphael is a quote from Lange, but only notes that Nietzsche came to question Schopenhauer due to his reading of Lange's *Geschichte des Materialismus*. The example of verifying Beethoven's music, as we shall see in Section 9, is the *precise* example that Carnap (1959a, 80) uses. Though Carnap does attribute this anti-metaphysical attitude to Nietzsche, he cites nei-

<sup>17</sup>Schlick too wrote aphorisms, posthumously compiled in *Aphorismen* (1962).

ther Nietzsche's letter nor Lange's book. Thus though, as we shall see, Carnap and Schlick are aligned in seeing Nietzsche as anticipating the overcoming of metaphysics, it is difficult to conclusively ascertain whether Carnap was directly influenced by (Schlick's knowledge of) Nietzsche's correspondence, by his reading of Lange, or by both.<sup>18</sup>

According to Schlick, Nietzsche's attempt to defend Schopenhauer's metaphysics as a kind of Langean "concept-poetry" eventually falters. Nietzsche frees himself from metaphysics by rejecting the idea that truth or falsehood can be in any way relevant to emotional needs (Schlick 2013, 228). According to Schlick, Nietzsche's middle phase is marked by a rejection of metaphysics, defined as any doctrine about a "supersensible" (2013, 228) world underlying phenomena; this is how Schlick understands Nietzsche's commitment to N<sub>1</sub> above. Defined thus, metaphysical systems "are not simply unprovable, but surely false" (Schlick 2013, 228, my translation). In Schlick's account, Nietzsche now admits of no other knowledge other than that given by the senses, and whose truth is discovered by science. Nietzsche, according to Schlick, is a positivist in the following sense: he thinks "the methods of thought of the rigorous sciences" (Schlick 2013, 229, my translation) are the only methods of acquiring knowledge, and that "philosophy has no other method at its disposal" (Schlick 2013, 229, my translation). Schlick is thus committed to N<sub>3</sub> (and furthermore sees it as intimately connected to N<sub>1</sub>). In this middle period, according to Schlick (2013, e.g., 234, 249–50, 261), Nietzsche conceives of knowledge as the highest good, which is pursued, in a scientific manner, for its own sake, and which brings joy to the knower (2013, 249–50). In Schlick's view, Nietzsche presents metaphysics as an attempt to "artificially embellish science" (2013, 250, my translation) which he compares to the attempt to ornamentally beautify nature in

<sup>18</sup>Concerning Lange's influence on Carnap, see Gabriel (2004, 10–11); Wolters (2004, 28–29); see also Sachs (2011, 305–309).

Rococo gardens. He goes on to add:

but just as nature is more beautiful than any garden, so genuine science is more beautiful than any metaphysic (Schlick 2013, 250, my translation)<sup>19</sup>

Thus during the middle phase, Nietzsche's former enthusiasm for artistic creation is toned down. Nietzsche's newly found appreciation of scientific rigour explains his high praise for the significance of psychology, physiology, and evolutionary biology during both his middle and later phases, and he appeals to psychological explanations of aesthetic phenomena (Schlick 2013, 230–31). In this way, Schlick presents Nietzsche's commitment to N<sub>3</sub> and N<sub>1</sub> as connected to N<sub>2</sub>. Nietzsche's Schopenhauerian estimation of Genius is also put on hold (Schlick 2013, 232). By extension, while Nietzsche had previously raised art above knowledge in attacking the Socratic culture of the Enlightenment, during his middle phase he reappraises this former rejection. This is evidenced, for example, in the high praise for Socrates that we encounter in Nietzsche's work during this phase (2013, 234–36).<sup>20</sup> Thus Schlick is committed to N<sub>4</sub>, seeing the later Nietzsche as transformed from a critic of the Enlightenment to its proponent. As outlined above, Schlick understands how Nietzsche become a proponent of the Enlightenment in terms of his overcoming of metaphysics (N<sub>1</sub>) and the accompanying positivistic (N<sub>3</sub>) emphasis on the value of scientific knowledge (N<sub>2</sub>).

<sup>19</sup>Schlick had previously (2006, 115–70) argued that art is a poor imitation of nature.

<sup>20</sup>Schlick (e.g., (2008, 376, 379–80, 383); (1938, 395–97); (1962, 18)) himself also presented Socrates in an analogous way.

## 5. From *Wissenschaft* to Life: Nietzsche's Third Phase

In Schlick's conception of Nietzsche's three phases, the developments that bring the second phase towards an end merge organically with the outset of the third phase (2013, 276–77). In Schlick's estimation (2013, 277), the change from the second to the third phase is not one in Nietzsche's theoretical orientation, but in some of his specific practical valuations. Schlick (2013, e.g. 240–41, 276–77) insists that Nietzsche does not revert to his former metaphysical romanticism, and that nothing in his later work contradicts the basic theoretical principles of his positivism. Nietzsche remains a committed positivist (N<sub>3</sub>), and revises neither his rejection of metaphysics (N<sub>1</sub>), nor his limitation of the knowable to what is given by the senses (e.g., Schlick 2013, 280–84).

In Schlick's account, the specific philosophical view which Nietzsche revises during the shift from the second to the third phase concerns his estimation of the value of knowledge. While in the second phase Nietzsche upholds knowledge as an absolute value, the third phase is characterised by a relativisation of the value of knowledge. In this third phase, Nietzsche sees the value of knowledge as determined by the demands of life. Life is now conceived as an unanalysable, irreducible, absolute value. The mature Nietzsche sees that knowledge is only a small part of life; it is valuable only insofar as it ultimately serves life (Schlick 2013, 277–78). (This, as we shall see, is a view which Schlick will negotiate in his own conception of the value of knowledge.) Thus, according to Schlick, Nietzsche's emphasis shifts away from knowledge and towards value. Nonetheless, Schlick argues that the correct way to see Nietzsche's later phase is as a non-metaphysical attempt to develop this axiological project (what he calls the "transvaluation of all values") from within the positivist theoretical framework that he had already accepted in the second phase.

Nietzsche's final period, according to Schlick, emerges with *Zarathustra's* turn to life itself as the highest value, determining and shaping even the will to knowledge. Schlick thinks of *Zarathustra* as an unsurpassed masterpiece, in which Nietzsche reaches a peak of his creative powers that the remainder of his later works fail to attain. *Zarathustra* is Nietzsche's masterpiece primarily because it reaches a state of equilibrium between the content and the medium in which it is expressed, namely poetry. Schlick (2013, 300–304) has nothing but high praise for the exalted language of the book, and presents it as being unquestionably a work of genius. Though Nietzsche's later attempts to defend *Zarathustra's* outlook in a more systematic manner (in what he had published of his unfinished *The Will to Power*) are clearly works of genius, they pale in comparison to *Zarathustra* (2013, 311–12). Schlick argues that in these works Nietzsche fails to articulate the fundamental insights of *Zarathustra* precisely because they are attempts to present in a theoretical manner views that are best expressed poetically (2013, e.g., 278, 311). (As I will show in Section 9, by contrast to Schlick, Carnap had interpreted the later Nietzsche's work as neatly divided between poetry and empirical studies. Schlick's 1912 lecture notes nonetheless partly prefigure Carnap's similar claims about metaphysics as being the result of attempts to express in a theoretical medium things that are best expressed as art or poetry.)

Schlick defends his view that the mature Nietzsche remains a positivist by opposing metaphysical interpretations of his work. In other words, Schlick thinks Nietzsche is committed to both N<sub>3</sub> and N<sub>1</sub> throughout his middle and later periods. In order to defend this view, Schlick must show that Nietzsche remains within the theoretical strictures set out by his earlier positivism. Schlick is therefore at pains to show that some of Nietzsche's concepts that deceptively appear to be metaphysical, such as his doctrine of eternal recurrence and his view of the *Übermensch*, are in fact consistent with his anti-metaphysical (N<sub>1</sub>) positivism (N<sub>3</sub>).

Schlick argues that the doctrine of eternal recurrence, which Zarathustra proclaims as a central component of his teaching, is *not* a metaphysical idea (2013, 298). Nietzsche's own positivistic strictures allow this view. The doctrine makes no reference to a supersensible world beyond experience, but only refers to something which could not possibly be experienced. Schlick thus claims that a broader conception of metaphysics, which covers over anything that could not possibly be experienced, is required if one is to claim that Nietzsche has fallen back into metaphysics here. As Schlick (2013, 298) notes, in unpublished documents Nietzsche made a failed attempt to prove his thesis on the basis of physics and cosmology. Schlick (2013, 298–99) proposes that the thesis is in fact a kind of speculative naturalistic view, which remains a possibility that is as yet neither provable nor unprovable by contemporary physics. It gives rise to no logical contradiction. Schlick nonetheless questions how such a view would have any consequence other than being “a symbolic representation of the eternal value of life” (Schlick 2013, 299, my translation), as it seems to make no empirical difference: to whoever lives it, a life that has already had manifold recurrences will still be new.

Schlick further rejects the idea that the notion of the *Übermensch* was originally intended by Nietzsche as a metaphysical concept. Schlick (2013, 284–85) does concede that Nietzsche was not consistent in his original non-metaphysical view, and misuses the concept in his some of his less careful last works. Schlick (2013, 284) interprets Nietzsche's concept of the “*Übermensch*” as an evolutionary biological concept. Schlick (2013, 284) cites Nietzsche's first deployment of the concept in *Zarathustra*, which he thinks clarifies that humans evolved from apes, and the *Übermensch* will evolve from humans. Schlick very briefly contrasts the blind natural evolution of species to the “conscious” (2013, 284) production of the *Übermensch* through a process of education [“*Höherbildungsprozess*” (2013, 284)] and even of breeding [“*Höherzüchtung*” (2013, 286)].

Schlick's biological conception of the *Übermensch* may seem deceptively close to some form of eugenics (i.e., the attempt to influence the evolution of the human species by the application of selective breeding).<sup>21</sup> However, what Schlick has in mind is better clarified in his earlier *Lebensweisheit* (90), which distinguishes, in Nietzschean terms, between “all-too-human” [*Allzumenschliche*] and “overhuman” [*Übermenschliche*] drives. Schlick's account here seems merely descriptive, insofar as he defines *Allzumenschliche* drives as those which are currently being overcome, while *Übermenschliche* drives are those which will become more powerful in future humans. In Schlick's account, education would thus play a role in strengthening or weakening certain drives, which thereby affect the biological future of the human species.<sup>22</sup> This connects to Nietzsche's project of the transvaluation of all values, as the affirmation of new values is what will create, through habituation, the *Übermenschliche* drives of the future. This explanation, of course, does not clear Schlick of all charges, since without further inspection of Schlick's earlier writings, his lecture notes remain ambiguous, and could easily leave their reader with the false impression that he approvingly interprets Nietzsche as defending eugenics!

<sup>21</sup>The only explicitly reference to eugenics in Schlick's work uncritically uses it as “an example of how the biological development of the genus *Homo Sapiens* can be taken up in culture as its own, indeed perhaps as its highest, mission” (Schlick 1952, 25). See also Bright (2017). As Bright clarifies, though the Vienna Circle later fought against race science, Schlick retained some racist attitudes, e.g., speaking of the ‘African savage’ in order to attack the racist view that they are morally inferior to Europeans.

<sup>22</sup>One example of this may be glimpsed from Schlick's (2006, 155–70, 181–85; 1979b) discussions of aesthetics. Schlick envisages a process of adaptation to the environment which will eventually allow all humans to effortlessly see the world as beautiful, in the way that only genius artists currently see it.

## 6. Nietzsche's Influence on Schlick

What I have outlined above concerns Schlick's exposition of Nietzsche's thought in his Rostock lectures, i.e., in what is primarily a historically-minded enterprise. Though [Schlick \(2013\)](#) does defend a number of interesting interpretative theses on Nietzsche (N<sub>1</sub>–N<sub>4</sub>), and does often pause to evaluate some of his views, he does not directly connect Nietzsche to his own philosophical positions. In what follows, I will proceed to examine how aspects of Nietzsche's thought influenced Schlick's positions on ethics, epistemology, and his connected conceptions of play and the meaning of life.

Interestingly, in the Rostock lectures Schlick presents Nietzsche as a "positivist" at a time when Schlick himself had not yet become one. Before his conversion to positivism in 1922 through his contact with the Vienna Circle, Schlick had espoused a brand of realism (usually categorised as either "critical" or "structural" realism). Schlick's early work is crucially opposed to the most prominent positivistic philosophy of science of his time, i.e., Machian "empiriocriticism".<sup>23</sup> The early Schlick does subscribe to a broadly Machian (and Nietzschean) conception of drive-psychology, which I will go on to discuss in more detail. His major disagreement with Mach concerns not practical, but theoretical philosophy, and mainly epistemology. Against the Machian explanation of knowledge by reference to a uniform account of the drive to pleasure, Schlick argues for the autonomy of *Wissenschaft*.<sup>24</sup> Nonetheless, in reacting against Mach, Schlick finds an *ally* in Nietzsche. As will become clear after we further analyse Schlick's conceptions of play and the value of "joyful" knowledge, Schlick will follow Nietzsche into what, in the Rostock lectures, he had designated as the third phase of his *oeuvre*.

Apart from the Rostock lectures, Schlick's clearest dialogue

with Nietzsche occurs in his 1908 *Lebensweisheit*. This peculiar book offers a clear example of the unresolved tension between Schlick's more sober technical work and his poetic leanings. Schlick's influence by Nietzsche is displayed not only in numerous doctrines he puts forward, but also in the style of his writing. Schlick swiftly moves from neurobiological explanations of the workings of the human brain (2006, e.g., 50–51) to emotional flourishes, often punctuated by exclamation marks, e.g., on the meaning of love (2006, 289–332). Schlick's partly Nietzschean style has been described as "involuntarily comic" ([Mormann 2010](#), 268) or "purple prose" ([Uebel 2020](#), 144).

As [Mormann \(2015, 419–20\)](#) points out, there were a number of contemporary Germanophone philosophers who had responded to Nietzsche's Schopenhauerian notion of the "will to power" by adapting it to their own frameworks, e.g., [Vaihinger's "will to illusion"](#), or [Rickert's "will to system"](#). Schlick similarly reworks this broadly Schopenhauerian and Nietzschean notion into his own evolutionary conception of a "will to pleasure".<sup>25</sup> In Schlick's account, the "will to pleasure" is the drive which governs all spheres of human activity pertaining to the attainment of practical ends. According to Schlick's Nietzschean (and partly Machian) psychology of drives, all values are determined by such a will.<sup>26</sup> We have already seen how Schlick, within this context, develops an account of the struggle between contesting drives, in relation to which he interprets the Nietzschean concept of the *Übermensch*.

Schlick's main aim in this book is to formulate a typology of the ways the "will to pleasure" takes. This drive manifests itself in different forms, some purely bodily and some mental. Thus, for example, [Schlick \(2006, 108–23\)](#) distinguishes between mere civilization, which looks to the satisfaction of bodily needs, and a kind of utopian *Kultur* which seeks to effect mental joy, and

<sup>23</sup>See also [Lewis \(1988\)](#); [Textor \(2018\)](#).

<sup>24</sup>See also [Vrahimis \(forthc. a\)](#).

<sup>25</sup>See also [Mormann \(2010\)](#); [Ferrari \(2016\)](#); [Vrahimis \(forthc. a\)](#). On Schlick's uses of Schopenhauer, see [Textor \(2018\)](#).

<sup>26</sup>See [Ferrari \(2016\)](#); [Textor \(2018\)](#).

ultimately a way of living in harmony with nature.<sup>27</sup>

Rising above mere bodily needs, the “will to pleasure” develops into a “will to beauty” Schlick (2006, 155–70) that drives art and aesthetic appreciation, and into the “will to truth” (2006, 170–81) which determines scientific knowledge. Especially in relation to the latter, Schlick (2006, e.g., 170–71) conceived of a strict separation between two possible ways of approaching an object in the world, one pertaining to values, the other pertaining to facts. According to Schlick, values are pertinent to the ways in which we approach any object in relation to specific practical ends. Such valuations involve no real scientific knowledge [*Wissenschaft*]. Knowledge, as Schlick conceives it, has a purely theoretical character, which presupposes an indifference to the practical value of the object under examination. Thus, Schlick thought that *Wissenschaft* is not subjugated to practical ends, but is a purely theoretical type of knowledge driven by the “will to truth”.

Though autonomous from practical goals, the “will to truth” is not completely disengaged from them. Schlick (2006, 155–70) has an evolutionary account of the emergence, in various stages, of the “will to truth” from the “will to pleasure”. Before the emergence of a “will to truth”, humans (like all other animals) are simply motivated by the drive towards pleasure. At this stage, according to Schlick, one cannot speak of knowledge, since the drive towards pleasure guides only valuations for practical purposes. Schlick follows Mach in showing how it is useful for humans to make predictions conducive to particular practical ends.<sup>28</sup> Specific predictions, however successful, are nonetheless insufficient for *Wissenschaft*. A further stage is necessary, involving a notion of play (2006, 143–55) that, as we will

see, remains central throughout Schlick’s later work.<sup>29</sup> Schlick (2006, 171) imagines a scenario in which all other drives are momentarily satisfied. In such a case, it becomes possible to ask, for the sake of asking, a question which has no specific practical application. In Schlick’s account, following adequate habituation, engaging in this kind of questioning can come to provide pleasure—it becomes a kind of game. The game is not yet *Wissenschaft*: in playing the game it may not matter whether the right answer is reached or not (2006, e.g., 173). In Schlick’s conception, the emergence of *Wissenschaft* is made possible by a combination of the ability to make predictions with the ability to enjoy playing with questions. Playing the game enough times may enable its players to answer some questions in a manner which has some predictive power. *Wissenschaft* gradually emerges as an attempt to answer some questions for the sake not of a practical goal, but of finding the truth. While the drive to pleasure in the pursuit of practical ends only leads to further pursuits, there is an immediate pleasure afforded by the pursuit of truth for its own sake.

In Schlick’s account, knowledge can only come about through the playful pursuit of truth.<sup>30</sup> He connects this thesis to his critical attitude towards the notion that knowledge is the result of work. He also presents this as his interpretation of the Nietzschean “joyful wisdom” of life. Schlick endorses Nietzsche’s criticism of the professionalization of knowledge, and its irreconcilability with the game of pursuing knowledge:

The sensitive Nietzsche, who felt this disharmony perhaps especially in himself, therefore praises, in contrast to this unhappy practice of erudition, the “joyful *Wissenschaft*” of the wise. Wise is he [*sic*] to whom the contemplation of the world and the search for truth have bestowed all their blessings . . . which the Play of the Spirit effuses on all who give themselves to it. (Schlick 2006, 181, my translation)

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<sup>27</sup>This remains Schlick’s ideal throughout his life, which in *Natur und Kultur* he describes in terms of Zeno of Citium’s “ὁμολογουμένως τῆ φύσει ζῆν” (Schlick 1952, 14).

<sup>28</sup>See Textor (2018, 114–15).

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<sup>29</sup>See Bonnet (2016).

<sup>30</sup>See also Bonnet (2016).

In accordance with the two later phases in Nietzsche's work that Schlick detects in his 1912 lectures, we can distinguish between two ways of understanding this Nietzschean "Wisdom of Life".<sup>31</sup> In his middle positivist period, as Schlick emphasises, Nietzsche develops a conception of scientific knowledge as an end in itself. What characterises, in Schlick's account, the shift from the middle to the later period is, as we have seen, Nietzsche's relativisation of the value of knowledge, which is seen in terms of its service to life. In *Lebensweisheit*, but also in later works (e.g., 1974, 94–101), Schlick's epistemology follows Nietzsche into his third phase. For Schlick, the "will to truth" can only be fulfilled in making successful predictions about reality (see Bonnet 2016):

Even if science does not draw its conclusions for the purpose of action, the truth of its propositions can of course . . . only be tested by the success of actions; the latter are then called experiments. (Schlick 2006, 173, my translation).

This is a position that Schlick maintained throughout his Vienna Circle years, for example in his most well-known contribution to the Protocol-Sentence debate in "The Foundation of Knowledge" from 1934.<sup>32</sup> Here, Schlick more or less summarises his position from 1908, when he states that

Cognition is originally a means in the service of life. In order to find his way about in his environment and to adjust his actions to events, man must be able to foresee these events to a certain extent. . . . Now in science this character of cognition remains wholly unaltered; the only difference is that it no longer serves the purposes of life, is not sought because of its utility. With the confirmation of prediction the scientific goal is achieved: the joy in cognition is the joy of verification, the triumphant feeling of having guessed correctly. And it is this that the observation statements bring about. (Schlick 1959, 222–23)

<sup>31</sup>The mature Schlick (e.g., (2008)) retains this term to describe his metaphilosophical views.

<sup>32</sup>See also Uebel (2007); Uebel (2020); Bonnet (2016).

As has been made clear by our discussion so far, the view of joyful verification Schlick advances here comes from Nietzsche. It is thus perhaps fitting that the accompanying notion of *Konstatierungen* has been translated into English as "affirmations", carrying the appropriate Nietzschean overtones.<sup>33</sup>

The influence of Nietzsche on Schlick is also made explicit in "On the Meaning of Life". The main thesis of Schlick's 1927 article is that the meaning of life consists in playful activity undertaken for its own sake. Schlick here presents his view of the meaning of life as a development of his engagement with Nietzsche's response to Schopenhauer on this matter. Schlick's account of the meaning of life is based on a rejection of the Schopenhauerian dictum that life is meaningless (Schlick 1979a, 113).<sup>34</sup> Schopenhauer famously framed this contention in terms of the view of all action as driven by desires that unceasingly lead to further desires, and so on *ad nauseam*. Schlick seems to implicitly accept Schopenhauer's framing of the question of the meaning of life, and thus it is in response to this that he searches for the answer in activity that is undertaken for its own sake. Schlick claims that Nietzsche's overcoming of Schopenhauer's pessimism was a predecessor to his own view of the meaning of life. He summarises the gist of the tripartite periodization of Nietzsche's work he had discussed in his Rostock lectures, now seen as three ways of responding to pessimism:

First by the flight into art: consider the world, he says, as an aesthetic phenomenon, and it is eternally vindicated! Then by the flight into knowledge: look upon life as an experiment of the knower, and the world will be to you the finest of laboratories! But Nietzsche again turned away from these standpoints; . . . henceforth the ultimate value of life, to him, was life itself. . . . For he saw that life has no meaning, so long as it stands wholly under the domination of purposes. (Schlick 1979a, 113)

Schlick evidently develops the thought which he finds in "the

<sup>33</sup>See also Uebel (2020, 145).

<sup>34</sup>On Schlick's overall response to Schopenhauer, see Textor (2018).

wisest Nietzsche . . . of *Zarathustra*" (1979a, 113), explicitly connecting it to his own conception of play. Repeating, in brief, the outlook he had developed in 1908, Schlick defines play, explicitly against the ordinary usage of the term (1979a, 115), in terms of all free activities that "exist for their own sake and carry their satisfaction in themselves" (1979a, 114), rather than existing for the satisfaction of some other desired end. He presents this insight as a continuation of the last stage in Nietzsche's work.

So far, I have argued for a consistent influence by Nietzsche on some of Schlick's fundamental views concerning the value of knowledge and its relation to drive psychology, as well as his conception of play. Recent scholarship has also outlined some other aspects of Nietzsche's influence on Schlick. Ferrari (2016), for example, shows that Schlick appealed to Nietzschean insights in rejecting the philosophy of values developed within his contemporary Neo-Kantianism and Phenomenology. Though I will not further discuss the details of this view in this paper, I should here note that the same theme will appear in some of his fellow Vienna Circle's members' responses to Nietzsche, to which I now turn.

## 7. Philipp Frank on Nietzsche as an Enlightenment Philosopher

It is highly unlikely that Schlick's work on Nietzsche was known by Philipp Frank in 1917 when he wrote "The importance of Ernst Mach's Philosophy of Science for our times". Frank nonetheless echoes, and even amplifies, Schlick's view of the second and third phases of Nietzsche's work when he interprets Nietzsche, alongside Mach, as an Enlightenment thinker. Frank prefaces his discussion of their relation by noting that it concerns "the striking agreement of his [i.e., Mach's] views with those of a thinker for whom he cannot have had any great sympathy, Friedrich Nietzsche" (Frank 1970, 232).

The main relevant influence on Frank comes from the parallel between Mach and Nietzsche drawn by Hans Kleinpeter in his 1913 *Der Phenomenalismus*.<sup>35</sup> According to Kleinpeter's interpretation, which has generally been ignored by Nietzsche scholarship,<sup>36</sup> Mach and Nietzsche both developed phenomenalist epistemologies.<sup>37</sup> Kleinpeter detects two epistemological principles which characterise both Nietzsche's and Mach's phenomenism, namely: (a) the view that all knowledge is grounded in sensations, and (b) the view that all our concepts are mere symbols and thus "'truth" has only a relative meaning" (Gori 2012, 343). In both philosophers' epistemologies, there is no purely logical way of reaching out to a true description of the world without recourse to sensations.<sup>38</sup> This, as Kleinpeter saw, meant that both Nietzsche and Mach were concerned with working out the consequences of this new anti-metaphysical (N1) "scientific philosophy" (Gori 2012, 342) (N3\*<sup>39</sup>).

Frank relies on Kleinpeter in proclaiming Nietzsche, after Mach, to be "the other great enlightenment philosopher of the end of the nineteenth century" (Frank 1970, 232). Frank uncritically repeats Kleinpeter's view that their epistemological views are in agreement, despite other radical disagreements, e.g., in their very different education, "temperament" (1970, 232), or "ethical ideals" (1970, 232). Like Schlick, Frank calls Nietzsche

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<sup>35</sup>Frank (1915) had earlier reviewed this book. Though it is unlikely that Schlick had any influence on Kleinpeter's interpretation of Nietzsche, or vice versa, Schlick was certainly aware of Kleinpeter's book, which he later refers to (Schlick 1974, 241).

<sup>36</sup>See Gori (2012, 341); see also Frank (1949, 18).

<sup>37</sup>See Kleinpeter (1913, 143); see also Gori (2012); (2019, 103–11).

<sup>38</sup>Gori (2012, 344).

<sup>39</sup>Though Schlick talks of Nietzsche as a positivist (N3) while Kleinpeter more narrowly pins down his epistemology to the two phenomenalist principles, both argue that Nietzsche's thought is concerned with developing a philosophical view within the bounds of such anti-metaphysical strictures (N1). Both Kleinpeter and Schlick saw Nietzsche as concerned with the practical implications of the new scientific view of the world N3\*.



“that great master of language” (1970, 232) in quoting, with apparent approval, a series of remarks that show Nietzsche to be a phenomenalist, in connection to which he rejects as metaphysical the notion of subjectivity and the distinction between appearance and reality.<sup>40</sup> Frank describes the aphorism “On the Psychology of Metaphysics” as “Nietzsche’s most significant expression of the positivistic world conception . . . where he attack[s] with cutting sharpness the employment of very frequently misused concepts” (Frank 1970, 232–33), i.e., the aforementioned metaphysical notions. Frank here clearly accepts both N<sub>1</sub> and N<sub>3</sub>\*. Though he does not explicitly claim that Nietzsche was a positivist, Frank does briefly note that he contributed to the “positivistic world conception” (1970, 232). By contrast to Schlick’s extensive defence of the view that Nietzsche was a positivist, Frank’s cursory employment of the term “positivism” is not enough here to justify attributing to him a full-fledged endorsement of the bolder view N<sub>3</sub>. Frank at best seems to say that Nietzsche had positivist tendencies, and contributed to an overall positivistic outlook. Frank’s view is thus better understood as an endorsement of the weaker claim N<sub>3</sub>\*. Similarly to Schlick, Frank ties N<sub>3</sub>\* to N<sub>1</sub>, insofar as he sees the critique of metaphysics as Nietzsche’s main contribution to the positivist outlook. Furthermore, Frank selects a passage from Nietzsche in which his critique of metaphysics (N<sub>1</sub>) is based on an appeal to insights from empirical psychology (N<sub>2</sub>).

Frank closes his comparison between Nietzsche and Mach by noting what he calls a “tragic feature” (1970, 233) of the enlightenment, namely that “it destroys the old systems of concepts, but

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<sup>40</sup>Sachs (2011, 311–12) argues that Carnap paid inadequate attention to Nietzsche’s criticisms of the dichotomy between appearance and reality, which were incompatible with Carnap’s position. Sachs claims that Carnap saw the overcoming of metaphysics as relying on the application of modern logic, which shows us that what *appeared* to be meaningful was *really* meaningless. Frank, by contrast, appreciates Nietzsche’s criticism of the distinction as being a main part of Nietzsche’s contribution to overcoming metaphysics.

while it is constructing a new system, it is also already laying the foundations for new misuse” (1970, 233). This is an unavoidable feature of scientific theory construction, in Frank’s view, given that it is necessary for theories to employ auxiliary concepts, which inevitably will eventually be misused. In response to this phenomenon, it would be possible to attempt to block challenges to specific scientific views by upholding them as dogmas. But this would go against the spirit of the enlightenment, as championed by Mach and Nietzsche. As Frank sees it, both philosophers envision the enlightenment as an ongoing process in which the truth is perpetually sought but no perpetual truth is ever finally reached. Frank quotes Nietzsche’s claim that the spirit of the enlightenment concerns “the will to test, investigate, predict, experiment” (1970, 233), not its inhibition through some purported attainment of truth. Here again, Frank clearly sees Nietzsche in terms of N<sub>3</sub>\*. Frank’s reference to experimentation is far from being an explicit acceptance of N<sub>2</sub>, yet he does make the weaker claim that Nietzsche had a high esteem for the methodological characteristics of empirical science.

When Frank returns to this theme in introducing his 1949 book *Modern Science and its Philosophy* (in which the 1917 article is reproduced), he diagnoses that

the great mass of writing on Nietzsche has overlooked the fact that he was a philosopher of enlightenment in his acute analysis of the auxiliary concepts of contemporary idealistic philosophy. (Frank 1949, 18)

In this regard, one of Nietzsche’s targets, and the one that Frank presents as having turned his interest to him, is Kant’s view of unchanging *a priori* synthetic conditions for any possible experience. Frank presents Nietzsche as opposed to Kant’s view that there can be certain knowledge about such conditions, and which furthermore is not knowledge about experience:

Nietzsche said flippantly that Kant’s explanation is merely equivalent to saying that man can do it “by virtue of a virtue”. Nietzsche

accused him of demonstrating by sophisticated and obscure arguments that popular prejudices are right while the scientists are wrong. (Frank 1949, 9)

Frank's description of Nietzsche's critique as "flippant" appears to signal that he is interested in the general spirit of Nietzsche's critique of Kant, rather than its details, which he does not further discuss. Frank presents Nietzsche as aligned with the Vienna Circle's overall appraisal of the Scientific World Conception (N<sub>3</sub>\*), as opposed to Kant's championing of popular prejudices. Notably, Frank's 1917 views are mirrored in von Mises' 1938 "Ernst Mach and the Scientific Conception of the World", where Nietzsche is summarily presented as a critic of Kant (von Mises 1970, e.g., 169) who was "in full accord with Mach's view" (1970, 171).

Frank's earlier presentation of Nietzsche as an anti-metaphysical (N<sub>1</sub>) enlightenment thinker (N<sub>4</sub>) may be contrasted to his brief mention of Nietzsche in his well-known biography of Einstein published in 1947. Frank (1947, 46–47) quotes a passage from Antonio Aliotta's 1884 *The Idealistic Reaction against Science*, in which Nietzsche is presented as part of a romantic response to a seeming crisis in late nineteenth-century science. In other words, Aliotta here rejects all of N<sub>2</sub>, N<sub>3</sub>, and N<sub>3</sub>\*. Aliotta sees Nietzsche, like other romantics, as denigrating rational thought in preference for aesthetic intuition.<sup>41</sup> This romantic response to science's crisis is presented by Frank as an *alternative* to positivist and pragmatist responses to the crisis, under which heading he includes, among others, the work of Mach. Frank notes that the positivist movement had also been perceived by some as anti-intellectualist, but qualifies such claims by arguing that it "could be characterized as anti-intellectual only in so far as it warned against occupying the intellect with meaningless problems" (Frank 1947, 47). According to Frank, the anti-metaphysical stance of late nineteenth-century positivists like

<sup>41</sup>As we have seen, this is how Schlick interpreted the first phase in Nietzsche's thought, which is overcome by his later phases.

Mach should not be understood as a denigration of the powers of intellect; it is, instead, a correct estimation of the extent to which such issues can be meaningfully discussed.

It is unclear why, whereas in 1917 Frank had thought this would be a good characterisation of Nietzsche's worldview, he seems to have changed his mind in 1947, only to repeat his 1917 view in 1949. One possible explanation for this would be that the later Frank simply revised his early positive views of Nietzsche. This is further suggested by the fact that, in introducing the 1949 republication of the 1917 text, Frank talks of having been influenced by Nietzsche "at this stage" (1949, 9), possibly implying that he later overcame this influence. Frank does not specify a specific date range for the stage, or clarify whether he did change his mind about Nietzsche's significance, and for what reason.

Another possible explanation for Frank's seeming change of heart may be given by the subject matter of the 1947 book, namely Einstein's life. Frank divides Einstein's philosophical interests into two categories. On the one hand, there are those philosophical works pertaining to and influencing his scientific work, in which category Frank includes Mach. On the other hand, there are other works, including those of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, which Einstein read

because they made more or less superficial and obscure statements in beautiful language about all sorts of things, statements that often aroused an emotion like beautiful music and gave rise to reveries and meditations on the world. . . . Einstein read these men, as he sometimes put it, for "edification" just as other people listen to sermons. (Frank 1947, 51)

Here Frank is echoing similar remarks made by other Vienna Circle members, e.g., Feigl's aforementioned remarks on Schlick's influences, or more famously Carnap's remarks on metaphysics, to which I will turn to in Section 9. Before turning to Carnap, I will first look at various remarks on Nietzsche made by Otto Neurath.

## 8. Neurath on Nietzsche as Predecessor of the Vienna Circle

Neurath's remarks on Nietzsche are quite brief, and might appear especially puzzling if not seen in light of his other Vienna Circle colleagues' estimation of Nietzsche (and their varying degrees of commitment to  $N_1$ – $N_3^*$ ). Yet in light of Schlick's and Frank's earlier appraisals of Nietzsche, it is clear that Neurath is simply pointing out something that is "in the air", so to speak, in Vienna Circle discussions. This practice was in fact quite commonplace in Neurath's *modus operandi*. Neurath did not work within academia, and did not follow common academic citation practices; he would often respond to contemporary debates without citing the relevant sources.<sup>42</sup> This may help explain why he is convinced of Nietzsche's importance for the work of the Vienna Circle without necessarily attempting to demonstrate it, or to refer to relevant works that did so (e.g., Schlick's, Frank's, or Carnap's).

Neurath presents Nietzsche as a predecessor to the Vienna Circle's anti-metaphysical stance ( $N_1$ ). This is clear e.g., in his 1935 presentation of the Vienna Circle to a French audience, where he plainly states that "Nietzsche and his critique of the metaphysicians took an active part in the flourishing of the Vienna School" (quoted in [Moreira 2018](#), 243). A few pages later, listing the Vienna Circle's influences, Neurath names "Mach, Avenarius, Poincare, Duhem, Abel Ray, Enriques, Einstein, Schröder, Frege, Peano, Hilbert, Russell as well as James and Nietzsche" ([Neurath 1981](#), 697).<sup>43</sup> Neurath does not further qualify his claim in 1935, but does so in his 1936 introduction to the Vienna Circle's ideas:

Nietzsche stressed esteem for "the unpretentious truths", objecting to the fascinating errors of metaphysical ages. An evolved civi-

<sup>42</sup>See e.g., [Uebel \(1992, viii–ix\)](#); [Uebel \(2007\)](#); [Tuboly \(2019, 165–67\)](#).

<sup>43</sup>[Uebel \(2015, 4\)](#) compares Neurath's various lists of influences on the Vienna Circle, pointing out that Nietzsche and James only appear in this specific list.

lization likes, according to Nietzsche, the modest results found by means of exact methods which are fruitful for the whole future; and such manliness [*sic*], simplicity, and temperance will characterize not only an increasing number but also the whole of humanity in the future. Moritz Schlick explained in a similar sense that the evolution of modern critical thinking is founded on an anonymous mass of thinkers, especially scientists, and that progress does not arise from the sensational philosophical systems which form an endless row, each contradicting the others. ([Neurath 1955](#), 18).

Neurath's interpretation of Nietzsche here is unorthodox, to say the least. Along with Voltaire and Schlick, Neurath sees Nietzsche as championing a culture based on the communal activity of scientific research, as opposed to revolving around "individual philosophemes" ([1955](#), 18). Though this seems to go against the grain of Nietzsche's individualistic and elitist outlook, I will not here attempt to determine whether Neurath's interpretation is plausible. What is perhaps most interesting in connection to this enquiry is the relation of Neurath's comments to Schlick's interpretation of Nietzsche. As noted in [Section 2](#), Schlick presents Nietzsche as an individual genius who attempts to overcome his cultural surroundings, despite the tendency of such processes of change to be slower than he envisages. On the contrary, Neurath claims that both Schlick and Nietzsche are paradigmatic champions of communal efforts, as opposed to individual genius. Neurath tells us that Schlick understands that "critical thinking" is not the product of individuals, but rather the result of accumulated effort. As shown in [Section 2](#), this is precisely the reason that Schlick gives for his claim that attempts to single-handedly transvaluate a culture's values tend to fail, and also the reason why Schlick thinks Nietzsche was an exceptional genius who happened to succeed in such an attempt.

Another parallel between Schlick's, Frank's (and [von Mises 1970](#)), and Neurath's responses to Nietzsche may be found in their interpretation of his views as anti-Kantian.<sup>44</sup> Neurath

<sup>44</sup>On Schlick's anti-Kantian use of Nietzsche, see [Ferrari \(2016\)](#).

presents Nietzsche's anti-Kantianism as part of his overall anti-metaphysical position. In the context of discussing the separation of specific scientific fields of study from "the mother-philosophy" (Neurath 1955, 10), Neurath notes that although Kant did in fact subsequently influence many scientists, his work also had as its effect the hindering of scientific progress in some fields. Like Frank, Neurath partly attributes this understanding of Kant to Nietzsche:

The essayist-philosopher Nietzsche showed how much of an antiscientific attitude can be found in Kant's system, which reduces the power of science and thus opens the doors to metaphysical and philosophico-religious speculations. (Neurath 1955, 11)

Thus Nietzsche's critique of Kantian metaphysics is linked by Neurath to his favouring of a scientific world conception (N<sub>3</sub><sup>\*</sup>).

Neurath had elsewhere (1987, 11) presented psychology as the last of the sciences to be cut off from philosophy, thus resulting in the overcoming of metaphysics. Neurath describes Nietzsche's contribution to this project as follows:

The last science to have the umbilical cord connecting it to philosophy severed is *psychology*. And what remains behind is a dead, deaf mass. If Nietzsche stimulated psychologists in many ways, it was not by producing a systematic metaphysics, but because he was able to pursue lines of thought untrammelled by contemporary academic psychology, which was not interested in, e.g., "resentment". But even a non-philosopher enjoys that freedom today. *The end of metaphysics is demonstrable precisely in the case of psychology*. (Neurath 1987, 11)

It is thus that Neurath connected Nietzsche's psychological insights with his overcoming of metaphysics. Nietzsche's anti-metaphysical turn made lasting contributions to empirically-minded psychology, in Neurath's view. Accordingly Neurath elsewhere notes that many of Nietzsche's "excellent philosophical insights" (1981, 826) contributed both to psychoanalysis and to what Neurath calls "behaviouristics". Thus Neurath not only

sees Nietzsche as committed to N<sub>2</sub>, but also makes sense of this commitment in reference to N<sub>1</sub>.

Neurath's brief comments on Nietzsche are not meant to be scholarly analyses. Neurath does not attempt to substantiate them by reference to specific works. Most appear in programmatic statements of the Vienna Circle's mission. Nonetheless, Neurath's brief responses to Nietzsche play an interesting role in bringing together and unifying different interpretative theses (N<sub>1</sub>, N<sub>2</sub>, N<sub>3</sub><sup>\*</sup>) articulated by the Vienna Circle's members. Neurath quickly outlines how Nietzsche's anti-metaphysical stance (N<sub>1</sub>) was connected to his understanding of psychology (N<sub>2</sub>), all in light of an overall commitment to a scientific world conception (N<sub>3</sub><sup>\*</sup>). These are, as I have shown, themes that are addressed by both Schlick and Frank, and which will also play a part in Carnap's reception of Nietzsche, to which I now turn.

## 9. Carnap's Nietzsche: The *Begriffsschrift* on the Desk, *Zarathustra* on the Bedside Table?

Gabriel summarises the significance of Nietzsche for Carnap (as well, perhaps, as the Vienna Circle in general) by noting that "for Carnap, Frege's *Begriffsschrift* lies on the desk, so to speak, and Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* on the bedside table" (Gabriel 2004, 12).<sup>45</sup> Various scholars have highlighted the fact that Nietzsche's influence was significant in the formation of different strands of the German Youth Movement, in which both Carnap and Reichenbach had participated.<sup>46</sup> The young Carnap was associated with Dilthey's student Herman Nohl, who had written on Nietzsche.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>45</sup>But see Mormann (2012, 72).

<sup>46</sup>E.g., Carus (2008, 52–54). Schlick (1979a, 124) favourably compares Nietzsche to Wyneken, who had led the strand of the *Jugendbewegung* that Reichenbach had belonged to; see also Schlick (1962, 13).

<sup>47</sup>See e.g., Gabriel (2004); Damböck (2012); Nelson (2018, 328).

Carnap's philosophical debt to Nietzsche already manifests itself in his 1922 sketch for the *Aufbau*, titled "Vom Chaos zur Wirklichkeit".<sup>48</sup> The relevant conception of "chaos", as it appears in Carnap's title, is traceable, through various possible paths, back to Nietzsche.<sup>49</sup> Like Schlick, Rickert, Vaihinger, and other early readers of Nietzsche, Carnap reworks the Nietzschean conception of the "will to power", which he renders as the "will to order".<sup>50</sup> Mormann (2016, 117–18, 121–22) has traced the transmission of influence from Nietzsche to Carnap via the Neo-Kantian Rickert and his critique of *Lebensphilosophie* during the early 1920s. Rickert had attempted to tame the Nietzschean conception of the will to power by claiming that in exact philosophy this manifests itself as a "will to system".<sup>51</sup> Philosophy's task is to order the chaotic stream of experiences (what Rickert's philosophical opponents had called "Lebens") into a coherent and comprehensive system. Carnap's "Vom Chaos zur Wirklichkeit" has been seen by both Mormann (2006), (2016) and Leinonen (2016) as engaged in precisely this project, set out by Rickert, in its attempt to explain how the will to order is the guiding principle of the move from chaos to structured reality. According to Carnap,

"Reality" is not given to us as something fixed, but undergoes permanent corrections. The epistemologist asserts: it has been built up on behalf of an accomplishment from an original chaos according to certain order principles that for the time being are instinctive. . . . The will to a new order is responsible for the epistemolog-

<sup>48</sup>See e.g., Mormann (2006); Mormann (2012, 73); Mormann (2016, 117–18, 121–22); Leinonen (2016); Moreira (2018, 262–69).

<sup>49</sup>See Leinonen (2016, 215–16).

<sup>50</sup>Carnap began writing the manuscript in 1921 and he continued working on it until 1926. He was introduced to Schlick by Reichenbach in 1923. I have been unable to ascertain whether the apparent parallels between Carnap's 1921 and Schlick's 1908 and 1912 interpretations of Nietzsche could be the result either of their conversations or of Carnap's reading of Schlick's work.

<sup>51</sup>Mormann characterises this concept as "pseudo-Nietzschean" (2016, 117), insofar as it distorts Nietzsche's views.

ical considerations that deal with the fictions of chaos as starting point and the principles of order that guide the constitution. This will to order, which intends to overcome the inconsistencies of reality by rebuilding it in a new way, is the irrational starting point of our theory. (quoted in Mormann 2006, 34)

Mormann (2016, 121–22) thus holds that Carnap's "will to order" builds on Rickert's unorthodox (and strictly speaking false) interpretation of Nietzsche's conception of the "will to power" as "will to system". Contesting Mormann's account, Carus (2008, 108, 125–27) has interpreted Carnap's discussion of "chaos" as influenced primarily by Vaihinger.<sup>52</sup> In Vaihinger's view, the original chaos we find in the stream of our experiences is rendered meaningful by the fictions we impose onto them. As already noted, like Rickert, Vaihinger also appeals to Nietzsche as a predecessor of his fictionalist account of the "will to illusion".<sup>53</sup> I will not attempt to resolve this dispute here; for the purposes of this article, it should suffice to note that, whether it is through Rickert or Vaihinger, Carnap's conceptions of "chaos" and the "will to order" are ultimately traceable back to Nietzsche.<sup>54</sup>

By contrast to Carnap's various early sketches from the 1920s, which contain no references to other works, the *Aufbau* itself contains multiple references to Nietzsche.<sup>55</sup> One of the central themes advanced by Nietzsche and upheld by Carnap concerns the rejection of the Cartesian view of subjectivity. In the various responses to Nietzsche outlined above, this topic is only mentioned in passing by Frank as an example of Nietzsche's critique of metaphysical concepts. Carnap objects to the idea that what is given must be given to some subject. He quotes the following passage by Nietzsche as a source for his claim:

<sup>52</sup>In response, Leinonen (2016, 215–19) has argued in favour of the compatibility of both Rickert's and Vaihinger's influence on the early Carnap.

<sup>53</sup>See also e.g., Gori (2019, 111–18).

<sup>54</sup>But Moreira (2018, 260–69) portrays Carnap and Nietzsche as being on opposite political sides, the former advocating order, the latter chaos.

<sup>55</sup>See also Mormann (2012, 73); Moreira (2018, 245–46).

It is merely a formulation of our grammatical habits that there must always be something that thinks when there is thinking and that there must always be a doer when there is a deed. (quoted in Carnap 2003, 105)<sup>56</sup>

Carnap returns to another aspect of this same theme when he formulates his views on “the problem of the self” (2003, 261). This relates to Carnap’s objection against the Cartesian account of the self: according to Carnap, the “cogito” does not imply the “sum”. Carnap lists Nietzsche among a series of philosophers who had via “philosophical introspection . . . reached the same result” (2003, 261). Carnap parallels Frank’s earlier view on the topic when he also includes Mach as a source for his view, noting his agreement with Nietzsche. Carnap also categorises some of Nietzsche’s anti-Cartesian views concerning the non-existence of the subject as being in agreement with Avenarius (2003, 261), Schlick (2003, 105, 261), and Russell (2003, 261).

Carnap (2003, 108–9) nonetheless partly contests the Kleinpeter-Frank thesis, insofar as he discerns an epistemological disagreement between Mach and Nietzsche when it comes to the former’s atomistic rendition of phenomenalism. In selecting between the two positions, Carnap favours Nietzsche over Mach. Carnap’s preference for Nietzsche over Mach parallels a similar view by Schlick (as outlined in Section 6), and in fact Carnap names Schlick (2003, 108) as one of his allies in his choice against Mach. In Carnap’s view, Mach naïvely endorses an atomistic conception of “sensations” which is incompatible with the latest advances of science. More specifically, Carnap refers to the results of Gestalt psychology, showing that the primary units of experience are not like Machian “atomic” sensations, but rather combined into unitary wholes. Carnap (2003, 108) refers to Nietzsche as part of a list of thinkers, compiled by Hans Cornelius, who had defended such views before they

<sup>56</sup>Waismann (1959, 350) also briefly mentions Nietzsche in connection to the significance of grammar.

were experimentally demonstrated by psychologists. This overall attitude is similar to the one by Neurath that we have already examined: both Carnap and Neurath agree about N2, holding that Nietzsche was an important precursor of later empirically-minded experimental psychology.

Carnap returns to Nietzsche in his famous remarks in the 1931 article “Overcoming Metaphysics through the Logical Analysis of Language”.<sup>57</sup> Here, Carnap’s overall project is to demonstrate how, following various failures from previous philosophical movements (including the ancient skeptics, the modern empiricists, and some strands of Kantian thought), the newly developed method of logical analysis provides the tools for demonstrating that metaphysics is cognitively meaningless. Carnap shows how (i) metaphysical pseudo-concepts without empirical content, and (ii) metaphysical pseudo-statements can be overcome by his recommended method. According to Carnap, metaphysicians had hitherto endeavoured to put forth theses that are to be shown to be either true or false in the course of rational theoretical debate. However, the content of their expressions is, according to Carnap, what he calls *Lebensgefühl*, i.e., a kind of emotive attitude towards life. Carnap thinks that such emotive attitudes should be expressed in the appropriate medium, which is not theoretical. Art can provide the most appropriate medium for expressing *Lebensgefühl*, since the question of whether a statement is true or false is irrelevant to artworks. As Dahms (2004) shows, one of the first articulations of this idea was presented in Carnap’s lectures at the Dessau Bauhaus.<sup>58</sup> There, Carnap admits that

<sup>57</sup>Whereas Carnap had chosen to use the Nietzschean term “overcoming” [*Überwindung*] in his title, in his well-known *Language, Truth and Logic*, A. J. Ayer had preferred the phrase “the elimination of metaphysics”, and this was later used by Arthur Pap in translating the title of Carnap’s paper; see Friedman (2000, 23); Vrahimis (2013a, 90–91); Vrahimis (2013b, 4); Moreira (2018, 248–49); Vrahimis (forthc. b).

<sup>58</sup>In 1929, Carnap (1922–33, 33) briefly mentions Nietzsche’s aristocratic ethics in his notes for this lecture. In his 1930 notes for 1959a, Carnap (1929–37, 21) comments on the relation between metaphysics and poetry, noting that

after the misguided metaphysicians' attempts to express their *Lebensgefühl* in a theoretical medium have been overcome, the need for expressing such *Lebensgefühl* in other media remains.<sup>59</sup> Carnap even encouraged the artists and designers in his audience to address this need.<sup>60</sup> He thus portrayed the overcoming of metaphysics as a kind of liberation, freeing *Lebensgefühl* from the shackles of theory and allowing freedom for its exploration within the realm of artistic creation and "the conscious design of the things of [everyday] life" (quoted in Dahms 2004, 370).

Nietzsche is, according to Carnap, the philosopher who most clearly saw this well before it could be cemented by logical analysis:

Our conjecture that metaphysics is a substitute, albeit an inadequate one, for art, seems to be confirmed by the fact that the metaphysician who perhaps had artistic talent to the highest degree, viz. Nietzsche, almost entirely avoided the error of that confusion. A large part of his work has predominantly empirical content. We find there, for instance, historical analyses of specific artistic phenomena, or an historico-psychological analysis of morals. In the work, however, in which he expresses most strongly that which others express through metaphysics or ethics, in *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, he does not choose the misleadingly theoretical form, but openly the form of art, of poetry. (Carnap 1959b, 80)

The above passage may at first appear puzzling, especially if read in isolation from other responses to Nietzsche by the Vienna Circle. In the first sentence, Carnap appears to suggest that Nietzsche *is actually a metaphysician*.<sup>61</sup> This seems to be in tension with what follows, as Carnap goes on to say that Nietzsche *overcomes metaphysics* by altogether avoiding its exposition in a theoretical medium. Should this avoidance not mean, according to Carnap, that Nietzsche is no longer a metaphysician?

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<sup>59</sup>Nietzsche clearly separates the two' (quoted in Moreira 2018, 247).

<sup>59</sup>See also Carnap (1929–37, 21).

<sup>60</sup>See Dahms (2004, 369–70); Vrahimis (2012, 70–72). See also Galison (1990); Potochnik and Yap (2006); Sachs (2011).

<sup>61</sup>Sachs (2011, 312) and Moreira (2018, 247) reject this as a misreading.

We have already established that both Schlick and Frank had, in the preceding two decades, already interpreted Nietzsche as a critic of metaphysics (N<sub>1</sub>). Schlick, furthermore, had in 1912 already defended the tripartite view of Nietzsche's phases, according to which, having overcome an initial metaphysical period, Nietzsche became a positivist (N<sub>3</sub>). This interpretation of Nietzsche, which was also put forth by various contemporary Nietzsche scholars, helps us to make sense of Carnap's remarks. Carnap is best understood as claiming that Nietzsche had been a metaphysician, *before* he subsequently overcame metaphysics (N<sub>1</sub>) by dividing his work into either empirically-minded historical and psychological analyses (N<sub>2</sub>),<sup>62</sup> on the one hand, or poetry on the other hand.<sup>63</sup> As Schlick, Frank, and Neurath would agree, this way of overcoming metaphysics puts Nietzsche in league with the Vienna Circle, as one of their closest predecessors during the late nineteenth century. The Vienna Circle can now realise the Nietzschean project of overcoming metaphysics by putting to use the technical means provided by the development of modern logic.

As already shown in Section 5, Schlick had seen *Zarathustra* as the epitome of Nietzsche's work, because it employs a poetic form that is appropriate to the subject-matter. Schlick sees a decline in Nietzsche's writing that occurs in later works, which try to approach in a systematic manner the views initially expressed as poetry in *Zarathustra*. Once Carnap's characterisation of Nietzsche as a metaphysician is clarified in light of Schlick's tripartite scheme, i.e., as pertaining to an initial phase which Nietzsche later overcomes, it becomes clear that Carnap endorses the view that *Zarathustra* is not a work of metaphysics. Instead, Carnap agrees with Schlick that *Zarathustra* is a work which has overcome metaphysics. Carnap explicitly understands *Zarathus-*

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<sup>62</sup>Sachs (2011, 313) connects this to what he calls Carnap's and Nietzsche's hypermodernism.

<sup>63</sup>Sachs (2011, 312) questions whether this is a correct understanding of Nietzsche.

tra as expressing in the poetic medium what ‘others express through metaphysics or ethics’ (1959a, 80), i.e., through a theoretical medium. In other words, in *Zarathustra* Nietzsche has overcome metaphysics by embracing the use of a non-theoretical medium for his work. By contrast to Schlick, however, Carnap omits to mention the fact that Nietzsche returned to a theoretical medium after *Zarathustra*. As Schlick clearly understood, Nietzsche’s last works attempted to systematically develop what he had earlier expressed as poetry. Thus by contrast to Schlick, Carnap’s all too brief mention of Nietzsche in 1931 selectively emphasises those aspects of his thought which conveniently align with his project of overcoming metaphysics.<sup>64</sup>

Carnap’s final mention of Nietzsche occurs in his 1932 “Psychology in Physical Language”. In the context of discussing “resistance to the thesis of physicalism” (Carnap 1959a, 40), Carnap lists a number of examples in which a new theory causes a wave of controversy because, to quote Carnap’s Nietzschean vocabulary, “an Idol is being dethroned by it” (Carnap 1959a, 40). Carnap’s examples include Copernicus’ heliocentrism, Darwin’s theory of evolution, Marx’s material explanation of causation in history, and Freud’s notion of unconscious drives. Nietzsche is listed among these, since as a result of his historico-psychological analysis “the origins of morals were stripped of their halo” (Carnap 1959b, 40). Carnap’s thesis here is compatible with his earlier division of Nietzsche’s work into poetic art works, on the one hand, and empirically-minded analyses on the other. Carnap accepts what he sees as Nietzsche’s empirical genealogy of morals as one among the various ground-breaking theoretical advances that he mentions. This position again is aligned with the overall emphasis of N2 by Schlick and Neurath.

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<sup>64</sup>This omission may reflect the overall disagreements between Carnap and Schlick concerning the scope of the project of overcoming metaphysics, which I cannot further discuss here. Schlick may have been more willing than Carnap to go along with Nietzsche’s last works, and their return from poetry to theory. For further discussions of this, see e.g., Uebel (2020); Tuboly (forthc. a).

Overall, Carnap’s various claims about Nietzsche, as I have shown here, can best be understood alongside Schlick’s, Frank’s, and Neurath’s similar statements. There is nothing extraordinary about Carnap’s suggestion that Nietzsche’s work was relevant to the Vienna Circle’s project of overcoming metaphysics. It is, rather, a kind of routine operation by which Carnap, like almost all other Vienna Circle members, acknowledges the significance of work that he considers to have anticipated Logical Empiricism.

## 10. Conclusion

In the above examination of Nietzsche’s reception by the Vienna Circle’s members, I have first of all clarified that the Vienna Circle’s responses to Nietzsche were overwhelmingly positive. Their championing of Nietzsche focussed on what I have summarised as a series of specific theses on his work (N1–N4).

As this paper has shown, N1 was explicitly attributed to Nietzsche by Schlick, Frank, Neurath, and Carnap. Schlick discussed Nietzsche most extensively at a time when he himself was neither a positivist nor committed to the project of overcoming metaphysics tout-court. Nonetheless, he was sympathetic to Nietzsche’s overcoming of metaphysics, which he understood to be the rejection of appeals to a “supersensible” (Schlick 2013, 228) world. Frank sees N1 in terms of Nietzsche’s rejection of “misused” (Frank 1970, 233) metaphysical concepts, such as the notion of subjectivity or the distinction between appearance and reality. Neurath explicitly presents Nietzsche as a precursor of the Vienna Circle’s proposals for overcoming metaphysics, tying N1 to N2 and N3\*, as well as to Nietzsche’s critique of Kant. Carnap, finally, presents N1 in light of his interpretation of Nietzsche’s work as split between poetry and empirical research. Thus, while Schlick, Frank, Neurath, and Carnap agree in subscribing to a version of N1 broadly construed, they each emphasise different specific aspects of it.



Of the different responses to Nietzsche by the Vienna Circle, it is only Schlick who explicitly linked Nietzsche's turn towards **N1** and **N3** to his rejection of Schopenhauer's early influence on his work. The others simply focus on Nietzsche's philosophy after its turn away from Schopenhauerian metaphysics. Nevertheless, I have shown that Carnap's remarks on Nietzsche are best understood in light of the view of Nietzsche's rejection of Schopenhauer's influence that is also put forth by Schlick.

I have also demonstrated that **N2** was explicitly acknowledged by Schlick, Neurath, and Carnap. Frank does not explicitly address **N2**, but does briefly refer to Nietzsche's use of psychology in criticising metaphysics. He also connects Nietzsche's role as an Enlightenment philosopher (**N4**) with his high esteem for the application of "the will to test, investigate, predict, experiment" (Frank 1970, 233).

**N3**, on the other hand, was only explicitly proclaimed by Schlick. Frank and Neurath uphold its weaker form **N3\***. Frank claims that Nietzsche contributed to "the positivistic world conception" (Frank 1970, 232) with his attack on metaphysics, thus tying **N3\*** to **N1**. Neurath's portrayal of Nietzsche as endorsing a scientific conception of the world, as I have shown, draws various connections between **N1**, **N2**, and **N3\***. Both Frank and Neurath praise Nietzsche's critique of Kant, which they present as having been a kind of philosophical impediment to the advancement of a scientific conception of the world.

Finally, this paper has shown that the view that Nietzsche was an Enlightenment philosopher (**N4**) was explicitly articulated by Frank as well as Schlick. As highlighted above, Schlick understood **N4** to result from Nietzsche's turn away from his early critique of the Enlightenment, and towards an anti-metaphysical positivist phase. Though the various brief comments by Neurath do not directly address this view of Nietzsche as an Enlightenment philosopher, he can be said to implicitly subscribe to the Frank/Schlick interpretation, insofar as he sees him as an ally of the scientific world conception.

Though most scholarly attention has focussed on Carnap's response to Nietzsche, it is in various ways an outlier, as we have seen above. By contrast to Schlick, Frank, and Neurath, Carnap nowhere explicitly discusses the issue of Nietzsche's relation to positivism (**N3**) or to the scientific world conception (**N3\***). Neither does Carnap give any indication as to whether he upholds **N4** or not. Carnap's discussion of Nietzsche's views on subjectivity is not paralleled in other Vienna Circle texts, with the exception of a brief mention by Frank. Nonetheless, as this article has argued, the relation Carnap sees between Nietzsche and the overall project of overcoming metaphysics is best understood in light of the reception of Nietzsche by his Vienna Circle colleagues. The discussion in this article should at least resolve a certain ongoing puzzlement as to why Carnap closes his 1931 paper with a reference to Nietzsche.

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