

WHAT IS TO BE OVERCOME? NIETZSCHE, CARNAP, AND MODERNISM AS THE OVERCOMING OF METAPHYSICS

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Hanging over contemporary philosophy is the shadow cast by the divergence between two movements retrospectively labeled as “analytic philosophy” and “Continental philosophy.” Though the divergence no longer has the weight it did twenty or even ten years ago, it will be some time before all of its repercussions can be assessed impartially. A comprehensive history of the divergence between analytic and Continental philosophy, including as its last chapter the story of the overcoming of the very idea of such a ‘divergence,’ has yet to be written. As Nietzsche was only able to write a ‘genealogy of morality’ *after* he had constructed a perspective ‘beyond good and evil’, so too the perspective here is, in some sense yet to be specified fully, beyond the analytic/Continental divide, and hence one from which the genealogy of that divide can be undertaken. The present essay is intended as a modest contribution to that far greater enterprise.

No perspective beyond the analytic/Continental divide should conceal its debt to those philosophers who have helped bridge the gulf between analytic and Continental philosophy by reflecting on the differences between the two traditions. Habermas (2003) suggests that Continental philosophy, following Hegel, continually reflects upon, and brings up into its manifest content, its own socio-historical situation (2003, 79-80). Thus, unlike analytic philosophy, Continental philosophy has never turned away from culture, tradition, literature,

psychodynamic, and political economy in the course of thinking about language and meaning. By contrast, analytic philosophy – especially in the wake of the so-called “linguistic turn” – has tended to think about language in abstraction from such matters. Along similar lines, Gutting (1999) suggests that analytic philosophy takes its own modernism for granted, to the point of not even acknowledging the historical specificity of its own conceptions of rationality, objectivity, cognitive significance, and so on. As he puts it:

The question of modernity does dominate our thought, but the question is not whether to reject it but how to understand it. Those who see analytic philosophy as irrelevant because it does not question the very idea of a commitment to reason as the vehicle of human autonomy have misconstrued the question of modernity. On the other hand, much analytic philosophy has been justly marginalized because it ignores serious questions about its own particular conception of reason. As a result, analytic philosophy has not fully faced the question of whether it is trapped in a false conception of reason. (Gutting 1999, 4)

Without disputing the insights of Habermas and Gutting, more should be said about how exactly analytic philosophy developed so as to suppress the acknowledgment of its modernity. I propose to investigate a particular moment in that development by looking carefully at two representative texts from Carnap’s early period: the metaphilosophical remarks that frame his *Logische Aufbau der Welt* (1928) and “Überwindung der Metaphysik durch Logische Analyse der Sprache” (1931)

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More specifically, I want to bring out Carnap’s modernism by considering Carnap’s understanding of Nietzsche in the “Overcoming” essay in relation to the metaphilosophical reflections with which Carnap frames the *Aufbau*. Though one may be surprised to hear that

Carnap seems to have thought highly of Nietzsche, his reading of Nietzsche conveys much of how Carnap understands what is properly included and excluded from philosophy. Yet it is just that question – what is properly included and excluded from philosophy – that generated and sustained the divergence between analytic and Continental philosophy for most of the twentieth century.

Since Carnap's understanding of Nietzsche is presumably less familiar, I shall begin by noting how Carnap situates Nietzsche in the history of metaphysics (§1). I shall then turn to a broader theme in Carnap, what I call his "futurity," to illuminate the affinity between himself and Nietzsche. I then turn to a necessarily brief examination of Nietzsche's own commitment to futurity (§2) before presenting a comparison of Carnap and Nietzsche on the overcoming of metaphysics as the futurity of modernism (§3). I hope to show that the way in which Nietzsche understands the overcoming of metaphysics as a necessary step in the realization of an explicitly modern self-understanding can illuminate an important strand in the emergence of analytic (and 'post-analytic') philosophy (§4).

1. Kant, Carnap and the Overcoming of Metaphysics

Though well-known for its polemic against Heidegger, Carnap's 1931 essay on the "overcoming of metaphysics" also documents Carnap's understanding of logical empiricism in the history of Western philosophy. Whereas previous anti-metaphysicians regarded metaphysics as false or as useless, "modern logic" (*der modernen Logik*) – a phrase that Carnap underscores for emphasis – allows for the far stronger claim that metaphysics is *meaningless* (*gänzlich sinnlos*). Carnap defends this position by claiming that every meaningful sentence in a natural

language must satisfy two conditions: (i) the content of the sentence must be correlated with a unique range of sensations and (ii) the structure of the sentence must be correlated with a syntactically correct formula of the first-order predicate calculus. Traditional metaphysics violates the first criterion; Heidegger is singled out as violating the second. From the entire history of philosophy, only Nietzsche is exonerated, in terms that mark a sharp departure from the bulk of the essay.

In order to understand just why Carnap exonerates Nietzsche, we must first understand just what Carnap means by “metaphysics”. Consider the list of metaphysical terminology that falls under Carnap’s prohibition:

Just like the examined examples “principle” and “God,” most of the other *specifically metaphysical terms are devoid of meaning* [*die meisten anderen spezifisch metaphysischen Termini ohne Bedeutung*] i.e. “the Idea,” “the Absolute,” “the Unconditioned,” “the Infinite,” “the being of being,” “non-being,” “thing in itself,” “absolute spirit,” “objective spirit,” “essence,” “being-in-itself,” “being-in-and-for-itself,” “emanation,” “manifestation,” “articulation,” “the Ego,” “the non-Ego,” etc. (67)

In a remark appended to the essay in 1957, Carnap indicates more explicitly how he understands the target of his criticism:

This term [metaphysics] is used in this paper, as usually in Europe, for the field of alleged knowledge of the essence of things which transcends the realm of empirically founded, inductive science. Metaphysics in this sense includes systems like those of Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, Bergson, and Heidegger. But it does not include endeavors towards a synthesis and generalization of the results of the various sciences. (80).

In short, Carnap singles out for criticism, not ‘metaphysics’ *simpliciter*, but a particular conception of metaphysics.² How are we to understand ‘metaphysics’ in this sense?

The solution lies in considering the neo-Kantian background of logical empiricism. Though logical empiricism has largely been understood as indebted to nineteenth-century empiricism (e.g. Ernst Mach), more recent scholarship has drawn attention to the neo-Kantian background of the Vienna Circle in general and of Carnap in particular (Friedman 2000). Carnap’s critique of metaphysics can thus be seen as a radicalization of the general ‘return to Kant’ that arose in reaction to post-Kantian speculation. In (broadly) Kantian terms, ‘metaphysics’ is distinguished from ‘science’ in a picture that determines the very sense of “metaphysics” which Carnap discerns and attacks in the German Idealists, in Bergson, and in Heidegger. Some clarification of how Kant understands ‘metaphysics’ is therefore in order.

I understand Kant as having, in effect, two conceptions of metaphysics: a positive sense and a negative sense (cf. Bird 2006). In the positive sense, metaphysics consists of the (purported) *a priori* conditions of possible experience. In the negative sense, metaphysics consists of (purported) *a priori* knowledge that goes beyond all possible experience. The crucial difference between them emerges more clearly when one considers Kant’s stress on turning metaphysics into a science in order to rescue it from the scorn of “indifferentism” (*CPR* A x). Metaphysics in the negative sense, the transcendent use of concepts, is dogmatic *because* it is a pre-scientific metaphysics. Metaphysics in this sense consists essentially in knowledge-claims which go beyond possible experience, whereas ‘science’ consists of cognition grounded in possible experience. What is necessary is a distinction between the legitimate, immanent use of concepts from the illegitimate, transcendent use of concepts. In Carnap’s *Logical Construction of the*

World, the Kantian conception of science is transformed into that which can be rationally reconstructed in terms of types of sets of sense-data.

On this view, Carnap uses what he calls “modern logic” – as developed by Frege, Wittgenstein, and by Russell and Whitehead -- as continuing an important aspect of the original Kantian project: the delimitation of science (the legitimate, immanent use of concepts) from metaphysics (the illegitimate, transcendent use of concepts) (e.g. A 296/B 353). But whereas Kant aimed to show the *impossibility for us* of noumenal knowledge, Carnap appears to go much further, in purporting to show that metaphysics is *empty*, i.e. meaningless. To go further than Kant, Carnap draws a distinction between cognition and pseudo-cognition. Given the logical empiricist theory of cognition, the pseudo-cognitive thus consists of either: (i) meaningless words: an initially meaningful word is used in a new way, but without a new use being defined for it; or (ii) meaningless word-sequences: individually meaningful words are combined in a way that obeys natural grammar but which violates logical syntax. Though Carnap does not, to my knowledge, explicitly defend the assumption that logical syntax is authoritative for natural languages, I shall attempt to show in §3 just why this assumption might have seemed so obvious to Carnap as to not need argumentation.

In radicalizing Kant, Carnap ties meaning to truth-value: a symbol-string counts as a statement just in case it can be either true or false. With this move Carnap identifies meaning (*Sinn*) with what Kant calls objective validity, or more generally, cognition (*Erkenntnis*). Hence I will speak about “cognitive significance” where Carnap writes about “meaning.” Since statements concern states of affairs, only statement can have cognitive significance. Hence Carnap eliminates Kant’s distinction between *Erkenntnis* (cognition) and *Denken* (thought) (e.g. B 146; B 166). Notice that this distinction ultimately turns out to be, for Kant, grounded in the

distinction between concepts and intuitions; in cognizing, concepts are schematized (temporalized) so that they can be ‘filled’ appropriately with sensations as the ‘material’ of sensible intuitions; in thinking, unschematized concepts are employed by reason in its yearning for the unconditioned. Carnap uses only sets (or more precisely, types of sets) and sense-data in lieu of conceptual form, sensible intuitive form, and sensible intuitive content (sensations).³ Thus, whereas Kant only denies *knowledge* of God, the soul and free will, but insists on their validity for *thought* (and thus for faith), Carnap rejects them as utterly devoid of cognitive significance *per se*.

However, Carnap then complicates his account by admitting that utterances without cognitive significance are not thereby unimportant for human life. Having shown that metaphysics lacks cognitive significance by modern criteria, Carnap acknowledges how alienating this result might sound:

Our claim that the statements of metaphysics are entirely meaningless, that they do not assert anything, will leave even those who agree intellectually with our results with a painful feeling of strangeness: how could it be explained that so many men in all ages and nations, among them eminent minds, spent so much energy, nay veritable fervor, on metaphysics if the latter consisted of nothing but mere words, nonsensically juxtaposed? (78)

His response is that “metaphysics does indeed have a content; only it is not theoretical content. The (pseudo) statements of metaphysics do not serve for the *description of states of affairs* ... They serve for the *expression of the general attitude of a person towards life* (“Lebenseinstellung, Lebensgefühl”)” (78).⁴

What is poorly expressed in metaphysical assertions has a *practical* role that, though non-cognitive, figures centrally in poetry, art, and music. Carnap's critique of metaphysics turns on the acceptance of a series of parallel dichotomies that have decisively shaped the history of analytic philosophy: cognitive/non-cognitive, objective/subjective, scientific/artistic, and literal/metaphorical. Metaphysics violates these dichotomies because it is *pseudo-cognitive*; it consists of terms or sentences that *appear* cognitively significant, but in reality are not. That such utterances are pseudo-cognitive is a consequence of the imprecision of the grammar of natural language. If a given utterance is translated into predicate logic, it becomes *obvious* that what had seemed hitherto to be cognitively valid is, in fact, nonsense. The pseudo-cognitive is the non-cognitive that wears the misleading guise of the trans-cognitive.

2. Carnap's Interpretation of Nietzsche

What, then, of Nietzsche? On Carnap's view, Nietzsche avoids the pseudo-cognitive by adhering rigorously to the distinction between the cognitive and the non-cognitive. Having identified the non-cognitive in its purest form with music and with poetry, Carnap concludes:

Our conjecture that metaphysics is a substitute, albeit an inadequate one, for art, seems to be further 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 a historical-psychological analysis of morals. In that work, however, in which he expresses most strongly that

which others express through metaphysics or ethics, in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, he does not chose the misleading theoretical form, but openly the form of art, of poetry. (80)

Interestingly, it does not matter much to Carnap whether the genealogy of morality is true – what matters is that there are empirically available criterion for determining its truth-value. By contrast, *TSZ* is understood here as a work of “poetry”. Like music, poetry is neither true nor false, but rather an “expression” (*Ausdruck*) of one’s existential attitude towards the whole of life. Nietzsche is thus exonerated because, whereas other metaphysicians illicitly obscure the distinction between the cognitive and the non-cognitive, Nietzsche upholds it. In other words, Carnap understands Nietzsche as a Good Kantian: his work *upholds* the distinction between science and metaphysics – a distinction that Carnap reworks into the dichotomy between the assertional (science) and the metaphorical (poetry). Carnap appeals to Nietzsche as anticipating, though no doubt in a confused form (because lacking the tools of modern logic), the overcoming of metaphysics that has finally become possible with logical empiricism. In Carnap’s narrative of the history of philosophy, Nietzsche is situated as intimating a new kind of philosophy, a post-metaphysical philosophy.

Though I do not wish to defend Carnap’s interpretation of Nietzsche in all respects, it does capture more than a grain of truth. Recent scholarship has emphasized Nietzsche’s complicated relationship with neo-Kantianism (Small 2001, Green 2002, Hill 2003). Though it would exaggerate to say that Nietzsche was a neo-Kantian *simpliciter*, he was decisively influenced not only by Schopenhauer but also by Friedrich Lange, Afrikan Spir, Kuno Fischer, and Gustav Teichmüller. The impact of the neo-Kantians on Nietzsche is difficult to assess; though he was strongly influenced by them during the 1870s, up to and including *Human, All-too-Human*, Nietzsche nevertheless seems to have discovered an exit-strategy from the entire neo-Kantian

problematic. What he retains, however, is the insight that the critique of metaphysics that began with Kant can and must be completed through a historicization, pragmaticization, and naturalization of the *a priori*. It is only on the basis of what I want to call a “this-worldly turn” given to the *a priori* by the neo-Kantians, especially Lange and Teichmüller, that Nietzsche can even so much as inquire into the value of metaphysics for life, or how it came about that a certain kind of life not only fantasized about a reality beyond the world of finite, embodied life, but invested the fantasy with such fear and desire as to make something of a ‘true’ world out of it. In that sense, the whole problematic that today is represented for us by the word “Nietzschean” should be elucidated in terms of its neo-Kantian background. Thus, though on the one hand the Carnapian dichotomies seem clearly inadequate for understanding the complex relation between *On the Genealogy of Morality* and *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* – notice, for example, that *GM II* concludes with a gesture towards *TSZ* – on the other hand, *something* like Carnap’s dichotomies is not entirely inappropriate.⁵

I want to turn now to the different, though closely related problem, as to what the desirability of the “overcoming of metaphysics” tells us about both Carnap and Nietzsche, and why they understood themselves as occupying the right historical moment for such an “overcoming.” Carnap’s emphasis on the *modernity* of “modern logic” at the beginning of “The Overcoming of Metaphysics” resonates with the attitude that he permits himself to display in his Preface to the first edition of the *Aufbau*. There he explicitly steps back from the presentation of content in order to address (“outside of the framework of the theory”) the metaphilosophical question, “what position in contemporary philosophy and contemporary life in general does this book occupy?” (LCW xv). Here again the emphasis falls on the “new logic”, originally developed by

mathematicians, as used to put philosophy on a scientific course that “will eliminate all speculative and poetic work from philosophy” (LCW xvii).

In general, so much energy has gone into either condemning or applauding Carnap’s attitude that we have neglected how Carnap historicizes his metaphilosophy:

We do not deceive ourselves about the fact that movements in metaphysical philosophy and religion which are critical of such an orientation [i.e. a *scientific* orientation – CS] have again become very influential of late. Whence then our confidence that our call for clarity, for a science that is free of metaphysics, will be heard? It stems from the knowledge or, to put it somewhat more carefully, from the belief that these opposing powers belong to the past. We feel that there is an inner kinship between the attitude on which our philosophical work is founded and the intellectual attitude which manifest itself in entirely different walks of life ... It is an orientation which demands clarity everywhere, but which realizes that the fabric of life can never quite be comprehended. ... Our work is carried by the faith that this attitude will win the future. (LCW xvii – xviii).

Here Carnap announces his feeling of inhabiting a moment in Western history defined by the struggle between metaphysics and science *as* a struggle between past and future. The critique of metaphysics has been made possible by *modern* logic; it is *as a modernist* that Carnap cheerfully relegates metaphysics to the past. The crucial move here is what I want to call Carnap’s “futurity”: taking on as one’s existential commitment a temporal orientation that opposes the past in the name of the future. It is in the name of the future that Carnap aims to overcome what he calls metaphysics. Here too lies the key to the affinity that Carnap discerned between himself and Nietzsche.

3. Nietzsche on Overcoming and Futurity

Unlike Carnap, futurity in Nietzsche is more explicit and more frequently noticed and commented upon by scholars (see e.g. Lippit 1998); accordingly I shall devote somewhat less attention to it here. Whereas Carnap writes about “the overcoming of metaphysics,” Nietzsche writes more poetically about struggle against “the shadows of God” (*GS* 108, 109). The struggle against the shadows of a God who has died – that is, against the residue of a Platonic-Christian metaphysics that we no longer quite believe in anymore, even if there are many who still believe that they believe – takes, among its various cultural expressions, what Nietzsche calls the “de-deification of nature”: “But when will we be done with our caution and care? When will all these shadows of God no longer darken us? When will we have completely de-deified nature? When may we begin to *naturalize* humanity with a pure, newly discovered, newly redeemed nature?” (*GS* 109). Nietzsche’s faith in the future, his futurity, partly consists of the hope that a new conception of nature, purged of “aesthetic anthropomorphisms” (*ibid.*), can also open us onto a radically new self-conception – one so new that it will seem, from our contemporary perspective, that we must learn to see as ‘human, all-too-human’, to be something *Übermenschlich*, trans- or meta-human. It is hardly an understatement to say that ‘futurity’ is a central Nietzschean concept (see e.g. *BGE* Preface and §§ 42-44, 203, 210-213; *GS* 343, 374).

In speaking of ‘futurity’ in this way, a careful distinction should be made between ‘futurity’ and ‘progress.’ The relevant difference for present purposes is that ‘progress’ projects into the future merely an idealized version of present conditions. It thus treats as unproblematic the description of present conditions to be imaginatively projected. ‘Progress’ is thus fully pre-

determined insofar as the contours of the future are determined by the imaginative projection of the present. All that remains is the actualization of this fully determined (though still merely imagined) potential. By contrast, ‘futurity’ is a refusal to impose onto the future any conceptual determination. It is the future *as such* into which, while we nevertheless project our hopes and desires, is nevertheless not already cast in stone, not even at the imaginative level. In this sense, while Nietzsche is certainly a skeptic about ‘progress,’ his faith in the future is as incontrovertible as is Carnap’s.

This is not to say that Nietzsche’s understands his own relation to modernity, his own ‘futurity’, as neatly aligned with that of Carnap. Consider, for example, how Nietzsche situates himself in the history of philosophy in his famous “How the ‘True World’ Finally Became a Fable: The History of an Error,” in *Twilight of the Idols*. Here, the very distinction between the real and the apparent is displaced by a genealogy which reveals that distinction as an “error.” The “rooster’s crow of positivism” comes when we realize that the “true world” is “*unknowable*” – not merely unknown, but unknowable. It thus seems that Nietzsche identifies positivism with a phenomenalism that identifies what is knowable with what appears to consciousness. But much as Nietzsche appreciates positivism, the history of this error culminates in the realization that there is *neither appearance nor reality* – and with that, Nietzsche gestures at *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* in order to underscore how underdetermined and fundamentally open the future of humanity has suddenly come to be seen: “We have done away with the true world: what world is left over? The apparent one, maybe? ... But no! *Along with the true world, we have also done away with the apparent!* (Midday; moment of briefest shadow; end of the longest error; high point of humanity; INCIPIT ZARATHUSTRA)” (*TI* p. 24).

The status of the reality/appearance distinction is crucial for evaluating carefully Carnap's interpretation of Nietzsche. Recall that Carnap distinguishes between cognitively significant assertions (*Sätze*) and non-cognitive expressions (*Ausdrücken*) in terms of whether (i) protocol sentences are directly tied with unanalyzable sense-data and (ii) rules of logical syntax are obeyed. For this second criterion to hold, logical syntax must reveal the truth of language. Only in light of that assumption can one argue that what *appears* to be cognitively significant in ordinary language can be shown to be *really* meaningless. For this reason, one may doubt whether Nietzsche is really the ally that Carnap portrays him as. Carnap presents "the overcoming of metaphysics" as the correct deployment of the reality/appearance distinction with respect to language itself. There is that which is really cognitively significant, and that which merely appears to be cognitively significant, but which is not.

Overcoming metaphysics, in Carnap's terms, requires that we peel back the shiny veneer of appearance in order to discover the truly cognitive significant parts of our language, and to demarcate unambiguously these parts from those that express a 'feeling towards life'. Thus Carnap uses the reality/appearance distinction to articulate a conception of "what meaning really is," whereas Nietzsche does not think that linguistic meaning is a notion that we can get a firm handle on. The "rich ambiguity [*Vieldeutigkeit*] of existence" (*GS* 2) destabilizes any attempt to ground meaning in the way that Carnap attempted; whereas Carnap is modest enough to accept, as Nietzsche does, that human life cannot be comprehended, he nevertheless aspires to a precise foundation for the kind of meaning upon which science depends.⁶

By contrast, Nietzsche points towards a different kind of 'overcoming of metaphysics' which somehow involves leaving behind that distinction itself. Thus, whereas Carnap understands *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* as a mere "expression of the feeling of life", and thus merely non-

cognitive, Nietzsche sees it as inaugurating a wholly new way of speaking and thinking – at the very end of “How the ‘True World’ Became a Fable” -- one that lies on the *far* side of the reality/appearance distinction itself, and beyond the conceptions of humanity and of nature at work in the metaphysics based on that distinction.

4. The Overcoming of Metaphysics as Philosophical Modernism

In light of this significant difference between Carnap and Nietzsche, it might now seem as if Nietzsche would have regarded Carnap as he regarded Kant – as “a fox who strays back into his cage. Yet it had been *his* strength which had broken open the cage!” (GS 335). Having clarified one of the many areas of incontestable difference between Nietzsche and Carnap, I want now to retrace some of this terrain from a different angle, one that will show Carnap as strikingly close to Nietzsche through the lens provided by the question of modernism.⁷

I understand modernism as *modernism* – that is, not just a particular epoch in our socio-historical development, but a specific attitude towards that epoch. Modernism regards modernity as a rupture with what is held as *mere* past, as tradition. Modernists take up tradition as the *object* of intense criticism and analysis – which requires in turn that one have available a *method* which is not itself entangled in the conceptual formations that are the object of analysis. Hence modernists need a resolutely and self-consciously modernist methodology. Whereas there have been significant ruptures in the history of Western culture and thought – such as Plato’s critique of previous genres of Greek literature or Paul’s critique of previous interpretations of the Covenant -- modernism is distinguished by a typically high level of self-consciousness about the nature of its rupture and critique.

While there is little to dispute in the standard depiction of modernity as beginning with Descartes and Bacon, modernism becomes intensified in the line of thought that begins with Kant, because it is here that even metaphysics is seen to be too much mired in what is past and in what must be overcome. Nietzsche and Carnap, for their part, might be regarded as ‘hyper-modernists’, insofar as they see the entirety of the history of metaphysics as mere background and preparation for the future. Their hyper-modernism is crucial for understanding the depths of their commitment to a post-metaphysical science and culture.

The hyper-modernism at work in both Nietzsche and Carnap is evident in how they give voice to the shock of the new. Nietzsche makes liberal (and wildly imaginative) use of new developments in mid-19th century German biology and physics – what has been called “German Materialism” (Leiter 2002, p. 64) – in order to construe traditional philosophical problems as *symptoms*, and to cast himself in the role of diagnostician. Carnap uses the new logic in order to construe traditional philosophical problems as “*Scheinprobleme*,” pseudo-problems. The modernism of both Nietzsche and Carnap is an intensification and transformation of the Kantian anthropocentric turn. Whereas Nietzsche broadens this turn through an imaginative physiopsychology that turns anthropocentrism into biocentrism, Carnap narrows this turn through a reliance on mathematical logic that turns anthropocentrism into logocentrism.⁸ But in both cases these responses are governed by a faith in the future, or futurity, whereby the new is authorized as having power to determine what in the past is worthy of continuing cognitive and existential commitment.

Thus, Nietzsche and Carnap can each be interpreted as deepening and radicalizing Kant’s criticism of the sort of systematic comprehension that traditionally runs from Aristotle through Leibniz to the German Idealists (and which has been revived by more recent ‘analytic’ as well as

‘Continental’ metaphysicians). As modernists, both Nietzsche and Carnap are significant for the clarity of their self-awareness on this point. Nietzsche was not systematic, as indicated by his famous remark, “I mistrust all systematizers and avoid them. The will to a system is a lack of integrity” (*TI*, “Maxims and Arrows” 26). This is not to deny that Nietzsche is working out a remarkably consistent philosophical vision, only to underscore the difference between Nietzsche and a truly systematic philosopher such as Hegel, perhaps the last canonical figure who was both comprehensive and systematic. This difference is elided by works that present Nietzsche as not merely consistent and comprehensive, but also as systematic. A crucial ingredient of Nietzsche’s modernism, as understood here, is that he exemplifies a *non-systematic* comprehensiveness. While both ‘analytic’ and ‘Continental’ readings of Nietzsche as a systematic philosopher (cf. Richardson 1996; Deleuze 1983 [1962]) do, on my view, yield genuine insights into Nietzsche’s philosophy, the ‘violence’ (if that overused word is not too strong) done to his texts by systematizing them should not thereby be discounted.

By contrast, Carnap admits that the system presented in the *Aufbau* is only a rational reconstruction of scientific knowledge of the world, and does not touch on the practical problems of life. This is clear both in the Preface to the *Aufbau*, where he claims that a truly scientific orientation is one that “demands clarity everywhere, but which realizes that the fabric of life can never quite be comprehended” (LCW xviii) as well as in the final section of the *Aufbau*, “Aims and Limits of Science”, where Carnap distinguishes the system of the *Aufbau*, as a scientific system, from what might be expected on the part of a systematic philosophy. Thus he notes that “[s]cience, the system of conceptual knowledge, has no limits. But this does not mean that there is nothing outside of science and that it is all-inclusive. The total range of life has still many other dimensions outside of science, but within its dimension, science meets no barrier” (LCW

290). Though modern logic allows us to say more on behalf of science than ever before, it also forces us to confront the limits of this very approach:

The proud thesis that no question is in principle unsolvable for science agrees very well with the humble insight that, even after all questions have been answered, the problem which life poses for us has not yet been solved. ... Even if modern movements frequently underestimate the importance of science for life, we do not wish to fall into the opposite error. Rather, we wish to admit clearly to ourselves, who are engaged in scientific work, that the mastery of life requires an effort of all our various powers; we should be wary of the short-sighted belief that the demands of life can all be met with the power of conceptual thinking alone. (LCW 297)

Thus, while Carnap denies that “there are questions to which it is in principle impossible to find answers,” he does not deny that there are “perhaps unsolvable riddles of life”, so long as one understands that “*the ‘riddles of life’ are not questions, but are practical situations*” (LCW 297, emphasis original). A constructional system achieves clarity at the expense of comprehension. Thus, whereas Nietzsche offers a *non-systematic comprehension*, Carnap offers a *non-comprehensive system*. In both cases their modernism marks the eclipse or foreclosure of systematic comprehension, of *theoria* in the Aristotelian sense. Furthermore, their modernism is constituted in part by their awareness of their modernism, their sense of stepping out from under the shadow of the past and into bright light of the open, undecided future.

5. Conclusion: Towards a Genealogy of the Analytic/Continental Distinction

In a recent re-assessment of the “Overcoming” essay, Gottfried Gabriel notes that “With Carnap, Frege’s *Begriffsschrift* lies on the desk, so to speak, and Nietzsche’s *Zarathustra* on the bedside table” (Gabriel 2003a, 36). The present essay has attempted to explicate Carnap’s affinity with both Frege and Nietzsche in terms of his modernism. Yet Carnap is not only solidly modernist, but also installs a frame around the *Aufbau* that makes explicit its own commitment to modernism, a frame that also sheds light on the critique of metaphysics. The infatuation with the new logic issues in a thoroughly modernist philosophical discourse that regards ordinary language as a mere appearance that conceals its real logical structure. This conception of language privileges modern logic at the expense of disavowing the entanglement of language with history, culture, and politics. Thus analytic philosophy after Carnap tended, for much of its history, to abjure the modernism that gave rise to it.

Far from it being the case that the philosophical discourse of modernity is merely *absent* from the origins of analytic philosophy, at least in its Viennese branch – rather, it is *on account of that modernity itself* that the discourse *about* that modernity is relegated to the margins of the text – and yet, interestingly enough, it is on the margins of the text that this discourse *does* find a voice. The rise of modern logic makes possible a new temporal orientation, a futurity, which disentangles a purely scientific philosophy not only from everything poetic and speculative but also from the task of explicit cultural criticism. Thus the problematization of modernity is eclipsed in the name of modernism itself. And yet, whereas most analytic philosophers since Carnap have not even so much as acknowledged what it is that they have eclipsed, the same cannot be said for Carnap himself. Thus, the problems and themes that dominate much of supposedly “Continental” philosophy – modernity, futurity, historicity, the socio-cultural

contextualization of philosophical practice – are indispensable for an adequate understanding of the history of “analytic” philosophy as well.⁹

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¹ Though there are some significant changes in Carnap's thought between 1928 and 1931, those changes do not, I think, affect the metaphilosophical views of the *Aufbau* and the "Overcoming" essay, which is the focus of the present essay. I depart from the English translation by translating "Überwindung" as "overcoming" rather than as "elimination," in part to bring out the similarities with Nietzsche, who regularly speaks of *Überwindung* and *Selbstüberwindung*.

² Stone (2006) argues that "[w]hat Heidegger and Carnap both saw, correctly, is that Husserl's system reconstitutes pre-Kantian metaphysics within the framework of Kantian epistemology" (217) and that Carnap's "overcoming of metaphysics" thus amounts to a re-instatement of the Kantian distinction between 'science' and 'metaphysics'. On my reading, the Kantian distinction affects the content of what is called 'metaphysics,' and that this conception is crucial to correctly understanding Carnap. Stone argues that Carnap, far from misinterpreting Heidegger, understood Heidegger quite well and criticized him for incorrectly carrying out what both of them undertook: a Kantian critique of Husserl's recovery of pre-Kantian metaphysics.

³ In doing so, Carnap followed the neo-Kantian trend of doing away with the distinction between conceptual form and intuitive form; cf. Friedman (2000).

⁴ The term "*Lebensgefühl*" was used by Dilthey, among others; Carnap admitted his intellectual debt to *Lebensphilosophie* in his "Intellectual Autobiography"; see Gabriel (2003a).

⁵ For Nietzsche's relation to neo-Kantianism, see Stack (1983), Crowell (1999), Green (2002), and Hill (2003). For Carnap's relation to neo-Kantianism, see Friedman (2000) and Gabriel (2003a; 2003b).

⁶ This is, of course, precisely where Quine begins his attack on logical empiricism; see West (1981) for a brief but suggestive indication of how Nietzsche might be read as an anticipatory response to Quine, Goodman, and Sellars – all of whom were profoundly indebted to Carnap.

⁷ The literature on Nietzsche and modernism is vast; however, I have been most strongly influenced by Cox (1999) and by Pippin (1999), both of whom situate the question of Nietzsche’s modernism in terms of whether or not he offers an adequate alternative to Hegelianism.

⁸ My use of “biocentrism” and “logocentrism” is not intended to connote any other positions associated with these labels.

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