

Title of the Dissertation:
Disputes: The Immeasurable Greatness of Micro-Wars
Paper to be adapted into Chapter 3

***Überwindung* Metametaphysics: Nietzsche and Carnap**

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Abstract: Can a persuasive reading of Nietzsche's and Carnap's views on metaphysics that does not ignore their upfront differences, while spelling out their underlying similarities be articulated? This essay supports an affirmative answer. It is argued that Nietzsche and Carnap endorse, but interpret differently what may be called *Überwindung* metametaphysics. This is a conjunction of the following three theses: (Ü-i) a *Überwindung* (that is, a kind of overcoming) of metaphysics ought to be performed; (Ü-ii) this *Überwindung* is to be performed by adopting a method of analysis of language that is suspicious of, collects and interprets metaphysical uses of language by means of another use whose aim is to avoid at least some of the content associated with metaphysics; and (Ü-iii) this *Überwindung* contributes to the political task of resisting diseased practices, and promoting healthy ones.

Key-words: *Überwindung*; metaphysics; metametaphysics; history of philosophy; continental-analytic gap.

Introduction

A core feature of twentieth century philosophy was a climate of animosity between the practitioners of what appear to be two considerably distinct kinds of philosophy—the so called continental philosophy, and the so called analytic philosophy.¹ Nietzsche is considered a key figure of the former; Carnap, of the latter. Accordingly, several continental philosophers have been influenced by Nietzsche, and practically ignored Carnap. Foucault and Deleuze are some of the figures that I have in mind. On the other hand, several analytic philosophers have not paid much attention to Nietzsche. Instead, they developed their projects in the light of that of Carnap. Quine and Putnam are some of the figures who exemplify this trend. Therefore, it is not surprising that there has not been much work connecting Nietzsche and Carnap. It is

¹ As Overgaard, Gilbert and Burwood (2013, 105) indicate, the task of spelling out the requirements for qualifying a philosopher as “analytic” or “continental” is a considerably hard one. I cannot pursue this task here.

also not surprising that though not usually explicitly defended, the thesis that there are significant differences between these philosophers' conceptions of philosophy is widely shared. Indeed, several of these differences can be spelled out.

Consider, for example, Nietzsche's take on what he calls "socialist fools and nitwits" (BGE 203). According to him, these people would be engaged in a "brutalizing process of turning humanity into stunted little animals with equal rights and equal claims" (BGE 203). Moreover, Nietzsche describes himself as "warlike by nature" (EH I 7). By his turn, Carnap emphasizes in his 1963 *Intellectual Autobiography* that after he served Germany in the First World War he ceased to be "uninterested and ignorant in political matters" (Carnap 1963, 9). It was, then, that his "political thinking" became "pacifist, anti-militarist, anti-monarchist, perhaps also socialist" (Carnap 1963, 9). In fact, Carnap goes as far as stating that "all of us in the [Vienna] Circle were strongly interested in social and political progress. Most of us, myself included, were socialists" (Carnap 1963, 22). In addition, Carnap describes himself as being driven by an "implicit lasting attitude" in stating that "the main task of an individual seems to me the development of his personality and the creation of fruitful and healthy relations among human beings" (Carnap 1963, 22). "This aim", Carnap continues, "implies the task of co-operation in the development of society and ultimately of the whole of mankind towards a community in which every individual has the possibility of leading a satisfying life and of participating in cultural goods" (Carnap 1963, 22).

Furthermore, Nietzsche suggests what I call a libertarian approach toward philosophy. According to this approach, consensus (or agreement) is not valuable. So, the "philosophers of the future" ought not to aim to reach it (BGE 42, 44, 210). Rather, they ought to provoke dissensus. In Nietzsche's words, "we must do away with the bad taste of wanting to be in agreement with the majority. 'Good' is no longer good when it comes from your neighbor's mouth. And how could there ever be a 'common good'! The term is self-contradictory: whatever can be common will never have much value" (BGE 43). Accordingly, Nietzsche concludes that "in the end, it has to be as it is and has always been: great things are left for the great, abysses for the profound, delicacy and trembling for the subtle, and, all in all, everything rare for those who are rare themselves" (BGE 43). No similar claim can be found in Carnap's works. In fact,

Carnap states that he “was depressed by disputations [in metaphysics] in which the opponents talked at cross purposes; there seemed hardly any chance of mutual understanding, let alone of agreement, because there was not even a common criterion for deciding the controversy” (Carnap 1963, 45). I read this as Carnap’s way of suggesting what I call an egalitarian approach toward philosophy. According to this approach, consensus is valuable. So, philosophers ought to aim to reach it, or at least to attempt to decrease the level of dissensus in metaphysics.

The remarks of the last two paragraphs might seem to imply that there is no interest in exploring the connections between Nietzsche and Carnap; that it is more pertinent to deal with these figures separately, as most of these philosophers’ readers have done throughout the 20th century and up to ours. Two reasons make me resist this suggestion. The first is that as I will spell out in what follows, there is textual evidence that Carnap read, and had a (surprisingly) positive view on Nietzsche’s writings. Given the influence that Carnap and Nietzsche had in 20th century philosophy, I believe that this textual evidence already provides enough justification for an inquiry that aims to connect these two philosophers’ views. There is also second reason for resisting the aforementioned suggestion; it is that despite of the differences mentioned above and others that will be spelled out in what follows, scholars have already indicated that Nietzsche’s and Carnap’s conceptions of philosophy (especially, their takes on metaphysics) have significant resemblances. I call this an interpretative tendency.

Over the last 20 years or so, several authors have exemplified it. According to Hales, Nietzsche and Carnap “are interested in undermining metaphysics, both think that there is something wrong with ordinary language that leads us into error, both consider metaphysics to be ‘not yet science’ (TI III 3), and both prefer historical and empirical analyses to metaphysical speculation” (Hales 1996, 828). By his turn, Friedman states that “it is possible that Carnap, too, made a connection between ‘overcoming metaphysics’ and Nietzsche” (Friedman 2000, 23). Moreover, Gabriel observes that “with Carnap, so to speak, Frege’s *Begriffsschrift* lies on the desk and Nietzsche’s *Zarathustra* on the bedside table” (Gabriel 2003, 36). On his part, Stone “carefully” speculates that “Carnap’s statement that the “future belongs to our attitude” [might be one of] Nietzschean rational faith” (Stone 2006, 232). Finally, Sachs argues

that “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” (Sachs 2011, 312).

If the remarks quoted in the last paragraph are correct (and I believe they are), a question that has not received much attention arises. Can a persuasive reading of Nietzsche’s and Carnap’s views on metaphysics that does not ignore their upfront differences, while spelling out their underlying similarities be articulated? I set myself to give an affirmative answer. I do so by proposing an interpretation according to which Nietzsche and Carnap endorse, but interpret differently what I call *Überwindung* metametaphysics. This is the view that

- (Ü-i) A *Überwindung* (that is, a kind of overcoming) of metaphysics ought to be performed.
- (Ü-ii) This *Überwindung* is to be performed by adopting a method of analysis of language that is suspicious of, collects and interprets metaphysical uses of language by means of another use whose aim is to avoid at least some of the content associated with metaphysics.
- (Ü-iii) This *Überwindung* contributes to the political task of resisting diseased practices, and promoting healthy ones.

Before I proceed, let me address three possible objections to this essay’s project. This, I hope, will avoid misunderstandings. The first objection is that Nietzsche’s and / or Carnap’s *Überwindung* metametaphysics is false. My reply is that as far as this essay is concerned, this might be the case. My aim here is primarily exegetical. Thus, I endorse neither Nietzsche’s nor Carnap’s views on any matter. Those who support the first objection, then, need to direct it to Nietzsche or Carnap themselves; not to me.

The second objection is that in attributing the *Überwindung* metametaphysics to Nietzsche and Carnap, I do not do justice to their philosophical differences. I reply by stating that in the very second and third paragraph of this essay, I have already acknowledged some of these differences. In fact, I will continue to do so throughout the essay in spelling out in which sense they interpret (Ü-i), (Ü-ii) and (Ü-iii) differently.

The third objection is that given that these three statements are considerably broad ones, they might be attributed to other philosophers. My reply is that as far as this essay is concerned, this might also be the case. Yet, the burden of proving so is not mine. Instead, this burden falls on the shoulder of the supporters of this third objection. They are the ones who have the hard task of showing what other philosophers are committed to (Ü-i), (Ü-ii) and (Ü-iii). On my turn, my goal is not that of showing that Nietzsche and Carnap are the only ones who share the aforementioned metametaphysics. Rather, I merely claim that in attributing distinct interpretations of this stance to them, I do not ignore their upfront differences, while spelling out their underlying similarities in a manner that is more systematic than any other present in the literature. This includes that developed by the authors who constitute the exegetical tendency. In doing so, my hope is to contribute to this tendency.

Now let me show that Nietzsche and Carnap are both committed, but interpret differently (Ü-i), (Ü-ii) and (Ü-iii) in sections 1, 2 and 3, respectively.

1. *Überwindung* of Metaphysics

“For me personally”, Carnap states in his *Intellectual Autobiography*, “Wittgenstein was perhaps the philosopher who, besides Russell and Frege, had the greatest influence on my thinking” (Carnap 1963, 25). Carnap never mentions Nietzsche as one of his influences. This poses a problem for the exegetical tendency. This problem can be surpassed. Note that in 1935, Carnap moved to the United States. He was still living there when he published his autobiography in 1963. During the 1950s, McCarthyism was implemented throughout the states. Reisch’s work shows that the influence of this policy of intellectual reprehension upon American philosophy departments cannot be underestimated. Under the pretense that he was engaged in “subversive political activity”, Carnap was investigated by the FBI (Reisch 2005, 274).

The fact that these investigations occurred motivates Carus to claim that “Carnap was careful not to associate his academic works with anything that might attract unwelcome attention from authorities or university administrations” (Carus 2007, 36). So, as Gabriel (2003, 56) emphasizes, it is very likely that Carnap felt the need to adapt his work to the new philosophical context in which he had adhered. From the

1930s to the 1960s, most American philosophers were not familiar with Nietzsche's works. In fact, some (if not several) of them might have associated Nietzsche with Nazism.² Hence, it is plausible to assume that Carnap felt that to mention Nietzsche in this American context would be impertinent if not offensive. Given his egalitarian tendencies, Carnap might have felt that there was no reason for doing so.

Before his immigration, Carnap refers positively to Nietzsche twice. The first work that I have in mind is his 1928 *Aufbau*, where Carnap refers to Nietzsche's *The Will to Power* three times.³ He goes even as far as quoting and endorsing the following passage (KSA 1887, 10 [58]) by Nietzsche: "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" (Carnap 2003, 105). At (BGE 17), Nietzsche makes a similar point. The second work in which Carnap mentions Nietzsche is the one that the interpreters mentioned in this essay's introduction have focused on —Carnap's 1932 "Überwindung der Metaphysik durch Logische Analyse der Sprache" (henceforth, Carnap's article). My reading of Carnap also focuses on this piece. References to other earlier and later works by Carnap will only be made to clarify the view that he held there, or to emphasize changes in his philosophy. The conclusion of Carnap's article runs as follows:

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 an historical psychological analysis of morals. In the work, however, in which he expresses most

² To dissociate Nietzsche with Nazism was one of the main aims of Kaufmann's 1950 book, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist* —the work that gave rise to the English-speaking tradition of interpretations of Nietzsche.

³ *The Will to Power* was edited by Nietzsche's sister, Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche. She put together several of Nietzsche's fragments by relying on one of the plans that he left for a work which was supposed to be entitled "The Will to Power." Elisabeth organized two editions of the book. The first is from 1901, and has 483 fragments. The second is from 1906; it contains 1067 fragments. It is hard to determine which one of the two versions Carnap read. This is because, in the *Aufbau*'s bibliography, Carnap cites Nietzsche's book as having been published in 1887. Carnap's references to Nietzsche can be found on pages 105, 108 and 261 of the latest English edition of the *Aufbau* released in 2003.

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 (Carnap 1959,80).

According to Carnap, Nietzsche is a metaphysician who constantly adopts two non-metaphysical procedures —an empirical procedure, and a poetic procedure that can be found in his 1885 *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. I follow the champions of the exegetical tendency in interpreting the last quoted passage as Carnap’s way of insinuating that Nietzsche was one of his influences. This interpretation starts to become more persuasive when the first word of the title of the original version of Carnap’s article, written in German, is taken into account; “*Überwindung*”.

Note that the connections between Carnap’s philosophy, Kant and Neo-Kantianism have been spelled out by interpreters, such as Richardson (1998), Friedman (1999, 2000) and Carus (2007). However, “*Überwindung*” is not a word that would be expected to be used by a Neo-Kantian. Kant does not use it. Indeed, his project concerns the limits or the very possibility of metaphysics, not its *Überwindung*. On the other hand, this word is pervasive throughout and it is characteristic of Nietzsche’s works. From 1870, where the term appears for the first time in a posthumous fragment (KSA 1870, 5 [23]), until 1889 when it is used for the last time in *Ecce Homo* (EH I 4), 109 is the number of times Nietzsche uses it. I cannot analyze all of these uses here. Rather, I would like to focus on a single one of them; that which Nietzsche makes in a posthumous passage from 1885. In this passage, Nietzsche relies on the same expression found in Carnap’s article; “*Überwindung* of metaphysics” (KSA 1885, 40 [65]). I emphasize that in spelling out what Nietzsche means by this expression as well as showing his commitment to (Ü-ii) and (Ü-iii), my reading focuses on what has been called his late phase. This phase is constituted by Nietzsche’s posthumous and published writings from 1883 to 1889, the year in which he had his nervous breakdown. I will proceed by connecting several passages of this period to one another so that a systematic view on metaphysics can be attributed to Nietzsche. This procedure is certainly problematic. Yet, it has been adopted by the vast majority of Nietzsche’s

readers.⁴ Given the well-known multiplicity of his writings, it is quite hard to proceed differently. This multiplicity makes me endorse the following statement by Richardson: “the strongest kind of claim any single reading [of Nietzsche] can plausibly make for itself [is] to pick *one* voice or aspect in Nietzsche’s writings, and show how to see that voice as somehow dominant, somehow trumping or subordinating the many other incompatible voices also there” (Richardson 2004, 9).

Neither Carnap nor Nietzsche explicitly spells out the meaning of “*Überwindung*”. As I would like to highlight their common use of this word, I will not translate it to English. This attitude of mine is distinct from that shared by Ayer (1936). In his presentation of logical positivism to English-speaking audiences, Ayer translated “*Überwindung*” to “elimination”. This is also the word adopted in the only translation to English of Carnap’s article; the 1959 one made by Arthur Pap. “Overcoming” is the word used by the interpreters mentioned in this essay’s introduction as well as by all English translators of Nietzsche. On my part, I am inclined to believe that though “*Überwindung*” is more accurately translated by “overcoming” than by “elimination”, its best translation is not given by a single English word, but by the following phrase: the challenging process of attempting to triumph over an obstacle or an opponent. It might seem that the remarks made in this paragraph are secondary ones that only translators should take into account. I resist this view.

The reason is that distinct translations of “*Überwindung*” suggest distinct readings of Carnap’s and Nietzsche’s projects. In relying on the word “elimination”, Ayer and Pap suggested that Carnap aimed to perform what might be called a strong *Überwindung* of metaphysics. Let this relation obtain whenever a philosopher proposes some new content in problematizing and preserving nothing of the old one present in metaphysics. Note that “metaphysics” is an equivocal term. This is because several kinds of contents have been associated with it —the science of being *qua* being, the study of what there is, an inquiry into what grounds what are a few examples. If Carnap aimed to perform a strong *Überwindung* of metaphysics, his project would be quite radical. Yet, it would also be considerably hard to reply to the objection that Carnap

⁴ See, for example, Deleuze (1983), Nehamas (1986), Müller-Lauter (1989), Wotling (1995), Richardson (1996, 2004), etc.

ultimately self-refutes himself in failing to develop a view that preserves nothing of those held by traditional metaphysicians. Putnam (1981) points to this direction.

Putnam underlines that Carnap's view is that metaphysicians articulate meaningless statements that violate the verification principle. In Carnap's article, this principle is articulated as follows: a word is meaningful if and only if it is part or reducible to the words contained in the "protocol sentences" (Carnap 1959,63). Accordingly, a statement that has words that violate this principle is a meaningless one. Protocol sentences would refer to what is immediately observable or verifiable. What would be the content and the form of such protocol sentences is a matter regarding which Carnap's article remains neutral.⁵ The problem, Putnam argues, is that several of the statements endorsed by Carnap himself also violate the verification principle. Indeed, this principle itself cannot be verified.⁶ Moreover, had Nietzsche been engaged in a strong *Überwindung* of metaphysics, a similar objection could be raised against him—that he likewise self-refutes himself in failing to have a view that shares no content with traditionally metaphysical ones. In calling Nietzsche "the *last metaphysician* of the West", Heidegger points to this direction (Heidegger 1991b, 8). Consider, for example, the following statement of Nietzsche's *The Will to Power* (WP 693):

(NM): The innermost essence of being is will to power.

Heidegger (1991a and 1991b) and other interpreters have read statements like this as evidence that some statements by Nietzsche have a metaphysical content.⁷ For instance, it may be argued that (NM) shows that Nietzsche aimed to fulfill an aim that is also associated with metaphysics—that of determining what might be called the One; the identity that all beings share in so far as beings, their "innermost essence". Whether this is so is a dispute regarding which I would like to remain neutral. What matters here is the claim that a more persuasive reading of both Nietzsche and Carnap is that they

⁵ For a detailed account of Carnap's view on protocol sentences and his dispute with Neurath on them, see Uebel (1992), Carus (2007) and Reisch (2005).

⁶ See Ricketts (1994) for a detailed reply to Putnam's objection on behalf of Carnap.

⁷ See, for example, Poellner (1995) and Richardson (1996). On the other hand, Nehamas (1986) and Clark (1990) claim that Nietzsche was never engaged in metaphysics.

developed less radical projects whose aims were that of performing a weak *Überwindung* of metaphysics. By this, I understand a relation that obtains whenever a philosopher proposes some new content in problematizing, but still preserving some of the content associated with traditional metaphysics. Henceforth, I will always use the expression “*Überwindung* of metaphysics” in this weak sense. Granted this move, the aforementioned objections are avoided. That is: although content similar to that associated with traditional metaphysics might still be present in both Nietzsche’s and Carnap’s works, this does imply that they self-refute themselves.

Nietzsche understands metaphysics in a quite broad sense—that of a conjunction of several beliefs that he associates with Socrates and Plato. There is “causal efficacy”, the “will is a *faculty*” and the “I” is a “substance” are some of these beliefs. (TI III 5). I cannot discuss all of these beliefs in this essay. Instead, I will focus on three of them that seem particularly characteristic of metaphysics for Nietzsche. The first is that there are hierarchical oppositions of values. In Nietzsche’s words, “the fundamental belief of metaphysicians is the *belief in oppositions of values*” (BGE 2). “Truth-error”, “the will to truth-the will to deception”, “selfless-self-interest” and “wisdom-covetous leer” are some of the oppositions that Nietzsche takes into account (BGE 2). Metaphysicians would have assumed that the first terms of the mentioned oppositions are more valuable than the second terms.

A second belief that would characterize metaphysics is that “certainty” ought to be pursued (GS V 347, BGE 10). Metaphysicians would “prefer a handful of “certainty” to an entire wagonload of pretty possibilities” (BGE 10). In fact, Nietzsche continues, “there might even be puritanical fanatics of conscience who would rather lie dying on an assured nothing than an uncertain something” (BGE 10). Although Nietzsche does not explicitly spell out what he means by “certainty”, I interpret that he understands it as phenomenon that occurs whenever a thesis does not require any further demand for “support” in convincing even the skeptics (GS V 347).

A third belief that would characterize metaphysics is that there is a “true world” (EH P, TI IV, etc.). Nietzsche seems to understand that those who share this belief embrace realism. This is the conjunction of two theses: there are entities that exist independently or that are not grounded in human factors, such as mind and language;

and these entities can be known by means of these factors. Nietzsche also speaks in terms of an “illusory world” (TI IV). With this expression, it is not clear whether he refers to strong or to weak idealism. The former is the thesis that there are no entities that exist independently, or that are not grounded by any human factor. The latter is the thesis that though these entities exist, human beings cannot know them.

Hence, Nietzsche’s *Überwindung* of metaphysics may be read as the task of developing a new kind of philosophy. This philosophy aims to put into question the three aforementioned beliefs, among others that Nietzsche associates with metaphysics. This is to state that Nietzsche is committed to (Ü-i). I claim that so is Carnap, even though he interprets this statement differently from Nietzsche. My point is that Carnap’s *Überwindung* of metaphysics is more restricted than Nietzsche’s. The reason is that in his 1957 remarks to his 1932 article, he attaches to metaphysics a single thesis that nowadays most contemporary analytic philosophers would associate with epistemology—that “knowledge of the essence of things which transcends the realm of empirically founded, inductive science” can be obtained (Carnap 1959, 80). Carnap explicitly attributes this view to “Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, Bergson [and] Heidegger” (Carnap 1959, 80). These figures are his main targets, and his *Überwindung* of metaphysics is the task of putting into question their shared view that metaphysics can provide this neither mathematical nor empirical knowledge of the essence of things.

2. How Can a *Überwindung* of Metaphysics be Performed?

Nietzsche and Carnap implicitly answer the question that entitles this section by endorsing distinct readings of (Ü-ii). As stated above, this is the thesis that in order to perform a *Überwindung* of metaphysics, philosophers ought to adopt a method of analysis of language. Three features characterize this method. The first is an attitude of suspicion concerning the uses of language made by traditional metaphysicians. Nietzsche calls these uses “grammatical habits” (WP 484). Nietzsche aims to step back from such habits by not taking for granted the theses apparently implied by them. He even goes as far as stating that people still believe in God because their grammatical habits incline them to do so. In his words, “I am afraid that we have not got rid of God because we still have faith in grammar” (TI III 5).

The previously mentioned passage by Nietzsche quoted in Carnap's *Aufbau* also indicates Nietzsche's commitment to this attitude of suspicion. This attitude is likewise present in the preface of *Beyond Good and Evil*. Nietzsche states that "what actually served as the cornerstone of those sublime and unconditional philosophical edifices that the dogmatists used to build" might have been "some word-play perhaps, [and] a seduction [*Verführung*] of grammar (BGE P). A similar insight lies in the very core of Carnap's project. Consider Carnap's take on

(PS-i): Caesar is a prime number.

Carnap argues that "the fact that the rules of grammatical syntax are not violated easily seduces [*verführt*] one at first glance into the erroneous opinion that one still has to do with a statement, albeit a false one" (Carnap 1959,68).⁸ According to Carnap, traditional metaphysicians would also have fallen prey of a similar seduction. This would explain why they make claims, such as the following one present in Heidegger's 1929 "What is Metaphysics?":

(PS-ii): The nothing nothings.

The second feature of the method of analysis of language required to perform a *Überwindung* of metaphysics is a collection of the metaphysical uses of language. The aim of this collection is to indicate the particularity that makes these uses suspicious in the first place. Nietzsche fulfills this aim in emphasizing that metaphysicians have relied on terms, such as "Being, the Unconditioned, the Good, the True, [and] the Perfect" (TI III 4). On his part, Carnap collects the following similar "specifically metaphysical terms" in spelling out the particularity of the metaphysical use of language: "the Idea", "the Absolute", "the Unconditioned", "the Infinite", "the being of being", "non-being", "thing in itself", "absolute spirit", etc. (Carnap 1959,67). As stated above, Nietzsche is depicted as a "metaphysician" in the passage that closes Carnap's article (Carnap 1959, 80). This suggests that Carnap believed that Nietzsche also relied on metaphysical terms—the "will to power" is the most obvious example that Carnap might have mentioned. Indeed, Carnap likely read some statements by

⁸ For an objection to Carnap's interpretation of (PS₁) as meaningless, see Camp (2014).

Nietzsche as having a metaphysical content. (NM) is a standard example that Carnap could have used to back up his reading.

However, for Carnap, Nietzsche's uses of language were most of the times either scientific or poetic ones. The former use would be characterized either by its use of tautologies (as in a formal science, like logic or mathematics), or by its aim of providing empirical knowledge (as in the empirical sciences). The following two statements exemplify these two characteristics of the scientific use: respectively,

(S-i): $1+1 = 2$; and

(S-ii): Spiders are arthropodes.

For Carnap, (S-i) is an analytic, a-priori, and necessary statement. (S-ii) would be a synthetic, a posteriori and contingent one. This indicates that Carnap endorses what might be called a dual picture of science. According to this picture, formal and empirical science are considerably different from one another in that they proceed by means of the two kinds of statements aforementioned.

For Carnap, statements, such as (S-ii), are recurrent in Nietzsche's works. In backing up this view, he might have gathered the following remark of Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morals* (GM I 6) as an example:

(NS): The Romans were the strong.

On the other hand, the poetic use of language would be characterized by its aim of providing a special expression of emotions. As data of such use, Carnap might have gathered the following statement by Rimbaud: "*L'étoile a pleuré rose au cœur de tes oreilles*". This statement can be translated as follows:

(P): The star has wept rose in the heart of your ears.

Carnap reads Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* as an example of a poetic use of language. He might have collected this book's following statement (Z III 16 [2]) as evidence that this is so:

(NP): The desert grows.

The third and last feature of the method of analysis of language required to perform a *Überwindung* of metaphysics is an interpretation of the metaphysical uses of language by means of another use whose aim is to avoid some of the content associated with metaphysics. The uses of language that Nietzsche and Carnap adopt while accomplishing this task are distinct. This makes their projects very different. Nietzsche relies on what might be called a medical-philosophical use of language. This use is not present in Carnap's works. In interpreting the metaphysical use of language, Carnap embraces a metalinguistic one. This use of language is absent from Nietzsche's works.

The main characteristic of Nietzsche's medical-philosophical use of language is a technical distinction between "health" (*Gesundheitand*) and "sickness" (*Krankheit*) (WP 47). For Nietzsche, health is a tendency toward harmony; sickness, a tendency toward disharmony. Nietzsche also claims that an organism is healthy whenever a "dominating passion" rules all others (WP 778). When this occurs, Nietzsche argues that "the co-ordination of the inner system and their operation in the service of one end is best achieved" (WP 778). An organism is sick when an "antagonism of the passions" takes place. Nietzsche describes this situation as an "inner ruin" and as a physiological "anarchism" (WP 778).⁹ Carnap never makes any reference to Nietzsche's medical philosophical use of language. It is likely that he would react to it as he reacts to Nietzsche's works as a whole; that is, he would reject the (arguably) metaphysical statements that Nietzsche articulates in relying on it, while endorsing the scientific and poetic statements.

The main characteristic of Carnap's metalinguistic use is the aim to establish the conditions for words and statements to be cognitively meaningful. The way Carnap pursued this project changed significantly throughout his career. So, I will refer to the use which he adopts in his 1932 article as his early use. Late use is what I call the distinct use that Carnap endorses in his 1956 "Empiricism, Semantics and Ontology" (henceforth, 1956 paper).¹⁰ What is common to the early and to the late use are three assumptions. The first is that given that it can be taken for granted that both the formal

⁹ See Ahern (1995) for a detailed take on Nietzsche's notions of health and sickness.

¹⁰ Carnap first published this paper in 1950. There are differences between this version, and the 1956 one. For a discussion of such differences, see Haack (1976).

and the empirical sciences provide knowledge, the problem is to determine in virtue of which uses of language this occur. The second assumption is that all words and statements have what the 1957 remarks to Carnap's article call "non-cognitive (expressive) meaning", but only some words and statements have "cognitive meaning" (Carnap 1959,80). The third assumption is that only cognitively meaningful statements are useful for science.

Carnap's early use is characterized by the following strict conditions for cognitive meaning. A word has cognitive meaning if and only if it fulfills two conditions. One is syntactical; the rules of modern logic must not be violated while connecting the word to other words within a statement. According to Carnap, the syntactic rules of modern logic would be stricter than those of ordinary grammar. "If grammatical syntax corresponded exactly to logical syntax," he claims, "pseudo-statements could not arise" (Carnap 1959, 68). His point is that the syntactic rules of ordinary grammar differentiate "the word-categories of nouns, adjectives, verbs, conjunctions, etc" (Carnap 1959, 68). However, these rules do not spell out all the specificities of each and every word that fall under these categories. For example, the syntactic rules of grammar do not determine that the noun "prime number" cannot be a property of a person. The syntactic rules of modern logic would do so in not permitting a statement like (PS-i) to be formulated. In making this assumption, Carnap seems to attach a theory of meaning to logic.¹¹

The second condition for a word to be cognitively meaningful is semantical — the aforementioned verification principle cannot be violated. If a word violates either or both of these conditions, it is a meaningless one which appears, but does not have a cognitive meaning. Tautologies, such as (S-i), would be true merely in virtue of their meaning. Contradictions are negations of tautologies. Accordingly, they are false solely by virtue of their meaning or form. Both tautologies and contradictions are cognitively meaningful statements which "say nothing about reality" (Carnap 1959, 68). A statement would have cognitive meaning if and only if it fulfills a syntactic condition and a semantic one. The syntactic condition is that the statement must not violate the

¹¹ To approach the particularities of Carnap's interpretation of modern logic is a task that I cannot pursue here. Reck (2007) has done so in detail.

rules of modern logic. The semantic condition is that the statement must only contain words which have cognitive meaning. If a statement disrespects one or both of these conditions, it is a “pseudo-statement” which is neither true nor false (Carnap 1959, 61). (PS-i) and (S-ii) would be standard examples of statements that violate and respect these conditions, respectively.

Carnap’s late use is characterized by less strict conditions for cognitive meaning. To begin with, Carnap now approaches syntax in a more pluralistic way in relying on the “principle of tolerance”. He states this principle in his 1934 *The Logical Syntax of Language* as follows: “everyone should construct his logic, i.e. his form of language, as he wishes. All that is required of him is that, if he wishes to discuss it, he must state his methods clearly, and give syntactical rules instead of philosophical arguments” (Carnap 1934, 52). Moreover, he no longer deals with semantics by relying on the verification principle. This leads him to embrace the following view in his 1956 paper: words and statements which are part of a linguistic framework are cognitively meaningful. A linguistic framework is a particular use of language. What characterizes it is that it is bounded by explicitly stated syntactic and semantic rules. These rules can be part of any logic —Aristotelian, sentential, quantificational, modal, paraconsistent, etc.

Linguistic frameworks provide responses to what Carnap calls “internal questions” (Carnap 1956, 207). These questions concern features of linguistic frameworks themselves. An external question concerns matters which are independent of any particular linguistic framework. Carnap claims that ontological questions regarding what there is can be interpreted in two ways. First, they can be read as internal questions about what is there according to a linguistic framework. These questions would be scientific in that they would be answerable by the traditional methods of formal or empirical science. Second, ontological questions can be interpreted as external questions regarding what is there over and above any linguistic framework. For Carnap, this is how metaphysicians have traditionally interpreted ontological questions. The problem is that given that answers to external questions are not bounded by the rules of any linguistic framework, they cannot be achieved by relying on the methods of formal and empirical science. Thus, Carnap argues that external questions are either cognitively meaningless ones that fail to be factual

questions; or that they have to be understood as practical questions concerning whether a particular linguistic framework ought to be adopted.

3. Why Should a *Überwindung* of Metaphysics be Performed?

Nietzsche and Carnap also implicitly answer the question that entitles this section by endorsing distinct takes on (Ü-iii) —the thesis that a *Überwindung* of metaphysics contributes to the political task of resisting diseased practices, and promoting healthy ones. That Nietzsche is engaged in this task is quite explicit —“great politics” is how he calls it (BGE 208, 241, etc). In relying on the medical-philosophical use of language, this politics aims to resist the practices that Nietzsche diagnoses as sick. This politics also aims to propagate the practices that Nietzsche diagnoses as healthy. In doing so, Nietzsche not merely awaits for what he calls “philosophical physician” —a figure who would “set himself the task of pursuing the problem of the total health of a people, time, race or of humanity” (GS, P 2). Rather, Nietzsche himself proceeds like a philosophical physician in showing commitment to (Ü-iii). The claim that so is Carnap is more disputable. Yet, my view is that this is also the case.

It is true that Carnap only describes himself as a champion of “scientific philosophy” (Carnap 1959, 77). This philosophy only explicitly poses to itself the task of distinguishing meaningful words, and statements from meaningless one. It is also true that Carnap was never as overt as Neurath concerning political matters. Indeed, Carnap states the following: “we [the members of the Vienna Circle with the exception of Neurath] liked to keep our philosophical work separated from our political aims” (Carnap 1963, 22). “In our view”, Carnap continues, “logic, including applied logic, and the theory of knowledge, the analysis of language, and the methodology of science, are, like science itself, neutral with respect to practical aims, whether they are moral aim for the individual, or political aims for society” (Carnap 1963, 22). This passage seems to back up the widely shared view that Carnap is politically neutral in pursuing no political aim while performing a *Überwindung* of metaphysics.¹² I align myself with Friedman

¹² Note that most contemporary philosophers who describe themselves as being inspired by Carnap neither associate with him nor explicitly pursue any kind of political project. See, for example, Thomasson (2015), Chalmers (2009) and Price (2009).

(2000) and Critchley (2001) in resisting this view. I start to do so by considering that Carnap attaches to his early use the following semi-clinical vocabulary: in “*deluding himself [sich in dieser Täuschung befindet]*” and “*succumbing to self-delusion [Selbsttauschung zu unterliegen]*” the “*metaphysician suffers from the illusion [metaphysiker selbst befindet sich in dem Täuschung]* that the metaphysical statements say something” (Carnap 1959,79, my emphasis).

In these passages, Carnap points to the practical aim of politically resisting the sick (that is, self-delusional) metaphysical practice. Although the aforementioned semi-clinical vocabulary cannot be found in most of Carnap’s works, he constantly pursues a similar practical aim. In fact, his late use is quite similar to his early one. This is because though the 1950s Carnap relies on a distinct terminology, he still suggests that metaphysicians are self-delusional: that is, metaphysicians would not understand external questions as practical ones. Instead, they would wrongly take themselves as able to answer these questions factually by means distinct from those adopted in formal and empirical science. This attitude, Carnap suggests, ought to stop. On the other hand, Carnap’s article implies that the poetic and the scientific practice are healthy ones, that is, they are non-self-delusional practices. So, their propagation ought to be promoted. Nothing that he wrote after indicates that he changed his mind.

This is not to state that Nietzsche and Carnap have a common political motivation. Indeed, their motivations ultimately run in tension with one another. For Nietzsche, the sick practices that ought to be resisted are those that have overvalued communitarian (or, in Nietzsche’s terms “herd”) equality. This would have brought physiological disharmony to the late nineteenth century European culture. The “socialist fools” mentioned in this essay’s introduction would be responsible for this situation (BGE 203). The same could be stated about Christians. Indeed, Nietzsche describes the statement “equal rights for everyone” as a “poisonous doctrine” that Christianity helped to disseminate (BGE 203). Moreover, he states that “Christianity has waged a deadly war on every feeling of respect and distance between people...” (A 43). Thus, it is not surprising that Nietzsche relies on his medical-philosophical use of language in interpreting that “all the [Christian] concepts of “God”, “the soul”, “virtue”, “sin”, the “beyond”, “truth”, “eternal life” are *lies* from the bad instincts of sick natures” (EH II

10). In fact, it would be due to their sick physiological disharmony that Christians would apply the predicates, “evil” (*böse*) and “good” (*gut*), in a quite particular way — one that assumes that “selfish” and “selfless” are the respective meanings of these terms (GM I 7). This indicates that Nietzsche ultimately understands late nineteenth century European culture as the result of a Christian process of degeneration that bred “the domestic animal, the herd animal, the sick animal: man, —the Christian” (A 3). This degeneration process would have started in Ancient Greece.

This is why Nietzsche claims that “Christianity is Platonism for the “ ‘people’ ” (BGE P) and “a hangman’s metaphysics” (TI VI 7). Hence, it is also not surprising that he relies on his medical-philosophical use of language in interpreting the metaphysical use as a sign that metaphysicians have been sick. Accordingly, Nietzsche understands “Socrates and Plato as symptoms of decay, as agents of Greek disintegration, as pseudo-Greek, as anti-Greek” (TI II 2). He also sees “signs of Socrates” decadence not only in [his] admitted chaos, and anarchy of his instincts, but in the hypertrophy of logic as well as in his emblematic rachitic spite” (TI II 4). “Everything about him [Socrates] is exaggerated”, Nietzsche concludes (TI II 4). This exaggeration would have given rise to the “most bizarre of all equation” —the “Socratic equation of reason = virtue = happiness” (TI II 4). This equation would have served to constitute the late nineteenth century Christian herd. On the other hand, Carnap suggests that the sick metaphysical practices ought to be resisted because they undervalue communitarian equality.

As already indicated in this essay’s introduction, Carnap describes himself as a socialist. Furthermore, he states that he is driven by an “implicit lasting attitude” in arguing that “the main task of an individual seems to me the development of his personality and the creation of fruitful and healthy relations among human beings” (Carnap 1963, 22). My interpretation is that the “fruitful and healthy relations” that Carnap had in mind were ultimately those that Nietzsche took to be sick ones —those that promoted equality within the early twenty century European and American communities in which Carnap was inserted. I also follow Carus in believing that for the members of the Vienna circle “certain assumptions about the broader cultural and ethical context of their philosophical project were so obvious to them they were never made explicit in their writings” (Carus 2007, 33). Indeed, the fact that Carnap describes

himself as being driven by the aforementioned attitude makes me endorse Friedman's (2000) view that Carnap "just as strongly agrees with his more activist friend and colleague [Neurath] that philosophy can and should serve social and political aims in its particular historical context" (Friedman 2000, 16).

Consider that in his 1946 reply to Kallen's (1946) objection that the logical positivists' aimed unity of science pointed toward totalitarianism, Neurath claims that "if priests and rulers have a language of their own, they become separated from the ruled masses, and it is just the unification of language that is a step forward to some democratic possibilities" (Neurath 1946, 502).¹³ For Nietzsche, on the other hand, the problem is not that priests and rulers have acted in an anti-democratic way. The problem is that these figures have spread the aforementioned Christian concepts that served to constitute the sick herd that endorses the egalitarian values associated with democracy. On his part, Carnap often insinuates that metaphysicians are quite similar to the "priests and rulers" considered by Neurath. Ultimately, they too would have acted in an authoritarian way in relying on obscure uses of language that render any refutation impossible and separate them from the rest of the community. Note that in the *Aufbau*, Carnap states that "in philosophy we witness the spectacle (which must be depressing to a person of scientific orientation) that one after another and side by side a multiplicity of incompatible philosophical systems is erected" (Carnap 2003, xvii). This spectacle would not serve to promote the "fruitful and healthy relations" that Carnap values.

Accordingly, I also follow Friedman in believing that "there can be very little doubt [...] that Carnap's attack on Heidegger, articulated and presented at a critical moment during the last years of the Weimar Republic, have more than purely philosophical motivations" (Friedman 2000, 21). Indeed, this attack, as Critchley claims, "is not just a theoretical disagreement, but also one expression of the social and political conflicts that so deeply scarred the last century" (Critchley 2001, 102). Heidegger had an ambiguous relation with Nazism. What Carnap knew about this relation is uncertain.¹⁴ Nonetheless, he suggests that in relying on an obscure use of language that cannot be refuted, Heidegger's philosophy is anti-democratic. For Carnap,

¹³ See also Neurath (1983) regarding this matter.

¹⁴ See Friedman on this matter (2000).

Heidegger was a self-delusional metaphysician who wrongly took himself as being able to provide a (mysterious) kind of knowledge distinct from those provided by formal and empirical science. Carnap's view is that no such knowledge can be obtained. So, Heidegger's philosophy would merely provide pseudo-statements.

Then, in relying on his early use, Carnap reads (PS-ii) as a standard example of a pseudo-statement. For him, the word "nothing" seems to be syntactically used as a noun in this statement. Semantically, Heidegger would not have been clear regarding the meaning of "nothing". Hence, according to Carnap's early use, "nothing" in (PS-ii) is a meaningless word for two reasons —it violates the syntactic rules of modern logic, and it is unable to be reduced to the words contained in protocol sentences. Carnap interprets the made-up word, "nothings", in a similar way. Syntactically, this word appears to be used as a verb. This would also violate the rules of modern logic. Semantically, the meaning of "nothings" would not have been explained by Heidegger. Given that Heidegger never explicitly spells out any alternative logical rules that would be guiding his use of language, this use cannot be considered a linguistic framework. So, Carnap's late use also implies that Heidegger proceeds by means of meaningless statements. Indeed, I speculate that the 1950s Carnap would have read Heidegger as someone who interprets external question as factual ones, and self-deludes himself in wrongly believing that these questions can be answered. This sick practice, Carnap insinuates, undervalues communitarian equality. Thus, it ought to be resisted.¹⁵

For Nietzsche, on the other hand, the healthy practices that ought to be promoted are the very ones that put communitarian equality into question in promoting individual freedom. Consider, for example, Nietzsche's take on nobles. For him, these figures would every once in a while "enjoy the freedom from every social constraint" (GM I 11). In doing so, they would show signs of a war-like healthier physiology more in harmony with itself. In Nietzsche's words, "the chivalric-aristocratic value judgments are based on a powerful physicality, a blossoming, rich, even effervescent good health that includes things needed to maintain it, war, adventure, hunting, dancing, jousting and everything else that contains strong, free, happy action" (GM I 7).

¹⁵ Besides Friedman (2000), see also Stone (2006) for a more detailed take on Carnap's reading of Heidegger.

Nonetheless, I do not believe that Nietzsche's aim was merely that of promoting a return to the noble way of living. What I take to be a more persuasive interpretation is that in order to contribute to bring physiological harmony back to his degenerated culture, Nietzsche thought that a new kind of philosophy had to be developed. This new philosophy would rely on several kinds of statements. This includes the scientific, the poetic and the (arguably) metaphysical one that I above identified in Nietzsche's works, and several others that are hard to qualify. Indeed, nothing in Nietzsche's works indicates that he thought that philosophers ought to adopt Carnap's linguistic frameworks. Furthermore, the new philosophy championed by Nietzsche is driven by the libertarian approach. As stated in this essay's introduction, this is the view that given that consensus is not valuable, philosophers ought not to aim to reach it. Instead, dissensus should be promoted so that the herd is problematized. This, Nietzsche seems to believe, can be done by performing *Überwindung* of metaphysics that puts into question the three aforementioned metaphysical beliefs, among others.

Accordingly, Nietzsche rejects the belief that there are hierarchical oppositions of values. He does so by discarding the "Socratic equation" in suggesting that human beings need reason, virtue and happiness as much as they need irrationality, vice and sadness (TI II 4). The same applies to the other oppositions considered above (BGE 2). Indeed, Nietzsche shares a similar view concerning the very opposition between health and sickness. For him, humans "need the sick soul as much as the healthy" (GS III 120).¹⁶ Nietzsche highlights that "health and sickness are not essentially different, as the ancient physicians and some practitioners even today suppose" (WP 47). Rather, "there are only differences in degree" between them (WP 47). Nietzsche also sees no point in the pursuit of certainty. He states that "honorable things, like honorable people, do not go around with their reasons in their hand. It is indecent to show all five fingers. Nothing with real value needs to be proved first" (TI II 5). In fact, Nietzsche goes as far as claiming that "it would offend [the philosophers of the future's] pride, as well as their taste, if their truth were a truth for everyone (which has been the secret wish and hidden meaning of all dogmatic aspirations so far)" (BGE 43). So, he reaches the following

¹⁶ See Günter (2015) for an account of Nietzsche's view on the soul.

conclusion: “ ‘my judgment is my judgment: other people don’t have an obvious right to it too’ – perhaps this is what such a philosopher of the future will say” (BGE 43).

Finally, Nietzsche also puts into question the belief that there is a true world. The way that he does so, I interpret, is not by merely endorsing strong or weak idealism. Consider the following remark by Nietzsche: “the true world is gone: which world is left? The illusory one, perhaps?... *But no! we got rid of the illusory world along with the true one!*” (TI IV). This passage is particularly challenging to interpret. So, I would like to be as careful as I can in merely committing myself to the claim that it might be plausible to read it as Nietzsche’s way of insinuating a thesis that Carnap explicitly endorsed throughout his career—that the very metaphysical dispute between realism, weak and strong idealism is ultimately irrelevant. Note that in his *Aufbau*, Carnap uses the verb “to construct” to emphasize that formal and empirical science are neutral regarding the aforementioned metaphysical dispute. He asks the following question: “does thinking “create” the objects, as the Neo-Kantian Marburg school teaches, or does thinking “merely apprehend” them, as realism asserts?” (Carnap 2003, 10). His answer is that “construction theory employs a neutral language and maintains that objects are neither “created” nor “apprehended” but constructed” (Carnap 2003, 10).¹⁷ Let me once again be as careful as I can in stating that the passage by Nietzsche quoted in this paragraph might be plausibly read as pointing toward a similar direction. That is: as an indication that Nietzsche also aimed to develop a medical-philosophical language that endorses neither realism nor strong nor weak idealism.

Distinct from Nietzsche, Carnap suggests that the healthy (that is, non-self-delusional) practices that ought to be promoted are those that contribute to communitarian equality. For Carnap, poets and scientists would use language in a way that manages to do so in being useful for the community. Neither one of them would be self-delusional. Poets would aim and actually provide a special expression of emotions by means of statements like (P) and (NP). Scientists would aim and actually provide knowledge by means of statements like (S-i), (S-ii) and (NS). For Carnap, instead of developing incompatible systems and engaging themselves in useless disputes,

¹⁷ For critiques of Carnap’s neutralism, see Psillos (1999) and Bueno (2015).

philosophers should also start to contribute to the community. This, Carnap thought, could be done by performing *Überwindung* of metaphysics that puts into question the thesis that knowledge of the essence of things can be obtained. Instead of pursuing this aim, philosophers should adopt the egalitarian approach in assuming that consensus is valuable. Therefore, philosophers ought to aim to reach it. Carnap’s way of contributing to this goal was by assuming the aforementioned scientific philosophy, and by proposing several linguistic frameworks. His “faith” was that this attitude would “win the future” in finally making philosophers reach the level of consensus found both in formal and in empirical science (Carnap 2003, xiii).

Conclusion

I repeat my thesis: Nietzsche and Carnap share, but interpret differently the *Überwindung* metametaphysics; the conjunction of the three e statements aforementioned, (Ü-i), (Ü-ii) and (Ü-iii). My hope is that this paper establishes a persuasive case for this thesis in contributing to make twenty first century philosophy have a distinct characteristic —that of having more philosophers who feel the need to develop projects in the light of both Nietzsche’s and Carnap’s.

Abbreviation Key

I quote Nietzsche’s works by section number and, when applicable, by chapter and/or sub-section. For example, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, section III, chapter 12 and subsection 4 is cited as *Z III 12 [4]*. In the case of Nietzsche’s posthumous works, I also state the year in which the fragment was written. Here are the abbreviations that I adopt:

| | |
|-----|-------------------------------------|
| A | <i>The Anti-Christ</i> |
| BGE | <i>Beyond Good and Evil</i> |
| EH | <i>Ecce Homo</i> |
| GS | <i>The Gay Science</i> |
| GM | <i>On the Genealogy of Morality</i> |
| KSA | <i>Kritische Studienausgabe</i> |
| TI | <i>Twilight of the Idols</i> |
| WP | <i>The Will to Power</i> |
| Z | <i>Thus Spoke Zarathustra</i> |

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