

Carnap's Non-Cognitivism and His Views on Religion, Against the Background of the Herbartian Philosophy of his Grandfather Friedrich Wilhelm Dörpfeld¹

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Abstract:

The pedagogue Friedrich Wilhelm Dörpfeld, Rudolf Carnap's grandfather, developed an interesting account of the relationship between science, religion, and ethics, which belongs to the tradition of Herbart and can be seen as a typical product of empirically minded philosophy in 19th-century Germany. This paper examines Dörpfeld's philosophical views and compares them with Carnap's non-cognitivism and his views on religion. It turns out that Carnap's non-cognitivism can be seen as a secularized version of Dörpfeld's views, while Carnap's views on religion are obviously inspired by the enlightened Protestantism of his grandfather.

The importance of protestant theology for Carnap's early intellectual development was recently highlighted by A.W. Carus by means of Carnap's relationship with the German Youth Movement and several unknown writings of Carnap from the 1910s.² Michael Heidelberger recently pointed to the role that Carnap's grandfather – the pedagogue Friedrich Wilhelm Dörpfeld (1824–1893) – played in his intellectual development.³ In this paper, I will elaborate on this and highlight two aspects of Dörpfeld's work: (1) the striking similarities between Dörpfeld's views on ethics and Carnap's non-cognitivism; and (2) Dörpfeld's enlightened approach toward religion, which might also have influenced Carnap's world views. Both aspects of Dörpfeld's work might allow us to add further

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² See (Carus 2021a, b) as well as the appendix of the forthcoming volume (Damböck, Sandner, and Werner 2021) which will contain two early texts on religious matters by Carnap, together with an introduction by A.W. Carus.

³ Heidelberger delivered his account of Dörpfeld and Carnap at a conference in Graz in September 2019. The paper should be published in the proceedings of this conference.

clarification to Carus's account, which has already pointed to the importance that Carnap's early intellectual development had for the development of his non-cognitivism, but without considering Dörpfeld in that regard.

The main hypothesis of this paper is that Carnap's non-cognitivism can be interpreted as a secularized version of Dörpfeld's meta-ethical views, whereas Carnap's views on religion share certain basic features with Dörpfeld's conception. For this purpose, I first provide an outline of Dörpfeld's system of the sciences (section 1), which then becomes confronted with Carnap's meta-ethical views (section 2). After a longer digression where I try to sum up all crucial theoretical and political aspects of Carnap's mature views on religion (section 3), I end with some facts and speculations about the way in which both Carnap's non-cognitivism and his views on religion might have been inspired by Dörpfeld (section 4).

1 Dörpfeld's system of the sciences and its meta-ethical aspects

Although Friedrich Wilhelm Dörpfeld never worked at a university – he spent his entire professional career as a teacher and director of an elementary school – he was in his time considered an important and influential pedagogue who stood out with a remarkable list of publications on pedagogics, psychology, and philosophy. His work is documented by an edition of his writings that appeared posthumously in ten volumes in the renowned publishing house of C. Bertelsmann. His daughter Anna Carnap, Rudolf Carnap's mother, wrote a voluminous account of his life and work that appeared in two editions (Carnap 1897, 1903). But even in the 20th century, the pedagogue Dörpfeld was not completely forgotten, as is documented by the monograph (Beeck 1975). Though Dörpfeld was mainly influential as a pedagogue in the tradition of Herbart, in his main philosophical work *On Ethics [Zur Ethik]* (Dörpfeld 1895), he also outlined a striking philosophical account which contextualizes ethics and religion in the context of the sciences, viz. represents the then influential approach toward religion that restricts itself to positive empirical knowledge. Dörpfeld's account, which was well-known to Carnap (see section 4), is a rather characteristic product of the empirically minded philosophy that was widespread in the German-speaking world during the 19th century (Damböck 2017). As revealed in the programmatic preface to his psychology (Dörpfeld 1894, IX-XXVI), Dörpfeld was mainly influenced by Herbart but also committed himself to the *Völkerpsychologie* of Moritz Lazarus (XV) and William Whewell's approach to the inductive sciences (XXIII). To get a grasp of Dörpfeld's views, we will now review the main aspects of his "system of the sciences" as it becomes developed in (Dörpfeld 1895).

There are two varieties of evidence: psychological self-evidence and formal-logical evidence (pp. 1-9)

Evidence in science, for Dörpfeld, is possible on two different grounds. First, there is the phenomenon of self-evidence [Selbstgewissheit], which is something that occurs only, rather than to follow from a doctrine, an axiom, or the adoption of a method. Self-evidence is the point, and the only point, where the voice of God becomes heard by humans. “*God’s revelations are not words, not a doctrine but deeds, works, events*” [Dörpfeld 1895, 7: *Gottes Offenbarungen sind nicht Worte, nicht Doktrin, sondern Thaten, Werke, Geschehnisse*]. God reveals herself not at the level of anything that could be justified via an axiom, doctrine, or theorem; there is no objective but only subjective evidence for the voice of God. Self-evidence is a psychological phenomenon, a “fact of consciousness” [Bewusstseinstatsache] that always affects only the one concrete case, the “thought process” in which it occurs. Therefore, self-evidence does not establish anything that could be systematically reproduced. The reproduction of evidence, in turn, becomes possible only based on certain formal rules that we establish in science and logic. Logical axioms allow us to establish a method that adds to the unique cases of self-evidence, a procedure through which evidence becomes reproducible in a step by step process. Thus, the second form of evidence that exists, for Dörpfeld, is logical evidence that establishes truth via logical axioms and rules. Only here we obtain objective truth via reproducible deductions. The first evidence of Dörpfeld’s system – self-evidence – is subjective, psychological, and non-reproducible, whereas the second – logical evidence – is objective, formal, and reproducible. For reasons that will become clear in the following, however, Dörpfeld does not think that logical evidence is able to finally justify its results, while real justification is possible only at the level of self-evidence.

Mathematics is the only non-empirical science, plus Dörpfeld’s system of the empirical sciences (pp. 10-18)

Though based on logic, mathematics differs from the former in that it develops a system of axioms and deductions as well as cases of self-evidence that correspond to them, which is entirely theoretical and detached from the empirical world. Every other science, for Dörpfeld, is empirical. This is a remarkable variety of empiricism, because it identifies not only the natural sciences, but also disciplines such as logic, ethics, and theology, as empirical sciences. More precisely, Dörpfeld identifies two types of empirical sciences:

(1) Inductive or explanatory sciences that include (a) the whole of the natural sciences, and (b) psychology, linguistics, and theology (and possibly also metaphysics, but Dörpfeld leaves this open).

The systematic key point here is that not only the natural sciences and the Geisteswissenschaften belong to the inductive sciences – which is something that would also hold for several other German philosophers of that time (e.g., Dilthey or Wundt) – but also theology. This implies that theological doctrines are relevant and significant only insofar as they can become subject to empirical testing

and result from an inductive process of abstraction from the facts. Theology relies on the search for empirical evidence for the existence of God (via signs and wonders). What theology, for Dörpfeld, cannot provide though is any other kind of evidence. For Dörpfeld, there is no ontological proof in theology and also no emotional evidence that might establish the existence of God.

From the standpoint of the modern philosophy of science, the weak point of this conception is its empirical indifference. Though everything in the inductive sciences, for Dörpfeld, is significant only insofar as it becomes abstracted from the facts and becomes subject to further empirical testing, there is no way to further qualify theories once they are inductively found and empirically tested. Dörpfeld's conception shows traces of the hypothetico-deductive conception of the sciences because it grants that every claim that is formulated in the inductive sciences remains hypothetical, as soon as it is not to be verified or falsified by a singular event. However, Dörpfeld also goes on to say that these "hypothetical explanations" say "nothing else than that the matter is conceivable, i.e., logically possible" (Dörpfeld 1895, 11), whereas, at the same time, it is granted that the matter could also be entirely different. This is, to be sure, also what the hypothetico-deductive standpoint would imply. However, Dörpfeld also deduces from this that inductive science "only entails logical possibility but no reasons of probability". That is, it seems that for Dörpfeld, all empirical hypotheses that withstood empirical testing are equally "logically possible", viz. equally probable, no matter to which degree they are backed up by empirical evidence. An entirely vacuous hypothesis that is compatible with every possible empirical reality, for Dörpfeld, is epistemically equivalent to an extremely rich hypothesis being backed up by a wealth of successful and significant empirical tests. In other words, for Dörpfeld, falsifiability is no epistemic criterion at all. There is no genuine method of the inductive sciences that allows us to distinguish between rich and vacuous hypotheses, and there is also no possibility to identify degrees of truth, probability, or empirical significance for any hypothesis of the inductive sciences.

(2) So-called norm searching [normsuchende] sciences which "ask for the signs or norms of something ideal" and include logic, aesthetics, and ethics.

As a result of the somewhat vacuous status of inductive science – all empirically adequate theories are equally probable –, the other fields of empirical science as being outlined by Dörpfeld become extremely important. These so-called norm-searching sciences might seem to be inspired by Southwest German Neo-Kantianism and Hermann Lotze. However, unlike Lotze et al., who develop a strictly non-psychological brand of norms that leads to varieties of Platonism and a vacuous philosophy where norms become deduced from the scientific facts via synthetic judgments a priori, Dörpfeld's conception remains in the empirical realm, here following the psychologist tradition of Herbart and also the Völkerpsychologie of Moritz Lazarus. For Dörpfeld, there is no external (Platonist) realm in which norms can be fastened down, independently of their appearances in

human beings. Rather, norms only show up in our mind, and there are only certain abilities of the mind (psychological abilities in the Herbartian sense) that allow us to identify the proper norms. There are feelings [Gefühle] of a certain kind that allow us to establish norms with “natural necessity” [naturgegebenener Notwendigkeit] (Dörpfeld 1895, 14). The only way to proceed in our business of norm searching is to clean up the mind, make room for exactly those norms identifying feelings and follow their advice. This does not boil down norms to questions of mere taste and arbitrary choice, because “the observer” of norms needs to be “purely objective, i.e., his view may not be clouded by personal interests, partisan sympathy or antipathy etc.” [Dörpfeld 1895, 14: Dabei muß aber der Beobachter rein *objektiv* schauen, d.h. sein Blick darf nicht durch irgend ein persönliches Interesse, durch parteiische Sympathie oder Antipathie u.s.w. getrübt und bestochen werden.] We need to realize the “involuntarily emerging characteristic feeling” [das unwillkürlich entstandene eigenartige Gefühl] that induces moral values and then will be able to inductively carry out the “formal properties of the good” in that we only need to find those attitudes that regularly accompany the feeling of the good. Such formal properties, according to Dörpfeld, are things like the feeling of justice, inner freedom, willpower, and the like.

It is not only ethics and aesthetics but also logic whose basic norms (viz. the logical axioms), according to Dörpfeld, can only be established via feeling based evidence. The idea is that whereas logic in itself forms the basic discipline for both mathematics and the inductive sciences, its construction takes place in the field of norm searching science, via feelings that establish self-evidence for the basic axioms and notions of logic.

Dörpfeld’s system in comparison with the modern scientific world view

Dörpfeld’s system of the sciences offers a remarkable gap because the fundamental principles (axioms) of the inductive sciences somewhat hang in the air, whereas only the axioms of logic, ethics, and aesthetics actually become justified in the process of the search for (self-)evidence via feelings. Dörpfeld seems to think that our feelings might establish trustworthy evidence only in those fields being intimately connected to the mind, which includes, in his view, ethics, aesthetics, and logic, whereas every other empirical discipline – the natural and human sciences, together with theology – is doomed to the business of induction which, for Dörpfeld, does not establish evidence at all but only uncovers the “logical possibility” of hypotheses.

This conception is far from a modern picture of the sciences insofar as it devalues inductive science. If there is no evidence in inductive science but only the weak outcome of “logical possibility” for empirically adequate hypotheses, there is no real possibility of fruitful empirical research at all. But there is also an aspect in Dörpfeld’s conception where it appears to be rather modern, namely, the fact that he includes not only natural sciences and Geisteswissenschaften to the field of inductive

sciences but also theology. This leads to a radically enlightened and disenchanted notion of theology, which leaves no room for speculations and ontological proofs. Theism, in other words, is not a miracle, for Dörpfeld, but rather only a bunch of weak and risky empirical hypotheses. Theism also is not based on self-evidence, because in this system of the sciences, it is only ethics and not theology that can establish evidence at all. Therefore, the weakness of Dörpfeld's notion of the inductive sciences seems to be hardly motivated by considerations on the natural sciences, which certainly were not Dörpfeld's business. Rather, the weakness of his system is a result of the radically enlightened and disenchanted world view that Dörpfeld adopts, here following the tradition of Herbart and Völkerpsychologie, and insofar appears to be a real strength, from the perspective of modern science.

Religious belief is a psychological quality (pp. 65-84)

Because science is concerned with evidence and the establishment of knowledge, for Dörpfeld, religious belief is nothing that belongs to science. Whereas in theology, we are only able to establish those aspects of theism that can be carried out in an inductive and empirical way (with the downside that these aspects hardly exist at all); everything that goes beyond this and actually connects the otherworld of heaven and God is a matter of belief rather than knowledge. Belief, in turn, is nothing that we gain from science but only develop in real life, because of certain cultural and psychological processes. Therefore, the study of belief is a matter of psychology which here, in Dörpfeld's view, includes both what even today is called psychology but also such disciplines as sociology and history. What science can do here is only to study under which historical, psychological, and sociological circumstances religious belief is present or absent. In other words, the study of belief belongs to the human sciences and has nothing to do either with theology or ethics or what Dörpfeld calls lore of religion [Religionslehre], since religious evidence (knowledge) is established only in the latter fields (viz. in a combination of both).

Religionslehre is an empirical science which is based on theology and ethics

Theology, for Dörpfeld, neither offers ontological proofs nor evidence via feelings: it offers no evidence at all but rather empirical hypotheses, which at most can establish "logical possibility" (if they stand empirical testing). Therefore, theology needs to be backed up by another discipline that only establishes evidence. Theology only adds to the whole discipline of a Religionslehre what can be carried out in an inductive way, for example, on the basis of empirical evidence on the world's being a product of God's will and creation (via signs and wonders). Theology, in other words, concerns only those aspects of religion that address the transcendental otherworldly reality of Heaven and God, whereas ethics is concerned with this world, establishing all these rules that guide our living and

acting. Ethics, therefore, is not concerned with speculations about heaven and God but only considers practical decisions. These decisions, however, as soon as they are guided by pure feelings, are automatically guided by God, because pure feelings open our senses to hear the voice of God. The divine voice is in itself a pure voice, of course, and therefore every situation must be evaluated exactly in the same way by every human that puts herself in the position of being guided by purified feelings that open her senses for the voice of God. In other words, moral absolutism follows here only at a secondary level, because Dörpfeld thinks that if people only follow their pure feelings, they necessarily must all arrive at the same values and moral attitudes because these pure feelings open their minds to the unique voice of God, which is the same voice for everybody.

The key features of Dörpfeld's metaethics are, to conclude, that (1) there is no way to derive moral rules, either inductively or deductively; (2) moral rules become visible in practical situations only, by means of pure feelings of those human beings who made their mind ready for them; (3) every human being which is prepared for pure feelings necessarily arrives at the same moral attitude regarding a particular situation X.

2 A comparison with Carnap's non-cognitivism

Carnap's non-cognitivism was developed over decades (Reisch 2005, 47-53, 382-384; Richardson 2007; Mormann 2007; Uebel 2010; Siegetsleitner 2014, 89-162; Carus 2017, 2021b; Damböck 2017, 199-203, 2018, 2021a). For the present purpose, we widely ignore changes in his position and rather focus on the most comprehensive account of his views in "Kaplan on value judgments" (Schilpp 1963, 999-1013).

Carnap first grants that there is a wealth of empirical and logical statements about values. Empirical statements may contain (a) psychological, sociological, and historical analyses of concrete evaluations in certain persons or groups; (b) considerations about means-end relationships; and (c) statements on "the utility of a possible event [...] for a person". Logical statements are either deductions from empirical statements about values or concern the semantics and the "explication" of value concepts. Any statement "on values and valuations", which is neither empirical nor logical, then, is called "non-cognitive" by Carnap. Non-cognitive statements can be neither true nor false because there is per definition of no ground for such an evaluation (Schilpp 1963, 999).

Non-cognitive statements, on the other hand, need to be distinguished from "emotive statements" because a non-cognitive value statement expresses "more than merely a momentary feeling of desire, liking, being satisfied, or the like" but rather "satisfaction in the long run" (Schilpp 1963, 1009). If an evaluation of a situation by a person has this property of being free of all emotions that only reflect a momentary temptation, but what the person continuously thinks about an issue,

then this purified feeling is called by Carnap a “pure optative”.⁴ Now, Carnap’s overall meta-ethical claim is twofold:

(1) He claims that a good decision must be made in a sober and maximally informed and rational way. This means, on the one hand, that we may not let our actions be guided by momentary feelings and partial temptations but rather dig deeper to find out what we really think beyond these volatile things. On the other hand, we should always try to be on top of the available empirical and logical evidence and consider the entirety of our knowledge, which might even be improved for the present purpose before we go on to decide.

(2) He claims that even as soon as we find a proper way to decide in perfect accordance with the rules as resulting from point (1), it appears that every moral judgment at the end boils down to pure optatives and, therefore, is ultimately non-cognitive, even if it is also guided by a huge amount of empirical knowledge and logical considerations.

There is also an important corollary to point (2), namely, that non-cognitivism also implies that two persons may arrive at diverging decisions and incompatible value statements:

“It is logically possible that two persons A and B at a certain time agree in all beliefs, that their reasoning is in perfect accord with the deductive and inductive standards, and that they nevertheless differ in an optative attitude component.” (Schilpp 1963, 1008)

In other words, Carnap’s non-cognitivism involves a variety of moral relativism. Though empirical and logical evidence can and should have strong implications for our practical decisions, our decisions might still turn out to be different, even if we act rationally and take into consideration the available empirical evidence and let our feelings only guide us insofar as they are justified to be pure feelings that satisfy our intuition in the long run. Even if we follow the available evidence and pure rather than gut feelings, there still remains a non-cognitive basis to our decisions that can be different in different people with the implication that also the practical decisions may differ among different humans, even if they use exactly the same scientific basis for them.

Carnap’s account is certainly much more refined than Dörpfeld’s. From a Carnapian standpoint, one might object to Dörpfeld that his account is a little bit naïve in that he seems to think that it might be sufficient in a situation X to get yourself free of temptations and momentary emotions and automatically you will arrive at the correct decision. Carnap would object here that pure feelings

⁴ Carnap’s definition of “pure optatives” is somewhat misleading because he refers to the key motive of having attitudes being free of mere emotions and momentary temptations only before (1000) and after (1009) the section on “pure optatives”. However, the context of the section makes it nevertheless clear that Carnap has in mind exactly a purity-condition of that kind which sets pure optatives apart from other, non-purified attitudes.

alone are by no means sufficient; they also need to be accompanied by a rational process that considers the entirety of the available empirical and logical evidence; practical decisions involve theoretical questions that (a) show us the means toward an end and (b) make the consequences that we may expect from an action firstly visible (Carnap 1934). However, apart from this obvious criticism, there is also a key point where Carnap's and Dörpfeld's conceptions widely agree, namely, the overall non-cognitive attitude. Carnap and Dörpfeld agree in their conviction that moral judgments are, in the end, something that depends only on our feelings, although we first need to free these feelings from temptations and passing emotions. In this sense, it seems that Carnap's theory is ultimately identical to Dörpfeld's. They are both non-cognitive, in the same way. The only difference here is that Dörpfeld and Carnap have different judgments about the social status of non-cognitive statements. Whereas for Dörpfeld, two persons who agree in all their beliefs and logical considerations and also both base their decisions on purified feelings (viz. what Carnap calls pure optatives) necessarily arrive at exactly the same decision because their pure optatives are necessarily the same, for Carnap, this is simply not the case, because even here the pure optatives may diverge. The unifying voice of God, which leads to moral absolutism in Dörpfeld's variety of non-cognitivism, is absent in Carnap's account, and therefore moral relativism arises because of the absence of a guiding voice that is unequivocally hearable for everyone.

To conclude, there is one key point of agreement between the meta-ethical conceptions of Carnap and Dörpfeld, namely, the idea that moral judgments are ultimately based on purified emotions or what Carnap calls pure optatives. Apart from this, however, there are also two crucial aspects where Carnap's and Dörpfeld's theories diverge. First, Dörpfeld's theory only provides a rather naïve conception of practical decision making, which, unlike Carnap's, fail to incorporate the relevant theoretical questions. Second, and even more fundamentally, Carnap and Dörpfeld disagree in that for Dörpfeld, two persons who make a value judgment against exactly the same epistemic background necessarily have to judge identically and will base their judgments on the same pure optatives, whereas for Carnap, in cases of identical epistemic background, the pure optatives may be different and therefore two persons could also arrive at different moral judgments.

3 Digression: Carnap's views on religion

Carnap's views on religion can be divided into a political and a more theoretical part. As for the theoretical part, one might further distinguish between the theoretical aspects of Carnap's own atheist attitude and his theoretical attitude towards believers. Carnap arrived at atheism around 1920. At this stage of his intellectual development, the commitment to atheism was no longer based on any considerations about lack of support of theism via empirical evidence or the rejection of ontological proofs and other justifying strategies for theism because all these epistemic possibilities

were already rejected by Carnap in his youth. In his autobiography (Schilpp 1963, 3-84), this early turn toward a secular scientific worldview is attributed by Carnap to his adoption of the sober scientific and anti-theist attitude of the freethinkers' movement as being represented by Ernst Haeckel and Wilhelm Ostwald, whose writings Carnap already read in his early student years (1911–1914) (Schilpp 1963, 7-9, Dahms 2016). After he had rejected any traditional approach of epistemic justification of religion, with the inclusion of Spinozist pantheism, which happened to be the final theist strategy he adopted before moving forward to atheism (ibid.), the question of religion, for Carnap, ultimately became a mere psychological and cultural-historical one. This becomes obvious in two remarks that document his final abandonment of religion in 1920. In a discussion note on a meeting at the Wartburg in Mai 1920, Carnap says the following:

First insight: the distinction between clerical and religious; but: even the frankly clericals are not all religious; I state two types: religious and irreligious predisposition, the latter not as a flaw (examples: classic human being, Goethe, many recent people (me)); the expression 'religiousness' should be saved for another type (gothic human being, possibly Egyptians [...]).⁵

This is clearly a cultural-historical notion of "religiousness". To be clerical only means that one is a member of a club that has no necessary implications for his feelings and does not say anything about the presence or absence of religiousness. The latter, on the other hand, as it is described here by Carnap, also has nothing to do with questions of (scientific) evidence. Religiousness – and the adoption of theism – is nothing that follows from any insight, either empirical or theoretical. Rather, to be a religious or irreligious person is a question of character, and it is also a cultural-historical question. There are periods (Carnap mentions the Gothic period and ancient Egypt) where people tend to develop religious characters, while in other periods (Carnap mentions ancient Greek and the present age), people mainly develop irreligious characters. So, for Carnap, to be irreligious is something that follows from his own personal disposition but also from the historical disposition of the present age. Carnap only realized this during the days at the Wartburg in May 1920, and his convictions became consolidated in the following weeks, as he reports in a circular letter from November 1920:

⁵ In the following I quote from the Rudolf Carnap Papers at the Hillman Library, University of Pittsburgh, always using the format "RC XXX-XX-XX, page number" The present document is RC 091-18-02, 3. „Erste Erkenntnis: Unterscheidung von kirchlich und religiös; aber: auch die aufrichtig kirchlich[en] nicht alle religiös; ich stelle 2 Typen auf: rel[igiöse] und irrel[igiöse] Veranlagung, letzteres nicht als Fehler (Beispiel: klass[ischer] Mensch, Goethe, viele heutige Menschen (ich)); Ausdruck ‚Religiosität‘ soll aufgespart werden für anderen Typ (gotischer Mensch, viell[eicht] Ägypter [...])“

In summer, I have been in Jena for several months; at Whitsun with Flitner, Räubers and Rugard von Rohden with Baußnern in the Pfiffelbach parsonage. During our discussions on Christianity and church, my skepticism about what benedictory we might anticipate from the church for our time developed to such clarity that I turned my back to it.⁶

Here the motive is again outlined as an entirely cultural-historical one. Evidence (or doubt) does not play a role at all for Carnap's decision. This is, to be sure, also in accordance with the Herbartian understanding of religion as it was defended by Carnap's grandfather. Religious belief is something that exists only as a psychological quality, for Dörpfeld. The presence or absence of this quality is not a question of evidence at all. We may not change the religious or irreligious disposition of a person through the presentation of either empirical evidence or logical proof. Therefore, what happened with Carnap in 1920, viz., that he lost his religiosity, is a very simple psychological and cultural-historical process not only for him, Carnap, but also in the religious system of his grandfather: for both of them, the process might be something that one could either welcome or regret, whereas one could hardly do anything positive to prevent or support it.

That Carnap, in his mature views, felt no sympathy for scholasticism, and the search for ontological proof is obvious, for his anti-metaphysical brand of empiricism considers only empirical claims and logical tautologies to be meaningful. Therefore, any attempt to formulate meaningful statements about a transcendental being is certainly meaningless metaphysics for Carnap (Carnap 1932, 1934, 2004, 49-62, Damböck 2018). But Carnap also rejected alternative attempts towards providing evidential support for theism via emotive talk. This is well-documented by a discussion that Carnap had in the early 1920s with his friend Wilhelm Flitner about the theology of Friedrich Gogarten (Carus 2007, 95-97, 2021a, Damböck 2021b). Carnap rejects the idea of a "religious seeing" that allows the believer to gain insights which are entirely inaccessible to the nonbeliever. Gogarten's approach, which was a key example for the new varieties of theology that repressed in the Weimar republic the traditional empirically minded accounts of religion, represented, for Carnap, only another brand of metaphysical reasoning that was for him probably even more dangerous than the scholastic attempts toward ontological proof, because the new irrationalists around Gogarten hid from the start every rational discourse about religion behind a wall of dubious emotions.

⁶ RC 081-47-01. „Im Sommer war ich einige Monate in Jena; Pfingsten mit Flitner, Räubers und Rugard von Rohden bei Baußnern im Pfiffelbacher Pfarrhaus. Bei unsern Gesprächen über Christentum und Kirche wurde mir meine Skepsis über das, was von der Kirche Segensreiches für unsre Zeit zu erwarten sei, zu solcher Klarheit, daß ich ihr den Rücken wandte.“

The rejection of religion and the religious attitude by Carnap as it was described so far is twofold. On the one hand, Carnap rejects religion at a non-cognitive level, here based on a personal and a historical argument. The personal argument is that Carnap simply realized to be an irreligious character and, therefore, had to give up the religious attitude. The historical argument goes even further – and here also connects to the political argumentation that will be described below –, stating that it is not just a question of his own personality to reject the religious attitude but also that the entire present age – after the First World War and the German revolution – is one that tends to be irreligious. The second part of Carnap's theoretical attitude toward religion is that he, here again on a line with his grandfather, rejects all kinds of cognitive approaches toward justification of religiousness. This includes ontological proofs as well as emotive justifications in the sense of Friedrich Gogarten.

These theoretical reasons for the rejection of religion did not hinder Carnap to respect religious persons.

Since I experienced the positive effect of a living religion in the lives of my parents and in my own life during childhood, my respect for any man whose character I esteem highly is not diminished by the fact that he embraces some form of religion, traditional or otherwise. At the present stage of development of our culture, many people still need religious mythological symbols and images. It seems to me wrong to try to deprive them of the support they obtain from these ideas, let alone to ridicule them. (Schilpp 1963, 8)

This tolerance – which certainly was mainly due to the religious attitude of Carnap's mother that he admired for his whole life (Schilpp 1963, 3) – was practiced by Carnap even against fellow philosophers, such as the philosopher of religion Charles Hartshorne with whom he was a close friend during his time in Chicago, although he did not share any of Hartshorne's religious and metaphysical views (Carnap forthcoming). Religion, as Carnap realized, though it is a dead branch of cultural history that ultimately prevents progress, is still something that many people need to morally succeed. What the above statement implicitly says is that there are people who – possibly for a weakness in character – develop moral attitudes being favorable for Carnap only because they base their reasoning on religious beliefs. Therefore, religion is something that is still needed in our present culture, say, as a moral crutch for weak characters who might be endangered to become immoral without it, although in the future, religion might become more seamlessly replaced by the scientific world-conception and finally die out.

These considerations on Carnap's attitude toward religious people directly lead to an examination of the political aspects of Carnap's views on religion. As a social democrat and part-time

communist, Carnap shared the alleged Marxist view that religion is a dangerous narcotic for the masses. He added to this a story about metaphysics, which was thought by him to be an equally dangerous narcotic for the educated: “philosophical and religious metaphysics is a potentially dangerous reason-damaging narcotic” [daß philosophische und religiöse Metaphysik ein unter Umständen gefährliches vernunftschädigendes Narkotikum ist] (Carnap 1934, 260). Whether this view is genuinely Marxist could be questioned, because Marx seems to defend the view that religion is taken by the people as a narcotic, in order to sustain otherwise unsustainable working conditions,⁷ whereas, for Carnap, the point seems to be rather either religion or metaphysics is administered to the people by right-wing politicians. This view becomes obvious in a manuscript that Carnap wrote for a talk he gave in Brno on “Philosophy Opium for the Educated” (RC 110-08-17). There, Carnap unequivocally calls religion and philosophy “ideological weapons” [ideologische Kampfmittel] that are used by right-wing politicians, in order to “dissuade people from enlightenment, from a rational-scientific analysis of the situation, from the will to empower a change” [die Menschen *abzubringen* von der *Aufklärung*, vom *rational-wissenschaftlichen Analysieren* der Situation, vom *Selbst-ändern-Wollen*]. The narcotic, therefore, “serves the interests of certain groups” [dient dem Interesse bestimmter Gruppen] – Carnap mentions the “ruling classes” [herrschende Schichten] in Italy, Germany, and Austria – although these groups in themselves do not consciously use the narcotic: they do not follow a “calculating decision” [berechnende Überlegung] but rather act “unconsciously”, driven by sociological causes they themselves do not understand.

At any rate, religion, and metaphysics (or bad philosophy) were intimately connected for Carnap and the left-wing of the Vienna circle. The “scientific world-conception” is directed against “metaphysical and theologizing thought” that show up as a couple, in the Vienna Circle’s manifesto and several other texts by Carnap from that time (Carnap 1932, 1934, 2004, 49-62, Stadler and Uebel 2012).

The representatives of the scientific world-conception resolutely stand on the ground of simple human experience. They confidently set to work on the task of removing the metaphysical and theological debris of millennia. [...]

The increase of metaphysical and theologizing leanings which shows itself today in many associations and sects, in books and journals, in lectures and university courses, seems to be based on the fierce social and economic struggles of the present. One group of combatants, holding fast to traditional social forms, cultivates traditional attitudes of metaphysics and theology whose content has long since been superseded; while the other group, especially in central Europe, facing the new age, rejects these views and adopts empirical science as its basis. (Stadler and Uebel 2012, 89)

⁷ This I learned from a remark by Hans-Joachim Dahms to this manuscript.

The scientific world-conception of the Vienna circle, therefore, in the words of Carnap and Neurath, is the view that adopts empirical science as a new basis of life, which is thought to replace metaphysics and theology. This is more than an inner-scientific attitude. Rather, the aim is a fundamental life reform (Damböck, Sandner, and Werner 2021), which is thought to accompany a political reform in such a way that the “socialist attitudes” of “the masses” converge (no longer with the outdated brand of “materialism” but) with “modern empiricism”, which “has left behind a number of inadequate forms in its development and has found a defensible form in the scientific world-conception” (Stadler and Uebel 2012, 90).

In Carnap’s political conception, metaphysics and theology are two sides of the same coin. They function as tools of mass manipulation that obscure our view on the empirical and logical facts. Therefore, it is the same sin of meaningless metaphysics that obscures scientific reasoning and confuses the intellectuals and is also in effect in the everyday world, here confusing the masses via theological narratives.

There is an obvious difference to be noted here, between the more moderate stance of Carnap in his time in the US as it became formulated in his autobiography and the more radical stance of the Vienna Circle manifesto and the anti-metaphysical writings of the early 1930s. Whereas in the earlier writings, Carnap ultimately aims at a total and immediate removal of religion and metaphysics from all manifestations of culture, in his later years, he grants that some varieties of theology (and probably also metaphysics) are still needed. However, these changes were not necessarily accompanied by any change of the fundamental political and theoretical views of Carnap’s, for even in his later years, he obviously thought that metaphysics and theology are harmful and ultimately should become removed from everyday and scientific culture. The only difference is that in his later years, Carnap also became more realist and saw that for many people, it is at present simply not possible to live without these narcotics. The metaphysics and theology addicts are unable to live without their drugs. Doctor Carnap, though being a strict abstainer who propagates a life without cultural drugs, is also a realist who grants those being already addicted to taking their life-sustaining doses.

To sum up, Carnap’s views were certainly anti-religious and anti-theist, both at a theoretical and a political level. The key arguments against religion that Carnap put forth are cultural-historical and cultural philosophical. He thought that for our present culture, religion and theism are harmful because they attempt to lead culture in the wrong direction, namely, fascism instead of social democracy. This, on the other hand, also meant that Carnap did not reject all possible manifestation of religion and theism, for he indeed only took the reactionary and fascist religions and theisms as a threat to human culture. Only here, Carnap was seamlessly opposed to all manifestations of religion

and theism. But there was also the level of – as one could put it in Neurathian terms – religion and theism as a cultural agglomeration [Ballung], which is sometimes used as an ideological crutch even by rather progressive and well-meaning people. This came to Carnap as a surprise, but he also was willing to accept it without developing aversive feelings against those good-natured theology addicts. Apart from this, Carnap also dealt with religion and theology at a mere theoretical level where the argumentation was not affected by any political or moral attitudes. At this neutral level, Carnap started to reason about theological topics already in his earliest youth, whereas the political and cultural-historical aspects only developed in the course of Carnap's politicization at the end of the First World War (Damböck, Sandner, and Werner 2021).

What about Dörpfeld, in relation to Carnap's views on religion? In his youth, Carnap moved from an enlightened Protestantism toward atheism. The leaders in this development are mentioned in his autobiography, and included enlightened natural scientists and philosophers, such as Ernst Haeckel and Wilhelm Ostwald. But it also becomes obvious that Carnap's theoretical atheist stance is not far at all from the enlightened theism of his grandfather. Dörpfeld, to be sure, might have had absolutely nothing in common with Carnap's political and cultural-historical views on religion, for Dörpfeld hardly ever committed himself to socialism. However, at the theoretical level, Dörpfeld's enlightened and sober attitude toward religion and science is something that Carnap widely shared in all periods of his life. Dörpfeld comes even closer here to Carnap's overall views than Haeckel and Ostwald because he shares with Carnap the non-cognitivist attitude, which is something that hardly can be found in those more traditionally minded empiricists and positivists. Dörpfeld's theism was based on an inductive stance toward theology. This is something that Carnap could always adopt, for it leads to an adoption of atheism as soon as our empirical views become updated with evidence from modern science. The second element of Dörpfeld's system of Religionslehre was non-cognitivist ethics. Even this could be adopted by Carnap, after removing the theist point. If all our moral attitudes are justified by our inner voice, via what Carnap calls "pure optatives", and if it additionally turns out that our inner voice is just our voice, rather than a reflection of the voice of God, it immediately follows that we cannot expect that those attitudes that result from our inner voices must be the same in different people. Therefore, at the theoretical level, Carnap's views on religion and ethics are pretty similar to Dörpfeld's and share with the latter much more than they have in common with Haeckel, Ostwald, and other contemporary philosophers, such as the Neo-Kantians or Dilthey. This is not to claim that all those philosophers were not important for Carnap, for his views in the theory of knowledge and philosophy of science were certainly influenced by those and other contemporary philosophers. It is only Carnap's non-cognitivism and his related views on religion where we can find hardly any other contemporary match than the astonishing philosophy of his grandfather.

4 Some facts and speculations on the influence that Dörpfeld had on Carnap

In the previous sections, we uncovered certain striking similarities between Dörpfeld and Carnap. Are these only accidental family resemblances, or is there also a chance that Carnap might have been directly influenced by the philosophy of his grandfather? In Carnap's published work, we find almost no mentions of Dörpfeld at all. Dörpfeld is never cited, and even in the autobiography, he is mentioned only once as the person whose biography Carnap's mother wrote while he was a child (Schilpp 1963, 3). However, the published version of Carnap's autobiography is only a considerably shortened version that lacks everything that was considered not sufficiently relevant for the contemporary American reader of the *Schilpp volume* (Carnap 2021a, introduction). For information on Carnap's early European years, therefore, one must look at the original version of the autobiography, which was kept by Carnap with the intention of a later publication. In this unabbreviated version, Dörpfeld becomes identified as a crucial figure:

There were two relatives, both highly revered by my mother, whom I regarded from childhood as models of men, admirable for the fact that in their scholarly field they did not simply follow traditional ways but searched for their own new paths. One was my maternal grandfather, the other my uncle, the archeologist Wilhelm Dörpfeld (1853-1940), the explorer of the remnants of Greek antiquity, especially at Olympia, Troy, and Pergamum.⁸

Wilhelm Dörpfeld, the brother of his mother, was important for Carnap probably as an example of a sober and incorruptible and, last not least also extraordinarily successful, scientist. When Carnap decided to become a university scholar, he certainly took Wilhelm Dörpfeld as his main role model. On the other hand, Wilhelm Dörpfeld was hardly important for the development of Carnap's philosophical views, since, successful as an excavator, architect, and real estate developer, he was much more a practitioner than a theoretician. Friedrich Wilhelm Dörpfeld, by contrast, though being "an influential pedagogical author", still "remained throughout his life in the modest position of principal of a grade school".⁹ Whereas Carnap learned from Wilhelm Dörpfeld to be smart, ambitious and success-oriented, it was probably rather certain inner values that he took from his grandfather, because he hardly ever aimed at life as a philosophical eremite. Friedrich Wilhelm Dörpfeld also seems to have functioned as a philosophical role model for the entire family Carnap-Dörpfeld. His

⁸ Young Research Library, University of California at Los Angeles, Special Collections Department, Manuscript Collection No. 1029, Rudolf Carnap Papers, Box 2, CM3, M-A5, p. A7

⁹ Young Research Library, University of California at Los Angeles, Special Collections Department, Manuscript Collection No. 1029, Rudolf Carnap Papers, Box 2, CM3, M-A5, p. A3.

daughter Anna – Carnap’s mother – worked for several years as his assistant and, after her late marriage – she was 37 when she married Johannes Sebulon Carnap in 1889 – and after the death of her father in 1893, she spent several years on his legacy, writing a voluminous biography that actually had the status of a compilation from his writings and correspondence. Anna Carnap certainly deeply influenced her family in spreading the philosophical and religious views of her father. So, when Carnap, in the unpublished parts of his autobiography, associates key aspects of his philosophy, including his tolerant attitude, his humanism and his non-cognitivism to the legacy of his mother,¹⁰ he implicitly also commits himself to the influence that the family philosophy of Friedrich Wilhelm Dörpfeld had on him. He became familiar with this philosophy, first through the instructions of his mother, who also taught the kids at ground school level at home.¹¹ Later, until the death of Anna Carnap in 1924, his mother also remained an important discussion partner for Carnap, which becomes visible in the voluminous correspondence and also in Carnap’s diaries.¹² But Carnap also became acquainted with Dörpfeld’s philosophy as a reader of his mother’s biography of his grandfather – which he read several times, using both editions of the work (Carnap 1897, 1903) – and of Dörpfeld’s ethics, which he read at least once in the early 1920s.¹³ The exact extent and the way in which Carnap became influenced by his grandfather remains unclear. However, it seems that there is at least a very plausible candidate here, for the tracking of a quite crucial line of influence on Carnap’s thought, which addresses an important aspect of his philosophy, namely, non-cognitivism.

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¹⁰ Young Research Library, University of California at Los Angeles, Special Collections Department, Manuscript Collection No. 1029, Rudolf Carnap Papers, Box 2, CM3, M-A5, pp. A8-A15.

¹¹ Young Research Library, University of California at Los Angeles, Special Collections Department, Manuscript Collection No. 1029, Rudolf Carnap Papers, Box 2, CM3, M-A5, p. A11.

¹² See RC 025, several folders, as well as (Carnap 2021a, b).

¹³ Carnap requested a copy of Dörpfeld’s *Ethics* in a letter to his mother from February 20, 1920 (RC 025-85-32). From the formulation it becomes likely that Carnap already knew the book at this stage. Acquaintance with his mother’s biography of the grandfather is documented at several places of the Nachlass, with the inclusion of the before-quoted passages of the unabbreviated autobiography and the correspondence.

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