**The Will to Synthesis**

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Introduction

Consider three quite distinct writings: Plato’s *Republic*; the Christian Bible; and Richard Rorty’s 1992 autobiographical essay, “Trotsky and the Wild Orchids” gathered in his 1999 *Philosophy and Social Hope*. Regardless of their differences, these writings serve to illustrate a distinction between two kinds of practices. These are the libertarian practices and the egalitarian practices. To put it in Platonic terms, an example of a libertarian practice is that of seeking to satisfy one’s own pleasures (e.g., the pleasures of knowing, being admired and making a profit), regardless of whether such action benefits one’s community. An example of an egalitarian practice is that of sacrificing such pleasures for the sake of following the rules of one’s community. To borrow from the Christian Bible’s terminology, an example of a libertarian practice is that of selfishly acting in accordance with one’s own will, regardless of God’s will. An example of an egalitarian practice, on the other hand, is that of doing the opposite by altruistically acting in accordance with God’s will, regardless of one’s own will. To use Rorty’s words, an example of a libertarian practice is that of pursuing one’s “private, weird, snobbish, incommunicable interests” (e.g., an interest for “wild orchids”), regardless of whether such interests promote social justice (Rorty 1999, p.6). In contrast, an example of an egalitarian practice is that of promoting social justice, while sacrificing one’s own idiosyncratic interests.

More precisely, by a libertarian practice, I would like to understand a particular kind of action: namely, an action that privileges individualistic tendencies of either consciously or unconsciously acting in accordance and contributing to bring about (or, to put it in Nietzschean terms, to “affirm”) one’s own singularity and/or those of others, while problematizing the constrains that any kind of community imposes upon such singularities. In contrast, by an egalitarian practice, I understand an action that privileges communitarian tendencies to either consciously or unconsciously contribute to create a really universal community, while seeking to attenuate one’s own singularity and/or the singularity of others, especially, deviants whose practices violate the norms of merely particular communities. A merely particular community, let us assume, is a narrow community that exclusively seeks to defend the interests of a limited group of persons, such as that of all white, male, heterosexual, wealthy North Americans or Europeans. A really universal community is one that seeks to defend the interests of all beings or at least all persons, regardless of their race, nationality, gender, income, etc.

I do not aim to engage myself in exegetical work on Plato’s *Republic*, the Christian Bible or Rorty’s works. Yet, a plausible interpretation of these writings, I assume, is that they are attempts to promote some sort of synthesis between libertarian and egalitarian practices; I will spell out more precisely what I mean by a synthesis in what follows. For now, I emphasize that I am inclined to interpret that the ideal political community described by the Socrates of Plato’s *Republic* would be one in which persons would satisfy their own pleasures by following the rules of the ideal community (and vice-versa). I also think that the Christian Bible may be plausibly read as praising those whose individual wills are hardly distinguishable from God’s will. Furthermore, I do not think that it is very problematic to interpret Rorty as someone who aimed to satisfy his idiosyncratic interests and promote social justice at the same time. In Rorty’s words, he was someone who “wanted a way to be both an intellectual and spiritual snob and a friend of humanity —a nerdy recluse and a fighter for justice” (Rorty 1999, p.8). Another issue that I cannot approach is whether Plato’s *Republic*, the Christian Bible or Rorty successfully promoted some sort of synthesis between libertarian practices and egalitarian practices. Indeed, one might claim that this is not the case insofar as these writings fail to promote both of these practices. In other words, one (say, influenced by Friedrich Nietzsche) might argue that Plato’s *Republic*, the Christian Bible and/or Rorty’s works have failed to be really libertarian pieces because they have served to excessively constrain people’s individualistic tendencies. In contrast, one (say, influenced by Rudolf Carnap) might also argue that these writings have failed to be really egalitarian pieces; that, instead of defending the interests of a really universal community, Plato’s *Republic*, the Christian Bible and Rorty only defended the interests of merely particular communities: respectively, say, the Ancient Greek community, the Christian community and the late 20th century / early 21st century North American community.

For the purpose of this essay, what is crucial is that the distinction between libertarian and egalitarian practices has an important implication for metaphysics. More precisely, what is crucial is that Nietzsche and Carnap champion contrasting reactions to the fact that, throughout history, persons have been engaged in metaphysical disputes; Nietzsche embraces a libertarian reaction that runs in agreement with his anti-democratic aristocratic political views, whereas Carnap endorses an egalitarian reaction aligned with his democratic and socialist political views. This claim, which has been defended in detail by Felipe G. A. Moreira (2018), is presupposed in this essay.[[1]](#footnote-1) “Metaphysical disputes” is used here as an umbrella term that covers two kinds of disagreements that may be associated with metaphysics (broadly constructed): theoretical metaphysical disputes regarding claims (e.g., there is evil, there is a thing-in-itself, and there is consciousness), and practical metaphysical disputes regarding practices (e.g., that of addressing the theoretical metaphysical dispute over the existence of consciousness as opposed to addressing the theoretical metaphysical disputes over the existence of evil or a thing-in-itself). A libertarian reaction is that of theoretically defending claims that are to provoke dissensus, while practically resisting egalitarian practices and promoting libertarian ones. An egalitarian reaction is that of doing the exact opposite, that is, to theoretically defend claims regarding which consensus is to be reached, while practically resisting libertarian practices and promoting egalitarian ones.

The claim that Nietzsche champions a libertarian reaction, whereas Carnap endorses an egalitarian reaction is an example of what I call a metametaphysical descriptive claim. Metametaphysical descriptive claims are about metaphysical disputes, approaches to metaphysical disputes and/or reactions to the fact that, throughout history, persons have been engaged in metaphysical disputes. In contrast, a metametaphysical normative claim is a practical suggestion on how one isto deal with such metaphysical disputes, approaches and/or reactions. Likewise, what is crucial for the purpose of this essay is to underline that I inspire myself in the stated plausible reading of Plato’s *Republic*, the Christian Bible and Rorty’s named article in making cases for the following two metametaphysical normative claims:

1. The contrast between Nietzsche’s libertarian and Carnap’s egalitarian reaction is to be considered, not only by the scholars (named in footnote 1) who are interested in both of these philosophers’ works, but by a far larger group of philosophers that includes those who have addressed the continental-analytic gap; those who are concerned with the development of the history of 20th and 21st century philosophy; and/or those who are interested in the works of the likes of Michel Foucault (2006), Jacques Derrida (1979), David Lewis (1986a) and/or Peter van Inwagen (2003).[[2]](#footnote-2)
2. One is to do a synthesis of Nietzsche’s libertarian and Carnap’s egalitarian reaction to the fact that, throughout history, persons have been engaged in metaphysical disputes.

1. Beyond Nietzsche and Carnap

A reason for embracing (1) is that throughout the last century, several continental philosophers, such as Foucault and Derrida, were influenced by Nietzsche’s libertarian reaction. On the other hand, these philosophers did not pay much attention (if any at all) to Carnap’s egalitarian reaction. Consider, for instance, Foucault’s 1961 *History of Madness*. This work deals with a genealogical issue that most analytic philosophers, practically speaking, have simply not considered: that on how and why some claims about madness, mentally disordered or allegedly mentally disordered people became widely shared throughout the 17th and up to the 20th century. Examples of such claims are: “the meaning and the reference of the term ‘madness’ have not significantly changed over the last four centuries or so”; “in diagnosing someone as being mentally disordered, psychiatrists have usually respected scientific standards that have not significantly changed over the last four centuries or so”; and “psychiatry has not mainly served to isolate those who have a deviant behavior (e.g., men who engage in sexual intercourse with other men)”. In aiming to articulate a thought-provoking history of psychiatry, Foucault rejects all of these claims. In doing so, it is plausible to read him as someone who aimed to provoke dissensus, and to even shock or embarrass, especially those in the community or the “herd” of people who have presupposed the stated claims.

Practically speaking, by simply publishing the *History of Madness*, Foucault seems to resist the egalitarian practice of isolating the so called “sick” or “mentally disordered” in mental institutions for the sake of protecting the supposedly “healthy” or “mentally sane” part of the community. He also seems to promote the libertarian practice of problematizing these institutions on the basis that they are ultimately hypocritical ones, that is, while speaking in the name of apparently “peaceful” notions of “science” and/or “treatment”, such institutions would have fought a quite violent “war” against persons (especially deviants) in overly constraining and even pathologizing their singularities.[[3]](#footnote-3) As several interpreters, such as Todd May (1993) and Gary Gutting (2011) indicate, then, Foucault was quite inspired by Nietzsche. Ultimately, Foucault often appears to point to Nietzsche’s political task of resisting the “diseased” egalitarian practices and promoting the “healthy” libertarian ones.[[4]](#footnote-4) The same seems to be the case with Derrida. Consider his 1978 take on Nietzsche himself, *Spurs: Nietzsche’s Styles*.

In this work, as in most of his writings, Derrida addresses a matter that, practically speaking, analytic philosophers have likewise not usually discussed: the quarrel over the claim that there are exegetical claims about certain texts (especially, philosophical ones) that cannot be rationally contradicted by persons. Throughout his works, Derrida suggests that no such claim can be obtained. A claim that seems to contradict this suggestion, and (at least by the time Derrida was writing) was canonical among Nietzsche’s interpreters is: “Nietzsche has sexist views on women”. Derrida problematizes this reading. He does so by considering other passages of Nietzsche’s works rarely taken into account, reading famous passages anew and pointing toward the plausibility of a unique thought-provoking interpretation: that Nietzsche’s philosophy is “feminine” and, indeed, more “feminine” than that of most so-called feminists who still have a considerably “phallogocentric” thinking. In suggesting so, it is plausible to read Derrida as someone who seeks to provoke dissensus and even to shock or embarrass, especially those who are part of the community or herd that embraced (or “constructed”) the canonical reading.

Practically speaking, then, Derrida seems to resist an egalitarian practice of this community: namely, the practice of taking for granted Nietzsche’s canonical reading, say, for the sake of establishing a common criterion to evaluate exegetical claims about Nietzsche’s writings. He also implicitly promoted the libertarian practice of problematizing educational philosophical institutions, especially French ones that focus on the history of philosophy and use standardized tests on such history to hire professors as well as to evaluate students. It seems that Derrida’s point is that, in implicitly speaking in the name of a quite narrow notion of *logos,* such institutions excessively constrain their members’ singularities, especially the singularities of those whose ways of thinking are too “feminine”. This would be so because these institutions would have turned canonical readings into canons as if the supporters of these readings were authorities who are never to be contradicted; Derrida suggests that this situation renders the articulation of thought-provoking interpretations of philosophical writings, like his own readings, extremely difficult.

Now let us paraphrase a claim that John Richardson (2004, p.9) made about Nietzsche: it appears that the strongest kind of claim any single reading of Foucault or Derrida can plausibly make for itself is to pick one voice or aspect of their writings and show how to see that voice as somehow dominant, somehow trumping or subordinating the many other incompatible voices also there.[[5]](#footnote-5) The above exegetical remarks about Foucault and Derrida are hopefully enough to back up the claim that one of such voices of theirs is a Nietzschean voice. It is not this essay’s aim, though, to articulate detailed readings of Foucault and Derrida that show how this voice dominates others, such as, say, Foucault’s more Kantian voice; Derrida’s more Jewish voice; Foucault’s and Derrida’s more egalitarian voices; etc.

What is crucial here is to emphasize that basic observation shows that, in analytic contexts (e.g., those of several (if not most) philosophy departments in the United Stated) norms, such as the following one, are usually implicitly embraced: one is to not even mention Foucault or Derrida or their likes, unless it is to mock the alleged “absurdity” of their writings. In other words, this mockery is accepted and perhaps even encouraged by several analytic philosophers who, nevertheless, have never carefully addressed the writings of these French philosophers or taken Nietzsche’s libertarian reaction into account. Basic observation also indicates that, in continental philosophy contexts, such as those of several philosophy departments in France or literature ones in the United States, distinct norms are often endorsed. An example is the norm that one is not to mention analytic philosophers, unless it is to mock the alleged “naivety” of their thinking, that is, certain mockeries are also embraced by some continental philosophers, especially those who ignore Carnap’s egalitarian reaction to the fact that, throughout history, persons have been engaged in metaphysical disputes. So, what counts as a “serious philosopher” varies quite radically from analytic to continental contexts.

A second reason for accepting (1) is that Carnap’s reaction has influenced several analytic philosophers who, nonetheless, practically ignored Nietzsche’s libertarian reaction. Examples of such philosophers are Lewis and van Inwagen. Consider Lewis’s 1986 *On the Plurality of Worlds*. This book’s focus is on a theoretical metaphysical dispute that, practically speaking, most continental philosophers have ignored: that on whether there are concrete possible worlds neither spatial-temporally nor causally connected to ours. Lewis endorses modal realism: the thesis that these worlds exist. Arguably, modal realism has caused more dissensus, is more thought-provoking and even more shocking than Foucault’s history of psychiatry or Derrida’s reading of Nietzsche. Yet, it does not seem that Lewis aimed to provoke dissensus or to shock his readers. In defending modal realism, his aim seems to be that of reaching consensus. Under the influence of Robert Nozick (1974, 1981), Lewis does so by criticizing coercive uses of language on the basis that such uses function as implicit threats; ultimately, they render any kind of “democratic” debate improbable. What characterizes such coercive use of language are expressions, such as: “you *must* believe the conclusion of my *knockdown* argument”. According to Lewis, there seems to be no knockdown argument in philosophy, “or [at least] hardly ever [given that] Gödel and Gettier may have done it”.[[6]](#footnote-6)

Lewis also presupposes that philosophers are to “measure the price” in attempting to achieve a common philosophical “equilibrium”.[[7]](#footnote-7) By this (so to speak) business-centric metaphor (“measure the price”), Lewis means that after opponents have understood one another’s philosophical claims as well as articulated their respective arguments and counter-arguments, they should take another step: to compare their contrasting conjunction of claims in seeking to spell out which one of them maximizes theoretical virtues. Lewis presupposes that the theoretical virtues that need consideration are, as Willard van Orman Quine indicates (1992, p. 20), “conservatism, generality, simplicity, refutability and modesty”. Lewis does not precisely spell out whether such virtues have the same or distinct weights. He also does not justify why one is to attempt to maximize such theoretical virtues in the first place. What seems crucial, for him, is that a common philosophical “equilibrium” is to be reached whenever, after measuring the price of their respective conjunction of claims, two or more philosophers are convinced that one of such conjunctions maximizes theoretical virtues while being more likely true than its alternatives.

Note that this essay is influenced by George A. Reisch (2002). This is so in that it takes for granted his claim that, especially after World War II, several (if not most) analytic philosophers who have been educated and/or employed in research universities in the United States have taken themselves to be politically neutral. Nothing indicates that Lewis is an exception to this alleged apolitical analytic tradition. Therefore, it would be very problematic to attribute to him a conscious commitment to Carnap’s political task of promoting “healthy” egalitarian practices, while resisting “diseased” libertarian ones.[[8]](#footnote-8) However, regardless of his alleged political neutrality, Lewis promotes at least one egalitarian practice shared by Carnap by simply publishing *On the Plurality of Worlds*. The I practice I have in mind is that of doing philosophy by defending one’s views with detailed arguments whose rules of inference are widely shared by a community, while opposing and seeking to convince one’s opponents —at least the superficial opponents who, in Lewis’s case, are those who, practically speaking, grant that modal realism is to be discussed in the first place. In taking this practice for granted, Lewis implicitly resists the libertarian practice of doing philosophy differently, say, in following Nietzsche, Foucault or Derrida in relying on more upfront rhetorical devices that challenge any interpretation and problematize widely shared, but (in these philosophers’ views) very narrow or simplistic views on what counts, to begin with, as an “argument”, “science”, “*logos*”, etc.

Examples of such more upfront rhetorical devices are those of: articulating a conjunction of thought-provoking aphorisms without providing any explicit justification for them; relying on several considerably poetic statements without explicitly spelling out their meanings; problematizing the distinction between literal and metaphorical senses; often ironically playing with the dual sense of certain words; not defining the meaning of technical terms and shifting their senses with context; mocking one’s opponents in seeking to spell out how hypocritical or at least ignorant they really are in presupposing simplistic notions of “argument”, “science”, “psychiatric treatment”, “reason”, “*logos*”, “justification”, “clarity”, etc. Regardless of whether Lewis is aware, then, he problematically points to Carnap’s egalitarian political task and, hence, contradicts Nietzsche’s libertarian one. The same seems to be the case with van Inwagen.

Regardless of van Inwagen’s purported political neutrality, throughout his works, he promotes the same egalitarian practice promoted by Carnap and Lewis. While also criticizing coercive uses of language and pointing toward the impossibility of knockdown arguments in philosophy, van Inwagen implicitly resists the same libertarian practice Carnap and Lewis reject. Consider his 2004 essay, “Freedom to Break the Laws”. This essay explicitly reminds one of Carnap’s “depression” concerning the overwhelming lack of consensus in philosophy that cannot be found in logic and in the empirical sciences.[[9]](#footnote-9) van Inwagen approaches a traditional theoretical metaphysical dispute that the likes of Foucault and Derrida have simply not focused on: the dispute on whether free will and determinism are compatible. For van Inwagen, this is not the case, whereas Lewis (1986b) points to a distinct direction in claiming that free will is, after all, compatible with determinism.

Furthermore, van Inwagen problematizes the aim pursued by Lewis of “measuring the price” while attempting to achieve a common philosophical equilibrium. The problem, van Inwagen argues, is that even philosophers from the same period (e.g., American philosophers who were born in the 1940s, such as van Inwagen and Lewis themselves) and tradition (e.g., the Anglo-American analytic tradition) have not usually reached a common philosophical equilibrium.[[10]](#footnote-10) Regardless of whether this is so or whether van Inwagen’s argument for this claim is persuasive, what matters here is that he still seeks to achieve and values consensus. This is indicated by the fact that, counter to Nietzsche, van Inwagen still aims to affect “people’s opinions” in attempting to make them agree with him.[[11]](#footnote-11) In pursing this goal, van Inwagen seeks to convince his opponents —at least the superficial ones, like Lewis —that incompatibilism is true (or at least more likely true, plausible or persuasive) than compatibilism.

In sum, the contrast between Nietzsche’s libertarian and Carnap’s egalitarian reaction is to be considered, not only by the few scholars who are interested in both of these philosophers’ works, but by the aforementioned far larger group of philosophers, as the metametaphysical normative claim (1) states. Let me now, then, explain (in section 2), and articulate an argument (in section 3) for this essay’s second metametaphysical normative claim: (2), the claim that one is also to promote a synthesis of Nietzsche’s libertarian reaction and Carnap’s egalitarian one.

2. A Synthesis

To put it in a Nietzschean-like metaphorical way, the practice of doing a synthesis between Nietzsche’s libertarian reaction and Carnap’s egalitarian reaction is comparable to that of preparing a drink. Think, for instance, about *Caipirinha*. This is a mix of the Brazilian quite heavy alcoholic drink, *cachaça*, with three other “Apollonian” ingredients that attenuate *cachaça*’s “Dionysian” effects: lemon, sugar and ice. Let us say that *cachaça* stands for Nietzsche’s libertarian reaction, whereas the other ingredients represent Carnap’s egalitarian one. To put it in a more Carnapian-like literal way, the practice of doing a synthesis between Nietzsche’s reaction and Carnap’s is that of fulfilling three tasks. The first task is to bring these contrasting reactions to light, instead of merely presupposing them, like several continental and analytic philosophers have done especially after World War II. The second task is to problematize Nietzsche’s reaction by means of Carnap’s and vice-versa so that the shortcomings of their projects are avoided. Finally, the third task is to seek to keep positive aspects of Nietzsche’s and Carnap’s projects of overcoming metaphysics. So far, this essay has pursued the first of these tasks. I will now explain and pursue the other two tasks.

Consider that, in relying on his libertarian reaction, Nietzsche sometimes goes as far as suggesting that persons are to not even attempt to justify their claims or practices; it would simply not be valuable to be a herd animal in seeking to do so. In Nietzsche’s words, “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, my emphasis). Note that there may be passages by Foucault or Derrida that also point to this excessively libertarian direction, even though, instead of giving up the search for any kind of “proof”, these French philosophers might have merely attempted to problematize what counts as a “proof” as well as to revise traditional notions of “proof” in relying on the stated upfront rhetorical devices. On its turn, this essay objects, under the influence of Carnap’s egalitarian reaction, that the last quoted passage by Nietzsche is a shortcoming of his project. Such shortcoming indicates that he considerably imprudently overpraises individualistic tendencies over communitarian ones.

It is also important to emphasize that Nietzsche overpraises the likes of “Napoleon”, “Alcibiades”, “Caesar” and “Hohenstaufen Frederick II” (BGE 199-200). On the basis that they would have lived in an extremely libertarian manner, Nietzsche takes these types to have been standards of health, regardless of the overwhelming and not subtle at all violence they spread. This is not a view that can be found in Foucault’s or in Derrida’s writings. On its part, this essay aligns itself with analytic philosophers to an extent. It does so by explicitly claiming that Nietzsche’s view on Napoleon, Alcibiades, Caesar and Hohenstaufen Frederick II appears to be an “absurd” view that provides reasons for taking Nietzsche to be a proto-Nazi. Indeed, as Moreira (2018) argues, Carnap himself sometimes suggests so in his unpublished manuscripts.[[12]](#footnote-12) In other words, if Nietzsche took the likes of Napoleon and Caesar to be standards of health, perhaps, he could have stated the same about Adolf Hitler or Benito Mussolini. On its part, *pace* Nietzsche, this essay is committed to the search for justifications. Moreover, it does not praise the likes of Napoleon, Alcibiades, Caesar, Hohenstaufen Frederick II, Hitler, Mussolini, etc.

By his turn, Carnap relies on his egalitarian reaction in going as far as claiming that those who do metaphysics resort to a cognitively meaningless use of language, that is, a use of language that disrespects Carnap’s early conditions for cognitive meaning embraced, for instance, in his 1931 “Überwindung der Metaphysik durch Logische Analyse der Sprache”.[[13]](#footnote-13) According to such early conditions, a statement that is neither a tautology nor a contradiction is cognitively meaningful if and only if it respects the syntactic rules of modern logic, and the verification principle in only containing words that are part of, or reducible to, the words contained in “protocol sentences”, that is, sentences that refer to what is immediately apprehensible by the senses.[[14]](#footnote-14) The 1931 Carnap, then, claims that object-level metaphysical statements (e.g., Heidegger’s statement, “the nothing nothings”) are cognitively meaningless ones insofar as they disrespect such conditions.[[15]](#footnote-15) Carnap, as it is well-known, attenuates such conditions, at least as early as in his 1937 “Logical Syntax of Language”, where he embraces the “*Principle of Tolerance: It is not our business to set up prohibitions, but to arrive at conventions*”.[[16]](#footnote-16) He also states that “*in logic, there are no morals*”.[[17]](#footnote-17) The reason is that “everyone is at liberty to build up his own logic, i.e., his own form of language, as he wishes. All that is required of him is that, if he wishes to discuss it, he must state his method clearly, and give syntactical rules instead of *philosophical arguments*”.[[18]](#footnote-18) Also consider the 1950s Carnap, such as the one of “Empiricism, Semantics, and Ontology”. This paper suggests a broader late condition for cognitive meaning: namely, that words and statements have cognitive meaning if and only if they respect the syntactical and semantical rules of any conventional formal language. The late Carnap calls these formal languages linguistic frameworks.

Note that, like most contemporary analytic philosophers, Lewis and van Inwagen embrace neither Carnap’s early nor his late conditions for cognitive meaning. On its part, under the influence of Nietzsche’s libertarian reaction, this essay explicitly objects to these conditions. Let us do so by taking such conditions to be a shortcoming of Carnap’s project that shows that, throughout his career, he imprudently overpraises communitarian tendencies over individualist ones in taking for granted the problematic assumptionthat only formal languages conventionally adopted by a community that masters the precise rules of such languages lead to cognition. To use Carnap’s terms, this assumption is one that requires “philosophical arguments”. In presupposing otherwise, Carnap appears considerably “naïve”. In making this last claim, this essay aligns itself with continental philosophers to an extent. I also align myself with continental philosophers to an extent insofar as I take that it seems quite “naïve” to follow Carnap in believing that formal languages, such as those that Carnap articulated throughout his career, are “clearer” than ordinary ones. In fact, as others, such as Karl-Otto Apel (1996), indicate, it appears that it is inevitably by means of ordinary languages that formal ones are to be interpreted in the end.

Hence, it seems “naïve” to believe that the adoption of formal languages will decrease the level of dissensus in philosophy. As Lewis and van Inwagen themselves indicate, the history of 20th and 21st century analytic philosophy attests to the opposite, that is, the adoption of formal languages has not made analytic philosophers achieve consensus with one another. Instead, they seem to disagree as much as continental philosophers. Contrary to Carnap, then, this essay is not committed to any condition for cognitive meaning. It also does not aim to articulate or rely on a formal language. It is also important to add that, contrary to Carnap’s intentions, the adoption of such languages by faculty members of philosophy departments in the USA, the UK Canada and Australia has, arguably, not fulfilled any egalitarian purpose, but, rather a quite elitist one: that of creating a considerably narrow community of analytic philosophers who are practically only interested in discussing with other analytic philosophers about allegedly “specific” issues by means of formal or quasi-formal languages whose rules are ignored by non-analytic philosophers. *Pace* Carnap, this essay also does not seek to spell out conditions for knowledge or suggests that only claims by mathematics and the empirical sciences fulfill such conditions.

Nonetheless, the aim of doing justice to Carnap’s project of overcoming metaphysics is still pursued here. The reason is that, in seeking to justify (1) and (2), the essay does not engage itself in metaphysics in Carnap’s sense: that of “the result of a nonrational, purely intuitive process” and/or an inquiry that purports to have “knowledge of the essence of things which transcends the realm of empirically founded, inductive science”.[[19]](#footnote-19) Carnap does not precisely spell out what he means by an “essence”, or by a “purely intuitive process”. Rather, what he does is to merely suggest that those who purport to know such essences commit themselves to object-level metaphysical claims, while engaging themselves in an emotional process as opposed to the rational justificatory process found in the formal and in the empirical sciences. Also note that the claim that Nietzsche champions a libertarian reaction, whereas Carnap endorses an egalitarian one as well as (1) and (2) are not object-level metaphysical claims. Rather, as indicated above, these are metametaphysical claims. More importantly, in backing them up here, this essay proceeds empirically in seeking to spell out the view of a singular kind of observer: namely, the observer of the history of metaphysical disputes that have occurred throughout history. This is someone whose data are philosophical writings; someone whose specialty is that of having the proper philosophical education to interpret such writings that have been articulated, since Ancient Greece up to our time. In spelling out such interpretation, the observer of the history of metaphysics is the one who merely justifies metametaphysical claims. There is nothing “mysterious”, “irrational”, “exclusively emotional” and/or derogatorily “metaphysical” in a Carnapian sense about this procedure.

Indeed, this essay, to an extent, aligns itself with Carnap’s political task implicitly followed by the likes of Lewis and van Inwagen. This is because it aims to avoid relying on a coercive use of language that threatens the possibility of any “democratic” dialogue. Moreover, the essay promotes the traditional egalitarian practice of articulating detailed arguments (in the traditional sense) to justify one’s claims, while objecting to those of others who disagree with such claims and resisting overly libertarian practices. Examples of the latter practices are those of suggesting that one is to not justify one’s views; adopting the stated upfront rhetorical devices; and insinuating that mental and educational institutions are to be abolished.[[20]](#footnote-20)

This essay’s goal is also to do justice to Nietzsche’s project of overcoming metaphysics. Note that, as Moreira (2018, p. 251) indicates, Nietzsche does not precisely define the term “metaphysics”. Rather, he associates it with a defense of claims, such as: “there are hierarchical oppositions of values (e.g., between altruism and egoism)”; “one is to pursue certainty”; and “some sort of realism is the case”. Consider that, in justifying (1) and (2), no commitment to such claims was shown. To begin with and as indicated by the fact that this essay is neutral on object-level metaphysical claims, no kind of realism was defended; no kind of idealism was defended either. Moreover, it is taken for granted that the pursuit of certainty (at least insofar as metaphysical disputes are at stake) makes little sense. The reason is that nothing indicates that one will be able to establish a once and for all view on any metaphysical disputes, given that, throughout history, persons have been engaged in such disputes. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, this essay aligns itself with Nietzsche’s project of overcoming metaphysics insofar as it seeks to avoid some hierarchical oppositions of value. Indeed, it, perhaps, does so even more radically than Nietzsche. Note that Nietzsche constantly overvalues dissensus over consensus. He also often overvalues libertarian practices over egalitarian ones as well as individualistic tendencies over communitarian ones. In short, Nietzsche suggests that to be in accordance with his “will to power” is more valuable than to be in accordance with Carnap’s “will to order”.[[21]](#footnote-21) In doing so, Nietzsche establishes a new hierarchical opposition of value of his own. The same can be stated about Carnap who, in contrast to Nietzsche, overvalues consensus, egalitarian practices, communitarian tendencies and the will to order over dissensus, libertarian practices, individualistic tendencies and the will to power, respectively. This essay avoids this move while supporting (2). This latter claim can also be stated as follows:

(2)` One is to act in accordance with the will to synthesis.

In coining the will to synthesis, the essay —metaphorically speaking once again— seeks to do a *caipirinha* in mixing Nietzsche’s will to power with Carnap’s will to order. By the will to synthesis, it is to be understood the tendency to either consciously or unconsciously embrace the very contradictory conflict between one’s communitarian tendencies (or will to order) and one’s individualistic tendencies (or will to power), while seeking to maximize and achieve a balance that prudently satisfies both of these tendencies, even if to perfectly achieve such a balance may be ultimately impossible for inevitably imperfect persons. Note that individualist tendencies and communitarian ones seem to be present in all persons. Also note that were all persons able to perfectly satisfy either their individualist tendencies or their communitarian tendencies, metaphysical disputes would likely end: persons, as Nietzsche wishes, would either fulfill the task of ceasing to care about what their opponents think about their views in ultimately isolating themselves from any community or herd; or, as Carnap wishes, they would satisfy the task of embracing a common widely shared non-controversial criterion to solve metaphysical disputes in ultimately nullifying anything that is unique about themselves. To be in accordance with one’s will to synthesis is to acknowledge oneself as being unable to do either one of these tasks perfectly; it is to recognize oneself as failing to fulfill the former task because of one’s urges to engage oneself in the latter task (and vice-versa); metaphorically, it is to take oneself as being both a bird of prey and a little lamb that needs a herd. It follows that to be in accordance with the will to synthesis is to seek what might be ultimately impossible: to actualize an ideal community that would include all beings or at least all persons and whose norms and institutions would not constrain but allow all singularities to be expressed. In fact, this ideal community would be one in which the very distinction between egalitarianism and libertarianism would cease to matter insofar as one’s individualistic tendencies would confound themselves with communitarian ones; ultimately, the will to power would be identical to the will to order. Arguably, as indicated in this essay’s introduction, Plato’s *Republic*, the Christian Bible and Rorty’s “Trotsky and the Wild Orchids” arguably point to a similar ideal community.

Also note that to defend that one is to act in accordance with the will to synthesis is to establish another hierarchical opposition of values: the opposition between doing so, like this essay purports to do; and failing do to so. Indeed, it might be ultimately impossible to avoid all hierarchical oppositions of values; one would have to fulfill what may be the ultimate wish of skeptics, that of being neutral regarding practices themselves. Thus, I do not take myself as being able to avoid *all* hierarchical oppositions of value, but only *some* of them, such as the very ones supported by Nietzsche and by Carnap. A third way to state (2) runs as follows:

1. One is to react to the fact that, throughout history, persons have been engaged in

metaphysical disputes, by: defending claims that are both to provoke dissensus with some persons, *and* are to be consensually embraced by others, while also promoting some egalitarian as well as libertarian practices and resisting other likewise egalitarian and libertarian practices.

This is to state that I expect that (1) and (2) will simultaneously provoke dissensus (and perhaps, even shock or embarrass) some persons, *and* be consensually accepted by others. Note that, under the influence of Carnap’s egalitarian reaction and political task, it was already indicated how this essay seeks to avoid coercive uses of language, while promoting at least one egalitarian practice and resisting excessively libertarian ones.

Under the influence of Nietzsche’s libertarian reaction and his political task, it is now time to spell out that this essay also seeks to promote at least one libertarian practice quite similar to those championed by Foucault and Derrida. The libertarian practice I have in mind is that of problematizing the excessive constraints philosophical institutions (e.g., departments of philosophy, journals and publishing companies) impose upon the singularities of their members, especially, say, “trans-non-binary-philosophers” who are interested in responding both to the continental tradition and to the analytic tradition. In inspiring themselves in Richard Rorty himself (1979, 1989, 1999) as well as Hilary Putnam (2008), Bernard Williams (2006), Adrian W. Moore (2012), Markus Gabriel (2012, 2017), and their likes, these philosophers do not feel specifically inclined towards any of these two traditions. On the contrary, they feel like (so to speak) “others” regarding both the continental and the analytic tradition. Therefore, they take that, to say the least, it is quite “absurd” and/or considerably “naïve” to address exclusively one of these traditions as if the other tradition did not exist. This essay, then, resists the excessively egalitarian practice of those who do so, say, for the sake of overly paying respect to the ones who take the aforementioned norms for granted, while relying on strategically narrow bibliographies that consider either the continental tradition or the analytic one but never both of these traditions. My hope is that I am not the only one who feels that this attitude needs to stop.

3. An Argument

The goal of this third and last section is to back up (2) by means of a four-premise deductive argument. The first premise of this argument runs as follows:

1. An explanation for the fact that, throughout history, persons have been engaged in metaphysical disputes is that they have relied on problematic starting points.

A problematic starting point has two characteristics. First, it, ultimately, justifies all other claims and practices endorsed by the one who proposes it. Second, a problematic starting point can be easily problematized by others who simply do not grant one’s underlying assumptions, aims and/or criteria to approach metaphysical disputes. The above sections of this essay are ways to indicate that the libertarian reaction is a problematic starting point for Nietzsche and his followers, such as Foucault and Derrida, whereas the egalitarian reaction is a problematic starting point for Carnap and those influenced by him, such as Lewis and van Inwagen.

Note that the philosophers named in the last sentence are not the only ones who have embraced problematic starting points. Let us consider the practical metaphysical dispute on why, to begin with, one is to engage oneself in a theoretical metaphysical dispute over the existence of something. Let us also take into account three kinds of philosophers who have more or less implicitly presupposed views on such matter so that a very rough picture of the history of metaphysics from the Middle-Ages up to our time can be provided. The three kinds of philosophers I have in mind are: the God-driven philosophers who debate over the existence of evil; the human-driven philosophers who are more or less explicitly interested in discussing whether there are thing-in-themselves; and the physicalist-driven philosophers who have dealt with the metaphysical theoretical dispute over the existence of consciousness.[[22]](#footnote-22)

God-driven philosophers have presupposed as a problematic starting point either the claim that one is to address the theoretical metaphysical dispute over the existence of evil, or any other claim that justifies this practical proposal. Examples of the latter kind of claim are: one is to respect Christian scriptures; one is to think and act in accordance with such scriptures as well as not contradict the science of one’s time; one is to spell out that there is a harmony between *logos* and faith; one is to release oneself from evil (at least to the extent that human beings can do so) in being less prone to sin and becoming “holier”; etc.

On their parts, human-driven philosophers have also presupposed as a problematic starting point either the claim that one is to address the theoretical metaphysical dispute over the existence of things-in-themselves, or any other claim that justifies why one is to do so. Examples of such claims are: one is to “critically” spell out the conditions of human experience; one is to not take oneself as being able to think over and above such conditions; one is to strive toward a more just political community in showing that these conditions are contingent ones that have served to exclude people (e.g., working class people or black-skinned people); etc.

By their turns, physicalist-driven philosophers have presupposed as a problematic starting point the claim that one is to deal with the metaphysical dispute over the existence of consciousness, or any other claim that justifies this attitude. Examples of the latter kind of claim are: one is to take contemporary empirical sciences (especially, physics) as ultimate authorities concerning what there is; one is to address the possible limits of such authorities insofar as consciousness is concerned; one is to proceed in a way that is analogous to those of mathematicians and/or empirical scientists or to show the limits of such approaches; etc. This is to state that physicalist-driven philosophers have often presupposed that philosophers’ purpose is to pursue such goals. God-driven and human-driven philosophers have not done so in presupposing that philosophers are to proceed differently. More directly, they take that to do philosophy is to do something distinct than what physicalist-driven philosophers have done. Hence, observation of the history of metaphysics appears to attest to the fact that no philosopher seems to have been able to start without presupposing any problematic starting point.[[23]](#footnote-23) In fact, were anyone able to do so while approaching any metaphysical dispute, it is very likely that at least one metaphysical dispute would have been solved once and for all. Yet, this does not seem to be possible, given that, after more than 2000 years, no one appears to have done so.

The second premise for this essay’s argument for (2) is the following:

1. If P.1, it *might* be impossible for persons not to implicitly embrace (2).

I italicized the term “might” because my observation of the history of metaphysics only backs up the empirical claim that philosophers *have relied* on problematic starting points. This claim is not to be confounded with the modal claim that it is impossible for philosophers to not rely on problematic starting points. The latter claim is not endorsed here, where no prediction is made concerning how future philosophers (say, from a thousand years from now) will proceed. What this essay does is to claim that to implicitly embrace (2) is to perform two practices.

First, to implicitly embrace (2) is to resist at least one egalitarian practice, while promoting at least one libertarian practice. Respectively, say, the egalitarian practice of following an established tradition that does not embrace a claim that one aims to defend; and the opposite libertarian practice of committing oneself to at least one claim that has the feature of provoking some dissensus insofar as not all persons embrace it. This is a feature of Nietzsche’s libertarian reaction insofar as this reaction was not accepted by all philosophers. For instance, analytic philosophers, such as Carnap, Lewis and van Inwagen, have rejected Nietzsche’s libertarian reaction. This is also a feature of Carnap’s egalitarian reaction insofar as this reaction was also not accepted by all. For example, the likes of Foucault and Derrida have not embraced this reaction. The stated claims that God-driven, human-driven and physicalist-driven philosophy have implicitly adopted as problematic starting points likewise have the feature of provoking some dissensus; not all persons have embraced them.

To implicitly embrace (2) is also to perform a second practice: namely, to resist at least one libertarian practice, while promoting at least one egalitarian practice. Respectively, say, the libertarian practice of causing dissensus with all persons; and the practice of defending at least one claim that has a particular feature. The particular feature I have in mind is that of causing some consensus insofar as there is at least one person (besides the ones who proposes the claim) who agrees with that claim. This is also a feature of Nietzsche’s libertarian reaction. As indicated above, this reaction has been embraced by Foucault and Derrida. So, not all persons have disagreed or been shocked by Nietzsche. In fact, he has been one of the most influential philosophers of the last century. Carnap’s egalitarian reaction has also caused some consensus insofar as analytic philosophers, such as Lewis and van Inwagen, have been influenced by it. Furthermore, consider again all the stated claims that God-driven, human-driven and physicalist-driven philosophers have implicitly adopted as problematic starting points; all of these claims have caused some consensus in being accepted by more than one person.

It follows that the observer of the history of metaphysics is the one who empirically acknowledges that, throughout history, persons have performed the two practices described in the last two paragraphs, that is, this observation indicates that it *might* be impossible for persons to do otherwise. What, on the other hand, no one has explicitly done is to argue that:

1. It is more valuable (and more “realist”) to be self-aware of oneself in explicitly embracing (2) than to lack self-awareness in implicitly doing so.

To paraphrase Nietzsche, this premise implies that it is more valuable to become someone who we already are rather than attempt to be someone we cannot ultimately be. That is: someone or something that exclusively values dissensus, libertarian practices, individualistic tendencies and the will to power, while ignoring one’s urges for consensus, egalitarian practices, communitarian tendencies and the will to order. To paraphrase the Carnap of the “*Überwindung*” article, P.3 implies that it is more valuable to be self-aware of oneself than to succumb to “self-delusion”.[[24]](#footnote-24) By self-delusion here, it is to be understood the action of taking oneself to be able to exclusively value consensus, egalitarian practices, communitarian tendencies and the will to order, while ignoring one’s needs for dissensus, libertarian practices, individualistic tendencies and the will to power. To paraphrase both Nietzsche’s and Carnap’s clinical vocabulary discussed in detail by Moreira (2018, p. 259), to embrace P.3. is also to suggest that “healthy” is the one who aims to act in accordance with the will to synthesis, whereas “sick” is to be applied to those who act in discordance with such will. This sickness is expressed whenever one is imprudent in either following Nietzsche (and perhaps, the likes of Foucault and Derrida too) in being “too libertarian” or doing the opposite, that is, to imprudently follow Carnap (and perhaps, the likes of Lewis and van Inwagen too) in being “too egalitarian”. Let me, nonetheless, emphasize that in suggesting that these philosophers are “sick”, I do not claim that they are not legitimate rational peers whose views on metaphysical disputes are to not to be taken seriously. My use of this clinical vocabulary merely seeks to pressure those who follow such philosophers to change their practices in embracing the will to synthesis.

The fourth and last premise for this essay’s argument for (2) is that:

1. If the consequent of P.2 is the case as well as P.3, (2).

By *modus ponens* from P.1 and P.2, the consequent of P.2 follows. Hence, a conjunction between P.3 and this consequent can be inserted. By *modus ponens* from this conjunction and P.4, P.4’s consequent follows. Therefore, the argument’s conclusion is: (2), that is, the claim that one is to do a synthesis of Nietzsche’s libertarian and Carnap’s egalitarian reaction to the fact that, throughout history, persons have been engaged in metaphysical disputes. This is to state, as (2)` indicates, that one is to act in accordance with the will to synthesis. This is likewise to state, as (2)`` indicates, that one is to react to the fact that, throughout history, persons have been engaged in metaphysical disputes, by: defending claims that are both to provoke dissensus with some persons *and* which are to be consensually embraced by others, while promoting some egalitarian and libertarian practices as well as resisting other likewise egalitarian and libertarian practices. This is, accordingly, what I have attempted to do throughout this essay while contributing to close the gap between analytic and continental philosophers in a hopefully pertinent way, and making cases for the following two metametaphysical normative claims stated in this essay’s introduction:

1. The contrast between Nietzsche’s libertarian and Carnap’s egalitarian reaction is to be considered, not only by the scholars (named in footnote 1) who are interested in both of these philosophers’ works, but by a far larger group of philosophers that includes those who have addressed the continental-analytic gap; those who are concerned with the development of the history of 20th and 21st century philosophy; and/or those who are interested in the works of the likes of Michel Foucault (2006), Jacques Derrida (1979), David Lewis (1986a) and/or Peter van Inwagen (2003).
2. One is to do a synthesis of Nietzsche’s libertarian and Carnap’s egalitarian reaction to the fact that, throughout history, persons have been engaged in metaphysical disputes.

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The roman numbers after the abbreviation refer to the section. The Arabic numbers refer to the

paragraph. The following abbreviations were used:

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1. This is not to state that Moreira (2018) does not spell out several points that Nietzsche and Carnap have in common, starting from the fact that they are both interested in the “overcoming” (*Überwindung*) of metaphysics. For other readings that stress such points, see: Hales (1996); Friedman (2000); Gabriel (2003); Stone (2006); Sachs (2011); and Mormann (2012). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. This group includes: Rorty (1979, 1989, 1999) himself as well as Putnam (2008); Williams (2006); Gutting (2009), Moore (2012); Gabriel (2012, 2017); May (1997); Nolan (2002); those who contributed to Reynolds *et al* (2010); Soames (2014, 2017); those who contributed to the essay gathered in Keller (2017); etc. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. For a detailed take on Foucault’s views on violence, see Lawlor (2016). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. For a detailed take on this task, see Moreira (2018, p. 260). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Richardson’s claim is that “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”. See Richardson (2004, p 9). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Lewis (1983, p. x). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. *Ibid*. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. For a take on this task, see Moreira (2018, p. 260). [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Compare van Inwagen (2004, p. 334-335), and Carnap (1963, p. 44-45). [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. van Inwagen (2004, p. 340-343). [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. van Inwagen (2004, p. 350). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Carnap’s manuscripts remain unpublished and are held by the Archive of Scientific Philosophy at the University of Pittsburgh’s Hilman Library. The manuscript I have in mind is from 1918 and can be found in this library’s archive under the title: “Schema für den 9. Rundbrief”, code: RC 081-22-05. Moreover, note that Bertrand Russell (1945, p. 770) also suggests that Nietzsche was a proto-Nazi. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Also see this article’s English translation by Arthur Pap: Carnap (1959). [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Carnap (1959, p.63). [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. This is how Arthur Pap translates the sentence “Das Nichts nichtet”. See Carnap (1931, p. 230) as well as Carnap (1959, p.70). Heidegger’s sentence itself is “Das Nichts selbst nichtet”. See Heidegger (1976, p. 114). [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Carnap (1937, p. 51). [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Carnap (1937, p. 52). [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. *Ibid*., my emphasis. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Respectively, Carnap (2003, p. 295); and Carnap (1959, p.80). [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. This essay is neutral on whether Nietzsche, Foucault and Derrida are really committed to such an insinuation. It seems to me that works by such philosophers are not very precise on such matter. Hence, to spell out their views on the abolition of mental and educational institutions is not an easy task, and I will not pursue it here. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. The latter term appears in one of Carnap’s unpublished manuscripts: Carnap (1921–1926). For further comments on such “will to order”, see Moreira (2018, p. 262), and Mormann (2012, 73). [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Examples of God-driven philosophers are: Saint Augustine, Saint Anselm, Saint Thomas of Aquinas, etc. Examples of human-driven philosophers are Immanuel Kant, Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Karl Marx and, more recently, Habermas (1990), Rorty (1979, 1989, 1999), Apel (1996), Davis (1998), etc. Examples of physicalist-driven philosophers are: Nagel (1974), Dennett (1991), Churchland (1996); Chalmers (1996, 2010), etc. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Rorty points to a similar direction in stating that: “the more philosophers I read, the clearer it seemed that each of them could carry their views back to first principles which were incompatible with the first principles of their opponents, and that none of them ever got to that fabled place ‘beyond hypotheses’. There seemed to be nothing like a neutral standpoint from which these alternative first principles could be evaluated” (Rorty 1999, p.10). [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Carnap (1959, p. 79). [↑](#footnote-ref-24)