Translating the Vienna Circle

Duncan Large

Published online: 28 Dec 2022.

Submit your article to this journal ⎘

Article views: 187

View related articles ⎘

View Crossmark data ⎘

Translating the Vienna Circle

Duncan Large 📙

British Centre for Literary Translation, University of East Anglia, Norwich, UK

ABSTRACT

This article looks at the reception of logical positivism in the English-speaking world from the linguistic point of view. The inter-war Vienna Circle had a major impact on the development of English-language philosophy, but this was largely in the absence of published English translations. Many key essays appeared in English only well after the War, and the Circle's 1929 manifesto 'Wissenschaftliche Weltauffassung: Der Wiener Kreis' (The Scientific Conception of the World: The Vienna Circle) was first published in English translation as late as 1973. Before the rise of Nazism forced many of the key figures in the Vienna Circle to emigrate to Britain and the USA and begin lecturing and publishing in English, English-language philosophers like Ayer and Quine had studied logical positivism in Vienna. The article considers: the extent to which English-language philosophers were engaging with Vienna Circle ideas in German; the importance of popularisations of logical positivism by English-speaking philosophers; the history of English translations of Vienna Circle writings, and the nature of those translations. Finally, the role of translation within the philosophy of logical positivism itself is considered, and the overall contribution of Vienna Circle thinking to translation studies is assessed.

Introduction

This article is based on the premise that the Vienna Circle has been surprisingly neglected by the history and theory of translation but warrants closer consideration within the discipline. The 'Wiener Kreis' were a group of philosophers and physicists, logicians, mathematicians and social scientists who held regular meetings at the University of Vienna over the period 1924–1936 under the leadership of the Professor of Natural Philosophy, Moritz Schlick. Aside from Schlick, leading figures included Rudolf Carnap, Kurt Gödel, Hans Hahn and Otto Neurath; Ludwig Wittgenstein had close links to the Circle (and they were heavily influenced by his *Tractatus*, which they read carefully through together twice) but he was not technically a member (see Friedl, 2022), ditto Karl Popper; foreign visitors welcomed to join the discussions when they were in Vienna included A. J. Ayer, Willard Van Orman Quine, Frank P. Ramsey and Alfred Tarski (see Stadler, 2007). Given that the

CONTACT Duncan Large ✉ d.large@uea.ac.uk 🖃 British Centre for Literary Translation, University of East Anglia, Norwich, NR4 7TJ, UK

core group together with the peripheral visitors and occasional collaborators numbered around three dozen, it is not surprising that the Circle held quite a range of positions on some key philosophical questions, but they did publish a manifesto in 1929 (Carnap et al., 1929) which asserted their collective opposition to metaphysics and their unequivocal commitment to a 'Wissenschaftliche Weltauffassung' or 'Scientific Conception of the World' based on logical, empirical analysis, a verificationist theory of meaning and a belief in 'the unity of science' (see Uebel, 2008). In 1930 Carnap and Hans Reichenbach took over the editorship of the journal *Annalen der Philosophie und philosophischen Kritik* and rechristened it *Erkenntnis* (Knowledge), which then became the house journal of the Circle for a decade till it ceased publication during the War. Throughout the 1930s, members of the Circle went into exile with the rise of the Nazis in Germany and Austro-Fascism closer to home; meetings of the Circle came to an abrupt end in 1936 when Schlick was murdered by a deranged former student, though individual figures continued to promote its philosophical ideals (largely abroad and in English) under the banner of logical positivism or logical empiricism.

I want to argue that the Vienna Circle is of interest to translation studies for two principal reasons. First, it was a German-language philosophical movement that had a major impact on the development of English-language analytic philosophy, so it serves as a case study in the geographical and cultural 'translation' of philosophical thought – even if, as we shall see, the process of 'translating the Vienna Circle' was less reliant on actual published translations than might have been expected. Second, the Vienna Circle took a keen interest in translation from a philosophical point of view, since it held that language is ultimately vitiated by metaphysics, so that its members explored a wide variety of alternatives to natural language, seeking ways to 'translate' experience more directly through alternative systems of representation, notably symbolic logic and pictorial language.

The Vienna Circle untranslated

Let us start by looking at the ways in which Vienna Circle philosophy was received ('translated') into English. Wittgenstein's reception in English was facilitated by the early publication of his two key works, the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1922) and *Philosophical Investigations* (1953), in German/English bilingual editions, but the fate of the Vienna Circle's publications was very different from this, and many of the key texts appeared in English only well after the War. Extraordinarily, the Circle's 1929 manifesto was first published in English translation as late as 1973, and even then it was in abridged form, shorn of its extensive bibliography (Carnap et al., 1973). Another key Vienna Circle paper, Otto Neurath's 'Protokollsätze' (Protocol Sentences, 1932) first appeared in English (in a translation by Frederic Schick)[1] only in 1959, in A. J. Ayer's influential anthology *Logical Positivism* (Ayer, 1959), which was notable for including no fewer than eight first English translations of German-language papers by the leading members of the Circle (Carnap, Neurath and Schlick) that had originally appeared over a quarter century earlier, in the early 1930s, in the first four volumes of *Erkenntnis*. Even major books by leading Circle philosophers took decades to be translated: Carnap's *Der logische Aufbau der Welt* (*The Logical Structure of the World*, his habilitation thesis from 1928) was first published in English (in a translation by Rolf A. George) only in 1967 (Carnap, 1967), while Schlick's chief work, *Allgemeine Erkenntnislehre* (1918), first appeared in English (translated by Albert E. Blumberg) only in 1974 (Schlick, 1974).

If it took so long for the work of the Vienna Circle to be translated into English, how did it come to have such an influence? Let us consider four explanations. First, there were *some* English translations appearing at the time. For example, Carnap's 1934 masterpiece *Logische Syntax der Sprache* (Carnap 1934a) was already out in English translation by 1937, as *The Logical Syntax of Language* (Carnap, 1937), translated by the colourful British translator Amethé, Countess von Zeppelin. Carnap was getting translated into English in the 1930s because he was already being appreciated in the English-speaking countries as the leading figure among the Vienna Circle, and that in turn was because he was already lecturing and publishing in English himself. A second reason why the Vienna Circle was being appreciated in the English-speaking world, then, was that key members were travelling or emigrating and switching to English as their language of philosophical expression. Carnap's English was good enough for him to give three lectures in London in 1934, and these were published the following year as *Philosophy and Logical Syntax* (Carnap, 1935). 1935 was also the year in which Carnap emigrated to the United States, and by 1936 he was already installed as Professor of Philosophy at the University of Chicago, publishing prolifically in English for the rest of his life (see Verhaegh, 2020). Neurath left Vienna in 1934, initially for The Netherlands and then Britain, but already in 1931 he had published a short English-language introduction to the philosophy of the Circle in the prestigious American philosophy journal *The Monist* (Neurath, 1931). Even though Schlick stayed in Vienna till his untimely demise, he had married an American and spoke fluent English, so was perfectly capable of expressing himself philosophically in the language, too. His *Gesammelte Aufsätze* switch seamlessly to English with the essay 'The Future of Philosophy' (Schlick, 1938, pp. 117–133), which he gave as a lecture to the Seventh International Congress of Philosophy in Oxford in 1930. In 1931/32 he spent several months as a visiting professor at Stanford, then he lectured again in the UK, at King's College London, in 1932.[2]

So Vienna Circle members were having their work translated into English (to a limited extent) and publishing in English themselves; a third factor in the reception of Vienna Circle thought in the English-speaking world was the role played by advocates such as Susan Stebbing, the first woman professor of philosophy in England, who acted as an important bridgehead for Vienna Circle thinking (see Beaney & Chapman, 2021; Janssen-Lauret, 2022; Pincock, 2022). Stebbing was on the same panel as Schlick in Oxford in 1930, lectured on 'Logical Positivism and Analysis' to the British Academy in 1933 (Stebbing, 1933), and invited Carnap to London in 1934. The term 'logical positivism' had been coined in a 1931 article, published in the influential *Journal of Philosophy*, which 'introduced the Circle's ideas to an American readership' (Edmonds, 2020, p. 147). The article was co-written by Albert E. Blumberg – a young American philosopher teaching at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore who had studied for his doctorate in Vienna and would go on to translate Schlick's *General Theory of Knowledge* – and Herbert Feigl, the first member of the Circle to emigrate, who had recently taken up a Rockefeller Research Fellowship at Harvard (see Blumberg & Feigl, 1931). The most important early populariser-cum-proselytiser for the Vienna Circle in the English-speaking world, though, was undoubtedly A. J. Ayer with his 1936 study *Language, Truth and Logic*, which was effectively a potted introduction to the movement (Ayer, 1976). Ayer cites Carnap multiple times in his book; also referenced are fellow Circle members Hans Hahn, Béla Juhos, Karl Menger, Otto Neurath, Karl Popper, Moritz Schlick and

Friedrich Waismann. Where he can, Ayer cites English-language articles and books, but the great majority of the Vienna Circle references are (necessarily) to German-language materials, and he doesn't shy away from including them even in a popular introduction.[3]

The continuing importance of German-language intellectual culture

A fourth reason, then, to account for the reception of Vienna Circle philosophy in English is that it was being read in the original German and there was no perceived need for translations. The widespread reference to German-language sources in Ayer's *Language, Truth and Logic* reminds us of his own facility with German, which, though not extensive, was adequate[4] – after all, he had made a pilgrimage to Vienna and attended Circle gatherings between December 1932 and April 1933 (Edmonds, 2020, p. 107) – but what is more surprising is that it makes plain an expectation that his intended (non-specialist) readership will also be able to make something of this demanding German-language philosophical material. Such an assumption on Ayer's part is testament to the quite different ground rules which pertained before the Second World War, when German was still one of the primary languages of intellectual culture and debate in the social and natural sciences, even in the face of the decline in its relative pre-eminence which had set in with the First World War (see Gordin, 2015, pp. 159–212; Ammon, 2020). In this context, then, it is hardly surprising that the ground-breaking articles in *Erkenntnis* were not translated into English, for the primary flow of translations was actually in the opposite direction.[5] As late as 1960 the American philosopher Quine – another of the visitors to the Vienna Circle, who overlapped with Ayer in 1932/33 (Creath, 2007; Isaacson, 2004) – not only dedicated his *Word and Object* to Carnap but also prefaced it with an untranslated (and unreferenced) German-language epigraph from Otto Neurath, the point in his 'Protokollsätze' essay where he uses the analogy that has since become famous as 'Neurath's Boat':

> Wie Schiffer sind wir, die ihr Schiff auf offener See umbauen müssen, ohne es jemals in einem Dock zerlegen und aus besten Bestandteilen neu errichten zu können. (Stöltzner & Uebel, 2006, p. 401; cited in Quine, 1960, p. vii)

> We are like sailors who must rebuild their ship on the open sea, never able to dismantle it in dry-dock and to reconstruct it there out of the best materials. (Neurath, 1959, p. 201)

We are no longer familiar with the kind of centripetal German-centric linguistic self-confidence that Vienna Circle philosophy evinces (and we should remember that even several of the regular members were not first-language German speakers – the Vienna Circle was a kind of melting pot).[6] Indeed I would go so far as to argue that the Vienna Circle philosophy of the pre-diaspora period is relatively monolingual, since other languages do not get much of a look-in. In the case of the classical languages Greek and Latin this is programmatic: the Vienna Circle were keen to make a clean break with millennia of metaphysical philosophy and had correspondingly little concern for the history of philosophy (cf. Edmonds, 2020, p. 22). As far as other modern languages are concerned, though, the Vienna Circle is equally indifferent and simply homogenises them. The most comprehensive single-volume selection of Vienna Circle writings in German (Stöltzner & Uebel, 2006) includes 28 essays by eight authors across 650 pages, and there is barely a quotation in any language other

than German.[7] Linguistically this makes for a highly hermetic closed system when every-one is cited in German translation: Descartes (pp. 116, 227), Leibniz (pp. 227, 235, 236) and Locke (p. 228); Mill (p. 229f.) and Dewey (p. 255); Duhem (pp. 96, 102), Bergson (pp. 138f., 146) and Poincaré (pp. 102, 245, 256); William James (p. 255) and Russell (pp. 149, 177).

On the one hand, then, the Vienna Circle could be characterised as the last great German-language school in philosophy, but on the other hand, for all its preoccupation with 'die Sprache', the Vienna Circle was surprisingly unconcerned about the language of its own self-expression. One of the rare moments of self-awareness about the peculiarities of German occurs in Schlick's 1932 essay 'Positivismus und Realismus' when he remarks:

> Der Hauptgrundsatz des Positivisten scheint […] zu lauten: 'Nur das Gegebene ist wirklich'. Wer an Wortspielen Gefallen findet, könnte diesem Satze unter Benutzung einer Eigentüm-lichkeit der deutschen Sprache sogar den Schein des Tautologisch-Selbstverständlichen ver-leihen, indem er ihn formuliert: 'Es gibt nur das Gegebene'. (Stöltzner & Uebel, 2006, p. 190)

> The main principle of the positivist […] seems to run: 'Only the given is real'. Anyone who takes pleasure in plays upon words could even make use of a peculiarity of the German language in order to lend this proposition the air of being a self-evident tautology, by for-mulating it as: '*Es gibt nur das Gegebene*' [Only the given exists]. (trans. by Peter Heath in Schlick, 1979, Vol. 2, p. 261)

Although this is not a direct quotation, it is clearly but a thinly veiled attack on the German-language metaphysician who served the Vienna Circle as their prime example of what Wittgenstein (in Elizabeth Anscombe's translation) would later call 'the bewitch-ment of our intelligence by means of language' (PI §109; Wittgenstein, 1953, p. 47[e]), namely Martin Heidegger. The Vienna Circle had form in this respect, and regularly treated Heidegger as an Aunt Sally: in 'The Elimination [*Überwindung*] of Metaphysics Through Logical Analysis of Language' (Carnap 1931a) he devotes a section to critiquing 'Metaphysical Pseudo-Statements' (*Metaphysische Scheinsätze*), and Exhibit A is an extract from Heidegger's 1929 inaugural lecture 'Was ist Metaphysik?' ('What is Meta-physics?') that culminates in the infamous statement 'Das Nichts selbst nichtet', ('The Nothing itself nihilates', rendered more facetiously as 'the Nothing noths')) (Carnap, 1931a, p. 229; cf. Inwood, 1999; Friedman, 2000). In 1933 Neurath would borrow the Heideggerian formulations from Carnap's paper for his *Einheitswissenschaft und Psycho-logie* ('Unified Science and Psychology'), the first in the Circle's new monograph series, where he criticises them as 'verbal clutter', 'a contemporary example of the accumulation of senselessness within the framework of metaphysics' (McGuinness, 1987, p. 4f.); Ayer follows suit by citing (Carnap citing) Heidegger and dismissing the offending passage as a nonsensical error (1976, p. 59), 'a piece of verbiage' (1959, p. 16).

The Vienna Circle's critique of natural language and pursuit of intertranslatability

The Vienna Circle was very aware that (together with ancient Greek) German is the native language of the mystificatory metaphysical tradition, very aware of what Neurath (in 'Protocol Sentences', namechecking Heidegger) termed the 'linguistic abuses to which the German language lends itself' (Neurath, 1959, p. 200; cf. Neurath, 1991, p. 269). Lampooning the metaphysical excesses of Heideggerian German served

only as a kind of displacement activity, though, for Heidegger was merely an extreme case of the problem of language more generally. Nor did switching from German to English expression provide a solution: German was a particularly egregious example of the potential of natural language to harbour metaphysics, but ultimately all natural languages were at fault. In this respect the Vienna Circle formed part of an Austro-German tradition of *Sprachskepsis* or linguistic scepticism which went back via Wittgenstein, Karl Kraus, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Arthur Schnitzler and Fritz Mauthner at least as far as Nietzsche (see Vrahimis, 2020).

To combat this kind of metaphysical 'prejudice', Vienna Circle thinkers (primarily Carnap and Neurath) explored a number of alternatives, ranging from artificial languages like Esperanto[8] and the 'ordinary language' which would prove so attractive to post-War Oxford philosophy, to so-called 'protocol sentences', the 'languages' of symbolic logic and mathematics, Frege's 'conceptual writing' (*Begriffsschrift*; see Frege, 1879), Neurath's 'pictorial language' (*Bildersprache*; see Neurath, 1991) and Neurath and Carnap's 'physical language' (*physikalische Sprache*; see Carnap, 1931b). The kinds of reductive procedures the Vienna Circle espoused, stripping down natural language, stripping away any possibility of metaphysical expression, resemble the 'basic English' of (Wittgenstein translator) C. K. Ogden, which was designed from the ground up to avoid 'prohibited words' like *appearance* and *transcendence*, so that it would not be possible to translate a metaphysical proposition into Basic English (see Sigmund, 2017, pp. 346–347; McElvenny, 2018). And translation is ultimately the key: the goal of the Vienna Circle's 'physicalist' programme of linguistic reductionism is to translate one's way out of metaphysics. This aspiration is evident in Ayer's *Language, Truth and Logic* when he argues: 'the sentence, "I am now sitting in front of a table" can, in principle, be translated into a sentence which does not mention tables, but only sense-contents' (Ayer, 1976, p. 86). As James McElvenny puts it:

> At heart physicalism hinges on the possibility of translation: what distinguishes a scientifically valid statement from a meaningless statement of metaphysics is that the scientific statement can be translated into a language that describes everyday phenomenal experience. The statement of experience can then be confirmed or disconfirmed, a possibility not available to the untranslatable metaphysical statements. This principle of intertranslatability allows further for the 'unity of science', the free co-operation and communication among scientists, breaking down the disciplinary boundaries that presently separate them. (McElvenny, 2013, pp. 1199–1200)

Hence the frequency with which Vienna Circle thinkers write of translation, and their relatively unproblematic assumptions about full interlinguistic equivalence. This can be seen when Carnap argues: 'A translation is a rule for transforming a word from one language to another, (e.g., 'cheval' = 'horse')' (Carnap, 1934b, p. 39), or Ayer: 'we may define a proposition as a class of sentences which have the same intentional significance for anyone who understands them. Thus, the sentences, "I am ill", "Ich bin krank", "Je suis malade", are all elements of the proposition "I am ill"' (Ayer, 1976, p. 117).

The relative translatability of Vienna Circle philosophy

In light of the Vienna Circle's concern with translation and translatability,[9] I would like briefly in conclusion to consider the translatability of the Vienna Circle's own writings.

Given their concern to eschew metaphysics with a simplified style, one would be forgiven for expecting their works to be exceptionally straightforward to translate. And they are certainly easier to translate than Heidegger, but that is not saying much. Clearly the passages of pictorial language in Neurath need precious little translating, and passages of symbolic logic in Carnap need none at all. Specimen ordinary language statements of the kind 'Berlin is a city in Germany' in Carnap (1967, p. 51), 'There is a green leaf lying on my desk' in Schlick (1979, Vol. 2, p. 292), or 'I ate bacon and eggs for breakfast this morning' in Ayer (1936, p. 200, quoting W. T. Stace) present few problems to the translator. But such materials actually represent only a small percentage of the text of any Vienna Circle work. What is striking about the writings of the Vienna Circle – especially given that they were mostly trained in mathematics and the natural sciences – is that they are very stylistically accomplished and highly readable pieces of German writing. Friedrich Waismann recounts (1938, p. X) that Schlick once remarked 'We are all poets *manqués*' ('Wir sind alle verhinderte Dichter'), and this is borne out by the linguistic and rhetorical consciousness evident in their writings (and not just in German, either). Their writings are far from being dour, scientistic prose, and these more discursive, literary qualities in turn make them more difficult to translate – at least as difficult as, say, the Russell of *The Problems of Philosophy* or the Wittgenstein of *Philosophical Investigations*.[10]

Theirs is a philosophical style which is relatively free of jargon, but in some respects they cannot avoid indulging in ambiguity and setting traps for the unwary. To give just a few examples: their manifesto professes their adoption of a 'Wissenschaftliche Welt-auffassung', the latter term deliberately chosen to stress their distance from the *Welanschauung* of traditional metaphysics (Stadler, 2007, p. 14), yet this routinely gets translated as 'Scientific Worldview' all the same (see e.g., Sigmund, 2017, p. 5; Stadler, 2017). Following English translators of Wittgenstein, *Sachverhalt* in Vienna Circle writings tends to get translated as 'state of affairs' (e.g., by Peter Heath in Schlick, 1979, Vol. 2, p. 157), although that is merely a convention and undoubtedly misses some of the nuances of the original. The key term *Erleben* gets translated as 'acquaintance' (following Russell's distinction between 'knowledge by acquaintance' and 'knowledge by description', in contradistinction to *Erkennen*), but as Herbert Feigl recalled, 'Schlick was of the opinion that this term has no exact equivalent in English' (1979, p. xxxvin. 23), and Peter Heath duly translates Schlick's 1926 paper 'Erleben, Erkennen, Metaphysik' as 'Experience, Cognition and Metaphysics' (Schlick, 1979, Vol. 2, pp. 99–111).[11] As Oswald Hanfling points out, even the key word *Satz* (the standard German for 'sentence' or a musical 'movement') becomes problematic when it is given a more technical air in English and translated as 'proposition' (1981, p. 6n. 5). This is why Brian McGuinness, introducing his edition of the Vienna Circle's *Einheitswissenschaften* monographs in English translation, argues for translatory flexibility: '*Satz*, always a difficult word, has generally been rendered by "proposition", but in the cases of Carnap's contribution and the earlier of Neurath's two, "sentence" seemed to be demanded' (McGuinness, 1987, p. vii). Such translatory choices are the mark of deliberate interpretations which inevitably mould, and potentially skew, the philosophy's reception: Andreas Vrahimis (2021) persuasively argues that Ayer's translation of Carnap's 'Überwindung der Meta-physik' with 'The Elimination of Metaphysics' in *Language, Truth and Logic* (Ayer, 1976, p. 45) constitutes a deliberately radicalising interpretation of Carnap's ideas.[12]

Conclusion: the Vienna Circle's contribution to translation studies

I hope to have demonstrated that the writings of the Vienna Circle make an interesting case study in the international reception of a school of philosophical thought – through published translations but also by other means, such as self-translated lectures, or English-language books and articles by 'champions' such as Stebbing, Ayer and Blumberg, who were reading the Vienna Circle authors in the original German and to some extent expecting their own English-language readers to be able to do so, too. Philosophical scholarship is starting to appreciate the extent to which the reception of the Vienna Circle within English-language analytical philosophy was conditioned by issues relating to translation and self-translation, but there is undoubtedly much more to be said in this respect.

In the latter part of this article I have argued that the Vienna Circle engaged productively with the question of translation itself, and I will conclude with the thought that it is surprising Vienna Circle thinking should have been so little explored within translation studies. Philip Wilson has made a strong case for the relevance of Wittgenstein's thinking to translation studies (Wilson, 2016), and Spencer Hawkins has recently argued similarly for the value of Karl Popper's remarks on translation (Hawkins, 2022), so I think it is high time that translation studies paid as much attention to the work of Wittgenstein and Popper's contemporaries and compatriots in the Vienna Circle. In many ways the radical purity of the Circle's thinking was utopian, and perhaps inevitably their grander aspirations – both epistemological ('unified science') and linguistic (logically cleansed universal language) – have gone unrealised;[13] indeed, already by 1967 John Passmore was pronouncing logical positivism 'dead, or as dead as a philosophical movement ever becomes' (1967, p. 57). Yet it seems to me that their value and influence endures, and that we might profit in particular from taking Carnap and Neurath more seriously as translation theorists.

In their language criticism the Vienna Circle thinkers were undoubtedly part of a long intellectual tradition. For Umberto Eco, 'the entire logical positivist movement was heir to the Baconian polemic against the vagaries of natural languages productive of nothing but metaphysical illusions and false problems' (Eco, 1995, p. 313). Ironically, given their implacable opposition to metaphysics, the artificial, simplified language projects of Carnap and Neurath also bear more than a passing resemblance to the dreams of Leibniz, who sought to devise a logical calculus-cum-universal language ('characteristica universalis') which would both satisfy the highest aesthetic criteria and demonstrate the metaphysical truths of pre-established harmony and the principle of sufficient reason (Walker, 1972). Yet the historical significance of the Vienna Circle's thinking on language and translation points forward, as well.

In histories of translation theory Roman Jakobson's 1959 article 'On Linguistic Aspects of Translation' (Jakobson, 1959) is usually credited with seminal importance, and it certainly succeeded in focussing discussion within the nascent discipline on questions of linguistic meaning and equivalence (see e.g., Kenny, 1998; Munday et al., 2022, pp. 49–52). Yet Jakobson devotes his opening paragraph to critiquing Bertrand Russell's 1950 essay 'Logical Positivism', thus signalling that his contribution is in fact part of an ongoing debate that stretches back to the Vienna Circle in the inter-war period. Similarly, Jakobson's article introduced the term 'intersemiotic translation' to designate the

translation of a verbal sign into 'another, nonverbal system of symbols' (Jakobson, 1959, p. 233), but he was only really describing after the fact what Carnap, Neurath, Schlick and the others had been exploring a quarter century earlier with their conceptions of the *Logical Structure of the World*, 'physical language', 'pictorial language' and their inter-translatability. Some of the Vienna Circle's linguistic conceptions (like their quasi-alchemical obsession with rules of equivalent transformation) have doubtless not aged well, but overall they deserve to occupy a more substantial position in the history of translation theory.

Notes

1. Misattributed to 'George Schick' until a correction was published in *The Journal of Philosophy*, *56*(25), 3 December 1959, p. 1004, and *Mind*, *69*(273), January 1960, p. 119.
2. Cf. Edmonds, 2020: 'A remarkable aspect of the post-Austrian lives of the Circle was how swiftly they accommodated themselves to English – exemplifying a general pattern among refugees from the Nazi era. They were soon speaking English at home and to each other. As early as 1942, Popper and Carnap were writing to each other in English' (p. 230).
3. I take a different view of Ayer's study from Andreas Vrahimis, who argues: 'One of the basic difficulties that [*Language, Truth and Logic*] presents to the historian of philosophy derives from the fact that it presents its views and arguments almost as if they were completely detached from the Germanophone context in which they were initially developed' (2021, p. 43). For example, Ayer gives several terms from Carnap's *Logische Syntax der Sprache* in the original German (1976, p. 77n. 6). The previous year Stebbing had reviewed several Carnap publications for *Mind*, quoting *in extenso* from Carnap's German, without glossing (Stebbing, 1935).
4. As he put it in a 1989 interview: 'I'd just got married for the first time, and I thought Vienna would be a nice place to go to for a honeymoon. At this point I didn't speak much German, but I thought I'd pick up some, which I did, and so I went and worked with the Vienna Circle. I couldn't really take much part in their debates, but I understood what was going on and came back very enthusiastic about what they were doing' (Honderich, 1991, p. 209). On the magnetic attraction of German universities to visiting international philosophy students in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see de Berg & Large, 2012, pp. 1–2.
5. In the period 1926–1930 five key texts by Bertrand Russell were published in German translations, for example, four of them by the Berlin Circle philosopher Kurt Grelling (see Russell, 1926, 1927, 1928, 1929, 1930).
6. Edmonds points out, for example, that Marcel Natkin was Polish-born, Béla Juhos a Hungarian, and Friedrich Waismann of Russian origin (2020, pp. 17–18).
7. Schlick's 1931 article 'Die Kausalität in der gegenwärtigen Physik' (Stöltzner & Uebel, 2006, pp. 543–588) quotes a few words in English from Arthur Eddington's *The Nature of the Physical World* (p. 584f.). Neurath's article 'Die Enzyklopädie als "Modell"' (Stöltzner & Uebel, 2006, pp. 375–395) quotes a sentence in English (p. 391) from the first foreign-language article to be published in *Erkenntnis* (Brown, 1934), and it needs bearing in mind that this version of Neurath's article is itself a translation (by Brigitte Treschmitzer and Hans Georg Zilian) from a French original (Neurath, 1936).
8. This was a particular interest of Carnap's, even though it brought him into conflict with Wittgenstein: 'At our very first meeting with Wittgenstein, Schlick unfortunately mentioned that I was interested in the problem of an international language like Esperanto. As I had expected, Wittgenstein was definitely opposed to this idea. But I was surprised by the vehemence of his emotions. A language which had not "grown organically" seemed to him not only useless but despicable' (Carnap, 1963, p. 26).

9. In their early years several of the group actually worked as translators. In 1910 Neurath published a German version of Francis Galton's *Hereditary Genius* which he had co-translated with his first wife Anna Schapire-Neurath (Uebel, 2010, pp. 217–218), while Rose Rand 'paid for her doctorate fees […] by translating articles on logic from Polish into German' (Edmonds, 2020, p. 18).

10. This leads Eric Schliesser to be critical of some of the translation choices made by Vienna Circle translators like Rolf A. George: 'in general Carnap was not blessed in his translators. I don't think George's *Logical Structure of the World* really conveys the meaning of *Der Logische Aufbau der Welt*. (When I first heard the title of the book in English, I thought it was a book in the philosophy of physics.) *The Logical Construction of the World* would have better conveyed both the agency and progressivity involved (not to mention the resonances with Kantianism). To the best of my knowledge, little attention is paid to the quality of translations of early analytic philosophy' (Schliesser, 2017). See also Tribe, 2019.

11. These difficulties applied when translating in the other direction too, of course, as when Schlick, in this same paper, translates Russell's 'meaning' with 'Sinn' instead of 'Bedeutung' (see Stöltzner & Uebel, 2006, p. 662n. 48).

12. Schliesser comments here: 'there is a real distinction between *overcoming* metaphysics (a straightforward and philosophically resonant translation of Carnap's title) and *eliminating* it, which gives analytic philosophy a more militarist sensibility' (Schliesser, 2017), but blames Arthur Pap for '[doing] a bad job on the title', whereas Pap was presumably following Ayer when he translated the essay in 1959.

13. The project of Carnap's *Logische Syntax der Sprache* (1934a) had already been fatally undermined by Kurt Gödel's incompleteness theorem (1931) and Alfred Tarski's undefinability theorem (1933). See Hintikka, 2009, p. 283.

Acknowledgements

Disclosure statement

Notes on contributor

Duncan Large is Academic Director of the British Centre for Literary Translation at the University of East Anglia in Norwich. He taught previously at the Universities of Oxford, Paris III (Sorbonne Nouvelle), Dublin (Trinity College) and Swansea. He is Professor of European Literature and Translation at UEA and Chairman of the PETRA-E Network of European literary translation training institutions. He has authored and edited six books about Nietzsche and German philosophy; he has also published two Nietzsche translations with Oxford World's Classics (*Twilight of the Idols*, *Ecce Homo*), and one translation from the French (Sarah Kofman's *Nietzsche and Metaphor*). With Jacob Blakesley (Leeds) he is Editor of the new monograph series *Routledge Studies in Literary Translation*; with Alan D. Schrift and Adrian Del Caro he is General Editor of *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche* (Stanford University Press). His latest book publications are the co-edited volumes *Untranslatability: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (Routledge, 2018) and *Nietzsche's 'Ecce Homo'* (De Gruyter, 2021).

ORCID

Duncan Large 🔟 http://orcid.org/0000-0001-6555-7334

References

Ammon, U. (2020). German for international scientific and academic communication. In *The position of the German language in the world*, David Charlston (Trans.) (pp. 236–324). Routledge.

Ayer, A. J. (1936). The principle of verifiability. *Mind. A Quarterly Review of Psychology and Philosophy*, *XLV*(178), 199–203. https://doi.org/10.1093/mind/XLV.178.199

Ayer, A. J. (ed.). (1959). *Logical positivism*. Allen & Unwin.

Ayer, A. J. (1976). *Language, truth and logic* (2nd ed.). Penguin.

Beaney, M., & Chapman S. (2021). Susan Stebbing. In E. N. Zalta (Ed.) *The Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy* (Summer 2021 Edition). https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/stebbing/

Blumberg, A., & Feigl, H. (1931). Logical positivism: A new movement in European philosophy. *The Journal of Philosophy*, *28*(11), 281–296. https://doi.org/10.2307/2015437

Brown, J. F. (1934). A methodological consideration of the problem of psychometrics. *Erkenntnis*, *4*(1), 46–61. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01793476

Carnap, R. (1931a). Überwindung der Metaphysik durch logische Analyse der Sprache. *Erkenntnis*, *2*(1), 219–241. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02028153

Carnap, R. (1931b). Die physikalische Sprache als Universalsprache der Wissenschaft. *Erkenntnis*, *2*(1), 432–465. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02028172

Carnap, R. (1934a). *Logische Syntax der Sprache*. Springer.

Carnap, R. (1934b). *The unity of science*, M. Black (Trans.). Kegan Paul.

Carnap, R. (1935). *Philosophy and logical syntax*. Kegan Paul.

Carnap, R. (1937). *The logical syntax of language*, Amethé Smeaton (Trans.). Routledge.

Carnap, R. (1963). Intellectual autobiography. In P. Arthur Schilpp (Ed.), *The philosophy of Rudolf Carnap* (pp. 3–84). Open Court.

Carnap, R. (1967). *The logical structure of the world: Pseudoproblems in philosophy*, Rolf A. George (Trans.). University of California Press.

Carnap, R., Hahn, H., & Neurath, O. (1929). *Wissenschaftliche Weltauffassung. Der Wiener Kreis*. Wolf.

Carnap, R., Hahn, H., & Neurath, O. (1973). The scientific conception of the world: The Vienna Circle, Marie Neurath and Paul Foulkes (Trans.). In M. Neurath, & R. S. Cohen (Eds.), *Empiricism and Sociology* (pp. 299–318). Reidel.

Creath, R. (2007). Vienna, the city of Quine's dreams. In A. Richardson, & T. Uebel (Eds.), *The Cambridge companion to logical empiricism* (pp. 332–345). Cambridge University Press.

de Berg, H., & Large D. (2012). Introduction: German thought since Kant. In de Berg, & Large (Eds.), *Modern German thought from Kant to Habermas: An annotated German-language reader* (pp. 1–20). Camden House.

Eco, U. (1995). *The search for the perfect language*, James Fentress (Trans.). Blackwell.

Edmonds, D. (2020). *The murder of Professor Schlick: The rise and fall of the Vienna Circle*. Princeton University Press.

Feigl, H. (1979). *Moritz Schlick: A memoir*, Peter Heath (Trans.). In Schlick 1979, 1: xv–xxxviii.

Frege, G. (1879). *Begriffsschrift: eine der arithmetischen nachgebildete Formelsprache des reinen Denkens*. Louis Nebert.

Friedl, J. (2022). The Vienna Circle's relationship with Wittgenstein. In T. Uebel, & C. Limbeck-Lilienau (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of logical empiricism* (pp. 279–287). Routledge.

Friedman, M. (2000). *A parting of the ways: Carnap, Cassirer and Heidegger*. Open Court.

Gordin, M. D. (2015). *Scientific Babel: The language of science from the fall of Latin to the rise of English*. Profile Books.

Hanfling, O. (ed.). (1981). *Essential readings in logical positivism*. Basil Blackwell.

Hawkins, S. (2022). 'Good translating is very hard work': Karl Popper, translation theorist in spite of himself. *Target. International Journal of Translation Studies*, *34*(1), 3–36. https://doi.org/10.1075/target.20042.haw

Hintikka, J. (2009). Logicism. In A. D. Irvine (Ed.), *Philosophy of mathematics* (pp. 271–290). Elsevier.

Honderich, T. (1991). An interview with A. J. Ayer. *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement*, *30*, 209–226. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1358246100007785

Inwood, M. (1999). Does the nothing noth? *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement*, *44*, 271–290. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1358246100006767

Isaacson, D. (2004). Quine and logical positivism. In R. F. Gibson, Jr (Ed.), *The Cambridge companion to Quine* (pp. 214–269). Cambridge University Press.

Jakobson, R. (1959). On linguistic aspects of translation. In R. A. Brower (Ed.), *On translation* (pp. 232–239). Harvard University Press.

Janssen-Lauret, F. (2022). Women in logical empiricism. In T. Uebel, & C. Limbeck-Lilienau (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of logical empiricism* (pp. 127–135). Routledge.

Kenny, D. (1998). Equivalence. In M. Baker (Ed.), *Routledge encyclopedia of translation studies*. Routledge.

McElvenny, J. (2013). International language and the everyday: Contact and collaboration between C. K. Ogden, Rudolf Carnap and Otto Neurath. *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*, *21* (6), 1194–1218.

McElvenny, J. (2018). Ogden and the Vienna Circle. In *Language and meaning in the age of modernism: C. K. Ogden and his contemporaries* (pp. 113–153). Edinburgh University Press.

McGuinness, B. (ed.). (1987). *Unified science: The Vienna Circle monograph series originally edited by Otto Neurath, now in an English edition*, Hans Kaal (Trans.). Reidel.

Munday, J., Pinto, S. R., & Blakesley, J. (2022). *Introducing translation studies: Theories and applications* (5th ed.). Routledge.

Neurath, O. (1931). Physicalism: The philosophy of the Viennese Circle. *The Monist*, *41*(4), 618–623. https://doi.org/10.5840/monist19314147

Neurath, O. (1932). Protokollsätze. *Erkenntnis*, *3*(1), 204–214. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01886420

Neurath, O. (1933). *Einheitswissenschaft und Psychologie*. Gerold.

Neurath, O. (1936). L'Encyclopédie comme 'modèle'. *Revue de Synthèse*, *2*, 187–201.

Neurath, O. (1959). Protocol sentences, Frederic Schick (Trans.). In *Ayer 1959* (pp. 199–208).

Neurath, O. (1991). *Gesammelte bildpädagogische Schriften* (R. Haller and R. Kinross, Eds.). Hölder-Pichler-Tempsky.

Passmore, J. (1967). Logical positivism. In P. Edwards (Ed.), *The encyclopedia of philosophy* (Vol. 5, pp. 52–57). Macmillan.

Pincock, C. (2022). Logical empiricism in the anglophone world: Early receptions. In T. Uebel, & C. Limbeck-Lilienau (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of logical empiricism* (pp. 325–333). Routledge.

Quine, W. V. O. (1960). *Word and object*. MIT Press.

Russell, B. (1926). *Unser Wissen von der Aussenwelt [Our knowledge of the external world]*, Walter Rothstock (Trans.). Meiner.

Russell, B. (1927). *Die Analyse des Geistes [The analysis of mind]*, Kurt Grelling (Trans.). Meiner.

Russell, B. (1928). *Das ABC der Relativitätstheorie [ABC of relativity]*, Kurt Grelling (Trans.). Drei Masken.

Russell, B. (1929). *Philosophie der Materie [The analysis of matter]*, Kurt Grelling (Trans.). Teubner.

Russell, B. (1930). *Grundriß der Philosophie [An outline of philosophy]*, Kurt Grelling (Trans.). Drei Masken.

Schlick, M. (1938). *Gesammelte Aufsätze*, *1926–1936*. Gerold & Co.

Schlick, M. (1974). *General theory of knowledge*, Albert E. Blumberg (Trans.). Springer.

Schlick, M. (1979). *Philosophical papers* (H. L. Mulder and B. F. B. van de Velde-Schlick, Eds.), 2 Vols. Reidel.

Schliesser, E. (2017). On translation, in analytic philosophy. https://digressionsnimpressions.typepad.com/digressionsimpressions/2017/09/on-translation-in-analytic-philosophy.html.

Sigmund, K. (2017). *Exact thinking in demented times: The Vienna Circle and the epic quest for the foundations of science*. Basic Books.

Stadler, F. (2007). The Vienna Circle: Context, profile, and development, Camilla Nielsen (Trans.). In A. Richardson, & T. Uebel (Eds.), *The Cambridge companion to logical empiricism* (pp. 13–40). Cambridge University Press.

Stadler, F. (2017). The 'Vienna Circle' ('Wiener Kreis') 1924–1936. https://geschichte.univie.ac.at/en/articles/vienna-circle-wiener-kreis.

Stebbing, S. (1933). Logical positivism and analysis. *Proceedings of the British Academy*, *19*, 53–87. https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.19.1.53

Stebbing, S. (1935). Carnap's *Logische Syntax der Sprache, Die Aufgabe der Wissenschaftslogik, Philosophy and logical syntax, The Unity of science. Mind. A Quarterly Review of Psychology and Philosophy 44*(176), 499–511.

Stöltzner, M., & Uebel, T. (eds.). (2006). *Wiener Kreis: Texte zur wissenschaftlichen Weltauffassung von Rudolf Carnap, Otto Neurath, Moritz Schlick, Philipp Frank, Hans Hahn, Karl Menger, Edgar Zilsel und Gustav Bergmann.* Meiner.

Tribe, K. (2019). Style and substance in non-literary translation. In R. Schögler (Ed.), *Circulation of academic thought: Rethinking translation in the academic field* (pp. 55–75). Peter Lang.

Uebel, T. (2008). Writing a revolution: On the production and early reception of the Vienna Circle's manifesto. *Perspectives on Science*, *16*(1), 70–102. https://doi.org/10.1162/posc.2008.16.1.70

Uebel, T. (2010). What's right about Carnap, Neurath and the left Vienna Circle thesis: A refutation. *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science Part A*, *41*(2), 214–221. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.shpsa.2010.03.001

Verhaegh, S. (2020). Coming to America: Carnap, Reichenbach and the great intellectual migration. Part I: Rudolf Carnap. *Journal for the History of Analytical Philosophy*, *8*(11), 1–23.

Vrahimis, A. (2020). The Vienna Circle's reception of Nietzsche. *Journal for the History of Analytical Philosophy*, *8*(9), 1–29.

Vrahimis, A. (2021). *Language, Truth and Logic* and the anglophone reception of the Vienna Circle. In A. Tamas Tuboly (Ed.), *The historical and philosophical significance of Ayer's 'Language, Truth and Logic'* (pp. 41–68). Palgrave Macmillan.

Waismann, F. (1938). Vorwort. In *Schlick 1938* (pp. VII–XXXI).

Walker, D. P. (1972). Leibniz and language. *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, *35*(1), 294–307. https://doi.org/10.2307/750934

Wilson, P. (2016). *Translation after Wittgenstein*. Routledge.

Wittgenstein, L. (1922). *Tractatus logico-philosophicus*, C. K. Ogden and F. P. Ramsey (Trans.). Kegan Paul.

Wittgenstein, L. (1953). *Philosophische Untersuchungen/Philosophical investigations*, G. E. M. Anscombe (Trans.). Basil Blackwell.