WISSENSCHAFTLICHE WELTAUFFASSUNG:

DER WIENER KREIS

[The Scientific Conception of the World: The Vienna Circle] 1

*Dedicated to Moritz Schlick*

PREFACE

At the beginning of 1929 Moritz Schlick received a very tempting call to

Bonn. After some vacillation he decided to remain in Vienna. On this

occasion, for the first time it became clear to him and us that there is

such a thing as the 'Vienna Circle' of the scientific conception of the

world, which goes on developing this mode of thought in a collaborative

effort. This circle has no rigid organization; it consists of people of an

equal and basic scientific attitude; each individual endeavours to fit in,

each puts common ties in the foreground, none wishes to disturb the

links through idiosyncrasies. **In** many cases one can deputise for another,

the work of one can be carried on by another.

The Vienna Circle aims at making contact with those similarly oriented

and ,at influencing those who stand further off. Collaboration in the Ernst

Mach Society is the expression of this endeavour; Sclick is the chairman

of this society and several members of Schlick's circle belong to the

committee.

On 15-16 September 1929, the Ernst Mach Society, with the Society

for Empirical Philosophy (Berlin), will hold a conference in Prague, on

the epistemology of the exact sciences, in conjunction with the conference

of the German Physical Society and the German Association of Mathematicians

which will take place there at the same time. Besides technical

questions, questions of principle are to be discussed. It was decided that

on the occasion of this conference the present pamplet on the Vienna

Circle of the scientific conception of the world was to be published. It is

to be handed to Schlick in October 1929when he returns from his visiting

professorship at Stanford University, California, as token of gratitude

and joy at his remaining in Vienna. The second part of the pamphlet

contains a bibliography compiled in collaboration with those concerned.

It is to give a survey of the area of problems in which those who belong

to, or are near to, the Vienna Circle are working.

*Vienna, August 1929*

For the Ernst Mach Society

*Hans Hahn*

*Otto Neurath Rudolf Carnap*

1. THE VIENNA CIRCLE OF THE SCIENTIFIC CONCEPTION OF THE

WORLD

*1.1. Historical Background*

Many assert that metaphysical and theologising thought is again on the

increase today, not only in life but also in science. Is this a general phenomenon

or merely a change restricted to certain circles? The assertion

itself is easily confirmed if one looks at the topics of university courses

and at the titles of philosophic publications. But likewise the opposite

spirit of enlightenment and *anti-metaphysical factual research* is growing

stronger today, in that it is becoming conscious of its existence and task.

In some circles the mode of thought grounded in experience and averse

to speculation is stronger than ever, being strengthened precisely by the

new opposition that has arisen. .

In the research work of all branches of empirical science this *spirit of*

*a scientific conception of the world*is alive. However only a very few leading

thinkers give it systematic thought or advocate its principles, and but

rarely are they in a position to assemble a circle of like-minded colleagues

around them. We find anti-metaphysical endeavours especially in England,

where the tradition of the great empiricists is still alive; the investigations

of Russell and Whitehead on logic and the analysis of reality have won

international significance. In the U.S.A. these endeavours take on the most

varied forms; in a certain sense James belongs to this group too. The

new Russia definitely is seeking for a scientific world conception, even

if partly leaning on older materialistic currents. On the continent of

Europe, a concentration of productive work in the direction of a scientific

world conception is to be found especially in Berlin (Reichenbach,

Petzoldt, Grelling, Dubislav and others) and in Vienna.

That Vienna was specially suitable ground for this development is

historically understandable. In the second half of the nineteenth century,

liberalism was long the dominant political current. Its world of ideas

stems from the enlightenment, from empiricism, utilitarianism and the

free trade movement of England. In Vienna's liberal movement, scholars

of world renown occupied leading positions. Here an anti-metaphysical

spirit was cultivated, for instance, by men like Theodor Gomperz who

translated the works of J. S. Mill,Suess, Jodl and others.

'Thanks to this spirit of enlightenment, Vienna has been leading in a

scientifically oriented people's education. With the collaboration of Victor

Adler and Friedrich Jodl, the society for popular education was founded

and carried forth; 'popular university courses' and the 'people's college'

were set up by the well-known historian Ludo Hartmann whose antimetaphysical

attitude and materialist conception of history expressed

itself in all his actions. The same spirit also.inspired the movement of the

'Free School' which was the forerunner of today's school reform.

In this liberal atmosphere lived Ernst Mach (born 1838) who was in

Vienna as student and as *privatdozent* (1861-64). He returned to Vienna

only at an advanced age when a special chair of the philosophy of the

inductive sciences was created for him (1895). He was especially intent on

cleansing empirical science, and in the first place, physics, of metaphysical

notions. We recall his critique of absolute space which made him a forerunner

of Einstein, his struggle against the metaphysics of the thing-in itself

and of the concept of substance, and his investigations of the construction

of scientific concepts from ultimate elements, namely sense data.

In some points the development of science has not vindicated his views,

for instance in his opposition to atomic theory and in his expectation

that physics would be advanced through the physiology of the senses.

The essential points of his conception however were of positive use in

the further development of science. Mach's chair was later occupied by

Ludwig Boltzmann (1902-06) who held decidedly empiricist views.

The activity of the physicists Mach and Boltzmann in a philosophical

professorship makes it conceivable that there was a lively dominant

interest in the epistemological and logical problems that are linked with

the foundations of physics. These problems concerning foundations also

led toward a renewal of logic. The path towards these objectives had also

been cleared in Vienni from quite a different quarter by Franz Brentano

(during 1874-80 professor of philosophy in the theological faculty, and

later lecturer in the philosophical faculty). As a Catholic priest Brentano

understood scholasticism; he started directly from the scholastic logic and

from Leibniz's endeavours to reform logic, while leaving aside Kant and

the idealist system-builders. Brentano and his students time and again

showed their understanding of men like Bolzano *(Wissenschaftslehre,*

1837) and others who were working toward a rigorous new foundation

of logic. In particular Alois HofIer (1853-1922) put this side of Brentano's

philosophy in the foreground before a forum in which, through Mach's

and Boltzmann's influence, the adherents of the scientific world conception

were strongly represented. In the Philosophical Society at the University

of Vienna numerous discussions took place under Hofler's direction,

concerning questions of the foundation of physics and allied!

epistemological and logical problems. The Philosophical Society published

*Prefaces and Introductions to Classical Works on Mechanics* (1899), as

well as the individual papers of Bolzano (edited by Hofler and Hahn,

1914 and 1921). In Brentano's Viennese circle there was the young

Alexius von Meinong (1870-82, later professor in Graz), whose theory

of objects (1907) has certainly some affinity to modern theories of concepts

and whose pupil Ernst Mally (Graz) also worked in the field of logistics.

The early writings of Hans Pichler (1909) also belong to these circles.

Roughly at the same time as Mach, his contemporary and friend Jose

Popper-Lynkeus worked in Vienna. Beside his physical and technical

achievements we mention his large-scale, if unsystematic philosophical

reflections (1899) and his rational economic plan *(A General Peacetime*

*Labour Draft,* 1878). He consciously served the spirit of enlightenment,

as is also evident from his book on Voltaire. His rejection of metaphysics

was shared by many other Viennese sociologists, for example Rudolf

Goldscheid. It is remarkable that in the field of political economy, too,

there was in Vienna a strictly scientific method, used by the marginal

utility school (Carl Menger, 1871); this method took root in England,

France and Scandinavia, but not in Germany. Marxist theory likewise

was cultivated and extended with special emphasis in Vienna (Otto

Bauer, Rudolf Hilferding, Max Adler and others).

These influences from various sides had the result, especially since 1900,

that there was in Vienna a sizeable number of people who frequently and

assiduously discussed more general problems in close connection with

empirical sciences. Above all these were epistemological and methodological

problems of physics, for instance Poincare's conventionalism,

Duhem's conception of the aim and structure of physical theories (his

translator was the Viennese Friedrich Adler, a follower of Mach, at that

time *privatdozent* in Zurich); also questions about the foundations of

mathematics, problems of axiomatics, logistic and the like. The following

were the main strands from the history of science and philosophy that

came together here, marked by those of their representatives whose

works were mainly read and discussed:

(1) Positivism and empiricism: Hume, Enlightenment, Comte, J. S.

Mill, Richard Avenarius, Mach.

(2) Foundations, aims and methods of empirical science (hypotheses in

physics, geometry, etc.): Helmholtz, Riemann, Mach, Poincare, Enriques,

Duhem, BoItzmann, Einstein.

(3) Logistic and its application to reality:. Leibniz,.: Peano, Frege,

Schroder, Russell, Whitehead, Wittgenstein.' ,

(4) Axiomatics: Pasch, Peano, Vailati, Pieri, Hilbert.

(5) Hedonism and positivist sociology: Epicurus, Hume, Bentham,

J. S. Mill, Comte, Feuerbach, Marx, Spencer, Mtiller-Lyer, Popper-

Lynkeus, Carl Menger (the elder).

*1.2. The Circle around Schlick .*

In 1922 Moritz Schlick was called from Kiel to Vienna. His activities

fitted well into the historical development of the Viennese scientific, atmosphere.

Himself originally a physicist, he awakened to new life the

tradition that had been started by Mach and BoItzann and, in a certain

sense, carried on by the anti-metaphysically inclined Adolf Stohr. (In

Vienna successively: Mach, Boltzmann, Stehr, Schlick; in Prague: Mach,

Einstein, Philipp Frank.) .

Around Schlick, there gathered in the course of time a circle whose

members united various endeavours in the direction of a scientific conception

of the world. This concentration produced a fruitful mutual inspiration.

Not one of the members is a so-called 'pure' philosopher; all

of them have done work in a special field of science. Moreover they come

from different branches of science and originally from different philosophic

attitudes. But over the years growing uniformity appeared; this

too was a result of the specifically scientific attitude: "What can be said

at all, can be said clearly" (Wittgenstein); if there are differences of

opinion, it is in the end possible to agree, and therefore agreement is

demanded. It became increasingly clearer that a position not only free

from metaphysics, but opposed to metaphysics was the common goal of all.

The attitudes toward questions of life also showed a noteworthy

agreement, although these questions were not in the foreground of themes

discussed within the Circle. For these attitudes are more closely related

to the scientific world-conception than it might at first glance appear

from a purely theoretical point of view.:For instance, endeavours toward

a new organization of economic and social relations, toward the unification

of mankind, toward a reform of school and education, all show an inner

link with the scientific world-conception; it appears that these endeavours

are welcomed and regarded with sympathy by the members of the Circle,

some of whom indeed actively further them.

The Vienna Circle does not confine itself to collective work as a closed

group. It is also trying to make contact with the living movements of the

present, so far as they are well disposed toward the scientific world-conception

and turn away from metaphysics and theology. The Ernst Mach

Society is today the place from which the Circle speaks to a wider public.

This society, as stated in its program, wishes to "further and disseminate

the scientific world-conception. It will organize lectures and publications

about the present position of the scientific world-conception, in order to

demonstrate the significance of exact research for the social sciences and

the natural sciences. In this way intellectual tools should be formed for

modern empiricism, tools that are also needed in forming public and private

life." By the choice of its name, the society wishes to describe its basic

orientation: science free of metaphysics. This, however, does not mean

that the society declares itself in programmatic agreement with the individual

doctrines of Mach. The Vienna Circle believes that in collaborating

with the Ernst Mach Society it fulfils a demand of the day: we have to

fashion intellectual tools for everyday life, for the daily life of the scholar

but also for the daily life of all those who in some way join in working at

the conscious re-shaping of life. The vitality that shows itself in the efforts

for a rational transformation of the social and economic order, permeates

the movement for a scientific world-conception too. It is typical of the

present situation in Vienna that when the Ernst Mach Society was founded

in November 1928, Schlick was chosen chairman; round him the

common work In the field of the scientific world-conception had concentrated

most strongly.

Schlick and Philipp Frank jointIy edit the collection of *Monographs on*

*the Scientific World-Conception [Schriften zur wissenschaftlichen Weltauffassung)*

in which members of the Vienna Circle preponderate.

2. THE SCIENTIFIC WORLD CONCEPTION

The scientific world conception is characterised not so much by theses of

its own, but rather by its basic attitude, its points of view and direction

of research. The goal ahead is *unified science.* The endeavour is to link

and harmonise the achievements of individual investigators in their various

fields of science. From this aim follows the emphasis on *collective efforts,*

and also the emphasis on what can be grasped intersubjectively; from

this springs the search for a neutral system of formulae, for a symbolism

freed from the slag of historical languages; and also the search for a

total system of concepts. Neatness and clarity are striven for, and dark

distances and unfathomable depths rejected. In science there are no

'depths'; there is surface everywhere: all experience forms a complex

network, which cannot always be surveyed and,can often be grasped only

in parts. Everything is accessible to man; and man is the measure of all

things. Here is an affinity with the Sophists, not with the Platonists'; with

the Epicureans, not with the Pythagoreans; with all those who stand for

earthly being and the here and now. The scientific world-conception

knows *no unsolvable riddle.* Clarification of the traditional philosophical

problems leads us partly to unmask them as pseud()-problems, and partly

to transform them into empirical problems and thereby subject them to

the judgment of experimental science. The task of philosophical work

lies in this clarification of problems and assertions, not in the propounding

of special 'philosophical' pronouncements. The method of this clarification

is that of *logical analysis;* of it, Russell says *(Our Knowledge of the*

*External World,* p. 4) that it "has gradually crept into philosophy through

the critical scrutiny of mathematics... It represents, I believe, the same

kind of advance as was introduced into physics by Galileo: the substitution

of piecemeal, detailed and verifiable results for large untested generalities

recommended only by a certain appeal to imagination."

It is *the method of logical analysis* that essentially distinguishes recent

empiricism and positivism from the earlier version that was more biological-

psychological in its orientation. If someone asserts "there is a God",

"the primary basis of the world is the unconscious", "there is an entelechy

which is the leading principle in the living organism"; we do not

say to him: "what you say is false"; but we ask him: "what do you mean

by these statements?" Then it appears that there is a sharp boundary

between two kinds of statements. To one belong statements as they are

made by empirical science; their meaning can be determined by logical

analysis or, more precisely, through reduction to the simplest statements

about the empirically given. The other statements, to which belong those

cited above, reveal themselves as empty of meaning if one takes them

in the way that metaphysicians intend. One can, of course, often re-interpret

them as empirical statements; but then they lose the content of

feeling which is usually essential to the metaphysician. The metaphysician

and the theologian believe, thereby misunderstanding themselves, that

their statements say something, or that they denote a state of affairs.

Analysis, however, shows that these statements say nothing but merely

express a certain mood and spirit. To express such feelings for life can be

a significant task. But the proper medium for doing so is art, for instance

lyric poetry or music. It is dangerous to choose the linguistic garb of a

theory instead: a theoretical content is simulated where none exists. If

a metaphysician or theologian wants to retain the usual medium of language,

then he must himself realise and bring out clearly that he is giving

not description but expression, not theory or communication of knowledge,

but poetry or myth. If a mystic asserts that he has experiences that

lie above and beyond all concepts, one cannot deny this. But the mystic

cannot talk about it, for talking implies capture by concepts and reduction

to scientifically classifiable states of affairs.

The scientific world-conception rejects metaphysical philosophy. But

how can we explain the wrong paths of metaphysics? This question may

be posed from several points of view: psychological, sociological and

logical. Research in a psychological direction is still in its early stages;

the beginnings of more penetrating explanation may perhaps be seen in

the investigations of Freudian psychoanalysis. The state of sociological

investigation is similar; we may mention the theory of the 'ideological

superstructure'; here the field remains open to worthwhile further

research.

More advanced is the clarification of *the logical origins of metaphysical*

*aberration,* especially through the works of Russell and Wittgenstein. In

metaphysical theory, and even in the very form of the questions, there

are two basic logical mistakes: too narrow a tie to the form of *traditional*

*languages* and a confusion about the logical achievement of thought.

Ordinary language for instance uses the same part of speech, the substantive,

for things ('apple') as well as as for qualities {'hardness'), relations

('friendship'), and processes ('sleep'); therefore it misleads , one into a

thing-like' conception of functional concepts (hypostasis, substantiali-

zation). One can quote countless similar examples of linguistic misleading,

that have been equally fatal to philosophers.

The second basic error of metaphysics consists in the notion that

*thinking* can either lead to knowledge out of its own resources without

using any empirical material, or at least arrive at new contents by an

inference from given states of affair. Logical, investigation, however,

leads to the result that all thought and inference consists 'of nothing but

a transition from statements to other statements that contain nothing

that was not already in the former (tautological transformation). It is

therefore not possible to develop a metaphysic from 'pure thought,'.

In such a way logical analysis overcomes not only metaphysics in the

proper, classical sense of the word, especially scholastic metaphysics and

that of the systems of German idealism, but also the hidden metaphysics

of Kantian and modern *apriorism.* The scientific world-conception knows

no unconditionally valid knowledge derived from pure reason, no 'synthetic

judgments a priori' of the kind that lie at the basis of Kantian

epistemology and even more of all pre- and post-Kantian ontology and

metaphysics. The judgments of arithmetic, geometry, and certain fundamental

principles of physics, that Kant took as examples of a priori knowledge

will be discussed later. It is precisely in the rejection of the possibility

of' synthetic knowledge a priori that the basic thesis of modern

empiricism lies. The scientific world-conception knows only empirical

statements about things of all kinds, and analytic statements of logic and

mathematics.

In rejecting overt metaphysics and the concealed variety of apriorism,

all adherents of the scientific world-conception are at one. Beyond this,

the Vienna Circle maintain the vi1w that the statements of (critical)

*realism* and *idealism* about the reality or non-reality of the external world

and other minds are of a metaphysical character, because they are open

to the same objections as are the statements of the old metaphysics: they

are meaningless, because unverifiable and without content. For us, *some- ,*

*thing is 'real' through being incorporated into the total structure of experience.*

*Intuition* which is especially emphasised by metaphysicians as a source

of knowledge, is not rejected as such by the scientific world-conception.

However, rational justification has to pursue all intuitive knowledge step

by step. The seeker is allowed any method; but what has been found must

stand up to testing. The view which attributes to intuition a superior and

more penetrating power of knowing, capable of leading beyond the contents

of sense experience and not to be confined by the shackles of conceptual

thought - this view is rejected.

We have characterised the *scientific world-conception* essentially by *two*

*features. First* it is *empiricist and positivist:* there is kowledge only from

experience, which rests on what is immediately given. This sets the limits

for the content of legitimate science. *Second,* the scientific world-conception

is marked by application of a certain method, namely *logical analysis.*

The aim of scientific effort is to reach the goal, unified science, by applying

logical analysis to the empirical material. Since the meaning of

every statement of science must be statable by reduction to a statement

about the given, likewise the meaning of any concept, whatever branch

of science it may belong to, must be statable by step-wise reduction to

other concepts, down to the concepts of the lowest level which refer

directly to the given. If such an analysis were carried through for all

concepts, they would thus be ordered into a reductive system, a 'constitutive

system'. Investigations towards such a constitutive system, the

'constitutive theory', thus form the framework within which logical analysis

is applied by the scientific world-conception. Such investigations show

very soon that traditional Aristotelian scholastic logic is quite inadequate

for this purpose. Only modern symbolic logic ('logistic') succeeds in

gaining the required precision of concept definitions and of statements,

and in formalizing the intuitive process of inference of ordinary thought,

that is to bring it into a rigorous automatically controlled form by means

of a symbolic mechanism. Investigations into constitutive theory show

that the lowest layers of the constitutive system contain concepts of the

experience and qualities of the individual psyche; in the layer above are

physical objects; from these are constituted other minds and lastly the

objects of social science. The arrangement of.the concepts of the various

branches of science into the constitutive system can already be discerned

in outline today, but much remains to be done in detail. With the proof

of the possibility and the outline of the shape of the total system of

concepts, the relation of all statements to the given and with it the general

structure of *unified science* become recognisable too.

A scientific description can contain only the *structure* (form of order)

of objects: not their 'essence'. What unites men in language are structural

formulae; in them the content of the common knowledge of men presents

itself. Subjectively experienced qualities - redness, pleasure - are as such

only experiences, not knowledge; physical optics admits only what is in

principle understandable by a blind man too.

3. FIELDS OF PROBLEMS

*3.1. Foundations of Arithmetic*

In the writings and discussions of the Vienna Circle many different problems

are treated, stemming from various branches of science. Attempts

are .made to arrange the various lines of problems systematically ,and

thereby to clarify the' situation.

The problems concerning the foundations of arithmetic have become

of special historical significance for the development of the scientific

world-conception because they gave impulse to the development of a

new logic. After the very fruitful developments of mathematics in the

18th and 19th century during which more attention was given to the

wealth of new results than to subtle examination of their conceptual

foundations, this examination became unavoidable if mathematics were

not to lose the traditionally celebrated certainty of its structure. This

examination became even more urgent when certain contradictions, the

'paradoxes of set theory', arose. It was soon recognized that these were

not just difficulties in a special part of mathematics, but rather they were

general logical contradictions, 'antinomies', which pointed to essential

mistakes in the foundations of traditional logic. The task of eliminating

these contradictions gave a very strong impulse to the further development

of logic. Here efforts for *clarification of the concept of number* met

with those for an internal *reform cf logic.* Since Leibniz and Lambert,

the idea had come up again and again to master reality through a greater

precision of concepts and inferential processes, and to obtain this precision

by means of a symbolism fashioned after mathematics. After Boole,

Venn and others, especially Frege (1884), Schroder (1890) and Peano

(1895) worked on this problem. On the basis of these preparatory efforts

*Whitehead* and *Russell* (1910) were able to establish a coherent system

of logic in symbolic form ('logistic'), not only avoiding the contradictions

of traditional logic, but far exceeding that logic in intellectual wealth

and practical applicability. From this logical system they derived the

concepts of arithmetic and analysis, thereby giving mathematics a secure

foundation in logic.

Certain difficulties however remained in this attempt at overcoming the

foundation crisis of arithmetic (and set theory) and have so far not found

a definitively satisfactory solution. At present three different views confront

each other in this field; besides the 'logicism' of Russell and Whitehead,

there is Hilbert's 'formalism' which regards arithmetic as a playing

with formulae according to certain rules, and Brouwer's 'intuitionism'

according to which arithmetic knowledge rests on a not further reducible

intuition of duality and unity *[Zwei-einheit].* The debates are followed

with great interest in the Vienna Circle. Where the decision will lead in

the end cannot yet be foreseen; in any case, it will also imply a decision

about the structure of logic; hence the importance of this problem for

the scientific world-conception. Some hold that the three views are not

so far apart as it seems. They surmise that essential features of all three

will come closer in the course of future development and probably, using

the far-reaching ideas of Wittgenstein, will be united in the ultimate

solution.

The conception of mathematics as tautolqgical in character, which is

based on the investigations of Russell and Wittgenstein, is also held by

the Vienna Circle. It is to be noted that this conception is opposed not

only to apriorism and intuitionism, but also to the older empiricism (for

instance of j, S. Mill), which tried to derive mathematics and logic in an

experimental-inductive manner as it were.

Connected with the problems of arithmetic and logic are the investigations

into the nature of the *axiomatic method* in general (concepts of completeness,

independence, monomorphism, unambiguity and so on) and on

the establishment of axiom-systems for certain branches of mathematics.

*3.2. Foundations of Physics*

Originally the Vienna Circle's strongest interest was in the method of

empirical science. Inspired by ideas of Mach, Poincare, and Duhem, the

problems of mastering reality through scientific systems, especially through

*systems of hypotheses and axioms,* were discussed. A system of axioms,

cut loose from all empirical application, can at first be regarded as a

system of implicit definitions;that is to\say, the concepts that appear

in the axioms are fixed, or as it were defined, not from their content but

only from their mutual relations through the axioms. Such a system of

,axioms attains a meaning for reality only by the addition of further definitions,

namely the 'coordinating definitions', which state What objects of

reality are to be regarded as members of the system of axioms. The

development of empirical science, which is to represent reality by means

of as uniform and simple a net of concepts and judgments as possible,

can now proceed in one of two ways, as history shows. The changes

imposed by new experience can be made either in the axioms or in the

coordinating definitions. Here we touch the problem of conventions,

particularly treated by Poincare. '

The methodological problem of the application of axiom systems to

reafity may in principle arise for any branch of science. That these investigations

have thus far been fruitful almost solely for physics, however,

can be understood from the present stage of historical development

of science: in regard to precision and refinement of concepts; physics is

far ahead of the other branches of science.

Epistemological analysis of the leading concepts,of natural science has

freed them more and more from *metaphysical admixtures* which had

clung to them from ancient time. In particular, Helmholtz, Mach, Einstein,

and others have cleansed the concepts of *space, time, substance,*

*causality, and probability.* The doctrines of absolute space and time have

been overcome by the theory of relativity; space and time are no longer

absolute containers but only ordering manifolds for elementary processes.

Material substance has been dissolved by atomic theory and field theory.

Causality was divested of the anthropomorphic character of 'influence'

or 'necessary connection' and reduced to a relation among conditions, a

functional coordination. Further, in place of the many laws of nature

which were considered to be strictly valid, statistical laws have appeared;

following the quantum theory there is even doubt whether the concept

of strictly causal lawfulness is applicable to phenomena in very small

space-time regions. The concept of probability is reduced to the empirically

graspable concept of relative frequency.

Through the application of the *axiomatic method* to these problems,

the empirical components always separate from the merely conventional

ones, the content of statements from definitions. No room remains for

a priori synthetic judgments. That knowledge of the world is possible

rests not on human reason impressing its form on the material, but on

the material being ordered in a certain way. The kind and degree of this

order cannot be known beforehand. The world might be ordered much

more strictly than it is; but it might equally be ordered much less without

jeopardising the possibility of knowledge. Only step by step can the advancing

research of empirical science teach us in what degree the world

is regular. The method of induction, the inference from yesterday to

tomorrow, from here to there, is of course only valid if regularity exists.

But this method does not rest on some a priori presupposition of this

regularity. It may be applied wherever it leads to fruitful results, whether

or not it be adequately founded; it never yields certainty. However,

epistemological reflection demands that an inductive inference should be

given significance only insofar as it can be tested empirically. The scientific

world-conception will not condemn the success of a piece of research

because it has been gathered by means. that are inadequate, logically

unclear or empirically unfounded. But it will always strive at testing with

clarified aids, and demand an indirect or direct reduction to experience.

*3.3. Foundations of Geometry*

Among the questions about the foundations of physics, the problem of

*physical space* has received special significance in recent decades. The

investigations of Gauss (1816), Bolyai"(1823), Lobatchevski (1835) and

others led to *non-Euclidean geometry,* to a realisation that the hitherto

dominant classical geometric system of Euclid was only one of an infinite

set of systems, all of equal logical merit. This raised the question, which

of these geometries was that of actual space. Gauss had wanted to resolve

this question by measuring the angles of a large triangle. This made

*physical geometry* into an empirical science, a branch of physics. The

problems were further studied particularly by Riemann (1868), Helmholtz

(1868) and Poincare (1904). Poincare especially emphasised the link of

physical geometry with all other branches of physics: the question concerning

the nature of actual space can be answered only in connection

with a total system of physics. Einstein then found such a total system,

which answered the question in favour of a certain non-Euclidean system.

Through this development, physical geometry became more and more

clearly separated from pure *mathematical* geometry. The latter gradually

became more and more formalised thrugh further development of logical

analysIs. First it was arithmetised, that is, interpreted as the theory of

a certain number system. Next it was axiomatised, that is, represented

by means of a system of axioms that conceives the geometrical elements

(points, etc.) as undefined objects, and fixes only their mutual relations.

Finally geometry was logicised, namely represented as a theory of certain

structural relations. Thus geometry became the most important field of

application for the axiomatic method and for the general..theory of relations.

In this way, it gave the strongest impulse to the development of

the two methods which in turn became so important for the development

of logic itself, and thereby again for the scientific world-conception.

The relations between mathematical and physical geometry naturally

led to the problem of the application of axiom systems to reality which, as

mentioned, played a big role in the more general investigations about the

foundations of physics.

*3.4. Problems of the Foundations of Biology and Psychology*

Metaphysicians have always been fond of singling out biology as a special

field. This came out in the doctrine of a special life force, the theory of

*vitalism.* The modern representatives of this theory endeavour to bring

it from the unclear, confused form of the past into a conceptually' clear

formulation. In place of the life force, we have 'dominants' (Reinke, 1899)

or 'entetechies' ,(Driesch, 1905). Since these concepts do not satisfy the

requirement of reducibility to the given, the scientific world-conception

rejects them as metaphysical. The same holds true of so-called 'psychovitalism'

which puts forward an intervention of the soul, a 'role of leadership

of the mental in the material'. If,. however, one digs out of this

metaphysical vitalism the empirically graspable kernel, there remains the'

thesis that the processes of organic nature proceed according to laws

that cannot be reduced to physical laws. A more precise analysis shows

that this thesis is equivalent to the assertion that certain fields of reality

are not subject to a uniform and pervasive regularity.

It is understandable that the scientific world-conception can show

more definite confirmation for its views in those fields which have already

achieved conceptual precision than in others: in physics more than in

psychology. The linguistic forms which we still use in psychology today

have their origin in certain ancient metaphysical notions of the soul. The

formation of concepts in psychology is made difficult by these defects of

language: metaphysical burdens and logical incongruities. Moreover

there are certain factual difficulties. The result is that hitherto most of

the concepts used in psychology are inadequately defined; of some, it is

not known whether they have meaning or only simulate meaning through

usage. So, in this field nearly everything in the way of epistemological

analysis still remains to be done; of course, analysis here is more difficult

than in physics. The attempt of behaviorist psychology to grasp the

psychic through the behavior of bodies, which is at a level accessible to

perception, is, in its principled attitude, close to the scientific world conception.

*3.5. Foundations of the Social Sciences*

As we have specially considered with respect to physics and mathematics,

every branch of science is led to recognise that, sooner or later in its

development, it must conduct an epistemological examination of its foundations,

a logical analysis of its concepts. So too with the social sciences,

and in the first place with history and economics. For about a hundred

years, a process of elimination of metaphysical admixtures has been

operating in these fields. Of course the purification has not yet reached

the same degree as in physics; on the other hand, the task of cleansing is

less urgent perhaps. For it seems that even in the heyday of metaphysics

and theology, the metaphysical strain was not partictilarly strong here;.

maybe this is because the concepts in this field, such as war and peace,

import and export, are closer to direct perception than concepts like

atom and ether. It is not too difficult to drop concepts like 'folk spirit'

and instead to choose, as our object, groups of individuals of a certain

kind. Scholars from the most diverse trends, such as Quesnay, Adam

Smith, Ricardo, Comte, Marx, Menger, Walras, Miiller-Lyer, have

worked in the sense of the empiricist, anti-metaphysical attitude. The

object of history and economics are people, things and their arrangement.

4. RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT

The modern scientific world-conception has developed from work on

the problems just mentioned. We have seen how in physics, the endeavours

to gain-tangible results, at first even with inadequate or still insufficiently

clarified scientific tools, found itself forced more and more into methodological

investigations. Out of this developed the method of forming

hypotheses and, further, the axiomatic method and logical analysis; thereby

concept formation gained greater clarity and strength. The same

methodological problems were met also in the development of foundations

research in physical geometry, mathematical geometry and arithmetic, as

we have seen. It is mainly from all these sources that the problems arise

with which representatives of the scientific world-conception particularly

concern themselves at present. Of course it is still clearly noticeable from

which of the various problem areas the individual members of the Vienna

Circle come. This often results in differences in lines of interests and

points of view, which in turn lead to differences in conception. But it is

characteristic that an endeavour toward precise formulation, application

of an exact logical language and symbolism, and accurate differentiation

between the theoretical content of a thesis and its mere attendant notions,

diminish the separation. Step by step the common fund of conceptions

is increased, forming the nucleus of a scientific world-conception around

which the outer layers gather with stronger subjective divergence.

Looking back we now see clearly what is the *essence of the new scientific*

*world-conception* in contrast with traditional philosophy. No special

'philosophic assertions' are established, assertions are merely clarified;

and at that assertions of 'empirical science, as we' have seen when we

discussed the various problem areas. Some representatives of the scientific

world-conception no longer want to use the term 'philosophy' for their

work at all, so as to emphasise the contrast with the philosophy of (metaphysical)

systems even more strongly. Whichever term may be used to

describe such investigations, this much.is certain: *there is no such thing*

*as philosophy as a basic or universal science alongside or above the various*

*fields of the one empirical science;* there is no way to genuine knowledge

other than the way of experience; there is no realm of ideas that stands

over or beyond experience. Nevertheless the work of 'philosophic' or

'foundational' investigations remains important in accord with the scientific

world-conception. For the logical clarification of scientific concepts,

statements and methods liberates one from inhibiting prejudices. Logical

and epistemological analysis does not wish to set barriers to scientific

enquiry; on the contrary, analysis provides science with as complete a

range of formal possibilities as is possible, from which to select what best

fits each empirical finding (example: non-Euclidean geometries and the

theory of relativity). .

The representatives of the scientific world-conception resolutely stand

on the ground of simple human experience. They confidently approach

the task of removing the metaphysical and theological debris of millennia.

Or, as-some have it: returning, after a metaphysical interlude, to a unified

picture of this world which had, in a sense, been at the basis of magical

beliefs, free from theology, in the earliest times.

The increase of metaphysical and theologizing leanings which shows

itself today in many associations and sects, in books and journals, in

talks and university lectures, seems to be based on the fierce social and

economic struggles of the present: one group of combatants, holding

fast to traditional social forms, cultivates traditional attitudes of metaphysics

and theology whose content has long since been superseded; while

the other group, especially in central Europe, faces modern times, rejects

these views and takes its stand on the ground of empirical science. This

development is connected with that of the modern process of production,

which is becoming ever more rigorously mechanised and leaves ever less

room for metaphysical ideas. It is also connected with the disappointment

of broad masses of people with the attitude' of those who preach traditional

metaphysical and theological doctrine. So it is that in many countries

the masses now reject these doctrines much more consciously than

ever before, and along with their socialist attitudes tend to lean towards a

down-to-earth empiricist view. In previous times, *materialism* was the

expression of this view; meanwhile, however, modern empiricism has

shed a number of inadequacies and has taken a strong shape in the

*scientific world-conception.*

Thus, the scientific world-conception is close to the life of the present.

Certainly it is threatened with hard struggles and hostility. Nevertheless

there are many who do not despair but, in view of the present sociological

situation, look forward with hope to the course of events to come. Of

course not every single adherent of the scientific world-conception will be

a fighter. Some, glad of solitude, will lead a withdrawn existence on the

icy slopes of logic; some may even disdain mingling with the masses and

regret the 'trivialized' form that these matters inevitably take on spreading.

However, their achievements too will take a place among the historic

developments. We witness the spirit of the scientific world-conception

penetrating in growing measure the f9.r.tp.sof personal and public life,

in education, upbringing, architecture, and the shaping of economic and

social life according to rational principles.

*The scientific world-conception serves life, and life receives it.*

*1. Members of the Vienna Circle*

Gustav Bergmann

Rudolf Carnap

Herbert Feigl

Philipp Frank

Kurt GOdel

Hans Hahn

Viktor Kraft

Karl Menger

Marcel Natkin

Outo Neurath

Olga Hahn-Neurath

Theodor Radakovic

Moritz Schlick

Friedrich Waismann

*2. Those sympathetic to the*

*Vienna Circle* !

WaIter Dubislav

Josef Frank

Kurt Grelling

Hasso Hiirlen

E. Kaila

Heinrich Loewy

F. P. Ramsey

Hans Reichenbach

Kurt Reidemeister

'Edgar Zilsel

*3. Leading representatives of the*

*scientific world-conception*

Albert Einstein

Bertrand Russell

Ludwig Wittgenstein

1 [1929,Bibl. No. 179- Ed.].

a [The pamplet *Wissenschaftliche WeltauflPssung, Der Wiener Kreis* does not give an

author's name on the title page - unless one considers 'Der Wiener Kreis' as author,

being printed in smaller type. This pample tis the product of teamwork; Neurath did

the writing, Hahn and Carnap edited the text with him; other members of the Circle

were asked for their comments and contributions. (H. Feigl mentions F. Waismann

and himself, see: 'Wiener Kreis in America' in *Perspectivesin American History, 11,*

1968.)See also H. Neider's remarks in his contribution to our first chapter; he was a

witness,as I was myself.(The publisher, Artur Wolf,also published the first colour book

of the Social and Economic Museum in Vienna.) Carnap and Hahn's widow gave us

their permission to include the pamphlet among Outo Neurath's writings. In fact, the

name Wiener Kreis (Vienna Circle) was invented and suggested by Neurath. (See the

Neurath-Carnap correspondence in a later volume in this series.)- M.N.]

3 [Note: In his text, Russell wrote about 'logical atomism', not specifically of 'logical

analysis' - Trans.]. .

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