An international team of four authors, led by distinguished philosopher of science, Nancy Cartwright and leading scholar of the Vienna Circle, Thomas E. Uebel, has produced this lucid and elegant study of a much-neglected figure. The book, which depicts Neurath’s science in the political, economic and intellectual milieu in which it was practised, is divided into three sections: Neurath’s biographical background and the socio-political context of his economic ideas; the development of his theory of science; and his legacy as illustrated by his contemporaneous involvement in academic and political debates. Coinciding with the renewal of interest in logical positivism, this is a timely publication which will redress a current imbalance in the history and philosophy of science, as well as making a major contribution to our understanding of the intellectual life of Austro-Germany in the inter-war years.
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OTTO NEURATH:
PHILOSOPHY BETWEEN
SCIENCE AND POLITICS

NANCY CARTWRIGHT, JORDI CAT, LOLA FLECK
and
THOMAS E. UEBEL
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Preface

This book is made up of three parts. Part 1, Neurath’s intellectual biography, is primarily from Lola Fleck’s Graz dissertation, with additions by the other authors to fill in missing links with the account of parts 2 and 3. The translation from the German of Fleck’s original work is by Martin Anduschuss with revisions by Nancy Cartwright and Thomas Uebel. Part 2 of the book was written by Thomas Uebel and part 3 by Nancy Cartwright and Jordi Cat. Although the book has four different authors, listed alphabetically on the title page, there is a common point of view among them. The work on the book has been a close collaborative effort among Cartwright, Cat and Uebel, and these three authors would like especially to thank Lola Fleck for her generosity in allowing additions and revisions to integrate her dissertation more fully with the remainder of the text. Existing translations have been used where available; translations of previously untranslated materials are by the present authors. Timothy Childers has served as editorial assistant throughout. Figure 1.1 was recreated by George Zouro. Original drawings are by Rachel Hacking. The index was contributed by Mauricio Suárez.

Neurath’s own distinctive idea of Ballungen – congested concepts with fuzzy edges – plays a special role in our philosophic discussions. It enters the work of parts 2 and 3 by independent routes. In 1990 Nancy Cartwright went to talk to C.G. Hempel about Neurath. Hempel reported that there were two themes that he felt were really dear to Neurath and central to his thought: the moneyless economy and Ballungen. So Cartwright was delighted to find just after that what appears to be Neurath’s first public airing of his ideas on Ballungen, first among Rudolf Haller’s personal copies of Neurath’s papers in Graz and later officially in the Pittsburgh archives. Neurath’s discussion is recorded in the minutes of a meeting attended by many members of the Vienna Circle on 4 March 1931 (not one of the Circle’s regular Thursday evening meetings). The document is called Besprechung über Physikalismus.
Preface

After that Cartwright and Cat set about trying to understand the source of Ballungen in the nexus of Neurath’s political, scientific and philosophic work at that time.

In 1991 Thomas Uebel went to Pittsburgh as a Mellon Fellow, having completed a dissertation on Neurath in the Vienna Circle and edited a collection of contemporary Austrian writings on the topic. In the Carnap papers there he also discovered the Besprechung. He too was delighted. He knew not only how crucial Ballungen were to Neurath’s increasingly radical attack on the myth of scientific certainty and scientific method, but he also found there the first public use of Neurath’s private language argument which he knew to be of central importance to the protocol sentence debate. Uebel and Cartwright and Cat had already been discussing putting their ideas together in a single book with Fleck’s 1979 dissertation. The excitement over the Besprechung settled the matter.
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Finally, all the authors would like to thank Timothy Childers for his great efforts in producing the book and Mauricio Suárez for the index.