## Nikolay Milkov and Volker Peckhaus (eds.): *The Berlin Group and the Philosophy of Logical Empiricism*. *Boston Studies in the Philosophy and History of Science 273*. Springer, Dordrecht, 2013, x+332 pages

During the last few decades, historians and philosophers of science radically changed our perspective on logical empiricism in general, and on the Vienna Circle in particular. Though there are still some members of the Circle who did not get much attention (Victor Kraft, Richard von Mises, Felix Kaufmann, Josef Schächter etc.), we are in a quite good position to judge many of their efforts. On the other hand, our historical understanding of logical empiricism *in general* leaves something to be desired due to the circumstances that the so-called "Berlin Group" is underestimated in the literature.

*The Berlin Group and the Philosophy of Logical Empiricism*, edited by Nikolay Milkov and Volker Peckhaus, is meant to bring attention to the German wing of logical empiricism, thus doing justice to that forgotten projects and figures who had (in)directly an important influence on the philosophy of science in the United States after World War II. Among the most important members, one finds Hans Reichenbach, Kurt Grelling, Walter Dubislav, Paul Oppenheim, Olaf Helmer, Kurt Lewin, and Carl Gustav Hempel. The collection is devoted to their ideas and context in the European philosophy of science scene.

Part 1 is an introductory chapter composed of two papers: a longer article by Nikolay Milkov about the 'affinities and divergences' between the Vienna Circle and the Berlin Group. Though Milkov provides many important details and notions, his explanations are lacking sometimes, but I will come back to that later. The second paper is Nicholas Rescher's personal memories about his "interactions and collaborations with members of the Berlin Group" (p. 33). Rescher focuses on Helmer, Hempel, and Oppenheim (usually called as the '$H_2O$ philosophers'), discussing their role in the RAND corporation, and while it is always illuminating to read personal recollections about the less known sides of history, his paper is just five pages long, so one can get only a slight hint about the historical events.

The second part of the collection aims to explore the historical and philosophical context of the Berlin Group. Helmut Pulte describes in a lucid fashion those nineteenth-century roots of the Group which goes back to Jakob Friedrich Fries, an important critic of Kant. The ideas of Fries were continued by E. F. Apelt (referred to by Reichenbach in his dissertation) and later by Leonard Nelson who founded the so-called New Friesian School, inspiring such scholars as Grelling (who published with Nelson), Dubislav and Reichenbach. The second paper of this section

is
Jeremy Heis' work on the connections between Ernst Cassirer, Lewin, and Reichenbach—a topic which surfaces again in Milkov's paper who will argue that Hempel "more closely followed Lewin's Cassirer-inspired project than he did that of Hans Reichenbach" (p. 298).

Given that the Berlin Group is associated with individual figures rather than commonly shared theses, the collection treats the main figures in separate chapters. Part 3 considers Reichenbach's life and work. Flavia Padovani touches upon Reichenbach's time in the so-called Jugendbewegung (German Youth Movement), the famous Erlangen-conference, and his work on the radio. The paper, otherwise, is devoted to the conceptions of time and 'genidentity' as it was worked out by Lewin and Reichenbach. Michael Stöltzner's paper discusses the question of quantum mechanics and indeterminism. He achieves some important and strange conclusions; both Reichenbach and (based on his claims) the literature stated that the distinguishing feature of the Berlin Group (contrasting it with the Vienna Circle) is their member's continuous contact with the actual works of scientists. Nonetheless, Stöltzner shows that this idea requires some qualification since Reichenbach "did not involve himself into the details of the physical discussions, but pursued a genuinely philosophical agenda" (p. 146). Finally, Andreas Kamlah presents Reichenbach's involvement in the *Jugendbewegung*, which was a reform movement, originated from the early years of the twentieth century. He was an important figure in the so-called *Freistudenten* [Free Students] movement in Berlin—due to its explicit socialist leanings Reichenbach had different times later in pursuing academic jobs. Kamlah argues quite convincingly that Reichenbach's involvement (and leading role) in the voluntarist, pluralist, and tolerant movement had an important effect also on his philosophy (as it was the case actually with Carnap too).

Part 4 is devoted entirely to Dubislav—we got to know his logical works (Christian Thiel), his ideas on transcendental arguments (Temilo van Zantwijk), and his relation to Bernard Bolzano (Anita Kasabova). Two things emerge from these articles: Dubislav was involved in many up-to-date projects, acknowledged by many important figures of the history of logic and philosophy in the twentieth century. The other is that the fact that Dubislav is quite forgotten among philosophers might be due to the fact that, for example, his logical project was partly a failure since his work did not provide a decision procedure for classical monadic quantificational logic, or more precisely, "it yields only a sufficient criterion of validity, and not a necessary one" (p. 187).

Kurt Grelling (discussed in Part 5), though played in important role in the Berlin Group, he was always a third member behind Reichenbach and Dubislav as it is argued in Volker Peckhaus' contribution. Peckhaus mentions Grelling's ideas on

formal ontology (which is also the subject of Arkadiusz Chrudzimski's paper), his Russellian leanings (he translated four important books of Russell), and his involvement in psychology. Nevertheless, what emerges in these sections for sure is that Grelling was "a valuable collaborator" (p. 241).

The final, sixth part of the collection contains one paper on Oppenheim (Paul Ziche with Thomas Müller), and two on Hempel (Nikolay Milkov and Erich H. Reck). Ziche and Müller take Oppenheim as a co-author of many important philosophers of science and claims that he was "the greatest philosophical co-author of the twentieth century" (p. 265). On the other hand, and more importantly, they also view Oppenheim as an individual scholar who was interested in the order of the sciences, holding some unique position among logical empiricists. The Hempel-papers consider him in relation to others: Milkov argues against Michael Friedman's thesis that Hempel was influenced more by Carnap than by any Berliner. Finally, Reck takes the late Carnap's ideal of explication (on which we have now a flourishing secondary literature, partly due to Reck), and compares it to Hempel's ideas on the Covering Law Model of explanation; on the base of this Reck is able "to get clearer about why exactly [Hempel's] texts were so influential and, more basically, what their philosophical significance is" (p. 312).

Finally, a few words need to be said about the general narrative of the volume. In his introduction, Milkov claims that there is a certain asymmetry in the reception of the Berlin Group and the Vienna Circle in favor of the latter, though in some cases the Berliners have a priority claim. After that, he tries to show the reasons of the general neglect of Reichenbach's group. He discusses one theoretical and three external factors which purported to explain the asymmetry in the reception-history. The theoretical factor is that what "made the Vienna Circle's activities the more visible was Ludwig Wittgenstein's philosophy of language" (p. 5), and that when the philosophical debates of the Circle got public it "called attention to themselves in ways not seen in the Berlin Group" (p. 5). Contrary to this, the Berlin Group was occupied with dialogues of working scientist, keeping their eyes on the concrete scientific developments instead of inner-type philosophical debates.

The problem is that which Vienna Circle does Milkov talk about? The Vienna Circle members indeed shared many commitments, mainly connected to Wittgenstein, and debated only about philosophical matters (external to the actual scientific problems) *according to the received view*. Thanks to such volumes as Milkov's and Peckhaus', however, we are now aware of that fact that the received view was false—or at least misleading and oversimplified. So Milkov's story could be true in the received view, but false in the rehabilitated picture—the question is, which story was the story about the Circle in the 1920s and 1930s. Anyway, another question

emerges—namely that how did actual scientists respond to the claims and theories of the Berlin Group? Were they taken seriously? We do not get an answer to that.

The external factors behind the asymmetry are these: (i) the manifesto's radical program made the Circle recognized worldwide, (ii) the members of the Berlin Group had quite a peculiar and tragic careers without becoming as mainstream and known scholars as Schlick or Neurath, (iii) "[w]hereas Hitler came to power in Berlin in January 1933, he did not force Austria into the German Reich for more than 5 years (in March 1938)" (p. 7).

Regarding (i) one might point out that (a) the manifesto raised important and deep controversies inside the Circle; (b) the papers of Eino Kaila, Åke Petzäll and Feigl/Bloomberg did not originate from the Circle's manifesto—Kaila went to the Circle's meetings in 1929 but knew their program much earlier, and Feigl was one of those students of Schlick who persuaded him to gather a group of scholars around him to discuss philosophical problems. On the other hand, Reichenbach already published many important books and papers (also popular ones) already in the early 1920s. It is a further question (perhaps connected to the Austrian and German philosophical scene) why his efforts were less successful in the forming periods.

The second point is also problematic: it is true that it was only Reichenbach who "fully developed his philosophical program" (p. 6)—while Grelling organized some discussion groups even in the internment camp in South (Vichy) France in 1941, he died in Auschwitz one year later, still in his productive years. Dubislav, after a short imprisonment in Berlin, went to Prague where "he killed in jealousy first his girl-friend then himself on 16 September 1937" (p. 237). Many of the members of the Vienna Circle indeed had a much fruitful and longer career. On the other hand, Hahn died already in 1934, and Schlick was murdered in 1936; Zilsel committed suicide in 1944. While all the members of the Berlin Group worked in Berlin between 1926 and 1933 (when Reichenbach immigrated to Turkey), the Vienna Circle's most important members left Vienna quite early: Philipp Frank took over Einstein's position in Prague in 1912, Carnap got a positions there too in 1931, and after 1934 Neurath went to Hague. Somehow the Circle still managed to work together and built up the narrative of a successful discussion group.

Finally, though Hitler came to power in Berlin in 1933, the national socialist's revolution in Vienna caused the dissolution of the Ernst Mach Society already in 1934 and made it impossible (even earlier) for many members to get a job at the University.

Though Milkov did a great job to explore the reasons behind the asymmetry between Berlin and Vienna, some more details and inquiries are required since in

themselves the above-mentioned reasons are insufficient to explain the historical phenomena. Even if the book could be considered to be only a starting point for the later philosophical debates, *The Berlin Group and the Philosophy of Logical Empiricism* is an important collection of fine-grained and thought-provoking essays; they show some possible paths from Vienna to Berlin and back.[1]

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