HOPOS: The Journal of the International Society for the History of Philosophy of Science

Christian Damböck, Günther Sandner, and Meike G. Werner (eds.). Logischer Empirismus, Lebensreform und die deutsche Jugendbewegung: Logical Empiricism, Life Reform, and the German Youth Movement

--Manuscript Draft--

Manuscript Number:	2189
Full Title:	Christian Damböck, Günther Sandner, and Meike G. Werner (eds.). Logischer Empirismus, Lebensreform und die deutsche Jugendbewegung: Logical Empiricism, Life Reform, and the German Youth Movement
Article Type:	Book Review
Corresponding Author:	Thomas Mormann Independent Tsukuba, Ibaraki JAPAN
Corresponding Author Secondary Information:	
Corresponding Author's Institution:	Independent
Corresponding Author's Secondary Institution:	
First Author:	Thomas Mormann
First Author Secondary Information:	
Order of Authors:	Thomas Mormann
Order of Authors Secondary Information:	

Christian Damböck, Günther Sandner, and Meike G. Werner (eds.). *Logischer Empirismus, Lebensreform und die deutsche Jugendbewegung: Logical Empiricism, Life Reform, and the German Youth Movement*. Cham: Springer, 2022. Open access (e-book). Pp. x + 356. ISBN 978-3-030-84887-3.

The Vienna Circle and logical empiricism have long been of interest to philosophers of science, but the connections between these philosophical currents and the contemporary history of the twentieth century have been dealt with only marginally at best. The volume under review attempts to remedy this deficit.

Logical Empiricism, Life Reform, and the German Youth Movement is based on papers read in June 2016 at an international conference organized by the Vienna Circle Institute at the University of Vienna. The volume has four parts, each consisting of several chapters. Most of the contributions are in German, with only a few in English; some of them are bilingual, with the main text in German and introductory commentary in English. One focus of the volume is questions of ethics, which play only a subordinate role in the traditional exegesis of logical empiricism.

After a short introduction jointly written by the editors, Günther Sandner (in chapter 2) describes the complex spectrum of the German Youth Movement in some detail. The political ambivalence of the movement is demonstrated by figures such as the influential *Lebensreformer* Hermann Popert, to whom Rudolf Carnap often refers with approval in his *Politische Rundbriefe* (Political Circulars) of 1918. Pacifist, racist and anti-Semitic theses can be found side by side in Popert's writings. Another example is the early friendship between Carnap and Hans Freyer. Later, their politics developed in opposite directions: Freyer moved toward National Socialism whereas Carnap emigrated to the United States as a vehement opponent of this worldview.

In chapter 3, Ingrid Belke treats the now almost forgotten German-Austrian philosopher Friedrich Jodl (1849–1914) as a forerunner of the Vienna Circle. Jodl can be characterized as a committed member of the Viennese Reform Movement. His philosophical work focused on the history of ethics. (An obituary of Belke and an appreciation of her research by Friedrich Stadler can be found in chapter 19.)

The project of developing artificial languages played a major role in logical empiricism, from Carnap's logics to Otto Neurath's "picture statistics." In this vein, Ulrich Lins's contribution in chapter 4 highlights Carnap's lifelong enthusiasm for Esperanto.

Flavia Padovani, in chapter 5, discusses Hans Reichenbach's involvement with the *Freistudentenschaft* (community of free students). The ethical ideal of the *Freistudentenschaft* was that the individual who creates their own values in free self-determination and as a member of the social community also demands this autonomy for all and from all. Although Reichenbach presented his non-cognitivist ethics in *The Rise of Scientific Philosophy* (1951) as a result of his later empiricist philosophy, he had already developed the approach during his *Freistudent* period, shortly before the First World War (see also chapter 16). Padovani's chapter is a convincing example of the benefits of including an author's early history in the assessment of their mature philosophy.

In chapter 6, Meike G. Werner presents nine of the *Politische Rundbriefe* (Political Circulars) that Carnap sent to his friends, mainly those in the *Serakreis* (Sera Circle), for discussion in 1918. As Werner points out, a central topic of the *Rundbriefe* was the role of the League of Nations in ensuring a just and lasting peace after the war. The *Serakreis*, which the publisher Eugen Diederichs founded in Jena in 1912, was the branch of the German Youth Movement that significantly influenced Carnap. Diederichs saw his

publishing house as a “meeting place for modern minds” (2); these modern minds, however, were by no means all modern or even progressive. For example, Paul de Lagarde, a leading theorist of German anti-Semitism, was one of them, and Hans Freyer published his 1931 pamphlet *Revolution von rechts* (Revolution from the Right) with Diederichs. In 1917 and 1918, Diederichs also organized a series of conferences at Lauenstein Castle where Max Weber played a central role as a counterpoint to the youth movement.

Gereon Wolters, in chapter 7, discusses the changing attitudes of the logical empiricists Carnap, Reichenbach, Neurath, and Moritz Schlick toward the war. In the last part of his text, he presents a perhaps somewhat daring analogy between the political situation then and now: as in Germany in 1914, argues Wolters, many in Putin's Russia and the Islamic world see themselves as victims of a decadent, arrogant West that is not prepared to recognize the superiority of Russian or Islamic culture.

The classical interpretation of Carnap as a logical empiricist has paid little attention to his philosophy of value. This contrasts strongly with the detailed treatment of this topic in several contributions to this volume. In chapter 8, A. W. Carus digs deep into the philosophy of Carnap’s youth and comes to the conclusion that “ethical non-cognitivism did not come from far away in Carnap but was almost inevitable given his educational background,” which was essentially determined by the enlightened pietism of his mother Anna Carnap (151). Carus endeavors to substantiate this thesis with numerous unpublished letters by Carnap and other archival material (see chapter 14).

According to Christian Damböck in chapter 9, non-cognitivism is a very incomplete metaethical theory that is compatible with a wide range of worldviews, from irrationalism and totalitarianism through anarchism to a democratic worldview that is entirely rational and scientific. The difference between Carnap’s (and Reichenbach’s)

non-cognitivism, on the one hand, and Hans Freyer's, on the other, lies only in the political position that is added: irrationalism and totalitarianism in the case of Freyer and democracy and an appreciation of science in the case of Carnap and leftist logical empiricism.

Freyer is also central to chapter 10, in which Adam Tamas Tuboly addresses a long-neglected aspect of Carnap's *Aufbau*, namely, his attempt to prove that "so-called *geistige Gegenstände*—i.e., the products of the human mind"—can also be constituted within the framework of his general theory (181). As seen from Carnap's diaries, Freyer's *Theorie des Objektiven Geistes* (1923) played an important role, at least in the early 1920s. In his contribution, Tuboly also attempts to show affinities and differences between Freyer's and Carnap's theories of constitution.

In chapter 11, Gangolf Hübinger endeavors to construct a relationship between authors who were in some way influenced by Max Weber (the "Weber Circle") and scholars who can be assigned to the Vienna Circle. The link between the two is Otto Neurath. In fact, in the 1929 manifesto of the Vienna Circle there is a short section titled "Foundations of the Social Sciences" for which Neurath is responsible and which agrees with Weber in defending an "empirical, anti-metaphysical attitude" in sociology (220). The details of Carnap and Schlick's relationship to sociology in general and Weber's work in particular have not survived. Sociology has always led only a shadowy existence in logical empiricism and as a topic in the philosophy of science.

In 1929, Carnap gave several lectures at the Bauhaus in Dessau in which he attempted to introduce the philosophical principles of the "scientific view of the world" to a non-philosophical audience. In chapter 12, Peter Bernhard addresses some critical aspects of this project, in particular the relationship between art and metaphysics.

In chapter 13, Michael Buckmiller presents a historical-biographical account of Karl Korsch's attempt to bring Marxism and positivism together. Korsch was a member of the Sera Circle and a *Freistudent* but remained an interesting outsider throughout his life. Some authors characterize him as a member of the Frankfurt School, whereas others see him as close to American pragmatism. For Korsch, real progress in the sciences and in philosophy was only conceivable through intensive cooperation between critical Marxism and logical empiricism.

Perhaps the most interesting document published in the volume is Carnap's "Deutschlands Niederlage: Sinnloses Schicksal oder Schuld" (Germany's Defeat: Guilt or Meaningless Fate), presented by Christian Damböck in chapter 17. The text was intended as a "political circular" for Carnap's Sera Circle friends, but this did not materialize due to the rapid unfolding of events at the end of 1918. Carnap endeavored to give the German defeat in 1918 a deeper meaning by means of a few set pieces of Hegelian historical metaphysics ("world history is the judgment of the world"): German militarism and thus the entire German people, especially its intellectuals, were culpably out of step with the times. In an introductory commentary of more than eight pages (for an original document of just ten pages), Damböck attempts to make Carnap's romantic-metaphysical account plausible to the modern reader. It would be interesting to compare Carnap's youth-movement interpretation of events with Weber's quite different view.

For more than thirty years, the Vienna Circle Institute has been publishing work to further understanding of logical empiricism and the philosophy of science more generally. Compared with the Institute's earlier publications, this volume represents a clear shift in style and focus that amounts to a considerably broader perspective on

"scientific philosophy"; it is thus itself an interesting document in the history of the philosophy of science.

Thomas Mormann, Tsukuba, Japan