

Book Review:

1. The Vienna Circle and Logical Empiricism: Re-evaluation and Future Perspectives:

Editor: Friedrich Stadler. Vienna Circle Institute Yearbook No. 10.

Kluwer Academic Publishers, Dordrecht/Boston/London, 2003,

pp. 423, •148. ISBN 1-420-1269-1

2. Language, Truth and Knowledge: Contribution to the Philosophy of the Rudolph Carnap:

Editor: Thomas Bonk. Vienna Circle Institute Yearbook No. 2.

Kluwer Academic Publishers, Dordrecht/Boston/London, 2003,

pp. 192, • 79. ISBN 1-420-1296-3

These two publications by the Vienna Circle Institute are the latest additions to the collection of scholarly books produced by the Institute. Both the books are meant for scholars and researchers in history and philosophy of science. As the titles indicate, they deal with aspects of recent trends in philosophy which might be too technical for the general reader. Nevertheless, an interested layman may learn from these books about certain recent developments in philosophy which had roots in Vienna in the last century. The school of philosophy is broadly known as Logical Empiricism of the Vienna Circle and may be characterised by a scientific world conception directed against metaphysics. A scientific orientation grounded in logical and linguistic analysis is a hallmark of the movement.

The essays in both the books under review are based on papers presented at a Conference on *The Vienna Circle and Logical Empiricism* held in Vienna in July 2001. The conference was organized on the occasion of the 10th Anniversary of the Vienna Circle Institute (IVC).

The first book features recent work on the Vienna Circle and Logical Empiricism and their influence on today's philosophy of science. It explores the intellectual context of this scientific philosophy. It discusses contributions of both the main figures and peripheral adherents connected with Logical Empiricism. Besides, the Yearbook documents the activities of the Vienna Circle Institute and includes reviews of books on related topics. The opening article by Professor F.

Stadler, Director of IVC is entitled *What is the Vienna Circle? Some Methodological and Historiographical Answers*. The author points out that the early history of the Vienna Circle can be traced back to Ernst Mach (1838-1916) who came to Vienna from Prague. *The First Vienna Circle* prior to World War I was a discussion circle which included Frank, Hahn, Neurath, R.v. Mises. Later, following the appointment of Moritz Schlick (1882-1936) to Mach's chair for natural philosophy in 1922, a vigorous philosophical reform movement started with the participation of stalwarts like Schlick, Carnap, Feigl, Neurath, Kaufman, Popper, Wittgenstein, Waismann, Menger and others. This was known as the Vienna Circle proper to the outside world and lasted until 1938 when under Hitler's rule it

was disbanded and the scholars left for different destinations, mainly the United States of America. The different sections of the book are entitled

1. Origin and History of the Vienna Circle
2. Moritz Schlick
3. Hans Reichenbach
4. Other Proponents and Periphery (e.g. Felix Kaufmann, Wittgenstein, Quine)
5. Unity and Plurality
6. Contexts of Science
7. Epistemology
8. Ethics
9. Women of Logical Empiricism (Elke Frenkel-Brunswick, Susan Stebbing, Rose Rand)

The second book includes articles on a broad range of issues in the philosophy of Rudolph Carnap (1891-1970) who was perhaps the most important philosopher of Logical Empiricism. The programme of Carnap's famous *Der Logische Aufbau der Welt* (1928) as well as his views on ontology and realism and in general his ideas about the nature of philosophy and the notion of truth over the course of his life, are discussed by different authors. A partial list of contents runs as follows

1. Carnap on Truth
2. Carnap's Metaphilosophy
3. Synthetic Geometry after *Aufbau*
4. Carnap and the Unity of Science
5. Carnap's Internal and External Questions
6. Carnap versus Quine

In his somewhat controversial article *Squaring the Vienna Circle with up-to-date Logic and Epistemology*, Jaako Hintikka writes:

Logical empiricists are dead. I used to know some of them including Rudolf Carnap, Peter Hempel, Herbertr Feigl, Freddy Ayer, and Eino Kaila. But this is not news. More relevantly, the main proponent of the philosophical movements that are generally thought of as having replaced logical empiricism (Quine, Popper, Kuhn, Lakatos) are all gone... Who are more dead philosophically? I am beginning to think that we are insulting the logical empiricists by considering them predominantly as objects of historical curiosity ...Perhaps it was the logical empiricists, not the new philosophers of science in the stamp of Quine and Kuhn, who were on the right track. (p. 149)

An opposite view is presented by Wolfgang Spohn who writes:

Presently the prevailing impression is that Quine has won the day. (Quine survived Carnap by almost 30 years) Indeed Carnap has lapsed, it seems, into what is only the historic background of the present situation. (p. 167)

The chapter headings testify to the high level of both the books. They would be, in our opinion, valuable additions to any library and would attract serious readers

of diverging interests. The somewhat steep price might discourage complete amateurs from buying them.

(See Ind. Cruiser Vol. 16, No. 4, Oct. 2002 for a review of earlier publications of VCI)

Saurabh Sanatani

Vienna

21 December, 2003

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