

Friedrich Stadler. *The Vienna Circle: Studies in the Origins, Development, and Influence of Logical Empiricism*. Springer 2015. 631 pp. \$229.00 USD (Hardcover ISBN 9783319165608).

In the last three decades, against the earlier historiographies, it has been shown that logical empiricism (LE) ‘took the form of interdisciplinary collective work of an open group of scholars united by the spirit of the Enlightenment’ (47). By revealing the real nature, scope, and development of LE (and especially the Vienna Circle, VC), not just many historical matters could be seen in different lights but also many philosophical questions. (It was shown e.g., that Otto Neurath’s naturalized epistemology was not just a *historically* interesting precursor of Quine’s philosophy, but also a relevant *alternative* to it.)

Among the most important historians of LE is Friedrich Stadler, director of the Vienna Circle Institute. The first English edition of his *The Vienna Circle: Studies in the Origins, Development, and Influence of Logical Empiricism* appeared in 2001, and it was published recently in a revised and abridged version. The main differences between the two editions are that the new one is considerably shorter and incorporates the new literature on LE; the latter was quite needed since the last fifteen years saw again an enormous explosion in the secondary literature.

Stadler’s book is exactly what it promises: a sort-of-a-handbook of LE providing incredible amount of material about its philosophical, social and cultural origins, its periodic development, and its known and hitherto unknown influence.

The first four chapters follow the historical evolution of the VC: Chapter 1 summarizes the main conceptions of the so-called First VC from before World War I. Stadler achieves two main aims here: (a) by going through the ‘biographical marginalia’ of the mentioned scholars, he shows that ‘all the core members of the Vienna Circle [...] w[ere] interested more in integrating the social sciences into the scientific world conception’ (10); (b) he reconstructs the main ideas and the discussed problems of the First VC and reveals that almost all of those commitments that recurred later in the major VC, were already present back then.

Chapter 2 is devoted to those cultural and social institutions and frameworks which made possible the development of Austrian philosophy, in particular the VC. He describes that ‘basic humanitarian-cosmopolitan perspective, [that] uncompromising orientation toward progress and reason, and the advocacy of social and cultural reform’ (31) that characterized all those Viennese ‘late Enlightenment’ movements (like Monists and Freethinkers) that provided suitable platforms for many of the logical empiricists for their cultural and educational endeavor beyond the official frames of the Circle.

After the discussion of the First VC, its non-public phase (1918–1928) is treated in chapter 3. The reader becomes familiar with the early writings and lectures of Moritz Schlick, who was brought to Vienna by Hans Hahn as a successor in the chair of Mach and Boltzmann. Since Hahn is thought to be ‘the actual founder of the Circle’, Stadler discusses his less known workings from that period. The chapter’s goal is, however, to expose the idea that the Circle’s ‘public-mindedness and internationalization can be understood as the direct result of its neo-Enlightenment discourse of science’ (44). The chapter also addresses the idea that though the Circle was a ‘reform movement in philosophy’ (46), it was not a homogenous group.

The public phase of the VC (1929-1938) is presented in chapter 4, which is already a mixed one: half of it is devoted to archival and other less known primary materials. Section 4.1 examines the internal development of LE: Stadler argues that ‘the discussions of the Schlick circle most likely reached their zenith, in terms of intensity and number of participants, around 1930, the beginning of its public phase’ (59). He shows the ‘plurality of principled positions’ (61) by confronting the various intellectual autobiographies, interviews and official recollections of the members and associates of the VC. We also get to know the many visitors and occasionally participants both from Austria and from abroad.

The next, almost eighty pages (69-146) present archive materials in order to support Stadler’s main points, namely that the VC was an ‘open forum of discussion [and] that claims of a split between left and right factions or a dominance of Wittgensteinian ideas [...] have to be revised to a considerable extent’ (64). He includes here some records of the usual meetings (e.g., about protocol-sentences), the development of the positions of the members (like Frank, Neurath, Hahn, Schlick, Carnap, Kaufmann) as they were recorded by Rose Rand, a less known member of the Circle, and finally Carnap’s first three lectures on metalogic from the summer of 1931, which lead to his *Logical Syntax of Language*. All of these are important documents for assessing the internal development of LE.

The next section (4.2) is devoted to LE’s external development and Stadler considers many important events from the 1930s. We get to know the birth and function of the Ernst Mach Society which, though the official forum of the VC, was not identical with it. The famous manifesto (*The Scientific Conception of the World: The Vienna Circle*) is also presented along with the institutional and philosophical reasons behind it. Stadler is very thorough in contextualizing his materials—he devotes a full section to the lectures presented at the Ernst Mach Society, thus providing some interesting and useful primary material.

The chapter also presents all the significant conferences of LE: The First and Second Conference on the Epistemology of the Exact Sciences. At the former, the VC introduced its manifesto, while at the second, Gödel reported for the first time in public about his non-completeness theorem. Stadler argues that (according to the logical empiricists also) ‘it was no coincidence that the development from a fledgling democracy to totalitarianism was accompanied by a regression to the old philosophy’ (168). Beyond the lectures at the conferences, this idea was captured also by the idea of unified science. Thus Stadler reproduces the programs and lecture-titles of all the International Congresses for the Unity of Science.

The next three chapters introduce those figures who are usually regarded as peripheral members or close associates of the VC with reservations. Chapter 5 introduces Karl Menger’s *Mathematical Colloquium*, chapter 6 discusses Wittgenstein, while Heinrich Gomperz and Karl Popper are the heroes of chapter 7. Though Stadler provides many interesting ideas about all of these authors and their role in LE, one of the most important material in is an interview with Popper, made by Stadler and Hans-Joachim Dahms in 1991 (258-76).

Chapter 8 is a shorter piece which aims to shed more light on the idea that the VC was not a ‘self-contained anti-metaphysical’ (277) and homogenous school. Stadler uses Schlick and Neurath as examples: for Schlick, philosophy is an autonomous field which also treats ethical and life-ques

tions but stays value-neutral and apolitical; Neurath ‘was convinced of the need to dissolve philosophy as an autonomous discipline’ (278) with a political flavor in his writings. The outcome of the chapter is that ‘the personal and substantive differences between Schlick and Neurath [are] paradigmatic of the Vienna Circle’s pluralism’ (282).

The direct political circumstances of the VC from the early 1920s until Schlick’s murder in 1936 are described in chapter 9. Stadler provides some general remarks with special cases: Hahn was troubled because of ethical reasons; Schlick’s appointment in 1922 was partly due to his non-Jewish origins; Ziesel’s habilitation was rejected officially on scientific reasons, but ‘there were certain underlying motives which were founded on different political attitudes and world views and on a different understanding of science’ (295). Stadler also discusses in details the employment of logical empiricists: despite their influence, neither Menger, nor Gödel, nor Neurath, nor Reidemeister, nor Carnap ‘managed to be appointed as a full professor in Vienna’ (300), and only Hahn became a corresponding member of the Academy. The chapter ends with a list of the lectures and courses held by logical empiricists (308-39) and a shorter section on Neurath’s social and political ideals encoded in his educational works (340-51).

Chapter 10 reveals those socio-cultural and political conditions that made the emigration of logical empiricists (both from Germany and Austria) inevitable. Given the highly outranging wings of the Third Reich, such a multicultural, interdisciplinary and ‘Enlightenment-style’ group as the VC had to leave, and acclimatize in the new world.

Part II contains the primary materials and data of LE: Stadler has produced an enormous and outstandingly important work for everyone interested in the subject. Chapter 11 is an overview of the VC presenting many diagrams about its structure, development and influence, presents the register of *Erkenntnis* (the official journal of LE), and surveys the contents of all the edited series of the Circle.

Chapter 12 is devoted to the Circle and its periphery by presenting biographies and bibliographies, and Stadler provides many details and information about these, along with Schlick’s doctoral students, disciples and guests in the Circle. The amount of work that was devoted to this chapter is shown also by its length (exactly two hundred pages).

Finally, chapter 13 provides documents about Schlick’s murder. Since the murder, the murderer’s trial and its consequences document many typical and important political trends from the 1930s in Europe and the influence of the Third Reich, the chapter is a good continuation of Chapter 10.

Just a few critical remarks: though it is quite natural that in such a long and complex work some errors occur, the recurring typos are still disturbing sometimes given that we are dealing with a second edition (e.g., in chapter 8 before every dash line the name of Brian McGuinness appears). On the other hand, the more important archival materials are typescript and organized well, so one could not complain about the editorial work after all. Since the ‘Prologue’ repeats many important pieces of information and ideas that are covered in details during the book. It should be read as a summary only after one is through the whole work.

Stadler’s *The Vienna Circle* is an especially important document. Though it could be unusual

for a non-historian philosopher, Stadler's work is well-organized: the many details, data, archive material, bio- and bibliography, all the micro-studies are highly required since the published writings of the logical empiricists are just the top of the iceberg. In order to understand the heterogeneous character of the movement, the different opinions of its participants, and its real development, we need to know the scene behind the publications since they document the real VC. With its socio-cultural and educational line of thought LE still presents an interesting philosophical conception for those who require a scientifically oriented conception of the world. Thus Stadler's book is a must have.

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