

The Berlin Group and the Philosophy of Logical Empiricism

BOSTON STUDIES IN THE PHILOSOPHY AND HISTORY OF SCIENCE

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Nikolay Milkov • Volker Peckhaus
Editors

The Berlin Group and the Philosophy of Logical Empiricism

 Springer

Editors

Nikolay Milkov
Department of Philosophy
University of Paderborn
33098 Paderborn
Germany

Volker Peckhaus
Department of Philosophy
University of Paderborn
33098 Paderborn
Germany

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Preface

The Berlin Group for scientific philosophy was active between 1926 and 1933 with Hans Reichenbach, Walter Dubislav and Kurt Grelling as its leading members. It organized the Society for Empirical/Scientific Philosophy as a forum for communicating with the preeminent scientists and the educated public of the time. In 1930 Hans Reichenbach together with Rudolf Carnap launched the legendary journal for scientific philosophy *Erkenntnis*.

Interest in the Berlin Group has grown appreciably in recent years, something clear from the ever-increasing number of articles on the Group.¹ This book is designed to help meet this growing interest in ways that significantly contribute to a better understanding of the seminal role that the Berlin Group played in the emergence of the philosophy of science as a discipline.

To date, only a single book has appeared on the Berlin Group, a volume in German edited by Lutz Danneberg, Andreas Kamlah, and Lothar Schäfer: *Hans Reichenbach und die Berliner Gruppe* (Braunschweig: Vieweg 1994). By contrast with that text, the chapters of the present collection do not concentrate only on Reichenbach's scientific philosophy. This volume is the first to assess the scientific philosophy of Walter Dubislav, to which it devotes three chapters. The work of Kurt Grelling is explored in two further chapters. Grelling, like Dubislav, was an accomplished philosopher of mathematics and science who is scarcely known today, particularly in Anglophone philosophical circles. Two other chapters probe the relation of Kurt Lewin and Carl Hempel to the Berlin Group. Also included is original essay on the thought of Paul Oppenheim, who went on to become a prominent figure in the philosophy of science in the USA from the 1940s through the 1960s. Enriching the historical and theoretical range of this collection are essays that shed light on the intellectual debt that the Berlin Group owed to the precursor of the German tradition of scientific philosophy, Jacob Friedrich Fries, and to Ernst Cassirer.

¹Cf. Rescher (1997, 2006), Stadler (2011).

The idea for this book originated with a conference on the Berlin Group held at the University of Paderborn on September 3–5, 2009. The text, however, is no mere record of the proceedings. Rather, the editors selected from among the many conference papers those that in their judgment are of outstanding scholarly merit and likely to be of enduring historical and philosophical value. In addition, the collection includes studies solicited expressly for this volume from some of the most distinguished authorities in the field.

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The Paderborn conference that made this book possible was generously supported by the Fritz Thyssen Foundation (Cologne). Special thanks go to Anja Westermann and Nadine Sand (University of Paderborn) for their help by editing the text. Matthew Grellette (McMaster University) helped us to improve the English of six chapters.

The “family tree” of the Berlin Group and its successors in the USA was already presented in Rescher (2006, 282) which explains why we did not produce here. What we added to it in this volume are the pictures of members of its “Founding Generation”, Hans Reichenbach, Walter Dubislav, Kurt Grelling, and Paul Oppenheim, and of the two representatives of the “Middle Generation”: Carl Hempel and Olaf Helmer. Excerpts from letters of and to Carnap and Reichenbach are printed in the book with permission of the Special Collections Department, University Library System, University of Pittsburgh. All rights preserved.

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Contributors

Arkadiusz Chrudzimski Department of Philosophy, University of Szczecin, Szczecin, Poland

Jeremy Heis Department of Logic and Philosophy of Science, University of California in Irvine, Irvine, CA, USA

Andreas Kamlah Institute of Philosophy, University of Osnabruck, Osnabruck, Germany

Anita Kasabova Department of Anthropology, New Bulgarian University, Sofia, Bulgaria

Nikolay Milkov Department of Philosophy, University of Paderborn, Paderborn, Germany

Thomas Müller Department of Philosophy, University of Utrecht, Utrecht, The Netherlands

Flavia Padovani English and Philosophy Department, Drexel University, PA, USA

Volker Peckhaus Department of Philosophy, University of Paderborn, Paderborn, Germany

Helmut Pulte Institute of Philosophy, University of Bochum, Bochum, Germany

Erich H. Reck Department of Philosophy, University of California, Riverside, CA, USA

Nicholas Rescher Department of Philosophy, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA, USA

Michael Stöltzner Department of Philosophy, University of South Carolina in Columbus, Columbus, SC, USA

Christian Thiel Institute of Philosophy, University of Erlangen–Nürnberg, Erlangen, Germany

Temilo van Zantwijk Institute of Philosophy, University of Jena, Jena, Germany

Paul Ziche Department of Philosophy, University of Utrecht, Utrecht, The Netherlands