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How the Cold War Transformed Philosophy of Science (review)

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tutelage of Harris, she read Kant's *Perpetual Peace* upon which she then based her "practical pacifism." Her pacifist theory published in *Patriotism and the New Internationalism* (1906), *Swords and Ploughshares* (1912), and *Law or War* (1928), defines patriotism, not as involved in making and using guns, but as serving the country as teacher, farmer, doctor, etc., a patriotism which should be embedded in the education of children. Both Sunderland and Ames Mead applied philosophy to concrete efforts.

Like Sunderland, Marietta Kies (1853–1899) was one of the few women to earn a doctorate in philosophy. At the University of Michigan Kies' graduate study was guided by Morris and Dewey. Like Ames Mead, Kies also studied under Harris at Concord. Too young to be engaged in the development of the idealist movement, Kies published Harris' lectures in *An Introduction to the Study of Philosophy*. Having taught at Mt. Holyoke, South Hadley, Massachusetts and Colorado College in Colorado Springs, at Butler College, Indianapolis, she retained a position as professor of rhetoric. According to Rogers, her important contributions to the American philosophical canon lies in her judicious application of Hegel to social and political questions (except in terms of women's rights), and in her theory of "justice" and "grace" valuable for "political philosophy today," that was developed in her original works: *The Ethical Principle* and *Institutional Ethics*.

The aim of inclusive history of philosophy is not merely to add women's names, and justify them as philosophers, but rather to specify these women's achievements in philosophy and their contributions to the discipline. To that end this text analyzes the works of seven women at a critical time in American philosophical history. Perhaps subsequent scholars will make a different case as to their individual attainments. And it may be debatable as to whether the idealist movement that interpreted and translated Hegel, Fichte, Schelling and Kant was the "first genuinely philosophical movement in the nation" or if the best characterization of these late 18th early 19th century philosophers as "pre-pragmatic" as Rogers claims is accurate. The debate begun here in this "first philosophical examination" of the works of these women must continue, for credit is due to in Mitchell's words that "little band of women," who assembled "to study and discuss the problems of philosophy."

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GEORGE REISCH

How the Cold War Transformed Philosophy of Science

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In this important new book George Reisch casts valuable light on the history of analytic philosophy in the United States. In doing so, he corrects

many misconceptions about early logical empiricism, its social and political commitments, and its relationship to other philosophical approaches, including pragmatism. He shows that many of the original logical empiricists had strong political commitments which were reflected in the Unity of Science movement and in their attempts to join forces with prominent pragmatists in New York and Chicago. Thus, early analytic philosophy of science was a far cry from the philosophy of science as it later came to be practiced and as it is, to some degree, still practiced today. The reason for this, Reisch concludes, is that philosophers of science responded to Cold War political pressure by shifting their focus to apolitical topics.

In making this argument Reisch draws on a wide range of published and unpublished materials, including the correspondence of Otto Neurath, Rudolf Carnap, Charles Morris, and John Dewey. The result is a meticulously researched and frequently illuminating account of mid-century American philosophy. Reisch successfully challenges the stereotype of logical empiricism as dry, narrow, and politically disengaged and, in doing so, forces a reexamination of the recent history of American philosophy.

The book falls into two parts. In the first part Reisch documents the political commitments of early logical empiricists as well as their reception in the United States during the 1930s. In the second part, covering the post-World War II years, he documents the changing political and intellectual climate of the Cold War period and its effect on philosophy of science and philosophy more generally.

Early logical empiricists, Reisch argues, “sought nothing less than to specify and help fulfill the promise of the eighteenth-century French Enlightenment while taking full advantage of twentieth-century developments in science, logic, social thought, and politics” (3). This was most explicit in Neurath’s Unity of Science movement, which sought to coordinate different areas of science in order to address social problems as effectively as possible. Logical empiricists pursued this program by forming alliances with like-minded American philosophers and by publishing the *International Encyclopedia of Unified Science*, even after the Nazi regime caused many of them to immigrate to the United States.

The heroes of Reisch’s account are Neurath, Philipp Frank, and Morris. Each played important roles in introducing logical empiricism to an American audience. In addition, each understood logical empiricism as having a political dimension, as shown by their support for the Unity of Science movement. Neurath’s political credentials are, of course, best known. He was briefly jailed for serving in the postwar socialist government of Bavaria and believed that a unified science would be a force for positive social change. Frank likewise served the Unity of Science movement in a number of administrative and editorial roles, and championed the interconnection between science, the humanities, culture, and politics. Morris, finally, while not himself a member of the Vienna Circle, was a supporter of the Unity of Science movement and its understanding of the relationship between philosophy, sci-

ence, and society. Morris also tried to nudge the Unity of Science movement in a more pragmatic direction. He was, Reisch writes, “dominated by his Deweyan faith in science as a powerful and effective tool for shaping modern life” (38) and dismayed by logical empiricism’s unpragmatic focus on natural sciences at the expense of the social and human sciences.

Reisch also describes the many efforts of Neurath, Frank, and Morris to enlist prominent pragmatists to the cause of unified science. In some cases, this was to join forces against a common foe, such as the neo-Thomism of Mortimer Adler and Robert Maynard Hutchins. In other cases, it was in recognition of significant similarities between early logical empiricism and pragmatism: in particular, similar attitudes toward the value of science and the dangers of metaphysical speculation. In this light, it is not surprising that Dewey himself made two contributions to the *Encyclopedia of Unified Science* (“Unity of Science as a Social Problem” in 1938, and the longer monograph *Theory of Valuation* in 1939). Here, Reisch does a great service in clarifying the circumstances under which these two works were published. Quoting from letters between Dewey and the editors of the *Encyclopedia* (Neurath, Carnap, and Morris), he documents a shared background of similar commitments as well as some areas of sharp disagreement. For the most part, these were disagreements with Carnap on such points as the reducibility of all science to physics, and the meaningfulness, from a scientific standpoint, of value statements. Reisch also notes that, in some cases, the disagreement was more apparent than real. For example, when Dewey disagreed with certain passages in Ayer’s *Language, Truth and Logic*, Neurath and Carnap assured him that these passages did not accurately reflect logical empiricism. Elsewhere, the disagreement seems to have been over tactics as much as substance. While largely in agreement with the logical empiricist’s critique of metaphysics, Dewey thought it was a “serious tactical mistake” (95) to think that metaphysics could be brushed aside by simply invoking the principle of verifiability.

Despite these disagreements, Reisch shows that there was significant dialogue, and even cooperation, between logical empiricists and pragmatists. Neurath could sound positively Deweyan when speaking of the “antitotalitarian” and “democratic” attitude of science. Frank, who helped shepherd the Unity of Science movement after Neurath’s death in 1945, supported “the idea that the evolution of logical empiricism, rightly understood, was a vector pointing directly to North American pragmatism” (215). Thus, while some disagreements did remain, Reisch concludes that there was a shared belief that the philosophy of science had a valuable social function to play, especially in helping science address social problems.

As Reisch points out, the preceding picture of logical empiricism and, in particular, its political ambitions, will most likely seem alien, even to those who view themselves as intellectual descendants of the Vienna Circle. It is for this reason, as he then argues, that it becomes all the more important to understand the subsequent changes which took place in the philosophy of science. So, in the second part of the book, he turns to the factors which

made the philosophy of science a largely apolitical area. Once again, his account draws on a wide range of sources which provide a compelling picture of the post-World War II intellectual climate.

Reisch argues that, to a large degree, the Unity of Science movement was a victim of Cold War anticommunism. The Unity of Science movement was a natural target of suspicion since many of its members had socialist politics. In addition, the proposal that scientific inquiry should be coordinated across disciplines reminded some of Soviet-style collectivism and totalitarianism. In an especially fascinating section Reisch also draws on Frank's and Carnap's FBI files, which he obtained through Freedom of Information Act Requests. According to these files, the FBI investigated both Frank and Carnap as potential fifth-columnists. Specifically, Frank was accused of "organizing high level Communist Party activities" (268) while Carnap was cited as a potential "Communist liaison agent" (273). The FBI investigations, which included extensive interviews with both men's colleagues and acquaintances, failed to turn up anything except highly speculative circumstantial evidence, and both cases were eventually closed. However, it is safe to conclude that these investigations were symptomatic of a more widespread suspicion directed at politically engaged philosophy. As Ellen Schrecker and John McCumber have also shown, philosophers received more than their fair share of scrutiny during the Cold War.

The Unity of Science movement was also facing challenges from within the logical empiricist camp. Hans Reichenbach and Herbert Feigl posed the most serious challenge, arguing for the value neutrality of science and the strict separation of science and values. Carnap, too, could be placed in this camp, especially in his later years, despite his well-known leftist politics. Reisch suggests that, given the Cold War political situation, a value-free philosophy of science had an easier time rounding up support. As a result, Frank and Morris became increasingly marginalized, as did any discussion of values from a scientific standpoint. Borrowing a phrase from the Vienna Circle's manifesto *The Scientific Conception of the World*, Reisch concludes that philosophy of science retreated to "the icy slopes of logic" by treating "values as absolute and isolated from scientifically informed study and criticism" (364).

Of course, it is tempting to explain logical empiricism's postwar trajectory as a sign of maturation, and the separation of science and values as a step closer to the truth. But, as Reisch points out, it is hardly obvious that this is so. Fifty years on, it is increasingly difficult to defend the goal of value-free philosophy of science, or to wax nostalgic about post-war logical empiricism. If post-war logical empiricism now seems significantly flawed, then it is not so easy to view it as an improvement, or as more nearly true, than the earlier logical empiricism of Neurath and Frank. Moreover, once we expand the range of possible explanations to include social as well as epistemic factors, Reisch's carefully researched account calls for serious attention.

Throughout Reisch focuses on the Unity of Science movement as the most political wing of logical empiricism. However, at times this account

suffers from the same weakness as the movement itself: it is never exactly clear what “Unity of Science” meant. Sometimes its meaning was very broad, and referred simply to a kind of “coordination” among different scientific fields to promote “the deliberate shaping and planning of modern life” (3) — though the nature of this coordination was often left vague. Elsewhere, the unity of science was more narrow and implied the “reduction” (87) of terms from one scientific theory to another. In this case the unity of science was more a linguistic thesis than a political agenda, and relied on syntax and semantics for its fulfillment. While the main players were well aware of these different interpretations, they seemed unable, ironically, to achieve the kind of unity among themselves that they desired in the sciences. As Reisch points out, this ambiguity would even haunt the Unity of Science movement when it sought financial support. He quotes an official at the Rockefeller Foundation who wondered, somewhat condescendingly, “whether the Vienna Boys have really isolated any one meaning for their ‘unified’ attack” (319). The reader is left with much the same confusion as to what, exactly, was lost when the Unity of Science movement petered out.

As the title of this book suggests, Reisch focuses primarily on the philosophy of science. It is not clear whether he also intends to explain post-war developments across philosophy as a whole. Writing of the changes that took place in American higher education during the 1950s, Reisch does admit that his account “hardly touches on . . . larger economic and sociological factors” which helped reshape the American university but, in the next breath, he also argues that “there can be no doubt that philosophers of science were among the points of application for anticommunist forces” (386–387). Moreover, to the degree that philosophy of science began to take precedence over other philosophical subdisciplines, it follows from Reisch’s account that changes in the former would have had an effect on the latter. While other factors contributed to the trajectory of twentieth century philosophy, it is clear that the philosophy of science underwent a sea change during the Cold War period, and that this change was mirrored in American philosophy as a whole. Reisch’s account is exceptional for uncovering specific social and political factors that may have contributed to this change. At the same time, and given the widespread disenchantment with post-war logical empiricism, Reisch’s account also suggests an alternative to value-free philosophy of science: one that is politically engaged, collaborative, and prepared to act outside of academia. In short, an alternative that combines pragmatism and analytic philosophy.

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