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## Three Positivist Disputes in the 1960s

Carl-Göran Heidegren

The West German positivist dispute in the 1960s is well known and thoroughly studied. At about the same time positivist disputes also took place in two Scandinavian countries: one in Norway and one in Sweden. What did the front lines in the debate look like in the three countries? What was the outcome of the different disputes? The main focus in the article is on the Swedish case, but some comparative perspectives relating to the three disputes will also be presented. The Swedish positivist dispute originated with Gerard Radnitzky's doctoral dissertation in theory of science, defended at the University of Gothenburg in May 1968, *Contemporary Schools of Metascience* (2 volumes). The dissertation caused a stir of controversy. It meant a challenge to the Swedish philosophical establishment because it leaned heavily on continental philosophers such as Karl-Otto Apel and Jürgen Habermas, who at the time were more or less unknown in Sweden. The controversy was continued in the following years, most notably in the leftist journal *Häften för kritiska studier* (*Notebooks for Critical Studies*).

# Three Positivist Disputes in the 1960s

Carl-Göran Heidegren

## 1. Introduction

The 1960s saw a number of debates and controversies which in retrospect have been or may be called positivist disputes. The following decade, the 1970s, was in many ways the high time of the critique of positivism, but also the beginning of its downfall. Towards the middle of the decade Anthony Giddens wrote: 'The word "positivist", like the word "bourgeois", has become more of a derogatory epithet than a useful descriptive concept, and consequently has been largely stripped of whatever agreed meaning it may once have had' (Giddens 1974, ix). When the concept has been watered down to such an extent, it is hardly possible any more to speak of positivist disputes and critique of positivism in any serious theoretical sense.

The following text focuses on three positivist disputes that took place in the 1960s. The three occurred in respectively West Germany, Norway and Sweden. The Norwegian dispute started already in the late 1950s and overlapped in time with the more famous one in West Germany. The Swedish dispute originated in 1968 and is thus the youngest of the three. The West German dispute is by far the most well-known and thoroughly studied, and will be used here mainly as a foil for the Scandinavian disputes. The latter two are much less known to an international audience. An obvious reason for this is that many of the relevant texts are only available in Norwegian or Swedish. Another reason is that compared to Germany the Scandinavian countries represent a cultural periphery also in the world of philosophy. Most unknown is probably the Swedish positivist dispute, and for this reason it is the main focus in the article. The front lines in

the disputes did not look the same in the three countries, and this is one reason why I consider a study of them to be of interest. The positivist disputes also shed some light on the radical student movements associated with the year 1968 and their connection to the discipline of philosophy. Furthermore, the outcome of the disputes were also very different in the two Scandinavian countries, especially in a short-term perspective (but less so in a long-term perspective). In the final section of the article I will touch on these issues.

Thus, my two principal research questions are: What did the front lines in the debate look like in the three countries? What was the outcome of the different disputes, especially in the two Scandinavian countries?

The term 'positivism' was originally associated with the doctrines of Auguste Comte from the first half of the 19th century. His so-called positive philosophy was a general doctrine of science. In the latter half of the same century the term was often used in a broader sense. For example the French philosopher and psychologist Théodule Ribot distinguished between 'positivism', as the doctrine of Comte, and what he called *l'esprit positif*, which he characterized as 'the modern scientific spirit' or 'the pure scientific spirit' (Ribot 1875, 102). The 'neo-positivistic' Vienna Circle came into being in the 1920s, with Moritz Schlick, Rudolf Carnap and Otto Neurath as key representatives. They strongly rejected metaphysics and advocated a scientific conception of the world. The movement soon came to be called 'logical positivism' or 'logical empiricism'. As a Continental European movement logical positivism was crushed by the rise to power of National Socialism and the incorporation of Austria into Germany. Several of its representatives found a new home in the Anglo-American world, where they soon became a part of the dominant trend of analytical philosophy.

This as a general background. Before we start a preliminary concept of positivism should be presented. At least nine characteristics can be listed: 1. A pronounced anti-metaphysical out-

look and critical stance towards much of traditional philosophy. 2. An equally pronounced empiricistic outlook as the other side of the coin. 3. The most advanced natural sciences being seen as representing the scientific ideal. 4. An adherence to the deductive-nomological or covering law model of scientific explanation. 5. Adherence to the idea of the unity of science (*Einheitswissenschaft*). 6. Modern logic and linguistic analysis are considered to be useful tools in doing philosophy. 7. Some criteria of demarcation exist for sorting out scientific from unscientific statements. 8. A sharp distinction is made between facts and values, including a technical understanding of praxis. 9. A sharp distinction is also made between context of discovery and context of justification.<sup>1</sup>

The above characteristics together make up an *ideal type* of positivism. Rather than trying to specify necessary and sufficient conditions for calling someone a positivist or a certain position positivistic, I prefer to use an ideal type of positivism that allows for persons and positions to resemble it more or less. This implies that a certain intellectual stance may show some traits of positivism, rather than being a full-fledged positivistic position.

An ideal positivist dispute will involve an exchange of arguments between one camp criticizing all or most of the nine points listed above and another camp defending all or most of the same points. This was not the case in any of the three disputes that will be dealt with here. Thus, if we want to stay with the designation positivist disputes we will have to rely on weaker versions of what such a controversy amounts to. We can imagine one camp defending some of the nine points listed above, while rejecting some of them, and being criticized by the other camp for doing this. A still weaker version will be one camp simply criticizing another for being in some sense positivistic. In the latter case it is indeed questionable if the designation positivist dispute is at

<sup>1</sup>The first eight points I have from Ritsert (2010, 103ff.); the last is my addition.

all appropriate.<sup>2</sup>

## 2. The West German Dispute

The most famous positivist dispute took place in West Germany in the 1960s. The main combatants were Karl Popper, Theodor W. Adorno, Jürgen Habermas and Hans Albert. The two opposing camps were critical rationalism, on the one hand, and critical theory, on the other. It all started in October 1961 at an extra internal meeting for the members of the German Sociological Association. Popper, being at the time not very well-known in West Germany, was invited to give a speech on 'The Logic of the Social Sciences', and Adorno to give a comment on Popper's paper. In the following years, 1963–65, Habermas and Albert entered the scene and presented respectively two lengthy and substantial contributions to the dispute. At this time the idea came up to collect the different contributions in a single volume, eventually with additional texts. However, this idea was not realized until 1969 in form of the book *Der Positivismusstreit in der deutschen Soziologie*.<sup>3</sup> To this volume was added most importantly a new lengthy introduction by Adorno. By this time, the late 1960s, discussions of positivism had already become a beloved topic for seminars and journals.

There do exist a number of studies of the West German positivist dispute.<sup>4</sup> I see no reason to add another presentation in

<sup>2</sup>An alternative way to proceed might have been to investigate and connect to how the word 'positivism' was actually used and given meaning in the polemics under discussion. But since the expression 'positivist dispute' has in retrospect become the standard way of referring especially to the West German controversy, I decided to depart from an ideal type of 'positivism' and from what a 'positivist dispute' may involve.

<sup>3</sup>In the following I quote from and refer to the English translation, *The Positivist Dispute in German Sociology*, from 1976.

<sup>4</sup>The most thorough study is probably Dahms (1994). Beside Dahms I have consulted Frisby (1976), Honneth (1989, chap. 7), Wiggershaus (1997, 628–46), Demirovic (1999, 804–15), and Ritsert (2010). See also the special issue of

limited space to the ones already existing. Instead, I will just direct attention to what I consider to be some interesting aspects relating to the controversy, and then move on to the two Scandinavian disputes.

The original constellation of the West German positivist dispute, Popper vs. Adorno, came about as an attempt to loosen up internal conflictual knots and to bring new life into the discussions within the German Sociological Association. Popper was invited to give a speech because he was an outsider and had a blameless democratic past. Looking back at the first round of the discussion it doesn't seem appropriate to speak of a positivist dispute. Popper's address was in no way a full-fledged defence of positivism, in fact he considered himself an anti-positivist, and Adorno's commentary was very polite and not at all polemical. Instead the latter talked about 'numerous substantive points of agreement' (Adorno 1976, 105). It is also a fact that afterwards several of the participants at the meeting considered the addresses and the ensuing discussion to have been rather disappointing (see Dahrendorf 1976, 129–30).<sup>5</sup>

It came to a controversy or dispute only when Habermas and Albert entered the scene. The two were, so to speak, shooting at one another with sharp ammunition, and with the ambition to hit the opponent. The dispute, however, was hampered by the fact that they quite obviously had very different views of what constituted a positivist position. Albert, just as Habermas, saw himself as a critic of positivism. 'Habermas', he later wrote, 'had attacked Popper as being a positivist, which in my eyes was badly in need of correction, because I myself had revised my positivistic

points of view under the influence of Popperian thought' (Albert 1977, 18).<sup>6</sup> Albert no doubt made a more restrictive use of the term positivism than Habermas.

The dispute was not fought out under the banners of positivism and anti-positivism, but rather under headings like analytical theory of science vs. dialectic (Habermas), critical rationalism vs. Hegel-inspired philosophy (Albert), and positivistically bisected rationalism vs. comprehensive rationalism (Habermas). The strategy of Habermas was to anchor the whole of what he called analytical theory of science in a technical knowledge interest. This position he then described and criticized as positivism. 'A sociology which restricted itself in its critical intention to empirical-analytical research would only be in a position to examine the self-preservation and self-destruction of social systems in the sphere of pragmatically successful adjustment processes, and would have to deny other dimensions' (Habermas 1976, 222). Albert repudiated that such a knowledge interest and such limitations were at all a characteristic of critical rationalism: 'Neither theoretical nor historical investigations, of whatever form, are extinguished through the view attacked by Habermas. Even normative problems can be discussed and are discussed within the framework of such a view' (Albert 1976, 254). Albert also pointed to what he saw as obscurities in Habermas's position relating to concepts like dialectic and totality.

In his long introduction to the volume from 1969 Adorno presented a sharp critique of positivism. In several respects he then made use of arguments which had been presented already in the debates during the interwar period. Thus there is no real continuity between the critiques delivered by Adorno and Habermas

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*Journal of Classical Sociology* 15, no. 2 (Mele 2015).

<sup>5</sup>Albert had informed Popper in a long letter from 6 May 1961, about the situation in West German sociology, and also forewarned him that Adorno probably would not see any difference between Popper and 'the typically positivistic outlook' (Albert and Popper 2005, 49). Later in his autobiography Popper answered the question Who killed Logical positivism? with: 'I fear that I must admit responsibility' (Popper 1978, 88).

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<sup>6</sup>Both Albert and Habermas were at the time living in Heidelberg. Albert wrote in a letter to Popper from 21 December 1963: 'He [Habermas], it is true, is "dialectically" infected, but very tolerant and eager to learn, and has undertaken an immense effort to come to grips with the Critical position and be fair to it, although without complete success. I will in the next time invite him home for a discussion' (Albert and Popper 2005, 72).

respectively. The latter's theory of research-guiding knowledge interests rather derived from the tradition of philosophical anthropology (Arnold Gehlen, Erich Rothacker), being continued by for example his friend Karl-Otto Apel. 'I am concerned with knowledge-guiding interests which, in each case, form the basis for a whole research system' (Habermas 1976, 220–21).<sup>7</sup> Another difference between Adorno and Habermas was that the latter, something Albert already noticed, more and more opened up for influences coming from the tradition of analytical philosophy (see Albert 1976, 252–53). This proved to be the beginning of an important shift of profile in the tradition of critical theory.

To a certain extent the West German positivist dispute can be seen as a 'local event' (Ritsert 2010, 128), lagging behind the Anglo-American debate within the theory of science. The latter was in the 1960s already well on the way into a post-positivistic or post-empiricistic phase. Looking back at the dispute a decade later Albert points to publications by Norwood R. Hanson, Thomas S. Kuhn and Paul Feyerabend from the early 1960s as examples of this trend (compare Albert 1977, 25).

The controversy strongly contributed to creating an intellectual climate in which critique of positivism was high up on the agenda, and in which positivism came to be associated with a defence of the established social order or with technocratic reform. Both Adorno and Habermas were important sources of inspiration for the radical student movement in West Germany in the 1960s, although they were also soon to be surpassed by the most radical factions among the students.

### 3. Two Scandinavian Disputes

This section will, as already indicated, primarily deal with the Swedish positivist dispute, which took off in the late 1960s. But

<sup>7</sup>Habermas approach in the positivist dispute pointed forward towards his major work *Knowledge and Human Interests* from 1968 (compare Honneth 1989, chap. 7).

to begin with the Norwegian dispute will be shortly introduced by pointing to some of the characteristics that lend it a profile of its own.

#### 3.1. Norway: 'the modern rebellion against positivism'

The Norwegian positivist dispute started already in the late 1950s, thus a few years before the one in West Germany and well before the one in Sweden. The pioneering works were written by the philosopher Hans Skjervheim in form of the article 'Deltaker og tilskodar' (Participant and Observer) (1957) and the master's thesis *Objectivism and the Study of Man* (1959). An important local background for the dispute in Norway was the fact that in the late 1950s and early 1960s a number of talented young Norwegian philosophers and social scientists had studied at universities in West Germany and France. This was at a time when the overall intellectual trend in the Scandinavian countries was strongly in favour of an Anglo-American orientation.<sup>8</sup>

The Norwegian positivist dispute was to a considerable degree a critique of a domestic research tradition which had been founded by Arne Næss. When he as a very young man became professor at the University of Oslo in 1939, at the time the only professorial chair in philosophy in the country, Næss was considered as being close to the Vienna Circle and strongly critical of traditional philosophy.<sup>9</sup> In the following years Næss developed a programme for what he called empirical semantics,

<sup>8</sup>The Norwegian positivist dispute is documented in the volume *Positivism, dialektikk, materialisme* (Positivism, dialectics, materialism) from 1976. The editor, Rune Slagstad, writes in an introductory essay that Jürgen Habermas is planning a publication at the Suhrkamp Verlag which will document the controversy (see Slagstad 1976b, 76). Unfortunately there exists no such publication, but the remark indicates that what occurred in Norway caught attention in West Germany, i.e., influences went possibly in both directions. See also Nordenstam and Skjervheim (1973).

<sup>9</sup>Næss had studied in Vienna in 1934–35. On Næss and the Vienna Circle see Stadler (2010).



which included investigations, with the help of interviews and questionnaires, into what scholars as well as ordinary people meant when they used words like truth and democracy. Næss, and the multi-disciplinary circle that gathered around him, were also important in actively paving the way for American social science in the Norwegian context, including the founding of The Institute for Social Research at Oslo in 1949 (Thue 2006).<sup>10</sup> However, Næss himself was in the 1950s and 1960s in several respects moving away from his earlier position, and thus felt no strong need to defend any professed positivistic standpoint. Thus, rather than with a full-fledged positivist dispute, we are mainly dealing with a *critique* of positivism.

The critique was originally directed against what was seen as the objectification of man in philosophy and the social sciences. What was criticized went under many different names: positivism, objectivism, naturalism, behaviorism and technocratic steering. The critique has been aptly summarized by philosopher Jon Hellesnes in the following way: ‘The “objectivism” of such positions was said to consist in the methodological transformation of “subjective” and “intersubjective” phenomena (e.g. meaning, reason, intention, action) into “objective” phenomena (e.g. data, cause, behavior) and in the methodological reduction of intentional to extensional sentences’ (Næss and Hellesnes 1980, 164).<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, against the unity of science model

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<sup>10</sup>The spirit of the group around Næss is, I think, well captured in a letter from August 1946 that Stein Rokkan, later a renowned political scientist, wrote to Bertrand Russell: ‘Personally, I always meant it to be an essential aim of my life to do my best to propagate this Western heritage, these Western ideals of openness and toleration, this Western contempt for shortsighted dogmatism and foggy notion-mongering, in a country that has, culturally and intellectually, been too much dependant on German thoughtways, and I have now the impression that this urge for a general philosophical re-orientation is gradually spreading in wider and wider circles’ (quoted in Thue 2006, 193).

<sup>11</sup>Compare Skjervheim: ‘Objectivism, which must not be confused with objectivity, means just this: to treat everything as an object in the world, or as relations between such objects, exclusively’ (Skjervheim 1959, 9).

of logical positivism the distinction between natural sciences, on the one hand, and human and social sciences, on the other, was rehabilitated. ‘In this work’, Skjervheim wrote in his master’s thesis, ‘we shall try to rehabilitate the Diltheyan view that the transcendental problems of social and historical science are essentially different from the parallel problems with respect to natural science’ (Skjervheim 1959, 3).

The critique of positivism was to begin with primarily inspired by and anchored in phenomenology, existentialism and Weberian *Verstehen*-sociology, but also including the tradition of transcendental philosophy. The young Marx and the topic of human alienation was, given the focus upon the objectification of man, also part of the picture from early on. However, Skjervheim gave the critique an original bent when he explicated what a participant perspective involved in the following way: ‘We may treat the words that the other says as sound, merely . . . Or we may treat what he says as a *knowledge claim*, in which case we are not concerned with what he says as a fact of his biography only, but as something which can be true or false’ (Skjervheim 1959, 36). This passage was later to be of crucial importance to Habermas in his positive evaluation of Skjervheim’s contribution.<sup>12</sup> Not to objectify your fellow human beings meant for Skjervheim to take them seriously, i.e., to carefully listen to what they say, to the arguments they bring forth, and to agree or disagree with what they say.

Skjervheim, already in the late 1950s, used the expression ‘one-dimensional’ (Skjervheim 1959, 76) to characterize the kind of thinking that neglects the fact that man, including the social scientist, is a participant in social life. And in an article from 1964 he talked about ‘the modern rebellion against positivism’

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<sup>12</sup>Habermas writes in *Theory of Communicative Action*: ‘Skjervheim draws our attention here to the interesting fact that the performative attitude of a first person in relation to a second means at the same time an orientation to validity claims’ (Habermas 2002, 113).

(Skjervheim 1971, 67).<sup>13</sup> In the course of the 1960s the sources of inspiration for the critique of positivism was expanded or shifted to include the tradition of critical theory (Adorno, Marcuse, Habermas) as well as philosophers more or less close to this tradition (Apel).<sup>14</sup> The existential Marxism of Sartre also became an important point of reference, and so did the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty. Now the opposition to positivism was clearly situated on the political Left and directed against what was taken to be the establishment at the university and in society at large.<sup>15</sup>

During the 1960s attempts were also made, in connection with Habermas and Apel, to synthesize influences coming from phenomenology, hermeneutics and critical theory, on the one hand, and from analytical philosophy of language, on the other. In this context the later Wittgenstein became of crucial importance, and also Oxford philosophers like Strawson and Hampshire.<sup>16</sup> Rather typical of this approach was a reading of Wittgenstein as a 'transcendental philosopher in the sense of Kant' (Øfsti 1976, 326), i.e., with a focus on the conditions of possibility for a certain praxis: following a rule, language games, forms of life.

Knut Erik Tranøy points in retrospect to a peculiarity of the Norwegian dispute: 'In the Norwegian positivist dispute the ethical side of positivism was overshadowed by the problem of an ideal of science for the social sciences' (Tranøy 2002, 58). At the center of the debate was the issue concerning the ontological status of social phenomena as opposed to that of physical

phenomena, rather than for example the question of value freedom in scientific research.<sup>17</sup> This, as we will see, marks a strong contrast to the Swedish dispute in which the role of values in relation to science was central.

The critique of positivism was mainly situated at an abstract philosophical level rather than at the level of empirical research in the social sciences. The question of what a non-positivistic social science would look like in practice did not receive any clear answer. 'The difference', wrote the sociologist Vilhelm Aubert, 'is rather big between talking about how social science ought to be conducted and actually doing social science. The ones who like one of the activities are often not so happy about the other' (Aubert 1969, 60). An indirect answer to the critique of positivism in the social sciences was quite obviously doing business as usual, i.e., simply ignoring it. However, an explicit defence of the hypothetic-deductive method was delivered by the political scientist Stein Rokkan, a pupil of Næss from the 1940s, who also sharply criticized what he took to be the 'ritualistic word-fetishism' (Rokkan 1970, 12) of the radical New Left.<sup>18</sup>

A short-term result of the Norwegian positivist dispute was the establishment of a pluralistic philosophical culture around 1970, including a very good primary knowledge of contemporary German and French philosophy, and in many ways a bridging of the gulf between analytical and continental philosophy. Jon Hellesnes, a decade later, quite correctly laid down that 'Norwegian philosophy includes a trend that is rather atypical for Scandinavian philosophy' (Næss and Hellesnes 1980, 164).

However, in the same year, 1970, Skjervheim failed in becoming the successor of Næss at the University of Oslo. Instead he

<sup>13</sup>In the mid-1960s Skjervheim, returning from a long research stay in Munich, was about to establish an 'alternative center' (Gjefsen 2011, 258), beside that of Næss, at the Department of Philosophy, Oslo University.

<sup>14</sup>Skjervheim was in personal contact with Apel since the early 1960s. Furthermore, his mantra in these years is reported to have been: 'You have to read Adorno!' (Sørbo 2002, 94).

<sup>15</sup>In January 1969 the Department of Philosophy at Oslo University was occupied by radical students, and came to be the site of a one week teach-in about the role of philosophy in society. See Christiansen and Vold (1969).

<sup>16</sup>At the University of Bergen a strong interest in the late Wittgenstein was present since the early 1960s. See Johannessen, Larsen and Åmås (1994).

<sup>17</sup>This is for example the main theme of Audun Øfsti's master's thesis from 1966: the identification of physical and social phenomena. It was finally published as a book, with a new preface, almost fifty years later (see Øfsti 2015).

<sup>18</sup>According to Fredrik W. Thue there existed already in the late 1950s a trend towards interpretive sociology in Norway, and in which was articulated a critique of American-inspired scientific sociology that was rather similar to that of Skjervheim (see Thue 2006, chap. 15).



got a position at the University of Bergen, which came to house a large and diversified philosophy department. Dag Prawitz from Sweden was appointed as new professor in Oslo, having very strong merits in the field of philosophical logic, but also a strikingly narrow bag of merits. The appointment was controversial, and received a lot of mostly critical comments in the press. Prawitz remained in Norway for only six years, but his appointment can be seen as a first turn of the tide in favour of analytical philosophy. A strong influence in this direction was Dagfinn Føllesdal, who had become professor in Oslo in 1967. A decade later Føllesdal published a sharp critique of the critique of positivism. The critique was in his eyes superficial and directed against a diffuse straw man in the form of a rather unspecified -ism called positivism (see Føllesdal 1977). Much more relevant and productive was, according to Føllesdal, the self-criticism that had come from the members of the Vienna Circle themselves and from philosophers like Quine. This trend towards analytical philosophy at the University of Oslo was to become strong in the 1980s. It was instead rather at the universities in Bergen and Tromsø (opening in 1972) that the positivist dispute of the 1960s became a living heritage for quite a long time.

### 3.2. Sweden: a belated dispute

The Swedish positivist dispute had a twofold starting point: Gerard Radnitzky's defence in late May 1968 of his doctoral dissertation in theory of science at the University of Gothenburg, on the one hand, and the launching of the new journal *Häften för kritiska studier* (*Notebooks for Critical Studies*) in the late summer that same year, on the other.

A background to the controversy was the development of the Swedish welfare state and the simultaneous rise of analytical philosophy and Anglo-American social science to hegemony at the universities. Furthermore, it may be argued that there was an elective affinity between these two tendencies. The image of

the modern welfare state as a rationally organized, secularized, urbanized and democratic society did fit together with the idea of a sober style of doing philosophy, including the rejection of metaphysical arguments and entities. The vicious circle of speculative, unscientific philosophy and anti-democratic politics was to be replaced by the virtuous circle of sound philosophical argument and rational political planning. This meant that especially the German cultural heritage, until recently so influential, was strongly stigmatized and became literally dangerous to connect to (see Östling 2017).<sup>19</sup> By the time of the 1950s and early 1960s a proclaimed end of ideology-thesis had become a kind of over-ideology in Sweden. The reaction came in the latter half of the 1960s in the form of a critique of social engineering and technocratic steering, on the one hand, and a critique of the kind of philosophy and social science that was deemed to be in alliance with them, on the other. To this must be added the growing awareness of social injustice and human suffering in the Third World, with the Vietnam War as a focus of engagement. When Radnitzky defended his dissertation in the spring of 1968 the Swedish student movement was already mobilized and about to enter a phase of radicalization.

#### 3.2.1. A controversial dissertation

Radnitzky's dissertation, entitled *Contemporary Schools of Metascience*, caused a stir of controversy within Swedish philosophy. It consisted of two parts: *Anglo-Saxon Schools of Metascience* and *Continental Schools of Metascience*. Two circumstances formed a background to the controversy. One was the already mentioned rise to hegemony of so-called analytical philosophy within Swedish philosophy; all major representatives of the discipline in the 1960s adhered to this orientation. The other was the direction that the discipline of theory of science, formally still belonging to the Department of Philosophy, had taken under the leadership

<sup>19</sup>For British parallels see Akehurst (2010).

of Håkan Törnebohm. The latter was, since 1963, after a lengthy séjour at Khartoun University in Sudan, holding the only professorial chair in theory of science in Sweden. Törnebohm had as a young student experienced Ernst Cassirer as teacher in philosophy in Gothenburg; 'he had the whole of Kant in his head', Törnebohm later recalled in an interview (Allwood and Bärmark 1994, 62). However, in the years to come he became an acknowledged specialist in the philosophy of classical and modern physics. During the late 1940s and the 1950s Törnebohm was strongly influenced by logical empiricism. However, after becoming professor in theory of science he gradually made a shift of interest from analyzing the results of science towards studying the production process of scientific knowledge. At the same time an inventory was made in the seminars of the different positions in the theory of science being represented on the contemporary scene, including Popper's critical rationalism, Kuhn's paradigm theory, hermeneutics and critical theory. Radnitzky's dissertation was a result of this seminar activity.

Gerard Radnitzky had come to Sweden in the spring of 1945 as a deserter from the German Air Force (*Luftwaffe*). In the morning of 19 April he landed in a stolen areoplane at a military airfield in the south of Sweden.<sup>20</sup> With several years of delay, in the meantime he had become a Swedish citizen and married a Swedish woman, he took up his studies at Stockholm University College in 1950. There he was trained in analytical philosophy by Anders Wedberg, professor in theoretical philosophy, who was later to become his fierce opponent and critic. In the mid-1950s Radnitzky came into contact with Törnebohm and moved to Gothenburg. Some years later the German positivist dispute, among other things, had the effect of broadening his research interests. A personal contact with Karl-Otto Apel, starting pre-

<sup>20</sup>In an autobiographical work, published the same year as he died, Radnitzky writes about his childhood and youth as well as the time in the German Air Force and the escape to Sweden (Radnitzky 2006). The book unfortunately contains almost nothing about his long stay, more than 25 years, in Sweden.

sumably in the mid-1960s, was also of crucial importance for Radnitzky embarking on his dissertation project, beside the already mentioned orientation seminars.

The first part of Radnitzky's dissertation deals with logical empiricism (LE), being primarily represented by Carnap and Hempel. LE is presented as 'a substream' within analytic philosophy, and the Vienna Circle is said to be 'the cradle of LE' (Radnitzky 1968a, 19, 117). It should be noticed that this first part of the dissertation is not explicitly staged as a critique of positivism. Taken in a narrow sense positivism is not even one of the key concepts of the dissertation. It is also not the case that LE is simply equated with positivism. On the other hand, Radnitzky often uses, especially in the second part of the dissertation, expressions like 'the positivistic ideal of science', 'the positivistic image of research', 'a positivist attitude', 'positivistic social science', 'the positivistic *forma mentis*', etc. (Radnitzky 1968b, 71, 84, 127, 138, 155).

Radnitzky's dissertation meant a challenge to Swedish philosophy for several reasons, of which I take the following to be the most important.

a) A first stumbling-block was that Swedish philosophers saw that part of what they considered to be their own domain was about to break loose; theory of science was on the way of becoming an independent discipline. This move implied a shift from philosophy of science in the vein of LE towards the study of science in the making or the production process of scientific knowledge. Furthermore, the spirit of LE, according to Radnitzky, is narrowly 'security-minded'. His own and alternative ideal of science leaned heavily on Popper: 'We seek intellectual adventures.' His was a 'plea for a new spirit—which of necessity has had to be preceded by a criticism of the antipodal spirit that dominates the contemporary scene' (Radnitzky 1968a, 188).

b) Radnitzky's view of philosophy was a far cry from the one dominating Swedish philosophy: 'Philosophy in the sense of *philosophia perennis* is concerned with man's *worldpicture* and *way*

of life, and with existential themes' (Radnitzky 1968a, 4). In contrast to this the philosophy of LE was considered by Radnitzky as academic-anemic, situated far off from the daily concerns of science as well as everyday life.

c) Radnitzky portrayed the situation of philosophy in Sweden as that of being dominated by LE. This collided with the self-understanding of leading Swedish philosophers, who did not consider themselves as belonging to any particular school, but rather saw themselves as just analytical philosophers in a broad and somewhat vague sense. Radnitzky's critique was sharp: 'The alleged absence of "schools" in a milieu reflects the fact that this milieu is one grand school' (Radnitzky 1968a, 7). Furthermore: 'In an intellectual milieu hostile to philosophy (as in any milieu where positivism dominates) or one bound to a single philosophical position dogmatically enforced, responsible worldpicture-making becomes almost impossible. Hence in such a milieu enlightenment and emancipation will be hindered' (Radnitzky 1968a, 91).

d) A main object of criticism for Radnitzky was the application of the so-called deductive-nomological or covering law-model in historical explanations. This approach, he argued, rather is a hindrance to the growth of knowledge in this field: 'In our opinion the worst effect a meta-scientific doctrine can have' (Radnitzky 1968b, 104). For Radnitzky, following Apel and Habermas, this is a consequence of the dominance of a technical knowledge interest that aims at explanation and prediction. According to him causal explanations in the social sciences form part of the process of understanding that becomes relevant 'when the agents are not transparent to themselves to a considerable and relevant degree' (Radnitzky 1968b, 96).

e) Radnitzky drew attention to contemporary continental philosophers who were at the time more or less unknown within Swedish philosophy: Hans-Georg Gadamer, Paul Ricoeur, Karl-Otto Apel and Jürgen Habermas. Out of this constellation he constructed a tradition or school of thought that he termed the

hermeneutic-dialectic (HD). 'There has been little communication between logical empiricism and the hermeneutic-dialectic school. Logical empiricism has been isolationistic to the degree of appearing blind to the results of the latter school' (Radnitzky 1968a, xvii). Furthermore, Radnitzky made an argument for the HD-school being the far better alternative when it comes to a theory of science for the humanities and the social sciences. He especially highlighted the theory of research-guiding knowledge interests and a research strategy that included both interpretive and explanatory elements.<sup>21</sup>

f) In the way of expressing himself and in the use of metaphors Radnitzky was sometimes quite provocative. The representatives of LE were, for example, portrayed as gardeners who, in the fear of weed, do not allow anything to grow in their garden, and on the whole are quite satisfied by being considered as clever and astute: 'gardener No. 1 designs a tool, No. 2 points out a defect, No. 3 mends it and refines it, No. 2 finds a new fault, and so on and on' (Radnitzky 1968a, 144–45). Furthermore, Radnitzky made a distinction between what he called a T-type ('technical' or 'tool-making') and a Q-type philosopher ('question-raising'). Characteristic of the T-type philosopher is that his 'philosophy becomes professionalized, departmentalized and culturally alienated from life, science and society' (Radnitzky 1968a, 16).

An important constructive ambition of Radnitzky's dissertation was a daring attempt to integrate crucial ideas derived from critical rationalism (Popper) and the HD-tradition (Apel and Habermas), thus the two research orientations that confronted each other in the West German positivist dispute. Radnitzky saw some overlap between Popper and LE, but did not consider Popperianism to be a subschool of the latter. This set the stage for

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<sup>21</sup> Apel was Radnitzky's opponent at the disputation and had visited Gothenburg at least two times before, in the Spring of 1966 and of 1967. A personal contact with Habermas seems to have been established only after the defence of the thesis.

drawing Popper closer to HD. 'The political aim of critical social science is preventing society from becoming closed' (Radnitzky 1968b, 155). Of crucial importance to him was the close connection found in Popper between the so-called criticist frame, the decision in favour of rational argumentation, and the idea of an open society. Here, according to Radnitzky, an implicit emancipatory knowledge interest is at work: 'Habermas agrees with Popper's social philosophy but wants to go further. He wants to legitimize the "option" for Reason (i.e. the emancipatory interest) . . .' (Radnitzky 1968b, 154). Radnitzky, following Habermas, does this by anchoring the emancipatory interest in an anthropology of knowledge. As soon as we are involved in a dialogue, with ourselves and/or with others, we are already moving within the criticist frame; this is not the result of an active choice (decision) on our part: 'The criticist frame "coincides" with the dialogue' (Radnitzky 1968b, 184). As language users we are already involved in an exchange of opinions and arguments; this is a central aspect of being human. In addition to this, both critical rationalism and the HD-tradition stand for a dynamic view of science with a clear focus on the growth of knowledge.

The explicit intention of Radnitzky's dissertation was not to polarize between different positions, on the contrary, it was to be an invitation to a 'dialogue' and it was guided by 'a sort of ecumenical interest' (Radnitzky 1968a, xvi). However, the effect it had was rather to polarize into opposed camps.

The Swedish philosophical establishment reacted very irritably and critically to Radnitzky's dissertation, being already agitated by the turn that Törnebohm had given the theory of science-discipline. Ivar Segelberg, holder of the professorial chair in philosophy at the University of Gothenburg, wrote an official letter of protest to the Historical-philosophical Section at the University, to which he attached a letter from Anders Wedberg, the

former teacher of Radnitzky, which contained an informal assessment of his dissertation.<sup>22</sup>

'On page four', Segelberg remarked, "'philosophy" is described in a way that does not fit the activity that is carried out at our philosophy departments. Philosophy is said to be about man's worldpicture, about man's "way of life".' A little later Segelberg continued: 'The second part of the dissertation is devoted to German philosophy that is little noticed here by us', and he frankly admitted of not having 'any primary knowledge of these philosophers', while adding that Radnitzky's presentation of them does not 'invite to any closer acquaintance'. Furthermore, the ideals of humanistic research which the HD-school sets up are according to Segelberg 'very far' from the ones that humanistic research in Sweden tries to attain. The latter are for example characterized by a 'striving for objectivity and the repudiation of valuations'.

Wedberg, on the other hand, starts somewhat surprisingly by saying that Radnitzky is 'quite right' in much of his critique of LE. But he is nevertheless no sympathizer of Radnitzky, because what the latter writes is said to be all too vague in order to transmit a clear picture of what he wants to say. Thus, the question if Radnitzky is right or wrong cannot be settled because it is impossible to attach a definite meaning to what he says. Furthermore, Wedberg states that 'to my shame I must confess that I have never heard of neither "the hermenutic-dialectic school" nor of its representatives'. All in all, Radnitzky's dissertation is according to Wedberg a kind of 'philosophical journalism' that from a very 'high altitude' passes judgment on various philosophical schools and positions. This was hardly a vote for it to pass as a dissertation.

In the years to follow the Swedish establishment in philosophy did everything they could to thwart an academic career

<sup>22</sup>The following quotations are all from *Skrivelse av Ivar Segelberg* (Official letter from Ivar Segelberg, 1968).

for Radnitzky in Sweden. When a new professor in theory of science was about to be appointed at Umeå University in 1970, Radnitzky was, so it seems, more or less intimidated from applying. This no doubt contributed to Radnitzky later coming to conceive of Sweden as a more or less closed society in the form of a Social Democratic totalitarianism. In the early 1970s Radnitzky was offered a chair in Bochum, West Germany, and left Sweden, a country in which he had lived for more than a quarter of a century.<sup>23</sup>

### 3.2.2. The controversy continues

The first issue of the journal *Häften för kritiska studier* (*Notebooks for Critical Studies*) was published in September 1968. Behind the journal was a group of students in practical philosophy at Stockholm University, calling themselves ‘Unga Filosofer’ (Young Philosophers).<sup>24</sup> The first editorial laid down that the journal wanted to be the voice of a ‘rising radical student and research generation who demands a new scientific and social climate, at the same time as it engages in a dialogue with the established university and connects to the continental debate’ (Fjellström 1968a, 1). The journal was from the start an organ for part of the New Left at the university and in the public sphere.

<sup>23</sup>Some years later Radnitzky whole-heartedly took side with the camp of critical rationalism, and became extremely critical of Apel and Habermas. He takes a look back at his own philosophical development in Radnitzky (1981). In the dissertation Radnitzky writes: ‘A considerable part of Popperianism is implicitly included in our own platform’ (Radnitzky 1968a, 21). Two years later in the new introduction to the second edition he states that ‘Popper and his followers... have influenced our own platform more than any other philosophers of science’ (Radnitzky 1970, xxv).

<sup>24</sup>Åke Löfgren, teacher in practical philosophy, had initiated the group and was its informal leader. The professorial chair in practical philosophy at Stockholm University was held by Harald Ofstad, a former pupil of Næss from the 1940s. ‘Unga Filosofer’ and their journal *Häften för kritiska studier* have been thoroughly studied in a recent Swedish dissertation (see Ekelund 2017, chaps. 3, 5).

It is hardly surprising that *Häften* took an interest in Radnitzky’s dissertation, which no doubt connected to the contemporary continental debate. Radnitzky presented the main ideas of his dissertation in the first issue, and his colleague in Gothenburg, Aant Elzinga, wrote in a more polemical vein: ‘Younger scientists now question the views of the empiricistic authorities concerning objectivity and emphasize the connection between theory and practice. In doing this they find support in continental traditions within the theory of science deriving from Hegel and Marx’ (Elzinga and Radnitzky 1968a, 40). In another leftist journal, *Zenit* (*Zenith*), Elzinga wrote that ‘the positivistic doctrines about value neutrality and objectivity’ are now being criticized and replaced by modes of thought that depart from a ‘dialectical interpretation of the reciprocal link between theory and practice’ (Elzinga 1968, 79). In a sense one can say that it was Elzinga who transformed the controversy over Radnitzky’s dissertation into a Swedish positivist dispute, by quite explicitly framing it in such terms.

Radnitzky returned in the first issue of *Häften* with a second and this time very polemical article, no doubt written after he had learned about the reaction to his dissertation from the Swedish philosophical establishment. The article was entitled: ‘Om intolerans och forskningens frihet’ (On intolerance and the freedom of research). Formally, Radnitzky laid down, it is allowed to study different strands of continental philosophy. ‘However, *in reality* this freedom does not exist. Not even the freedom to question and sharply criticize analytical philosophy barely exists’ (Elzinga and Radnitzky 1968b, 58). In such a situation it is no longer possible to speak of the freedom of research. Elzinga in the same article posed an alternative: ‘We have the positivist’s position in favour of established norms and institutions, on the one hand, the position in favour of new norms and conceivable future institutions, on the other’ (Elzinga and Radnitzky 1968b, 59).



In a rejoinder, in the next issue of *Häften*, Anders Wedberg laid down: ‘The yardstick, which I as well as Segelberg utilize by the assessment of Radnitzky’s dissertation, we don’t have from any philosophical “school”, but it is the yardstick which at present is generally utilized in Sweden by the assessment of scientific treatises’ (Wedberg 1968, 42). Thus, Wedberg denied that he belonged to any particular philosophical school, and that his assessment for that reason was possibly biased; that the yardstick generally used in Sweden, so to speak the Swedish normality, could in some way be biased or one-sided obviously did not occur to him.

In *Häften*, no. 2–3, 1969, one of the editors, the young philosopher Roger Fjellström published a lengthy article with the title ‘Anteckningar om positivismen’ (Notes on positivism). The latest phase of positivism is said to be that of logical empiricism, which ‘more and more is about to break up and be transformed into a more general “analytic philosophy”’ (Fjellström 1969, 26). Through such a lumping together of positivism, logical empiricism and analytic philosophy the target of critique becomes indeed very wide and at the same time less specific. ‘Positivism can be seen as an *articulated ideology*, as an instrument for the establishment and consolidation of a certain way of thinking and looking at the world’ (Fjellström 1969, 27). The alternative standpoint that Fjellström presents read: ‘It is my opinion that *all science is ideological*, that it is a meaningful and “interested” structuration of existence answering to social needs and preconditions’ (Fjellström 1969, 35–36).

This standpoint, ascribed to the editors of *Häften*, was sharply criticized in a long article by the sociologist Göran Therborn, a key representative of the New Left at Lund University and being under the strong influence of Louis Althusser. However, the main focus of the article was a presentation and a critique of the Frankfurt School, and especially of Habermas, something already the title clearly indicates: ‘From revolutionary theory to academic metaphysics’. The point of departure for Therborn

was that Marx had established a ‘science of society and history’, and that what characterizes science is that it ‘brings forth knowledge’ (Therborn 1969, 30, 35). From this perspective Therborn disqualifies Fjellström’s point of view that all science is ideological as an absurd thesis. For Therborn there is a clear line of demarcation between science and ideology, the latter expressing valuations of some kind, reminding of the one that the Vienna Circle originally had erected between meaningful and meaningless statements. Therborn in passing characterizes Radnitzky’s dissertation as being politically and ideologically ‘reactionary’ and scientifically ‘fairly bad’ (Therborn 1969, 37).

Fjellström, already in the above-mentioned article, had pointed out that there are ‘positivistic’ forms of Marxism as well as ‘non-positivistic formulations of the concept of ideology’ (Fjellström 1969, 27–28). In a rejoinder to Therborn another of the editors, Åke Löfgren, laid down that the former took up a positivistic position through his sharp distinction between science and ideology. Furthermore, he argued that Therborn merely states that science ‘brings forth knowledge’, but does not present any arguments against the view that knowledge is always ‘knowledge relating to certain points of departure that are not self-evident and which are linked to interests and evaluations’ (Löfgren 1969, 40). The kind of research that Löfgren himself favours is characterized as ‘research for the people’, a ‘politically self-assured research’ based on ‘socialist valuations’ (Löfgren 1969, 42–43).<sup>25</sup>

It should be noted that although Radnitzky’s dissertation was discussed in the journals of the New Left in Sweden, the au-

<sup>25</sup>In an editorial Fjellström talks about a ‘democratic, socialist knowledge interest’ (Fjellström 1968b, 2). It has recently been convincingly argued that Gunnar Myrdal was a major influence on the group ‘Unga Filosofer’ in matters of the role of values in science (Ekelund 2017, 329–30, 369–70). A Swedish background to this turn of the debate was the so-called ‘value nihilism’ associated mainly with Axel Hägerström, and according to which value judgements are neither true nor false but simply expressions of emotions.

thor himself was not politically on this side. Radnitzky granted the radical student movement having raised important issues: 'The problem of the Good Life has again been made topical and "respectable"—a problem which the positivistic enlightenment thought "finished"' (Radnitzky 1968b, 158). But he also concluded that 'the New Left has fled from the (positivistic-historistic) ivory tower of the traditional a-political and value-free university into the ivory tower of a vague social utopia' (Radnitzky 1968b, 158). On this issue Radnitzky himself saw no alternative to Popper's idea of an open society and of gradual reform. But he also insisted upon: 'Positivistic social science is the only one a totalitarian society can use and *tolerate*' (Radnitzky 1968b, 137).

In conclusion, I will list some points relating to the positivist dispute that ensued in Sweden following Radnitzky's controversial dissertation and the launching of *Häftan för kritiska studier*.

a) The Swedish debate was from the start hampered by the fact that it often in a rather unclear way lumped together analytical philosophy, logical empiricism and, simply, positivism. This was disturbing to leading Swedish philosophers who generally considered themselves to be analytical philosophers, but certainly no logical empiricists.

b) Marx was from early on and remained an important factor in the dispute. In general Marx was mobilized as an alternative by those who criticized positivism. But at least one version of Marxism, represented by Althusser and Therborn, was also criticized as being positivistic because of the sharp distinction being made between science and ideology. Thus more than one front line existed in the dispute.

c) A displacement of the main focus of the debate gradually occurred, moving from a critique of the theory of science of logical empiricism to the question of the role of valuations in science and the possibility and desirability of objectivity in the humanities and the social sciences. The positivist-critical stance insisted that values cannot be avoided and kept out of science.

Thus, the questions rather became: How to handle valuations while doing science? And: What valuations are preferable or justifiable?

d) What took place in Sweden was no proper positivist dispute for the simple reason that no positivists appeared on the scene and explicitly defended a more or less full-fledged positivistic position. Lars Bergström and Göran Hermerén, two Swedish philosophers, both discussed problems of objectivity in books from 1972. But neither of them defended an all-round positivistic position, but rather met the critics of positivism halfway, granting some of their points, confronting others.<sup>26</sup>

e) In retrospect it has been argued that in the year 1968 there existed within the New Left a good opportunity for establishing a pluralistic philosophical culture in Sweden (Johansson 1993). This opportunity, however, was lost as a result of resistance from the Swedish philosophical establishment as well as the leftist student movement becoming more dogmatic.

f) As a consequence a marked polarization occurred between analytical philosophy dominating the departments of philosophy and various strands of continental philosophy that found a refuge at different humanistic and social science departments. Another bifurcation followed in the steps of this division: the one between philosophical professionals doing sober philosophical analysis, on the one hand, and philosophical amateurs banging the big drum for some continental philosopher or movement, on the other.

#### 4. Summary, Short-term and Long-term Effects

The central issue in the Norwegian positivist dispute was what was considered to be the objectification of man in positivistic philosophy and social science. Thus it comes as no surprise

<sup>26</sup>See Bergström (1972) and Hermerén (1972). Hermerén, for example, strongly upheld the distinction between context of discovery and context of justification.

that the young Marx's notion of alienation was mobilized in the discussion from early on. The question of the fundamental difference between physical and social phenomena was also of crucial importance in the dispute. The sources of inspiration, from the late 1950s to the late 1960s, involved a gradual shift from existentialism, phenomenology and *Verstehen*-sociology to critical theory (especially Habermas), existential Marxism and, to a certain extent, the late Wittgenstein. What took place can be most aptly described as a *critique* of positivism rather than as a full-fledged positivist dispute. Positivistic social science largely ignored the critique by doing business as usual. On the other hand there also existed in Norwegian social science a trend towards interpretive sociology. In contrast to the disputes in West Germany and Sweden, Popper and critical rationalism did not, as far as I can see, play any major role in the Norwegian dispute. A result of the critique was that a pluralistic philosophical culture was well established in Norway around 1970, something that had no equivalent in the other Scandinavian countries at the time. Thus, a short-term effect was the bridging of the gap between analytical and continental philosophy to an extent that is hardly found anywhere else at this time. There were several Norwegian philosophers that had a solid competence in both traditions. However, since then a slow but marked turn towards a dominating influence for analytical philosophy in Norway is observable. This trend can be said to have started at the University of Oslo already in the 1970s.

The West German positivist dispute had critical rationalism and critical theory as the two opposing camps, both being in their respective self-understandings critical of positivism. It started as a polite exchange of argument between Popper and Adorno, continued in a far more polemical tone in the debate between Habermas and Albert. The theory of knowledge-guiding interests, which played a crucial role in Habermas's critique of positivism, had no counterpart by Adorno, but rather had its origin in a radically different philosophical tradition than critical the-

ory, namely in German philosophical anthropology. Another difference between Adorno and Habermas was that the latter during the dispute more and more opened up for influences coming from analytical philosophy, thus initiating a paradigm shift in the tradition of critical theory. The distinction between a participant and an observer perspective, that Skjervheim introduced already in the late 1950s, was also of crucial importance to Habermas.

The Swedish positivist dispute took off in May 1968 when Gerard Radnitzky defended his dissertation *Contemporary Schools of Metascience*. The dissertation not only delivered a critique of the theory of science of logical empiricism, but also introduced what was called a hermeneutic-dialectic tradition and approach, at the time more or less unknown in Sweden, and argued that it constituted the better alternative for the humanities and social sciences. This was the first time since the Second World War that contemporary German philosophers were presented as preferable compared to their Anglo-American counterparts. Thus, Radnitzky introduced something radically new into Swedish philosophy, which with a slight exaggeration sent shock waves into the philosophical establishment (which was agitated already because of the direction that Törnebohm had given the discipline of theory of science). Systematically Radnitzky in some crucial respects aimed at a synthesis between critical theory and critical rationalism, thus the two opposing camps in the West German dispute. The dispute in Sweden gradually moved from a discussion of the research programs of different metascientific traditions or schools to the role of valuations particularly in the social sciences. A second front line was opened up as a version of Marxist theory (inspired by Althusser) appeared on the scene which insisted on a sharp distinction between science and ideology, and which discarded the latter as the home of either progressive or reactionary valuations being foreign to science. However, also in the Swedish case it is more correct to speak of a *critique* of positivism rather than a full-fledged positivist dis-

pute. Furthermore, the Swedish controversy did not result in the establishment of a pluralistic philosophical culture, but rather in a still present sharp divide between analytical and continental philosophy, with the latter being mainly represented outside the philosophy departments.

A characteristic of both the Norwegian and the Swedish disputes was that they were initiated by scholars who politically did not really belong to the New Left. Skjervheim and Radnitzky became involved in the radical movement of the 1960s mainly because they introduced and discussed authors and currents of thought that were attractive to the leftist radicals in their critique of the establishment at the university and in society at large.

An interesting difference between Norway and Sweden is that whereas the Norwegian critics of positivism were all firmly anchored in Norwegian culture, three of the most profiled critics in Sweden—Radnitzky, Israel and Elzinga—were neither born nor grew up in the country. However, both Radnitzky and Israel did their whole higher education in Sweden. Elzinga had begun studies in Canada and Great Britain before moving to Sweden, but took his degrees in the latter country. It is difficult to say if this background played a role for their oppositional stance. Perhaps they experienced the clash with the Swedish consensus culture stronger because of their positions as partly outsiders.

The West German positivist dispute was a major influence on Radnitzky when embarking on his dissertation project. Another important influence was the personal contact with Apel established in the mid-1960s. The Norwegian dispute, on the other hand, does not seem to have played any major role for Radnitzky. Skjervheim is, for example, only mentioned once in the second volume of the dissertation (Radnitzky 1968b, 53). Radnitzky's dissertation, for its part, was noticed and referred to in Norway almost immediately after its publication, but it did not, to my knowledge, have any significant impact on the course of the Norwegian dispute. Later when Føllesdal criticized the critique of positivism in the mid-1970s, his major example of a

superficial and misguided critique was the article by Fjellström, referred to earlier and originally published in *Häften för kritiska studier*: "Anteckningar om positivismen" (Notes on positivism). Thus, there was a cultural transfer between the two Scandinavian countries going in both directions, but less so than might be expected, given the geographical and cultural closeness of the two nations. The fact that Habermas and the Suhrkamp Verlag seem to have had plans to publish in translation some of the contributions in the Norwegian positivist dispute (see note 8) indicates an international interest. Also Radnitzky's dissertation met an international interest, being reviewed in several journals.

What can be said about the long-term effects of the positivist disputes and the critique of positivism in the 1960s and 1970s? To pose this question is to introduce a new and complex research question. What I can do here is only to round off by presenting some tentative reflections on this issue.

The critique of positivism meant that the classical ideals of scientific objectivity and value neutrality in science came under pressure. Thus, a long-term effect of the critique may have been to pave the way for an anti-objectivism and a radical constructivism in the humanities and the social sciences. Furthermore, the critique also paved the way for a rejection of the very possibility of a God's eye view in favour of necessarily situated knowledge, being both partial and partisan, i.e., for various versions of standpoint theory.

Swedish philosophy has until today remained mainly influenced by various strands of analytical philosophy, while continental philosophy has continued to find a place in other academic disciplines such as intellectual history, sociology and literature. A first break with this tradition occurred with the opening of Södertörn University College in 1996, situated southwest of Stockholm, where the philosophy department from the start in 1999 has had a programmatically continental profile.

In Norway a certain backlash began already in the 1970s and 1980s. This meant that the pluralistic philosophical climate and

the bridging of the divide between analytical and continental philosophy, as two short-term effects of the positivist dispute, soon came and has remained under a certain pressure. Today it seems to be the case that analytical philosophy is once again largely dominating the scene.

Finally, in Germany there is a rather strong tendency among younger philosophers of connecting to contemporary debates within Anglo-American analytical philosophy, rather than to the German philosophical tradition. A few years ago Manfred Frank complained in an article that 'Hegel doesn't live here anymore', arguing that if you want to study German idealistic philosophy from Kant to Hegel you should not go to Germany but to China or Brazil (Frank 2015). But it also seems to be the case that the analytical philosophy being done in Germany has difficulties having an impact on Anglo-American philosophy, and thus in a sense remains provincial.

Alluding to Nietzsche one can ask about the utility and disadvantage of the positivist disputes in the 1960s. Insofar as they contributed to the concept of positivism becoming a synonym for everything that smelled establishment or simply happened to be what one disliked, the consequences were mainly negative. On the other hand, insofar as they problematized some positions within philosophy and the social sciences that tended to be taken for granted, the consequences were positive. The *critique* of positivism in Norway and Sweden showed that there are other ways of doing philosophy and social science. Thus, it contributed to an important widening of the intellectual horizon, an achievement which, however, cannot be taken for granted but must be reconquered over and over again. Furthermore, the positivist disputes were not (only) an internal academic affair, but was also about the cultural role and functions of philosophy, the social sciences and the university in society at large.

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