

Review of
**VOLKER PECKHAUS: HERMANN ULRICI (1806–1884),
*DER HALLESCHER PHILOSOPH UND DIE
ENGLISCHE ALGEBRA DER LOGIK***
mit einer Auswahl von Texten Ulrici's zur Logik
und einer Bibliographie seiner Schriften.
Schriftenreihe zur Geistes und Kulturgeschichte: Texte und
Dokumente, hrsg. von Günter Schenk und Manfred Schwarz.
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This book contains a collection of three publications of Hermann Ulrici on logic, edited and introduced with an essay by Volker Peckhaus. At first sight it seems to investigate the history of an episode in nineteenth-century logic in Germany. Ulrici, associate professor for history of literature and aesthetics at the university of Halle from 1834 and full professor there from 1861, in 1855 wrote an extended and favorable review of George Boole's *An Investigation of the Laws of Thought*. It was the first public response to Boolean work in German philosophy. But it didn't have any influence on the development of logic in Germany. In the 1870s when German mathematicians and philosophers became interested in problems in the algebra of logic, they were mostly unaware of the progress of mathematical logic in Great Britain and got their first information on it from an article by Alois Riehl in 1877, entitled "Die englische Logik der Gegenwart", and from Ernst Schröder's *Der Operationskreis des Logikkalküls* in the same year. Ulrici published in 1878 his second article on the algebra of logic, a review of George Bruce Halsted's "Boole's Logical Method", but his view of it was now rather against the growing influence of that kind of logic in philosophy. Ironically, not only were the other participants in the discussion on algebra of logic in the 1870s completely ignorant of Ulrici's article from the 1850s, but Ulrici himself didn't mention it — contrary to his habit of citing in his writings many references to his own earlier works.

Peckhaus suggests that the reason for this strange attitude on the part of Ulrici can be found in a rivalry with Richard Avenarius. The

above mentioned article by Riehl was published in the first volume of the journal founded in 1877 by Avenarius, *Vierteljahrsschrift für wissenschaftliche Philosophie*. Ulrici, who as the editor (from 1847 to 1884, with an interruption from 1849 to 1852, when the journal couldn't appear) of the famous *Zeitschrift für Philosophie und philosophische Kritik* played "a pioneer role in establishing philosophical journals" in Germany (9f.), found himself compelled to deny Avenarius's claim of defining the criteria of scientificity in philosophy, which he suspected Avenarius had claimed with the choice of the title of his journal. That means Ulrici wrote his article in 1878 not only and, perhaps, not primarily on the subject of the algebra of logic, but as an argument against Avenarius. Therefore, this episode is more about a controversy over leadership between two editors of journals and it ended, as it often does in the history of science, without results.

But the question why Ulrici didn't mention his first review in another context later is the motivating factor for Peckhaus to expand the discussion to more important problems in the history of logic. As an expert in the history of logic and mathematics in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Peckhaus, in the introductory essay, goes beyond biographical remarks on Ulrici to an investigation of reception history. The central point of his essay is the question, why the acceptance of the algebra of logic in Germany began so late compared to Great Britain.

"Woran hat es nun gelegen, daß Ulricis erste Rezension unbeachtet geblieben ist, oder, anders ausgedrückt, woran hat es gelegen, daß Booles Werk, obwohl es in einer angesghenen Zeitschrift, von einem angesehenen Logikfachmann rezensiert worden war, dennoch weiterhin nicht zur Kenntnis genommen wurde?" (32)

The answer, given by Peckhaus, may be surprising to contemporary readers. who on the one hand know the impressive results of mathematical logic in our century and who, on the other hand, have not yet forgotten the prevailing contemptuous opinion among historians of logic on formal logic in Germany in the nineteenth century before Frege and Schröder.

"Die These ist, daß die logische Forschung in Deutschland in der Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts auf einem anderen, philosophisch höheren Niveau als in Großbritannien stand." (32)

In Germany, Peckhaus argues in his essay, the fundamental philosophical discussion was on the so-called "Logische Frage", meaning the efforts to clarify the relation of formal logic to metaphysics after Hegel.

Given the background of these debates Boole's rather formalistic treatment of logic appeared to philosophers in Germany only as an attempt at a "pure technical reform of formal logic" (33), and German philosophers believed that they already had gone further than that. But in the 1870s philosophy in Germany had to react to the challenge of natural sciences, and then the interest in symbolic-logical systems began to grow among philosophers, logicians and mathematicians, In connection with this interest was the acceptance of the recent results in mathematical logic in England. It seems to me a good idea that Peckhaus made Ulrici the focus of the reception history of the English algebra of logic in Germany in the middle of the past century. Ulrici's life's work was closely connected with English culture and logic. In his time he was known as a famous scholar on Shakespeare. He also wrote several articles on logic in England. But above all he was one of the leading participants in the discussion of the "Logische Frage" in Germany. In order to demonstrate the level of this discussion and to show the position which Ulrici held in it, Peckhaus has included with the papers of Ulrici reprinted in the book, three parts of Ulrici's *Compendium der Logik* (1860): the Preface by Ulrici, the Introduction and the first ten paragraphs, in which Ulrici explains his views about the so-called logical laws. The other reprints are the two reviews by Ulrici concerning Boolean algebra of logic, and Ulrici's obituary, first published in the *Chronik* of the University of Halle-Wittenberg in 1884.

Not only is the conception of the book convincing, but also its arrangement. Included are a photo of the philosopher and a bibliography of the writings of Ulrici. Nearly fifty pages long it alone has great value for the history of philosophy. As the editor of a major journal, Ulrici enjoyed a great advantage in publishing reviews of works by the philosophers of his time and he had written a lot of them himself. The bibliography of his publications provides a good survey of the themes in logic and theory of knowledge in the middle of the nineteenth century. In the Preface Peckhaus writes that the bibliography "aims at completeness" (11). It seems to me that it almost achieves this ideal.

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