

## OBITUARY

**Eckehart Köhler**, affectionately called "Kay" by his friends, was an extraordinary person//contemporary. As a commuter between two worlds (Germany, Austria, and North America), he was well versed in German philosophy, especially Austrian philosophy with Bolzano, Brentano, Wittgenstein, and the Vienna Circle, already at a young age, and wrote prolifically about them until the end of his life. The life and work of Kurt Gödel (Vienna – Princeton) became a central theme of his life – an interest he shared with his close (recently deceased) friends "Jimmy" Werner (DePauli-)Schimanovich and Peter Weibel, also in connection with the Vienna Kurt Gödel Society. As early as 1968, he drew attention to the forced exile of the Vienna Circle as well as to the continuity of faculty members at the Institute of Philosophy with the spectacular pamphlet "Philosophie der Untat" that he presented at the 14th International Congress of Philosophy.



It was therefore no coincidence that he was actively involved in the work of the Institute Vienna Circle since its founding in 1991 and served on its board for decades before moving to Munich. Many years earlier I had come to know and appreciate him in connection with the Austrian Ludwig Wittgenstein Society, for which, in 1978, he co-organized the major third international symposium "Wittgenstein, the Vienna Circle and Critical Rationalism" where I was able to give my first scientific lecture. Afterwards I had the pleasure to bring Kay from the USA to Vienna in 1981 to work with him together with Karl H. Müller for several years on a research project on Austrian philosophy of science, which was funded by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF). Eckehart Köhler contributed to numerous publications. In connection with the Institute Vienna Circle, he co-edited two books and published ten articles in three book series (listed below). In addition, his pioneering publications on Kurt Gödel are worth mentioning. He left several extensive manuscripts on normativity and intuition in Logical Empiricism, which unfortunately he was not able to complete. The Vienna Circle Society will make them available for research on its website in the near future and is planning a workshop *in memoriam* Eckehart Köhler on this topic.

Born in Darmstadt on December 18, 1939, at the beginning of World War II, Eckehart Köhler moved with his family to the United States in 1946, where, after attending school, he studied philosophy at Lehigh University in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. Further studies followed at New York University and at the University of Munich, where he also returned after leaving Vienna and continued to maintain his good contacts with the Munich Center for Mathematical Philosophy (LMU). He earned his doctorate at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln under Werner Leinfellner, with whom (and with his wife Elisabeth) he developed a lifelong friendship and scientific cooperation. For five years he was managing editor of the renowned journal *Theory and Decision*. After moving to Vienna, Kay was intensively involved in the Gödel Society and the Institute Vienna Circle. Because of his slightly unorthodox life, he did not obtain a permanent academic position befitting him, although he habilitated at the then Institute for the Philosophy of Science at the University of Vienna and was appointed Privatdozent.

However, he had to work as a lecturer at the Institute of Statistics and Information Science of the University of Vienna to finance his life until retired.

Kay was always an educated and stimulating conversationalist (time was never an issue for him), debater, and amiable person. We will miss him!

*Friedrich Stadler*

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(<https://trauer.sueddeutsche.de/traueranzeige/eckehart-koehler>)



Mit Wehmut und Trauer gedenken wir unseres liebenswerten, immer freundlichen und zugetanen Bruders „Kay“

**Privatdozent Dr. habil. Eckehart Köhler**

18. Dezember 1939 Darmstadt – 21. Mai 2023 Sebastopol, Kalifornien

Nach seiner frühen Kindheit in Alsbach in Südhessen zog er mit seiner amerikanischen Mutter und jüngeren Schwester zu seinen Großeltern nach Philadelphia.

In Bethlehem, Pennsylvania ging er auf das Lehigh-College, wo er bei Professor Gruenbaum seine Liebe zur Philosophie der Logik entdeckte. Dann studierte er an der New York University und kam bald zu seiner anderen Schwester nach München. Dort studierte er an der Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität bei Professor Stegmüller.

Er ging später an die Universität von Lincoln, Nebraska, zu Professor Leinfellner, dem er dann nach Wien an die Universität folgte, wo er einen Lehrauftrag bekam. Er begann sein großes Buchprojekt: „A Hierarchy of Normative Theories: Gödel and Harsanyi“ und sammelte eine riesige philosophische Fachbibliothek. Er war Mitgründer der Kurt Gödel Society und des Institute Vienna Circle. Danach erhielt er eine Professur an der englischsprachigen Lauder Business School in Wien.

Nach Beendigung seiner Lehrtätigkeit zog er 2017 mit allen seinen Büchern wieder nach München, wo er am Munich Center for Mathematical Philosophy der Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität arbeitete. Seine Gesundheit verschlechterte sich und während der Pandemie zog er 2021 nach Sebastopol.

Sein geliebtes Buchprojekt konnte er nicht mehr ganz vollenden, seine Fachbibliothek, weit über zehntausend Bände, meist englischsprachig, wurde während der Pandemie mit Hilfe seines Bruders nachgeschickt und wartet in Sebastopol auf eine neue Heimat.

Seine letzte Ruhe findet er in München.

Gerda Winifred Cichon geb. Köhler, München	Dr. Gernot Köhler Alsbach	Nan Köhler Sebastopol
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**Publications by Eckehart Köhler within the three book series of the Institute Vienna Circle / Vienna Circle Society:**

Books:

Werner DePauli-Schimanovich, Eckehart Köhler, Friedrich Stadler (Eds.), *The Foundational Debate. Constructivity and Complexity in Mathematics and Physics*. Wien-New York: Springer 1995. (= Vienna Circle Institute Yearbook 3).

Eckehart Köhler, Werner Leinfellner (Eds.), *Game Theory, Experience, Rationality. Foundations of Social Sciences, Economics and Ethics*. Wien-New York: Springer 1997 (= Vienna Circle Institute Yearbook 5)

### Articles:

“Gödel und Carnap in Wien und Prag“, in: Rudolf Haller und Friedrich Stadler (Hrsg.), *Wien – Berlin – Prag. Der Aufstieg der wissenschaftlichen Philosophie*. Wien: H-P-T 1992, 165-174. (= Veröffentlichung des Instituts Wiener Kreis 2)

„Gödel and Carnap. Platonism Versus Conventionalism“, in: Maria Carla Galavotti, Elisabeth Nemeth, Friedrich Stadler (Eds.), *European Philosophy of Science – Philosophy of Science in Europe and the Viennese Heritage*. Cham: Springer, 131-158. (= Vienna Circle Institute Yearbook 17).

“Gödel und der Wiener Kreis“, in: Paul Krontorad (Hrsg.), *Jour fixe der Vernunft. Der Wiener Kreis und die Folgen*. Wien: H-T-P 1991, 127-158. (= Veröffentlichungen des Institut Wiener Kreis 1).

„Kurt Gödel als österreichischer Emigrant“, in: Friedrich Stadler (Hrsg.), *Vertriebene Vernunft. Emigration und Exil österreichischer Wissenschaft 1930-1940*. Wien: Jugend und Volk. 2.Aufl. Münster: LIT Verlag 2004, 204-209.

“Physical Intuition as Inductive Support“, in: Friedrich Stadler (Ed.), *Induction and Deduction in the Sciences*. Wien-New York: Springer 2003, 151-167. (= Vienna Circle Institute Yearbook 11)

“Ramsey and the Vienna Circle on Logicism“, in: Maria Carla Galavotti (Ed.), *Cambridge and Vienna. Frank P. Ramsey and the Vienna Circle*. Wien-New York: Springer 2002, 91-122. (= Vienna Circle Institute Yearbook 12).

Review: Thomas E. Uebel, *Overcoming Logical Positivism from Within. The Emergence of Neurath's Naturalism in the Vienna Circle's Protocol Sentence Debate*, in: Friedrich Stadler (Ed.), *Scientific Philosophy. Origins and Development*. Wien-New York: Springer 1993, 246-248. (= Vienna Circle Institute Yearbook 1).

Review: Hao Wang, *A Logical Journey. From Gödel to Philosophy*, in: Jan Woléński (Ed.), *Alfred Tarski and the Vienna Circle. Austro-Polish Connections in Logical Empiricism*. Wien-New York: Springer 1998, 312-318 (= Vienna Circle Institute Yearbook 6).

### Additional Publications:

Köhler, Eckehart, Peter Weibel, Michael Stöltzner, Bernd Buldt Bernd, Carsten Klein, Werner DePauli-Schimanovich (Hrsg.), *Wahrheit und Beweisbarkeit*. Band 1: *Dokumente und historische Analysen*. Band 2: *Kompendium zum Werk*. Wien: öbv & H-P-T 2002.

Hal Berghel, Adolf Hübner, Eckehart Köhler (Eds.), *Wittgenstein, der Wiener Kreis und der Kritische Rationalismus*. Akten des dritten Internationalen Wittgenstein Symposiums, 13.-19. August 1978 Kirchberg an Wechsel. Wien: Hölder-Pichler-Tempsky 1979.