Hegel and the Modern Canon

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Abstract: This essay traces the relationship between Hegel and some common portrayals of modern philosophy in the nineteenth century. I explain much of the rationale behind the neo-Kantian narrative of modern philosophy, and argue that the common division of modern philosophers into rationalists and empiricists executed a principally anti-Hegelian agenda. I then trace some failed attempts by anglophone philosophers to reconcile Hegel with the neo-Kantian history, in the interest of explaining Hegel’s subsequent unpopularity in England and America. Finally, I argue that recent attempts to read Hegel in Kantian terms often rest on a misguided appropriation of an anti-Hegelian historical narrative.

In an essay that at least ought to have become a classic on the historiography of philosophy, Bruce Kuklick traced the historical development of the early modern canon in American academic philosophy. The objective of his essay was to account for the “entrenched” syllabus of an institutional standard: the Seven Figures who comprise modern philosophy as this exists in textbooks, anthologies, and university curricula. In accounting for the standard syllabus, Kuklick aimed to persuade historians of philosophy to view our canon as a product of historically specific debates, and thus open to various sorts of inquiry. He provided some tempting and plausible hypotheses concerning either historical conditions or programmatic rationales for the inclusion of precisely those seven philosophers. Hume, he related, re-entered our version of the canon in the middle of the nineteenth century due to the success of Mill’s criticisms of Hamilton. Although one should like to see a more detailed discussion of the impact of German neo-Kantianism on anglophone philosophy, Kuklick’s account of Kant’s later re-entry into the story probably touches upon a degree of truth. To put the matter briefly, American philosophers in
the period of canon formation, roughly 1860–1915, included among their tasks a kind of apologetics. One of the public roles these individuals played was to present the findings of modern science in a manner that was compatible with acceptable religious beliefs. For somewhat obvious reasons, then, Hume could not be permitted to have had the last word in modern philosophy.

One topic for which Kuklick struggled to offer adequate information, however, is Hegel’s disappearance from the scene in the second decade of the twentieth century. On this question he retreated from his usually comprehensive intellectual-historical method and merely waved his hand in a political direction: “the straight answer to that question is: although [Hegel] may have been knocked about previously, he was killed in World War I.” The particular aim of this essay is to explain some of the ways in which Hegel had been “knocked about” previously, and I supplement Kuklick’s political explanation of Hegel’s demise with some substantive considerations about why Kant, as opposed to Hegel or other nineteenth-century philosophers, became the accepted endpoint of modern philosophy.² My central historical contention is that the Seven Figure story was borrowed and imported from German epistemologists of the mid-nineteenth century, and it was those philosophers who had definite programmatic reasons for constructing modern philosophy in the manner that they did. The exclusion of Hegel from certain German depictions of modern philosophy was a deliberate one and was made in accordance with rather well-articulated philosophical and institutional motives. The more general aim of this essay, then, is to illuminate the argumentative contexts in which the Seven Figure story gained prominence.

My account concerns what could be called the immigration history of the narrative of modern philosophy, and this approach recontextualizes Kuklick’s conclusions. Although the Seven Figure story was later solidified through American publications, in the nineteenth century this was a ready-made product selected from among several competitors.³ Viewed in this light, Kuklick’s hypotheses serve to explain only why a particular neo-Kantian version of modern philosophy appealed to American (and British) theorists prior to the turn of the twentieth century. Modern philosophy is a German import that, in a few specific contexts, served the needs of anglophone consumers.⁴ The late Richard Popkin once made this observation in a review, though to my knowledge the issue has not received the detailed attention it warrants. He claimed, I think somewhat indisputably in light of the textual evidence, that anglophone historians of philosophy have made only minor revisions
to a canon that we have otherwise divorced from its original argumentative contexts:

By and large, we in the English-speaking world have accepted a history of modern philosophy worked out by the German philosophers of the early nineteenth century to justify their philosophy. Rather uncritically, we have accepted their selection of the heroes and villains of the drama, their selection of the issues and the parties to the dispute, and of the texts which are central. Where we have tended to deviate is in emphasizing more than the German historians did the achievement, the originality, and the genius of the trio of Anglo-Hibernian thinkers—Locke, Berkeley, and Hume, and in de-emphasizing the counter-school of Continental rationalists—Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibniz. Finally, we have elevated Hume into the position of the most original genius before our day, and demoted Descartes into that of a sad fool, lost and hopelessly confused in his own misusages of “English” grammar. Hume has become our Aristotle, the master of them that know; and we have grafted on to the German histories of philosophy, from Kuno Fischer’s to Windelband’s, a “rediscovered” Hume and an “exposed” Descartes.5 (my emphasis)

As Popkin underlined, our adopted neo-Kantian narrative of modern philosophy had an argumentative context that was specific to nineteenth-century Germany. The canon was developed to justify a set of generally antimetaphysical positions, and those positions determined the selection of topics, texts, and figures that became known as the history of modern philosophy. Some of the relevant characteristics that guided the selection have been widely enough noted in the literature, albeit without explanation of what philosophical or institutional needs were thereby fulfilled.6 Our received story of modern philosophy, for instance, prioritizes certain questions in epistemology, marginalizes politics and ethics, privileges the individual knower, and excludes both social philosophy and historical accounts of various aspects of culture. What is less well known is what the rationales were for depicting modern philosophy in just this way, as well as perhaps just how recent an invention this depiction is. In the first section of this essay I outline some of the programmatic goals of neo-Kantian historiography, insofar as these suggest that the Seven Figure story of modern epistemology was a post facto construction aimed largely (though of course not only) at overthrowing Hegel’s philosophy.

The fact that the received history of modern philosophy is anti-Hegelian in its foundations represents only one aspect of Hegel’s relation to the modern canon. As I explain in the second section, the modern canon also competed with and replaced a history constructed on Hegel’s example. Hegel thus has a unique position on the margins of the received story of modern philosophy. There was, by contrast with Hegel, a shortage of attempts to write textbooks
in the history of philosophy on a Marxist model, and the same can be said of every other noteworthy philosopher of the nineteenth century. The story of how the history of modern philosophy was constructed is a story rather of competing accounts of Kant and Hegel, as well as of earlier philosophers judged always from the supposed standpoint of either Kant or Hegel. The two histories had opposed purposes and structures: the neo-Kantian narrative indeed justified an individualist epistemology, whereas the competing neo-Hegelian narrative was historicist and collectivist. The contest between these histories formed, I suggest, the pivotal episode in the development of our canon.

At the center of the controversy were the sometimes protracted philological disputes about the texts of individual philosophers (Kant, Hegel, Hume, etc.), but these in turn were part of a larger struggle about the appropriate methods and aims of an increasingly professionalized discipline.

In the third section I argue that the exclusion of Hegel resulted mainly from the fact that an originally anti-Hegelian narrative served conveniently for diverse philosophical ends. I explain how anglophone historians placed their imported story in a vastly different argumentative context, and this affected the manner in which imported narratives could be received and recounted. Whereas the relevant German context concerned the rejection of metaphysics and systematicity in favor of a problem-based approach to epistemology, the story translated conveniently into a relatively conservative anglophone context. Anglophone philosophers sought, in addition to their apologetic aims, to reject those principles that were to become labeled “empiricism.” Kuklick’s focus on individual figures and his restriction to American texts obscures this primary issue, and overlooks the ways in which competing histories were employed as philosophical arguments. He wrote as if historians of philosophy first debated who belongs on the list of the important philosophers, and only afterwards supplied “an accompanying narrative that links text to text and author to author.” I insist, by contrast, that narrative purposes largely determined the decisions made at the documentary level, whereby certain figures and texts were recognized as canonical. Anglophone philosophers did not decide which philosophers and texts were great, they decided which story of great philosophers and texts was most useful. The exclusion of Hegel from anglophone histories, curiously enough, was largely an unintended byproduct of the fact that the neo-Kantian history was useful in arguments against Mill and his followers.
My insistence on the priority of narrative also sheds light also on numerous problems of reception history, which form the topic of my fourth and final section. I explain how the accepted narrative of modern philosophy has inspired what can fairly be labeled as revisionist readings of the principal figures in dispute. Hegel scholarship is the most interesting example, because his relationship to the accepted neo-Kantian canon is singularly complex. Comparable analyses, however, apply also to the twentieth-century Kant and Hume industries. To put the main point very simply: anglophone philosophers have spent the last century reading each of these figures into a badly outdated narrative, or to use Popkin’s verb again, grafting them onto a nineteenth-century neo-Kantian story. After this foreign narrative had been adopted, canonized, and divorced from any justificatory role, historians of philosophy performed mainly exegetical tasks that typically failed to bring their own narrative context into question. The accepted narrative has framed for us a more or less definable set of rhetorical strategies within which all the minor episodes received the slightest revisions and amendments, and this despite any denials of fidelity (to the canon) that particular historians of philosophy have articulated.11

I. The Attack on Hegel in Neo-Kantian Historiography

German academic philosophy from the so-called post-March period (viz., 1848–1860) has been the subject of more institutional and historical analysis than of substantive philosophical engagement.12 In this section I hope to emend this somewhat by outlining an argumentative strategy that was influential for philosophical historiography throughout the remainder of the century. This is not to overlook the political and institutional background: the political situation of the professorate indeed impacted the form philosophy took. Professors of philosophy in the 1850s, for example, negotiated a dichotomy between a materialist outlook prevalent outside the academy and strong religious or institutional pressures from within university walls. Just as decisive were the twin phenomena of the rise of the special sciences and a sharp decline in philosophy enrollment.13 The earliest attempts to return to Kant were thus a response to the need to define philosophy as a Fachwissenschaft, a particular scientific discipline. What was required was an approach to philosophy that could account for and supplement the special sciences without threatening religion. Philosophers sought also to define a subject matter that would secure disciplinary autonomy, hence the attempts to revive
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the transcendental, the a priori, etc. My interest here, however, concerns less the question of why this conception of philosophy arose than how it impacted the historiography of philosophy. Historians of philosophy in the neo-Kantian era executed their requisite agenda partly by constructing a minimalist interpretation of Kant that concluded an epistemologically-centered narrative of modern philosophy. They left a legacy primarily in these scholarly areas, and their voluminous general histories of philosophy were the chief medium through which they have spoken to posterity.

In developing their general history of philosophy, the writers of this time sought not so much to refute Hegel as to portray him as an historical anomaly. This rhetorical goal underlies several of the more well-known treatises of the period, such as Eduard Zeller’s 1862 inaugural address to the University of Heidelberg.\textsuperscript{14} In this lecture the great historian of ancient philosophy ostensibly outlined his upcoming course on the relation of logic to epistemology. The title was “On the significance and task of epistemology,” and in it Zeller both popularized the new term for “epistemology” (Erkenntnistheorie) and constructed the rationale for the existence of this as an independent subdiscipline. But these programmatic goals were achieved by rearranging the accepted pictures of Kant and Hegel, and more especially the relation between these philosophers.\textsuperscript{15} Zeller’s presentation of these points has widely recognized importance, since his lecture articulated the research program that was followed by a generation of scholars. That program also helped shape much of the philosophy curriculum that is still in place today.\textsuperscript{16} Its main substantive features are that it defined a subdiscipline devoted to the theory of knowledge, distinguished this endeavor from metaphysics, and supplemented it with a narrative of modern philosophy that emphasized the new subdiscipline’s centrality among intellectual endeavors. In order to sell this picture of epistemology as the centerpiece of modern philosophy, one had first to remove Hegel from the picture.

The opening arguments of “On the significance and task of epistemology” concern the status of logic in Hegel’s philosophy. Zeller insists that this discipline must be divorced from its Hegelian, speculative orientation in metaphysics, and instead given a basis in a formal investigation of human knowledge. The new discipline of epistemology, he claimed, will also announce every “final decision concerning the correct method in philosophy and in science.”\textsuperscript{17} He predicted that this correction of the order of philosophical subdisciplines would return philosophy to its appropriate place among
the sciences. As a consequence, epistemology would bring an end to the embarrassing state of affairs in which “fantastic individual systems . . . replace each other one by one,” which is to say the state of affairs that Hegel proudly claimed to have culminated. The previous half-century appeared to these philosophers to be marred by such ceaseless system-construction. Among the more disturbing byproducts of that tendency was the possession of a distinct system by every individual philosopher of note. The task of epistemology was thus a call for a full-scale change to the culture of philosophers, one that pertained to how they conceived the nature of their work. Zeller’s concern lay specifically with turning the attention of philosophers away from their own constructions and towards the rapidly developing special sciences.

The author’s academic expertise, of course, was in the history of ancient philosophy, and at the time of this lecture he had already published his legendary *The Philosophy of the Greeks in their Historical Development*, a work that dominated the study of ancient philosophy for the remainder of the century and beyond. While the inaugural lecture is not historically organized, his argument aims at establishing a conception of logic that was common to the ancients and moderns. This allowed him to portray Hegel as standing outside the tradition:

> For two thousand years the name of ‘logic’ has signified the entirety of investigations pertaining to the activity of thought considered purely, and so without regard to any definite content of such thought; it was supposed to display the forms and the laws of thought, without any proclamations about the actual objects that we otherwise have knowledge of. Hegel and his disciples have nevertheless opposed a newer logic to this ancient one, and from it they purport to derive knowledge of actual entities. The new logic is not content to be mere logic, but pretends also to be metaphysics, and so the Hegelians have named this ‘speculative’ logic as opposed to merely formal logic.

Such historical rhetoric introduced and framed the direct arguments in favor of the formality or abstractness of logic as well as the diverse scientific disciplines. These points represent a further rejection of Hegelianism in several senses. First, it was evident enough to all in the audience that “abstract” had been for the Hegelians the height of philosophical slander. Second, that a science is abstract in the relevant sense of the term implies that it be treated as a relatively independent endeavor. This independence demanded a respect for specialization in the various sciences, disciplines, and subdisciplines, which was one of the things lacking among the Hegelians. For my purposes, however, what matters is that these very general arguments against the old regime allowed the previous half-century of philosophy to appear almost
inexplicable. The rhetorical purpose of many historical and exegetical works by the neo-Kantians over the next two decades would be to portray the years 1800–1850 as an inconvenient detour from the supposed true history of philosophy.\textsuperscript{21} By this means they were able to provide a kind of historical justification of their own conception of philosophy as an enterprise aimed at addressing mainly questions of truth and method in the sciences. Philosophy so conceived would resist any urge to arrive at either first principles or comprehensive results.

Portraying Hegel as the end of an anomalous detour in turn enabled Zeller and his followers to define a primary tradition of modern philosophy. The newly defined tradition would accompany any arguments for epistemology as \textit{philosophia prima}, and so emphasized knowledge and method as its central themes.\textsuperscript{22} The discipline of epistemology, according to Zeller, had possessed this status even if the fact was not evident to philosophers throughout the millennia:

\begin{quote}
The need for such [epistemological] investigations has imposed itself on philosophy since Socrates first became conscious of the idea of a methodical procedure. . . . It was only in the recent centuries, however, that the full significance of such questions became clear, and only then was the task of epistemology defined more sharply. The two scientific directions of empiricism and rationalism appeared already in the first moments of modern philosophy, in Bacon and Descartes respectively.\textsuperscript{23}
\end{quote}

By proceeding to explain how questions about the origin of knowledge developed over the subsequent two centuries, Zeller thereby connected his reading of ancient philosophy with what he took to be the main thrust of modern philosophy. Philosophy became defined as a millennia-old search for method, with many self-identified “philosophers” thereby squeezed from the picture.\textsuperscript{24} The details of the modern story were left to the likes of Kuno Fischer, who had published a multivolume \textit{History of Modern Philosophy} beginning in 1854.\textsuperscript{25} Zeller’s brief summary of modern philosophy is distinctive, however, in that it includes exactly the seven figures that would eventually come to comprise the American canon.\textsuperscript{26} Spinoza, he claimed, corrected some of Descartes’s initial errors, but the theory of innate ideas was given its best defense by Leibniz, who distinguished between conscious and unconscious ideas. In a somewhat separate development, Locke formulated an empiricism that transformed first into Berkeley’s idealism, then second into Humean skepticism. Hume had his opponents, to be sure, but the Scottish school that opposed him did so “only by appeal to the needs and assumptions of prephi-
The laudatory conclusion is the stuff that has served us so well in class lectures and exams for the century and a half since: It was Kant’s immortal service to philosophy to have led her out of this dogmatism. He resolved the issue concerning the origin and truth of our representations more directly and completely than his predecessors, and he did not merely give a new answer to the old question. The others had derived our representations either from experience or from the mind, whereas Kant recognized that they spring from the former as much as the latter. More importantly, he did not execute this in a merely eclectic manner, according to which representations had one part empirical and one part a priori. Rather, his opinion was that there is not a single representation that lacks a unity of both these elements.

By itself this story is not entirely new to the 1860s, and I do not suggest that these post facto historical modifications amount to pure historical invention. What is peculiar to this period is rather, on the one hand, the scholarly thoroughness with which the Kantian history was constructed. On the other hand, the neo-Kantians had to modify the Kantian story in subtle ways so as to defeat its Hegelian counterparts. The outlines of the story itself are consistent enough with several of Kant’s articulations of his own achievements in the theory of cognition. This German story is also, like Kant himself, of partial Scottish ancestry. Thomas Reid had famously declared that representationalism, the so-called theory of ideas, was the central assumption of modern philosophy, and he began to trace an alleged straight path from Descartes to Hume. Beginning in the 1790s, the Kantian histories of philosophy organized the Scottish story according to Kant’s threefold division of dogmatism, skepticism, and criticism. Wilhelm Gottlieb Tennemann’s Manual of the History of Philosophy (1798–1819), for instance, reworked that set of metaphilosophical concepts and employed them as organizational tools in his history of various philosophical topics. The division of early modern philosophers into rationalists and empiricists has its argumentative (if not terminological) origins in this late eighteenth-century debate about philosophical method.

In order to revive the by then passé dogmatism-skepticism-criticism scheme in the middle of the nineteenth century, however, there was considerable work to be done in both general historiography—viz., the construction of an overarching story and concept of philosophy from ancient Greece to modern Germany—and the interpretation of individual philosophers. In the first half of the century, Kant’s epistemology had been the focus of only a small portion of the interest in his philosophy, and the history of modern philoso-
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...phy did not typically either end in Kant or take epistemic issues as the central theme. The more prominent works on the topic, such as J.E. Erdmann's 1834 Versuch, were constructed rather on Hegel's model. Even Tennemann, who preceded Hegel's influence, had allowed that several themes could serve as organizational centers for the history of philosophy, and he did not privilege the question of the origin of representations. The rationalism-empiricism distinction—which is what we came to call Kant’s dogmatism-skepticism distinction when employed as a general historiographical scheme—did arise during the first wave of Kantianism, but it did not gain solidity as the narrative structure of modern philosophy until a later generation restricted their Kantian allegiance to the early chapters of the Critique of Pure Reason. The scheme could work only if 1) Hegel’s influence on historiography was defeated and 2) Hegel himself was portrayed as a dogmatist après la lettre who had no real role in the history of modern philosophy.

This point introduces the second major characteristic of the neo-Kantian rhetorical strategy: in addition to marginalizing Hegel and the other so-called post-Kantians, they needed also to distinguish the core Kantian doctrine from the remainder of that professor’s impressive opus. They needed to construct a Kant who would be invulnerable to the criticisms of Hegel, and who had not inspired the movement that we label (on Hegel’s influence) “German Idealism.” In other words, the neo-Kantians needed to abstract an epistemologist Kant, and distinguish him most sharply from the author of the second and third Critiques. This is not to mention that they needed also to eliminate Kant the anthropologist, the virtue theorist, the historian of politics, etc. Thus Zeller immediately proceeded to draw a sharp line between the initial achievements of Kant in putting the central epistemological question of philosophical history to rest, and everything Kant wrote after the Transcendental Analytic:

From these principles Kant indeed drew other conclusions, by means of which German philosophy detoured into a dangerous path of fantastical and one-sided developments.

The opening to this dangerous path was the metaphysical distinction between things and appearances, and Zeller directed his audience to combat this distinction and its accompanying temptation to engage in metaphysics if in all representations a subjective and a priori element is in play, then things as they really are never appear in intuition or perception. Things appear to us instead only according to the idiosyncrasies of our minds.
With this Zeller acknowledged that the Prussian professor who authored the *Critique* also opened the door for further idealistic developments, but he portrayed a fairly orthodox Hegelian version of the *von Kant bis Hegel* narrative as an outgrowth of the less fortunate aspects of Kant’s work. The neo-Kantian canon was in this respect explicitly revisionary, and the Kant of the 1860s was not initially confused for the historical Kant. Much of the Königsberger’s philosophy needed to be rejected, such as any reference to the objects of our experiences as “appearances” as opposed to “things in themselves.” Such errors on Kant’s part had given the impetus to Fichte, who flatly denied the *Ding an sich* and replaced it with a subjective principle. Schelling and Hegel subsequently made the appropriate corrections to Fichte, and “the task of philosophy” became “to conceive this entire world as an appearance of consciousness, as the work of an infinite ego, a moment in its development, etc.”

One could add, the task of philosophy became to conceive this same world as a manifestation of the absolute, or select any relevant first principle of metaphysical system-building (Thales’s water, Spinoza’s substance). In other words, the post-Kantians (according to the neo-Kantians) latched onto the metaphysical side of Kant’s teaching, encouraged by the thing-appearance distinction, and they developed this into a succession of comprehensive systems. As a result they developed the conception of philosophy and of its tasks that was peculiar to their own age and context.

Zeller’s colleagues and followers made no disguises about how their very different conception of the tasks and central questions of philosophy affected their depictions of its recent history: the central questions of philosophy are those concerning the origin and accuracy of our representations of the natural world. Resolving these questions allowed them to determine, so they thought, the proper directives of the so-called special sciences and of any philosophical subdisciplines. To whatever extent self-identified philosophers had gone beyond this in order to construct comprehensive systems that engaged in other aspects of culture, those philosophers were supposed to have deviated from their chief vocation. Even Kant failed to recognize the limits he placed on philosophical work, since in the two decades after the *Critique of Pure Reason* he developed a philosophy as comprehensive and imposing as the systems of Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel. The two decades subsequent to Zeller’s lecture, by contrast, saw an impressive proliferation of monographs and articles on Kant’s philosophy, many of which follow the rhetorical strategy of denouncing Kant’s betrayal of his original critical insight, and so his
consequent extension of philosophy beyond his epistemology.\textsuperscript{40} This period in the history of philosophical scholarship has retained some small prestige under the name of a “Back to Kant” movement.\textsuperscript{41}

“Back to Kant” was a rallying cry coined by a gifted rhetorician named Otto Liebmann, who burst onto the academic scene at the age of twenty-five with a monograph entitled \textit{Kant und die Epigonen} (1865).\textsuperscript{42} The latter is a remarkably successful execution of Zeller’s distinction between the epistemological and metaphysical Kants, a distinction that deepened the division between the now-canonical “Descartes to Kant” story and the competing post-Kantian historical narratives that drew from Hegel. Liebmann followed a fairly straightforward argumentative structure, distinguishing the good Kant from the bad and subordinating all further discussions to that point. The remainder of his efforts aims at explaining how all the more recent movements in philosophy were developments only of the master’s mistakes. The first chapter, “Kant’s principal doctrine and his principal error,” summarizes the critical, epistemological doctrine in just a few pages, and the error receives the greater portion of explanatory effort. The remaining chapters trace the various directions that the error—the distinction between appearances and things—traversed in the nineteenth century, with a conclusion calling for a retrieval of the principal doctrine. The intervening chapters include one on the “idealistic direction,” which covers Fichte through Hegel, as well as chapters respectively on the “realistic direction” (Herbart) and the “transcendental direction” (Schopenhauer). Each of these chapters concludes with the same declaration: \textit{Also muss auf Kant zurückgegangen worden}. To go back to Kant, however, means only to reconstruct a minimal Kant who does not begin a slippery slope to Hegel (or to other mid-century figures). The canonical Kant, the figure who came to head modern philosophy, was constructed in this period as a sort of Anti-Hegel as much as he was discovered in the \textit{Critique of Pure Reason}.

From a scholarly standpoint, this restriction of the “Back to Kant” movement to a few aspects of that philosopher’s writings required considerable exegetical justification. They had no need to argue that those precious few epistemological points taken from the first hundred pages or so of the \textit{Critique of Pure Reason} concluded, for Kant, the principal basis of his philosophy. Again, they were content to distinguish the good from the bad in Kant. Nonetheless questions needed to be answered about how Kant could have resolved epistemological issues so decisively without recognizing that
his role as philosopher ended there. This exegetical crisis first took the form of a scholarly controversy over the two editions of the *Critique*. Following Schopenhauer, the neo-Kantians insisted that the first edition of 1781 contained Kant’s purest efforts, whereas the revised second edition introduced elements foreign to the true spirit of the critical philosophy. The distinctions between these editions was fodder for several monographs and dissertations by German scholars in the 1850s and 1860s, with the second edition or B version of the Transcendental Deduction and the “Refutation of Idealism” both coming under general suspicion. What concerns me here is that these developments, which mark the birth of an academic study called “the history of philosophy,” executed an ideological agenda among whose primary ends was the marginalization of Hegel’s philosophy.

In summary, the Seven Figure story of modern epistemology arose in a rhetorical context in which the exclusion of Hegel was a primary aim. This attempt to exclude Hegelianism from the main history of philosophy framed the new Kantphilologie, which in turn forged a careful distinction of the acceptable neo-Kantian Kant from the historical professor who taught at Königsberg. As a result of these rhetorical moves, two points of narrative emphasis triumphed in the arrangement of historical texts: the distinction criticism-dogmatism divided Kant and the neo-Kantians from everyone else, and the distinction rationalism-empiricism divided everyone else into two camps. In this case the category of dogmatism was no longer employed exclusively as a moniker for philosophies that were chronologically prior to Kant, but was directed as well against any philosophy that could be construed as continuous with the less modest aspects of Kant’s philosophy. Fichte, Schopenhauer, and most especially Hegel were dogmatists on this reading.

II. Modern Philosophy among Anglophone Idealists

One of the facts that has frequently perplexed historical glances into the late nineteenth century is that purported variations of Hegelianism survived much longer in the English-speaking world than they did in Germany. William James’s complaint in this regard has received numerous citations in scholarly articles, and philosophers who later became called “analytic” littered their own texts with similar lamentations. My aim here is not to explain this phenomenon, but rather to outline some of the effects it had on how the history of modern philosophy was portrayed in the anglophone world in the second half of the nineteenth century. In brief, the idealistic-
minded philosophers in America and Scotland preferred a history of modern philosophy that employed a neo-Hegelian notion of progress, borrowed ideas also from Darwinism, and promoted historical studies of art, religion, and philosophy. While the German neo-Kantians limited their textual allegiance to the Transcendental Aesthetic and Analytic, their anglophone contemporaries were more attached to the political, historical, and religious doctrines of Hegel’s Philosophy of Spirit. This third part of Hegel’s system, however, did not attract the kind of orthodox scholarship that befell Kant’s Critique. Neo-Hegelians instead frequently developed organicist, historical studies (of religion, art, or philosophy) that were rather loosely modeled on Hegel’s example.

The histories of philosophy among these works confronted two difficulties. In the first place, there was some pressure to assimilate the more voluminous works of German scholarship on the history of philosophy, despite the fact that the German histories executed what was for the anglophones a fairly irrelevant ideological agenda. In the second place, since the organicist approach placed a lesser emphasis on philological niceties, much of the scholarly detail of the relevant works was plainly abstracted from German debates. The organicist histories possessed several theoretical virtues, but they did not support a philological enterprise comparable to the German Kant industry. Where foreign philological debates were reenacted, this included none of the vigor or purpose characteristic of the neo-Kantians. Although anglophone publications saw some discussion, for instance, of the differences between the A and B editions of the Critique, this occurred entirely without reference to the argumentative purposes for which the Philologen attacked the B edition. To the anglophones, Kant and Hegel rather combined to form an alternative on the one hand to what might be called association psychology, and on the other to Scottish philosophy in the tradition of Reid. They thus had little interest in how the lengthy, detailed histories of philosophy like Fischer’s and Ueberweg’s, as well as the more protracted disputes in the new Kantphilologie, were being employed to define a neo-Kantian modernity that excluded the likes of Hegel.

Historians of philosophy from this period further divide into several types, corresponding to the various uses to which the histories were put. The most ambitious of the lot told self-justifying histories that culminated in their own systems. Josiah Royce’s The Spirit of Modern Philosophy (1893) is the highest literary achievement of this genre, and perhaps of any general history
of philosophy. Any impact that this work could have had on the canon, however, was muted by the fall of Royce’s own philosophy in the subsequent decades. A second group sought to assimilate German philosophy into more recent history of science. This required a developmental reading of Kant, and so one sharply opposed to the neo-Kantian version. Edward Caird composed two books with this aim, *A Critical Account of the Philosophy of Kant* (1877) and a much larger two-volume study called *The Critical Philosophy of Immanuel Kant* (1889). A final class of idealist historian of philosophy more aggressively engaged the non-idealist philosophers of their day. Thomas Hill Green’s “General Introduction” to his edition of Hume’s works, for instance, developed the neo-Kantian reading of eighteenth-century British philosophy into a format designed to defeat empiricist principles. Although his own allegiances were with Fichte and Hegel as much as with Kant, his adoption of this story conceded many historiographical points to anti-Hegelians such as Zeller and Liebmann.

Caird’s large volumes represent a valiant attempt to assimilate Kant’s entire corpus into a progressivist history of nineteenth-century philosophy, and so as part of a broadly neo-Hegelian narrative. Andrew Seth (Pringle-Pattison) called these studies “the culmination of the long English endeavor to assimilate Kant.” It is interesting to note that this English (really Scottish) Kant is one whose highest philosophical achievement was the “Idea for a Universal History.” Caird developed the thesis that the three *Critiques* form a consistent whole, and that Kant’s “mental” progress is ultimately a consistent one. Kant’s later positions, Caird argued, led modernity out of the mechanical eighteenth century into the organic nineteenth century. Caird thus developed in these works a view of Kant that was much more consonant with that of Fichte or the early Romantics than it was with the neo-Kantians of his own generation. His interpretive principles, however, are not borrowed from any German school of philosophy. Instead, he took the idea of evolution as “a key to the history of philosophy,” and he pitied pre-Darwinian philosophers for lacking such modern ideas. The dramatic alteration in worldview brought about by modern historiography and natural history enabled philosophers also to find in past philosophies the seeds of their own positions. Caird listed two consequences of his evolutionary approach:

On the one hand, we are freed to some extent from historical partisanship, since we do not expect to find direct support for our own ideas in any past system; yet on the other hand, we are enabled to feel a living interest in all
such systems, as containing aspects or elements of the truth which we seek to discover.\textsuperscript{55}

For Caird, then, the history of philosophy had “become a part of philosophy,” because philosophers began to read past philosophies as developments of their own ideas. He was not concerned with showing the likes of Kant or Hegel to have been right or wrong about specific issues, but rather only in finding aspects of his own thinking in theirs. This is the organic approach, the history of which itself required explanation.\textsuperscript{56} The explanation of it for Caird consisted in the details of the transition that Kant led into the nineteenth century. To the opposition between mechanism and organicism Caird added a second binary in terms of which he arranged his view of modern European intellectual history: there was also an important distinction between individualism and social unity, and of course an historical development from the former to the latter. His second, larger Kant book thus begins by describing the change from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century:

In general terms we may say that it was a change from division to reconciliation, from Individualism and Atomism to a renewed perception that the whole is prior to the parts, and that \textit{individual independence must rest on social unity}. Or, to put it all in a word, it was the substitution of the idea of organic unity and development for the idea of the mechanical combination of reciprocally external elements.\textsuperscript{57} (my emphasis)

These two principal themes of the organicist history, viz. historicism and collectivism, meshed uneasily with the very differently motivated neo-Kantian story. Nonetheless Caird endeavored to assimilate the recent German scholarship on Kant into his work. He was well aware of the opposition between empiricism and rationalism, and he even placed some importance on these ideas in his account of Kant’s development. These concepts receive capitalizations in a brief summary of Kant’s early development:

In 1763 . . . he breaks with the Wolffian philosophy and shows a tendency . . . to adopt the principles of the Empiricism of Locke. Finally, about the year 1768–9, there is evidence of a second recoil from Empiricism towards Rationalism, and the commencement of an effort to reach a higher point of view from which the opposition between it and Empiricism may be reconciled.\textsuperscript{58}

In recognizing the importance of these divisions, Caird thus granted to “the inquiry into the conditions of the possibility of knowledge” a place at the center of Kant’s philosophy and \textit{a fortiori} of his vision of the philosophical fate of modernity. But his account of how Kant synthesized the divergent tendencies of empiricism and rationalism differs significantly from the neo-Kantian
account of that problem. The latter had relied solely on the Aesthetic, and they emphasized that so long as philosophers made no effort to know any realities beyond the spatio-temporal world they would not degenerate into an unproductive opposition of schools. Whereas the neo-Kantians formulated the disjunction “either Kant or Hegel” (method or system, epistemology or metaphysics), Caird attempted to write rather an implication of the sort “Kant therefore Hegel.” To achieve this he emphasized how the *Critique of Practical Reason* and the *Critique of Judgment* moved Kant beyond the individualism that terminates in the restriction of philosophy to epistemology. On his account, Kant had acknowledged also “the great question of Metaphysics” that requires us to ask whether there is a higher world than the spatio-temporal one to which the neo-Kantians would restrict us. While Caird’s Kant allowed that the Ideas of Reason (viz., Self, World, God) are indeed problematical conceptions, morality brings us, so to speak, from the phenomenal into the noumenal:

> [I]n acting morally, we take our stand at a point of view from which the phenomenal world ceases to be real, except in so far as it is the manifestation of the noumenal. . . . Thus, while we may be said to be inhabitants of two worlds, of the world we can know and the world we can only think; yet, in so far as we live morally, we live as inhabitants of the ideal world we think, and treat it as the only real world.

Philosophy thus does not end, on this view, in epistemological critique, but moves from there into a moral metaphysics. It likewise does not stop at the moral-natural dichotomy, and Caird read Kant’s writings of the 1790s as attempts to overcome the dualisms with which his moral philosophy had burdened him. The high points of this development were “Idea for a Universal History” and *Religion within the Bounds of Mere Reason*, works in which Kant attempted to depict historical and cultural life on earth somewhat in terms of what he had called, in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, the noumenal world. The “general result” of Kant’s philosophy is thus

> [t]o favour a view of man’s life in which the natural and the spiritual, the individual and society, are brought into closer unity than Kant’s fundamental principles would permit.

The last clause allows that there are indeed difficulties and surface inconsistencies between Kant the epistemologist and later Kant who was an historian and philosopher of art and religion, but these surface inconsistencies were resolved with the help of Caird’s organicist view of history, inspired by Hegel but buffered by the philosophical interpretations of evolution that were so
The Owl of Minerva

common in his day. The result of the study was a view of Kant as a major influence on the holistic historicism that is common to both Hegel and anglophone idealism. He allowed that in the Critique—as the neo-Kantians insisted—there is a tension between the restrictions imposed on philosophy in the first half of the book and the move towards a moral philosophy in the later chapters, but he emphasized how Kant’s later writings vindicate the latter at the expense of the former. According to this view, it is the restriction of cognition to the spatio-temporal world, or at least a neo-Kantian interpretation of that restriction, that was Kant’s major mistake. Reading the Königsberger in light of his overall development and his final positions, however, the tendencies seemed to move in the direction of a synthesis of oppositions like history and reason or morality and nature, rather than merely of rationalism and empiricism. As a result, the epistemological dichotomy received no better than a secondary status in Caird’s historiographical division of modernity. One might say that Caird recognized the now canonical history that organized philosophy according to the dogmatism versus criticism scheme, but he viewed this entire set of oppositions as aufgehoben in nineteenth-century organicism.

The organicist historians thus desired to portray Kant as a philosopher with a consistent development, just as neo-Kantians sought to place a wedge within the critical philosophy that divides the modest epistemologist from the mistaken metaphysician. The former needed Kant to serve as a bridge between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, or between Hume and the Romantics. The latter needed Kant to conclude modernity, only to see his epigones to backslide into wild speculation. Although Caird and his followers perhaps lost this battle on philological terms, Green’s anti-empirist polemic was yet a more decisive episode. His influential study of Hume (written around 1874) illustrates the argumentative utility of the neo-Kantian history. Twentieth-century Hume scholars sometimes attributed to his “General Introduction” the invention of British Empiricism. Although Green did not label the connection Locke-Berkeley-Hume with the name of any school, he did offer an extremely detailed and persuasive exegesis of several points of argumentative continuity among their texts. This made his Introduction such a good candidate for the classroom, and many students of philosophy at American or British colleges learned of modern philosophical history through his account. Any exaggeration of the status of his text, however, requires qualification in respect of both originality and argumentative context.
In the first place, Green’s detailed summary of the Locke-Berkeley-Hume matrix, viz., how certain chapters of Locke’s *Essay* received criticism in Berkeley’s *Principles* and completion in the first book of Hume’s *Treatise*, was largely borrowed from Kantian and neo-Kantian histories. Reid and Kant gave the initial impetus to this reading of eighteenth-century British philosophy, and the many voluminous German histories from Tennemann’s to Ueberweg’s made the details of it all a matter of philosophical course. Granted that Green improved the argumentative depth of that tradition, his Introduction was only an especially skillful translation of a foreign narrative into an anglophone argumentative context. Secondly, Green’s argumentative aims were neither Humean, nor Reidian, nor neo-Kantian. Although he relied on the neo-Kantian scheme of modern philosophy, he did this in order to attack the notion of empirical or associationist psychology, not in order to disrupt the influence of Hegel’s school (as Zeller and Liebmann had done). Green insisted that the authentic heir of Hume was Kant, and this was meant as a slight to the likes of John Stuart Mill. On Green’s account, Hume’s *Treatise* began with a methodological contradiction in that it attempted to treat the mind as a part of nature. The work predictably ended with a doctrinal contradiction, since it offered no coherent account of the human mind as a unity. The *Critique of Pure Reason* was thus needed in order to rescue philosophy from the state in which the author of the *Treatise* had left it. What the failure of the *Treatise* and the triumph of the *Critique* demonstrated was that there could be no “science of man” modeled on natural sciences and by implication no psychological science as this had developed in the previous decades.

Green thus borrowed a neo-Kantian history, but he put this history to a very different use. Zeller, Liebmann, and the other Germans wanted to discourage philosophers from adopting metaphysical principles. They promoted logic and epistemology to positions of importance, and they discouraged the grand metaphysical systems that culminated in religious and historical syntheses. They did this by employing the dogmatism-criticism distinction against their philosophical enemies, and they thereby made Hegel and his followers seem anachronistic and irrelevant. Green, by contrast, did not even use the philosophical invective of “dogmatism.” His enemy was what he labeled the “empirical psychology” that was then common in England, whereas the first wave of neo-Kantians wished to be associated with the psychology then practiced in Germany. Green executed his assault by tracing a set of contradictions from Locke’s blank slate all the way to Hume’s theory...
of personal identity, and pronouncing this historical development to be both necessary and exhaustive.\textsuperscript{72} Empirical psychology as an historical movement ended (on this account) in 1737 with the \textit{Treatise of Human Nature}, a fact that Green read the author of the \textit{Treatise} as having recognized. Like Zeller and Liebmann, he thus used a narrative of modern philosophy to exclude his enemies from history. Mill, on his account, was as anachronistic as Hegel was on Liebmann’s. It is a remarkable fact about the received history of modern philosophy that both Hegel and Mill were defeated by the same story; or rather that Mill was defeated by a borrowed anti-Hegelian story. It is even more remarkable that the subsequent century continued to accept this history, divorced eventually from the arguments against either speculative idealism or empirical psychology.

This rejection of empirical philosophy \textit{cum} psychology was supposed by Green to open the door for the new method of studying humanity that, as I suggested above, was modeled loosely on the third part of Hegel’s system. In the nineteenth century the science of man had been replaced by an historicist hermeneutic of humanity, which manifested itself in idealistic and more or less chronological studies of politics, art, religion, and philosophy. Even into the twentieth century the most creative philosophy professors at anglophone universities were still formulating such studies, each of which possesses significant analogies with Hegel’s Berlin lectures. Green’s most influential works, apart from the Introduction to his Hume edition, were his \textit{Prolegomena to Ethics} and his \textit{Principles of Political Obligation}. In the former text he incorporated his Hume introduction, so that the argumentative purpose of his history of empiricism became rather obvious to his readers.\textsuperscript{73} In the latter text, as in several others, Green outlined an updated version of Kantian liberalism, one that balanced the individualism of the liberal tradition with ideas borrowed from nineteenth-century communitarianism. Among Caird’s highest achievements were his two sets of Gifford lectures on the history of religions.\textsuperscript{74} These last works have their chief historical precedent in the second part of Hegel’s \textit{Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion}, although of course Caird appealed somewhat to evolutionism for his theoretical orientation. It was important for both philosophers, then, that modern history did not culminate in the \textit{Critique of Pure Reason} and its distinction between dogmatism and criticism. Their depictions of modern philosophy as it progressed past Kant were integral to their ethical, political, and religious aims.
Nonetheless it cannot be said that they had any lasting success in countering the neo-Kantian historians.

III. Hegel’s Exile

One of Kuklick’s theses that I do not wish to dispute is his allegation that Teutonophobia played an important role in the formation of what came to be known in anglophone contexts as modern philosophy, even though I have insisted that what we call by that name is a more of a German import than he would have us believe. My problem with his account of the disappearance of Hegel, then, is not that he offered a political explanation of a philosophical context, but that political references can form only a part of the story of Hegel’s absence from the twentieth century canon. The acceptance of the specifically neo-Kantian story, which had in any case excluded the entire effective history of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right, is indeed rife with political implications and motives. There is even a philosophical literature to document the public reaction against the political affiliation of Hegel’s legacy, and a sufficiently curious investigator could further confirm this political backdrop by comparing anglophone, germanophone, and eastern European histories of philosophy from the era between the wars. Nonetheless political concerns offer only part of the story. Kuklick implicitly acknowledged this much when he turned to the question of Kant’s inclusion among the Seven: this, he related, is the more curious historical fact. If the war-era social climate was so irrationally teutonophobic, then the canon ought to have excluded all German philosophers. Kuklick then added a qualification that he neglected to pursue: “the Kant of the canon synthesizes rationalism and empiricism; he is much less the father of Hegel.”

Although his observation in no way answers the question of why Kant was politically acceptable to anglophone philosophers, Kuklick was much closer than he realized to engaging in a discussion of the philosophical underpinnings of the invention of modern philosophy. It would seem almost a triviality of reception history, maybe even a matter of harmless interpretive difference, that there are two well-known Kants. The first, more prominent version of Kant synthesized the competing schools of early modern epistemology. The other Kant gave the speculative impetus to Fichte and the romantics, and thus indirectly to the entire movement that resulted in Hegel’s reign (and by extension Marxism, historicism, etc.). But our possession of these diverse pictures of Kant already begs for a more historically nuanced explanation. Our
two Kants reflect no schizophrenia in the Sage of Königsberg, but represent rather central episodes in competing narratives into which his writings have occasionally been placed by his followers over the past two centuries. The first narrative, the seven-figure story of modern epistemology, requires an understanding of Kant that is significantly different than the interpretation that begins either the classic German von Kant bis Hegel narrative, or the organicist neo-Hegelian narratives that flourished in late-century Britain. The war over the invention of modern philosophy in the nineteenth century, I have suggested, had these competing depictions of Kant as its decisive battle. The question to consider now is why the minimalist, epistemological Kant defeated the fertile father of German Idealism.

Several answers to this question suggest themselves from the two preceding historical excursions. First, the “Descartes to Kant” narrative composed by Zeller and his followers proved to be remarkably adaptable to various argumentative purposes, and this distinguished it positively from its competitors. Green used a portion of the neo-Kantian history to achieve very different argumentative ends. A second explanation is related to this one: only a minimal Kant was needed in order to refute the empirical psychologists, and this was the principal argumentative end to which histories of modern philosophy were employed among the last generations of English idealists. Green himself was no Kant minimalist, and his allegiance to the master lay more in ethics and political theory than in epistemology. But his rivals in England in the 1860s and 1870s (e.g. Herbert Spencer and George Henry Lewes) had revived a form of empiricism, and he found in the neo-Kantian narrative a ready-made weapon against that position. His development of the Locke-Berkeley-Hume story against Mill and his followers, then, was probably a very unintentional concession to the neo-Kantians in the undeclared contest over modern philosophy. To put this problem in slightly different terms, in adopting the neo-Kantian narrative to exclude Mill, he unintentionally and indirectly excluded his own heroes in Fichte and Hegel.

A third explanation appeals to the scholarly successes of the neo-Kantians. By the time Caird wrote his second Kant book, neo-Kantians had spread all over Germany and subdivided into several schools. The minimal, epistemological Kant was the subject of so many monographs and dissertations that even Caird borrowed extensively from the more numerous German works of Kant philology, and he thus incorporated the empiricism-rationalism episode into his own narrative. In Caird’s case, as explained
above, this eighteenth-century, individualist Kant grew into an historicist and almost monistic Kant in the late 1790s. But Caird admitted that recognizing this required an aggressive reading that was inspired by evolutionary ideas, and Seth and others were right to accuse Caird of over-interpreting Kant’s texts. While more recent philosophers of history have indeed recognized organicism as a legitimate mode of historical argument, this is an especially liberal and flexible form that permitted Caird to unify the two otherwise conflicting Kant narratives. To put the point in slightly simpler terms, the neo-Kantian Kant could be made continuous with the nineteenth century only on historical principles akin to Hegel’s or Caird’s. Hegelians could write themselves into the dogmatism (empiricism-rationalism) versus criticism narrative only if the history were written on principles like the Hegelian theory of history. What was required was a narrative leap or Aufhebung, and such a story became increasingly less plausible, as a method of writing history, as time wore on. More generally expressed, the historically reflective aspect of organicist histories made their narratives less detachable from their context, and this benefited the more adaptable neo-Kantian history.

Hegel’s apparently sudden demotion from philosophical godfather of the English-speaking world, which status he still held at the turn of the last century, to a “pompous, silly, and defeated figure,” then, has a fairly simple explanation in summary of these three reasons. By the second decade of the twentieth century Hegel’s philosophy no longer fit the most useful of the available narratives of modern philosophy. More important, however, is the fact that the most useful and popular imported narrative had Hegel for its implied enemy: Hegel was forgotten largely because an anti-Hegelian history, albeit without this title, appeared in useful, popular, and widespread translations. Even today, when Hegel has undergone a kind of renaissance, it is rather difficult to reconcile his existence with the presupposed narrative according to which philosophy took a Copernican turn from dogmatism to criticism in 1781. It was always tricky to devise a rationale behind the canon that ended in Kant—the Kant who synthesized empiricism and rationalism—and yet make any sense at all of the existence of Hegel and his followers in the nineteenth-century tradition. Hegel scholars today often admit this difficulty, even where they are insufficiently sensitive to the historical contingency of the canonical status that the neo-Kantian narrative possesses. The difficulty is a plain and simple effect of a set of intentional and programmatic efforts
to exclude Hegel by the philosophers who were chiefly responsible for the construction of what became the modern canon.

All this is not to suggest that political factors, the world wars and the rise of communism, did not damage Hegel’s status in the English-speaking world. Such things could not have helped him. But his place at the head of modern philosophy had already been very seriously threatened before the political concerns arose, and this occurred for reasons that have very little to do with wars and political movements. The story of Seven Figures, viz., Descartes-Spinoza-Leibniz and Locke-Berkeley-Hume to Kant, was well on its way to canonization before it became politically objectionable in England or America to have a fondness for German writers. The story was developed first in an effort to abate Hegel’s influence and promote epistemology to first philosophy. It was then imported into anglophone contexts partly because it was a useful story for those who wished to combat the rebirth of empiricism, and partly because of the sheer volume of scholarly works devoted to executing the neo-Kantian agenda. The persistence of the narrative into the twentieth century was a product of, among many other things, the fact that neo-Hegelian historical narratives could not easily be divorced from neo-Hegelian philosophies of history.\textsuperscript{87}

The emphasis I have placed on narrative purpose requires as an appendix a few further emendations of Kuklick’s story. This essay began by noting Kuklick’s theses about Hume and Kant, and such stories are now ready for completion or emendation. Kuklick discovered how Hume was reborn only after Mill defeated Hamilton, but he acknowledged uncertainty as to how Mill’s argumentative victory promoted Hume, rather than himself, to the canon. This question was answered by the suggestion that English idealists resurrected Hume as a \textit{reductio} against Mill, as well as against any other philosopher with an empiricist approach to knowledge. Berkeley and Locke are not there so much to explain Hume; rather, Hume appeared in the canon so that empiricism as such would seem implausible. Kant’s attractiveness in America was probably, as Kuklick suggested, improved by the fact that the American professorate was still, to a great extent, an extension of the clergy.\textsuperscript{88}

But American philosophers were raised on the writings of their English and Scottish colleagues, and the latter assimilated Kant not mainly for his religious conservatism, but rather for his example of a non-naturalistic study of the mind (his political liberalism and his non-utilitarian ethics were likewise important). That Kant’s positions on religious matters were not obviously
offensive, then, could have made the Descartes to Kant narrative more palatable without factoring much into an explanation for its existence.

The simplistic version of my thesis about Hegel, viz., that he did not fit the story, applies as well to most other philosophers who were ever candidates for canonization—with the exception that Hegel is somewhat unique as the unmentioned villain of the story, whereas other philosophers serve as mere collateral damage. Berkeley is an especially interesting case. Kuklick’s emphasis on individual figures required him to seek reasons why anglophone idealists were interested in Berkeley’s texts. Although he was not short on discovering sincere interactions with Berkeley’s arguments—Royce in his middle period, for instance, frequently used Berkeleysque arguments—these were probably less relevant to Berkeley’s canonization than Kuklick suggested. Berkeley had already been shortlisted for canonization by neo-Kantian historians who were much less fond of his position, and Green made excellent use of Berkeley without having much affinity for the Bishop of Cloyne. In those contexts Berkeley was only a convenient medium for connecting Locke to Hume, and this is probably the best explanation of why he made the final cut. In other words, Berkeley’s position was of little importance. In fact the story places him on the wrong side of the dogmatism-criticism divide, and so his role in the narrative was never one of possible hero. What mattered was that he fit nicely into a story that as a whole played the necessary argumentative roles, be that in defining epistemology as philosophia prima (Zeller) or in attacking empiricism (Green). These narratives needed to lend an appearance of a necessary development from Descartes or Locke to Hume, and Berkeley’s position was convenient to this end.

The case of Leibniz is perhaps slightly different. Kuklick reminded us, and rightly so, that two influential American philosophers—Williams James and the young John Dewey—possessed an especial fondness for Leibniz. He added this to his observation that, prior to the influence of German philosophy, there had been American canons (viz., either Reidian or colonial) that excluded Leibniz. From these premises he concluded that Leibniz appears in our canon because Dewey and James were fond of him. But to cite James and Dewey as part of an explanation for Leibniz’s appearance in the story is to mistake the cart for the horse. Leibniz’s place was as sure in a Kantian or neo-Kantian history as Hume’s was, and he factored equally well in any history told by Hegel and his followers. At the time Dewey and James studied philosophy these German histories, including many in English translations,
comprised the bulk of available literature on the history of philosophy. James and Dewey appreciated Leibniz because he was part of the history they inherited—Dewey’s own teacher was the translator of Ueberweg’s *Outlines*—and not vice versa. If there is an interesting question about Leibniz’s role that the James-Dewey episode addresses, it concerns either why Christian Wolff was dropped (Wolff still featured prominently in the longer German histories), or why American historians were less likely than their British counterparts to overstress the empiricist side of the empiricism-rationalism divide.

**IV. Hegel’s Return?**

Studies of the historiography of philosophy frequently conclude with skeptical reflections about the practices of writing and teaching the history of philosophy, and this one will be no different. Enlightenment about the history of the received history indeed puts many of the standard practices into question. But, as Haakonssen has noted, this opens as many possibilities as it closes. Emphasizing the latter for a moment, historiographical reflection seems to preclude not only the plausibility of repeating an outdated and (now) argumentatively aimless story about the fate of philosophy from 1641 to 1781. Such criticism also brings into question the utility or interest of authoring articles or monographs on particular episodes in the received history, if such works follow the common rhetorical strategies. Haakonssen and Kuklick reach even more ominous conclusions about the status quo in the history of philosophy. The former urges that we dispense with any “standard course called The History of Modern Philosophy.” The latter suggested that research in the canonical history of modern philosophy presupposes “feeble inquisitiveness” about the past.

For the purposes of this essay, I will forego making suggestions as to how our historically displaced narrative might undergo revision for the contemporary classroom. Instead I wish to fulfill a promise regarding the usefulness of my approach for contextualizing scholarly works on individual figures. Such focused researches often suffer from a form of interrogative paralysis induced by the standard narrative. One prominent example should suffice to illustrate my central claim, viz., that the implied narrative context can impose crippling limitations on the rhetorical possibilities in particular historical subfields. Too many supposedly historical studies still accomplish no more than what Popkin complained of in 1959: grafting figures onto a narrative borrowed from nineteenth-century Kant scholars. Hegel studies are
perhaps the most interesting, since the canon that happened to prevail was constructed primarily to repel his influence. His works thus allow of only the most uneasy reconciliation with the background narrative. In the absence of detailed historical study of the sort I have begun here, Hegel scholars have nonetheless attempted to reinterpret his works in order to make sense of his appearance after the received history. They found it necessary to revise Hegel so that he could conform somewhat to the narrative arc of modern philosophy as this trajectory was seen to move from Descartes to Kant. This endeavor has concluded in the resurrection of a neo-Hegel in the shadows of the neo-Kantian Kant. Some considerable exegetical difficulties arose, of course, in light of the fact that the neo-Kantian Kant was invented mainly in order to distance Kant from Hegel.

Like the Back to Kant movement of the 1860s, the rationale for the new Hegel renaissance involved both exegetical controversies and aggressive narrative strategies, ones that were strongly influenced by the historical narrative that triumphed in the English-speaking world. In fact, both the historical and the programmatic sides of the movement mirrored the rhetorical practices of Zeller and Liebmann. Historically speaking, responsibility for the exclusion of Hegel from the canon needed to be cast onto mistakes by a group of undesirables from the past, just as Zeller needed the likes of Fichte and Schulze to blame for the misappropriation of Kant. Easy scapegoats were found in the so-called British Hegelians, which is to say precisely those philosophers who did not share the background narrative that culminated in the dogmatism-criticism distinction. Those philosophers were seen to have misunderstood the critical, epistemological thrust of Hegel’s *Encyclopedia*, and they instead ran rampant with a metaphysical interpretation of the late Berlin system. This type of rhetoric is inevitable whenever Kantian historiographical metaphors such as the “Copernican turn” are mistakenly viewed as the framework within which Hegel’s contributions should be examined.

The programmatic side of this recent scholarly movement is perhaps even more striking: Hegel’s texts had to be interpreted in a manner that would permit his re-entry into the home of modern philosophy, even if he is to remain in a corner rather than displayed on the mantle. What met this need was a string of monographs and articles that claimed that Hegel was not a metaphysician and even that he can be considered a member of the so-called analytic tradition. The rhetorical background to this scholarly trend again mirrored the Back to Kant movement; the exegetical tendencies
of these scholars are astounding in light of the neo-Kantian history I outlined above. In a gesture of thorough complaisance with the standard narrative, they argued first, and most predictably, that any Hegel interpretation should reconcile his philosophy with Kant’s critical turn. Second, just as Kant’s philosophy was reinterpreted in the 1860s as exclusively epistemological, Hegel’s Encyclopedia Logic received an epistemological interpretation. Third, just as the neo-Kantians accomplished their ends by restricting themselves, at least in the beginning of the movement, to the Analytic and Aesthetic, the “non-metaphysical” Hegelians likewise began by banishing all the historical and metaphysical works (the larger Logic and especially the Berlin lectures).\textsuperscript{97} These were proclaimed to be contrary to the true spirit of his philosophy. In other words, the scholars in question devised a minimal Hegel who could have reasonably followed Kuno Fischer’s or Otto Liebmann’s Kant. In doing so they unknowingly mimed the rhetorical tactics of the Back to Kant movement, but for exactly the reason that they wanted Hegel to fit into a narrative that was initially used against him. Reason in this case showed remarkable cunning.

Implausible scholarly detours such as the Hegel industry just described, though rather impressive in many details, result primarily from a failure on the part of historians of philosophy to engage in any serious historical criticism of our received narratives, whether it be the standard story of Descartes to Kant or any other recycled drama. As a final note, I would like to warn against restricting potential criticisms of such narratives to their representative accuracy. The neo-Kantian story of modern philosophy has for a long time met challenges that it inaccurately or insufficiently represents individual episodes or figures. Hume, for instance, borrowed from Malebranche or Bayle as much as he did from Berkeley.\textsuperscript{98} To emphasize such issues at any length without considering what argumentative purposes the Berkeley-Hume connection had in the first place, however, is to allow those purposes to dictate the terms of scholarly proceedings. The shortcomings of the canon as the basis of current or future research are not primarily that the story omits or misconstrues many details. The problems with the story are rather that it was written more than a century ago by people with historical assumptions and argumentative aims that even the authors of more current histories no longer share. This last problem is the one to which I have tried to call attention in tracing the relationship between Hegel and the modern canon.
NOTES


2. Professional job calls frequently use the expression “early modern” to designate the period ending in Kant, and this convention seems to allow for the considerable renaissance of post-Kantian philosophy. Throughout the following, however, I will continue to use the term “modern philosophy” to designate the Descartes-through-Kant story. Even a brief survey of anthologies and course curricula would justify this practice.

3. Kuklick explains at the opening of his essay that the canon has slightly different composition in France, England, and Germany, respectively, but also that the American version has become the anglophone version.


6. Haakonssen provides a helpful accounting of the ideological assumptions of what is called modern philosophy. In addition to the above-cited essay, see also his editor’s introduction to The Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Philosophy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).


8. Kuklick insists that the Seven is American largely because in the twentieth century British, German, and French versions of the canon differed slightly in composition. This fact is no longer relevant, since international publications have made the American tale more dominant than the British one, which underplayed the so-called rationalists. It is worth adding to Kuklick’s account of this, however, that nineteenth-century American philosophers only adopted the narrative on the basis of English readings of German philosophy.


11. Consider, for example, the disputes over the relationship between Hume and Berkeley in the middle of the twentieth century. These are aimed at attacking the neo-Kantian narrative, but they fail to escape the rhetorical framework set by it. Many Hume scholars, perhaps even a majority, professed infidelity to what they called the Reid-Green reading, but the prominence of that reading nonetheless determined the argumentative options available to them. For an historiographically sophisticated summary of this episode in Hume scholarship, see Michael

12. The key work in this field is still, to my knowledge, Klaus Christian Koehnke’s *Entstehung und Aufstieg des Neukantianismus* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1986). Two other works of note are Thomas E. Willey’s *Back to Kant* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1978) and Hans-Ludwig Ollig’s *Der Neukantianismus* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1979).

13. See Koehnke’s statistical data, especially on page 145. These show that the sharp decline in philosophy enrollment before 1855 was followed by an equally dramatic rise until 1870.

14. “Ueber Bedeutung und Aufgabe der Erkenntnistheorie”; my references will be to the collected edition, *Vortraege und Abhandlungen* (Leipzig, 1877), pp. 479–526. This lecture is familiar to some anglophone readers from the discussion of it in Chapter III of Richard Rorty’s *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*.

15. Zeller was to some extent only generalizing the views that Kuno Fischer had outlined in his own 1860 lecture on “The problem of human cognition as the first question of philosophy,” in *Kant’s Leben und die Grundlagen seiner Lehre, drei Vortraege von Kuno Fischer* (Mannheim, 1860).

16. Zeller’s influence has been acknowledged not only in special studies such as Thomas E. Willey’s *Back to Kant*, but also in more widely read publications like Rorty’s *Philosophy and The Mirror of Nature*, Chapter III, “The Idea of a ‘Theory of Knowledge.’”


18. 1844–1852. This appears in many editions and translations. For a recent assessment of the significance of Zeller’s work on ancient philosophy, see the volume cited in the above note.


20. The problems discussed by Zeller in this section were made public two decades earlier by Friedrich Trendelenberg, *Die logische Frage in Hegels System* (1843).

21. On this topic, consult Zeller’s remarks in the Zusatze to his lecture (1877), or his 1873 monograph on German philosophy, *Geschichte der deutschen Philosophie seit Leibniz*.

22. Compare Kuno Fischer’s 1860 lecture, cited above.

23. Zeller, “Ueber Bedeutung,” p. 483. The emphasis on Bacon demonstrates Zeller’s reliance on Fischer. See Fischer’s volume on *Bacon und sein Nachfolger*, 2nd ed. (Leipzig, 1875); the first edition appeared in the 1850s, and was available in English as early as 1857.

24. Compare Haakonssen, who emphasizes how our picture of eighteenth-century philosophy was retrospectively distorted.

25. Most volumes of Fischer’s *History* are available in translations, but in the form of various monographs.

26. Fischer, by contrast and as suggested above, emphasizes Bacon in his account of empiricism.


29. On this, see Haakonssen.
30. Reid developed this historiography in, among other places, his *An Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principle of Common Sense*, Chapter I.

31. The last paragraph of the *Critique of Pure Reason* (A855/B883) suggests this division of Kant’s predecessors, and the *Prolegomena* extends this discussion.

32. My references are to the Oxford translation by Arthur Johnson, 1832.

33. This is Haakonssen’s principal thesis (Haakonssen, “Early Modern”).

34. Consider as only the most popular examples, the more self-serving histories written by Hegel and followers, Feuerbach, and Schelling.


36. He does, however, employ the distinction between criticism and dogmatism as his chief organizing tool for modern philosophy. See p. 294ff.


38. These are Otto Liebmann’s examples. See his *Kant und die Epigonen* (Stuttgart, 1865), p. 33.

39. Later neo-Kantians of course deviated from the strict reactionary qualities of the first wave, and even among the likes of Zeller, Fischer, and Trendelenberg there was significant variation in their views on the extent to which philosophy could proceed beyond epistemology. Zeller’s 1895 essay “Ueber Metaphysik als Erfahrungswissenschaf* (Kleinere Schriften [Berlin, 1910], pp. 553–65) provides a more optimistic view for metaphysics than one would guess from, for instance, the Heidelberg inaugural address.

40. Consider Zeller’s 1877 Zusatze to the lecture, in which he cites the wealth of Kant scholarship as a chief reason the academic battle against metaphysics and systematicity had been, by that time, won.

41. For a brief intellectual history of the movement, see Willey, *Back to Kant*.

42. My references will be to the original pagination, since this is widely available in reprint.

43. Fischer made Schopenhauer’s opinion more widespread due to the influence of his study of the *Critique* in volume 4 of his *Geschichte der neueren Philosophie*—the English translation of this volume by Mahaffey (1866) contains an introduction with extensive discussion of the point. See my note on Mahaffey’s translation below. In addition, Friedrich Ueberweg wrote a Latin dissertation on the problem in 1861. These references are all to be found in Liebmann, p. 26. For more information on this debate, see the references in my note to the anglophone discussion of the issue.


45. In a priceless passage from 1920, Norman Kemp Smith lamented: “Most histories of philosophy have, as it happens, been written by idealists; and we are therefore well acquainted with the idealist’s claim that his type of philosophy has progressively deepened, has been fertilized, strengthened, and enriched by the whole progress of human thought throughout the centuries.” (“The Present Situation in Philosophy” in *The Philosophical Review* Vol. 29, No. 1, pp. 1–26).
46. Although the *Encyclopedia* version of the third part of the system did not appear in English until Wallace’s translation of 1894 (Hegel’s *Philosophy of Mind* [Clarendon Press]), several parts of the Philosophie des Geistes were already widely read. The *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* were fruitfully discussed by Seth (*The Development from Kant to Hegel* [London, 1882]), Caird (Hegel, 1886), and Stirling. Bosanquet published some translated excerpts from the *Lectures on Aesthetics* in the 1886 version of the *Journal of Speculative Philosophy*. These, of course, are only a few very prominent examples of the era’s preoccupation with that part of Hegel’s philosophy. Nonetheless I find it more interesting that scholars interested in Hegel were more interested in reproducing historical studies of art, religion, and philosophy than they were in discussing Hegel’s particular doctrines.

47. In the first appearance of this controversy in an English-language publication, the Translator’s Introduction to the volume of Kuno Fischer’s *History* devoted to the *Critique*, the whole issue was rather emphatically dismissed. The volume was published as *A Commentary on Kant’s Critic of Pure Reason* (London, 1866) by Irish translator John Pentland Mahaffey. The latter’s arguments appear on page xlviii and the following pages, and conclude that there are no important doctrinal differences between the editions. Mahaffey did append to the text translations of the “suppressed” chapters of the A edition, and a number of scholarly articles on the topic eventually appeared in *Mind* and other periodicals. Fifteen years later (1881) a German philologist and former student of Schelling, Max Muller, translated the entire A edition into English, in a failed attempt to spread the Back to Kant movement into the English-speaking world. Around the same time, Hutchison Stirling, Caird, and others published somewhat dismissive essays on the edition controversy. Stirling’s “The Question of Idealism in Kant: The Two Editions” appeared in the 1883 volume of *Mind* (OS 8–32, pp. 525–42). Three years prior, Caird and Henry Sidgwick engaged in a similar debate on “Kant’s Refutation of Idealism” (*Mind* OS 5–17). pp. 111–15).

48. On the latter, see Andrew Seth (Pringle-Pattison’s 1885 book, *Scottish Philosophy: A Comparison of German and Scottish Answers to Hume*. My focus in the following will be on the former.


50. Caird’s disciple John Watson reluctantly pitted Caird’s Kant against the English psychologists in *Kant and His English Critics* (1881).


54. *Critical Philosophy*, I, p. 68: “The idea of evolution is now so familiar, and it has lent such a living interest to the history of the past, that it is not easy to realize the view of those who were without the idea.”

55. *Critical Philosophy*, I, p. 68.


59. If Seth is to be believed, Caird borrowed this part of his account from German histories. See his review of Caird, pp. 267–68.


62. In the Concluding Remarks (II, p. 640ff.) Caird summarizes his view of what he calls Kant’s error, viz., the latter’s individualism and his subsequent conclusion that knowledge adequate to the Ideas of Reason is unachievable. His point, however, is couched in terms peculiar to his more complete analysis of the *Critique of Pure Reason* in volume 1 of the study.

63. His 1881 essay in *Mind* employs the distinction in the account of Kant’s predecessors.


66. The status of Green’s Introduction has been disputed by Hume scholars, and already in 1905 (“The Naturalism of Hume,” in *Mind* Vol. 14, No. 2, pp. 149–73) Kemp Smith declared that the consensus of scholars was against the account of empiricism that moved from Locke to Berkeley to Hume. Nonetheless one need only consult any of the later histories of philosophy, from Russell to Copleston to the chapter headings in the latest anthology, to see how unsuccessful Hume scholars have been in resituating his historical position. Ayers’s essay, cited above, is particularly illuminating on this topic.

67. The variations in the order of empiricisms are slight. Ueberweg, for instance, treats “Hume’s skepticism and its opponents” in a chapter separate from his discussion of “Locke, Berkeley, and others.”

68. Page 297: “[T]he more strongly Hume insists that ‘the identity which we ascribe to the mind of man is a fictitious one,’ the more thoroughly does he refute himself.”

69. This is stated very clearly at the outset (p. 3): “the Treatise of Human Nature and the Critic of Pure Reason, taken together, form the real bridge between the old world of philosophy and the new.”

70. See Klein’s dissertation (*The Rise of Empiricism*) on this point.

71. The Marburg anti-psychologism, for instance, is generally viewed as a reaction to this.

72. Green began his Introduction with an eye-catching statement of historical objectivism, according to which he promised to “detach(es) from the chaos of events a connected series of ruling actions and beliefs.”


75. J. H. Muirhead’s *German Philosophy in Relation to the War* (Oxford pamphlet series, no. 62) is a key source on this topic, in addition to various works by Dewey and others.

76. Page 134.
77. One German reaction to the victory of the neo-Kantian story was a prolonged attempt at reviving an orthodox Hegelian narrative. The classic work in this category is Richard Kroner’s *Von Kant bis Hegel*. For a history of this movement, see Lukács’s 1954 study *The Destruction of Reason* (New York: Humanities Press, 1981).

78. See, for instance, Watson’s *Kant and his English Critics*, or Klein, *The Rise of Empiricism*, p. 51ff.

79. Marburg, Southwest, etc.

80. On this point consult Zeller’s very satisfied 1877 additions to his lecture.

81. In the 1890 volume of *Mind* OS 15–58, pp. 266–79.


83. Interestingly enough, this is a consequence of organismist histories that was well foreseen by Zeller. See Wolfgang Bartuschat’s “Zeller und das ‘Archiv fur Geschichter der Philosophie’” in Hartung, pp. 243–60.

84. This is Kuklick’s expression.

85. In addition to Morris’s translation of Ueberweg (see note 91 below), as well as the many early translations of Zeller and Fischer, there were translations of neo-Kantian histories by Schwegler (trans. Hutchison Stirling [Putnam, 1872]); Windelband (trans. Herbert Cushman [Scribner’s, 1901]), Falckenberg (Holt, 1897), and Hoeffding (trans. Meyer [Macmillan, 1900]). For a summary of works on the history of philosophy available in English at the time, see Benjamin Rand’s *Selected Works on the History of Philosophy in the English Language* (Boston, 1906).

86. The introduction to Robert Stern’s recent book on *Hegelian Metaphysics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) serves as one recent example. But in this work Stern is merely reacting to a wider trend of relating Hegel specifically to a restrictive interpretation of Kant’s philosophy (focused on the Transcendental Analytic).

87. This is what Ricoeur was worried about when he wrote, in *History and Truth* (Northwestern University Press, 1965), p. 41ff., that the history of philosophy should not be mixed with the philosophy of history.


91. Ueberweg’s *History of Philosophy from Thales to the Present Time* was translated by G. H. Morris, and published in London, 1875.

92. Wolff was held in especially low regard in English-speaking circles, though not in Germany. John Watson wrote in *The Philosophical Review* Vol. 3, No. 5 (1894), p 550, that the “Medusa-like power which Wolff exhibits of turning the living ideas of Leibnitz into stone . . . is perfectly marvelous.”

94. In a fascinating debate in The Bulletin of the Hegel Society of Great Britain Vol. 32 (1996), Pinkard admits that this was the principal effect of Klaus Hartmann’s strategy, which he is defending in that dispute (pp. 15–17).

95. Tom Rockmore’s Hegel, Idealism, and Analytic Philosophy (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2006) provides this details of this strategy.

96. In a number of works, Paul Redding goes the furthest in this direction. See especially his Analytic Philosophy and the Return of Hegelian Thought (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

97. This holds only for the earliest readings in the movement, such as Klaus Hartmann’s twin essays “Hegel: A Non-Metaphysical View” (in Hegel: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. A. MacIntyre [South Bend, Ind.: Notre Dame University Press, 1972], pp. 101–24) and “Die ontologische Option” (in Die ontologische Option, Hrsg. Klaus Hartmann [Berlin: de Gruyter, 1976], pp. 1–30). Later writers such as Pinkard and Pippin have slowly, if uneasily, reconciled the non-metaphysical approach with other parts of Hegel’s system.

98. This has been the primary method of attacking the canon, and one pursued since Popkin’s famous “Did Hume Ever Read Berkeley?” in Journal of Philosophy Vol. 56, No. 12 (1959), pp. 535–45.