INTRODUCTION: ON GOING BACK TO KANT

ANDREW CHIGNELL

Kant is, without a doubt, the most significant thinker of the Christian period.

—Otto Liebmann

I. BACK TO KANT! EARLY NEO-KANTIANISMS

In 1865, the young German philosopher Otto Liebmann published a book entitled *Kant and His Epigones*, every chapter of which ended with the declaration: "One therefore must return to Kant."[1] Liebmann's jeremiad expressed the frustration of many German philosophers with the speculative excesses of absolute idealism and at the same time their unwillingness to collapse theoretical philosophy into the empiricistic program of someone like J. F. Fries or the psychologism of a J. F. Herbart. Inspired by his teacher, the Kant scholar Kuno Fischer,[2] and emboldened by Eduard Zeller's famous back-to-Kant speech at

[1] Otto Liebmann, *Kant und die Epigonen* (Stuttgart: Carl Schober, 1865). The phrase that Liebmann uses is actually in the passive: "*Also muss auf Kant zurückgegangen werden*." All translations from the German here are mine unless otherwise noted.

[2] Fischer was one of the most prominent historians of modern philosophy in mid-century Germany. His *Kants Leben und die Grundlagen seiner Lehre* (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1860), as well as the two volumes on Kant in his widely read *Geschichte der neueren Philosophie* (Mannheim: F. Basserman, 1860), laid some of the groundwork on which Neo-Kantianism was built. In a much-publicized controversy, Fischer's interpretation was harshly criticized by the Aristotelian F. Adolf Trendelenburg (*Kuno Fischer und sein Kant* [Leipzig: S. Hirel, 1869]). Trendelenburg claimed that Fischer was wrong to assume that Kant did or could claim to know that the things-in-themselves cannot have the same sort of spatial properties which the appearances do (this is clearly related to the famous "neglected alternative" objection first raised in Kant's day by J. G. Maass and H. A. Pastorius). Trendelenburg's critique prompted Fischer's immediate and acrimonious riposte—*Anti-Trendelenburg: Eine Gegenschrift* (Jena: H. Dabis, 1870). Further discussion was precluded by Trendelenburg's death in 1872, but the controversy had prominent effects on German philosophy for

Heidelberg in 1862,[3] Liebmann argued that the most fitting objects of philosophical inquiry are the *a priori* conditions of experience in general and of natural science in particular. He thus urged his contemporaries to return to transcendental reflection on our knowledge of the law-governed realm of bodies, forces, particles, and spaces, rather than engaging in empirico-psychological investigation of contingent perceptual structures or flabby speculation about past and future unfoldments of the Absolute.

In calling philosophy back to Kant, of course, Fischer, Zeller, and Liebmann did not mean to suggest that their opponents were ignorant of the critical philosophy. Everyone from Jacobi to Hegel was a reader of the three *Critiques*, at least, and most were well versed in other Kantian texts as well. Fries, for instance, regarded himself as the Kantian alternative to Schelling and Hegel at Jena, and effusively proclaimed in his *New or Anthropological Critique of Reason* (1807) that Kant's *Critique* was the "first philosophical masterpiece."[4] Similarly, Herbart, who succeeded Kant in the Lehrstuhl at Königsberg in 1809, declared in his *General Metaphysics* some 20 years later that "In a word: the author is a Kantian."[5]

By mid-century, however, the younger Neo-Kantians sensed that the "scientific materialism" that was prominent in empirical psychology and physiology had gone well beyond Fries and Herbart and simply *presumed* a dogmatic metaphysics. They also believed that establishment idealism—in its zeal to unify the Kantian faculties into one underlying rational structure and to collapse Kant's distinction between noumena and phenomena into a knowable Absolute—had lost track of what was central to the Copernican revolution.[6] The goal of a truly Kantian philosophy, according to Liebmann et al., was to provide foundations for the exact *Naturwissenschaften*—primarily mathematics and physics, rather than psychology, physiology, or anthropology—by regarding their objects as "empirically real" phenomena, while at the same time denying all knowledge-claims about the intrinsic features of "transcendentally real" fundamentalia.

Liebmann and his cohort were not the only prominent opponents of absolute idealism in 19th-century Germany. There were the scientific materialists

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years. See, for example, the early pages of Hermann Cohen's classic work *Kants Theorie der Erfahrung* (Berlin: Dümmler, 1871).

[3] Eduard Zeller was a well-known historian of ancient of philosophy whose explosive pro-Kant speech at Heidelberg on October 22, 1862 was published later that year as *Über Bedeutung und Aufgabe der Erkenntnisstheorie* (Heidelberg, 1862).

[4] J. F. Fries, *Neue oder Anthropologische Kritik der Vernunft* (Heidelberg: Mohr und Zimmer, 1807) 49.

[5] J. F. Herbart, *Allgemeine Metaphysik* (Königsberg: A. Unzer, 1828) 27.

[6] See Liebmann's first chapter on idealist epigones of Kant (i.e., Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel). The other chapters of *Kant und die Epigonen* deal with the "empiricism" of Fries, the "realism" of Herbart, and the "transcendent philosophy" of Schopenhauer, each of which Liebmann takes to be a deeply flawed departure from the true Kantian position.

mentioned earlier, for example. And of course decades before the publication of *Kant und die Epigonen*, Schopenhauer and Kierkegaard had openly railed against the Hegelian orthodoxy. Furthermore, Schopenhauer explicitly (and Kierkegaard somewhat less so, perhaps[7]) had sought to shift philosophy's lodestar from the skies over Berlin and Jena back to the starry heavens above Königsberg. In the 1844 Preface to *The World as Will and Representation*, Schopenhauer ridicules the idealists and then reverently records his debt to Kant: "Kant's teaching brings to everyone who understands it such a fundamental and massive transformation that it can count as a spiritual rebirth."[8] In spite of the prominence granted to these figures by later historians of the 19th century, however, it was Liebmann's call for a return to Kant, five years after Schopenhauer's death, that had the greater effect on the ground. Those who rallied to it typically fell into one of two broad camps.

The "metaphysical" camp—which included Kuno Fischer, Liebmann, and another of Fischer's students, Johannes Volkelt[9]—focused on philosophy's role in grounding the presuppositions of natural science. These presuppositions include not merely various regulative "maxims of reason" but also constitutive principles regarding the uniformity of nature, the causal structure of the universe, the nature of space and time, and the susceptibility of the world to understanding by our cognitive faculties. The way to ground such principles, of course, is to show that nature is an "appearance" whose features are partly the result of the operations of those very faculties. So according to members of this camp, Kant's so-called "metaphysics of experience" is a crucial aspect of what must be recovered from his picture, although his occasional (and ill-advised) musings about the metaphysics of the thing-in-itself are better left behind.

Neo-Kantians in the physiological camp—including Hermann von Helmholtz, Friedrich Lange, and Alois Riehl—focused less on Kant's metaphysics of the empirical world and more on the critical philosophy as precursor of the scientific study of human physiology and psychology. Unlike many of their contemporaries, however, they recognized that this study does not necessarily presuppose a dogmatic metaphysics. Thus, Helmholtz rejected the thoroughgoing materialism of

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[7] For a controversial account of Kierkegaard's enthusiasm for and putatively "hidden debt" to Kant, as well as his use of Socrates as a kind of stalking-horse for Kant, see Ronald M. Green, *The Hidden Debt* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1992).

[8] Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* (Leipzig: F. H. Brockhaus, 1819; 2nd expanded edition 1844). Although initially neglected, by the time of the third edition in 1859, Schopenhauer's book was finally enjoying serious attention and influence, as Schopenhauer himself notes with some relief in his preface to that edition (he died the following year). This quotation is from p. 24 of that edition.

[9] Johannes Volkelt's most important contribution was *Immanuel Kants Erkenntnistheorie nach ihren Grundprinzipien analysiert* (Leipzig: L. Voss, 1879).

many of his fellow scientists and also openly campaigned against the speculative *Naturphilosophie* of the idealists. Lange appealed to empirical facts about sense-perception to argue against the dogmatic materialism of the physiologists and empirical psychologists and in favor of a broadly Kantian position. In his monumental *History of Materialism* (1866), Lange claims that facts about how sense-perception is caused by electrical impulses traveling through the nerves and into the brain, together with newfound knowledge of how the brain changes these impulses into representations (transforming the two-dimensional retinal image into a three-dimensional representations, for instance), leads naturally to a Kantian-style distinction between phenomena and things-in-themselves. It also, according to both Lange and Helmholtz, underwrites total skepticism about intrinsic features of the latter.[10]

The foregoing sketch should make it clear that the early Neo-Kantians were by no means proposing an uncritical rehabilitation of Kant's entire system. On the contrary, members of both camps saw themselves as creative appropriators of Kant's ideas: They recognized the limitations of the master's view and hoped that, by standing on his shoulders, they would be able to see much further than he did. The problem was just that they were not (at least initially) in much agreement about which way to look. As a result, just 15 years after Liebmann's call to arms, the controversies, schisms, and skirmishes between various camps, sub-camps, and isolated individuals had become so fractious that Hans Vaihinger could plausibly characterize the state of Kant scholarship in Hobbesian terms as "a universal war of all against all!"[11]

It would be impossible for any introduction, or indeed any volume of essays, to describe in adequate detail the classical Neo-Kantian tradition that came out of the diverse antimaterialist and anti-Hegelian backlashes of the 1860s. In the next three sections of this introduction, I aim to provide just an outline of the most important developments, issues, and figures, while also describing how the papers included below fit into the overall narrative.

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[10] F. A. Lange, *Geschichte der Materialismus* (Iserlohn: J. Baedeker, 1866, expanded 1873–75). Though not much read today, the influence of this work was initially massive. Hermann Cohen was so enthusiastic that he wrote a foreword to the fourth edition of 1884 and an entire "Introduction and Critical Supplement" to the sixth edition of 1898. Friedrich Nietzsche is known to have read and been heavily influenced by Lange, and Bertrand Russell wrote the Foreword to the first English translation in 1925. For a helpful portrait of Lange's life and work, with a very useful bibliography, see Nadeem Hussain, "Friedrich Albert Lange," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Summer 2005 Edition)*, ed. Edward N. Zalta. <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2005/entries/friedrich-lange/>.

[11] Hans Vaihinger, *Commentar zu Kants Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (Berlin: W. Spemann, 1881, 1892; 2nd edition Stuttgart: Union Deutsche Verlagsgesellschaft, 1922; reprinted by Aalen Scientia Verlag, 1970), vol. I, p. ii.

II. MARBURG

The early Neo-Kantianisms just described ultimately coalesced into two main schools whose differences do not precisely map onto the differences between the earlier camps. The schools are typically referred to by their locations rather than by their doctrines. The "Marburg School"—a rubric first used by Paul Natorp and later adopted by its other prominent members Hermann Cohen and Ernst Cassirer—retained Liebmann's focus on the exact sciences and philosophy's role in grounding empirical inquiry. Cohen, in particular, often employed a theoretical analogue of Kant's regressive argument in the second *Critique* from the "fact of reason"—that is, our consciousness of the moral law—to the existence of transcendental freedom. After first positing the "fact of science" as a kind of theoretical datum, Cohen sought to elucidate that fact's transcendental conditions in the mind as well as in the world.[12]

Rolf-Peter Horstmann's essay in the present volume critically examines some of these attempts on Cohen's part to deduce synthetic *a priori* axioms of space and time, particularly in *Kant's Theory of Experience*.[13] According to Horstmann, Cohen's twofold concern in that book is to show (1) that neither psychologism nor logicism can account for the fundamental principles of geometry and physics, and (2) that accepting the latter principles as both constitutive and synthetic *a priori* is consistent with 19th-century developments in those sciences and with a refusal to speak of a wholly inaccessible thing-in-itself. Both Horstmann and Michelle Kosch, in her comments on Horstmann, worry about whether Cohen's "constructivist" focus on Kant as a metaphysician of experience is sufficient to account for the important role played by the thing-in-itself in Kant's own philosophy. To see the latter as the in principle accessible "task" or ideal convergence of our scientific researches not only conflicts with Kant's restriction of our knowledge to appearances, it also neglects the central importance of Kant's critique of traditional dogmatic metaphysics. This would not be a significant worry, of course, if it were not for the fact that Cohen is always so insistent (as Horstmann points out) that his book is meant to be a serious reading of Kant and not simply a view inspired by him.

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[12] Kant himself, of course, presents a version of the deduction of the categories and forms of intuition using this "analytical" method in the *Prolegomena*. Some interpreters suspect that this is the best kind of argument that he has to offer (e.g., Karl Ameriks, *Interpreting Kant's* Critiques [New York: Oxford, 2003]); others disagree and seek to reconstruct a "synthetic" argument along the lines of, say, the B-deduction in the first *Critique* (e.g., Paul Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge* [New York: Cambridge, 1987]).

[13] *Kants Theorie der Erfahrung* (Berlin: Dümmler, 1871; 2nd edition 1885).

Paul Guyer and Peter Gilgen shift our focus away from Cohen's work on theoretical philosophy and toward his works on aesthetics.[14] Guyer finds it useful to contrast Cohen with Baden philosopher Jonas Cohn on this topic,[15] as well as with the friend (if not card-carrying member) of the Neo-Kantian movement, Wilhelm Dilthey.[16] Guyer's primary focus is the interpretation of Kant offered by these writers, though he also evaluates the theories on their own terms. His surprising conclusion (with which Gilgen largely agrees) is that Cohen's and Cohn's aesthetics fail to do justice to Kant's synthesis of the "aesthetics of play" and the "aesthetics of truth" and that a better reconstruction of the Kantian middle way can be found in Dilthey's essay. The conclusion is surprising, since Dilthey is usually associated with the so-called *Lebensphilosophie* of Georg Simmel, with philosophical hermeneutics, and with the development of sociology, and not really with Neo-Kantianism. But it is worth recalling in this connection that Dilthey was also the founding editor of the Academy Edition of Kant's works and, as Guyer and Gilgen convincingly remind us, a very astute reader of the third *Critique*.

Cohen's former student and longtime colleague Paul Natorp was the second great Marburg Neo-Kantian. Once a student of the Strassburg anti-Kantian positivist Ernst Laas, Natorp underwent a kind of conversion upon encountering Cohen's writings and ultimately transferred to Marburg in order to habilitate there. The new student must have impressed his teacher, because after the degree was conferred Natorp was given a post at Marburg, and both philosophers continued to teach there until their deaths (Cohen in 1918, Natorp in 1924). Throughout all of this, Natorp retained his passion for the classical philology that he had studied at Strassburg before going to Laas and Cohen for more systematic philosophical training. As a result, his iconoclastic work on ancient philosophy remains one of the best-known parts of his extensive *corpus* and has earned him a reputation as a first-rate Neo-Kantian historian of philosophy.

In *Plato's Theory of Ideas*, Natorp defends the Whiggish thesis that the history of thought—especially at its Platonic, Galileian, Newtonian, Leibnizean, and Kantian high points—is effectively a history of transcendental idealism in the distinctively Marburgian sense.[17] In other words, Plato was the first of a select few

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[14] Hermann Cohen, *Kants Begründung der Ästhetik* (Berlin: Dümmler, 1889); Hermann Cohen, *Ästhetik des reinen Gefühls*, 2 vols (Berlin: B. Cassirer, 1912).

[15] J. Cohn, *Allgemeine Ästhetik* (Leipzig: Engelmann, 1901).

[16] Wilhelm Dilthey, "The Imagination of the Poet," *Selected Works: Volume 5: Poetry and Experience*, trans. Lois Agosta and Rudolf A. Makkreel, ed. Rudolf A. Makkreel and Frithjof Rodi (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1985) 29–174.

[17] Paul Natorp, *Platos Ideenlehre: Eine Einführung in den Idealismus* (Leipzig: Dürr, 1903). Vasilis Politis and John Connolly have recently translated this book into English as *Plato's Theory of Ideas: An Introduction to Idealism* (St. Augustin bei Bonn: Academia Verlag, 2004).

who saw that reason's essence is expressed in a certain kind of *method*—namely, the broadly scientific method of generating hypotheses in light of available data, and then supporting (or refuting) them by appeal to further evidence, all on the presumption that spatiotemporal reality is governed by laws whose (partial) source is located in rationality itself. Plato's most prominent articulation of this thought is found in his theory of Forms, which for Natorp is really a theory of hypotheses or *laws*—namely, the categorial laws whose content helps explain the structure of phenomena.

In his reflections on Natorp's book below, Vasilis Politis argues that this reading of Plato is not as implausible as it has often seemed to mainstream scholars of ancient philosophy. He also helpfully juxtaposes Natorp's work on Plato with Friedrich Adolf Trendelenburg's work on Aristotle, and suggests that there might be an Aristotelian origin of Trendelenburg's reading of Kant (see footnote 3 above), whereas Natorp's (and Cohen's) claims about the constitutive *a priori* conditions of our knowledge can be seen as broadly "Platonic."[18] (Whether it is fair to call Plato a transcendental idealist, of course, is another story altogether!)

Peter Gordon and Michael Friedman turn our attention to the third great Marburger, and perhaps the best-known Neo-Kantian of all, Ernst Cassirer. Gordon takes as his focus *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, which was first published in Berlin in 1932, just before the Nazi regime came to power.[19] Cassirer's sympathetic history, according to Gordon, implicitly operates as a sustained defense of the characteristic Enlightenment doctrine that thought is at its best when it is "spontaneous," "active," and "autonomous." Free, rational thinking, for Cassirer, was the most effective bulwark against the ominous appeals to superstition, authority, and Germanic cultural and racial myths that were gaining strength as the Weimar Republic wobbled. The thesis about the centrality of spontaneity also flew in the face of the putatively Heideggerian doctrine that our fundamental relations to the world are those of passive "thrownness" and "care laden" coping (see Gordon).[20] It is thus fitting that Gordon uses Cassirer's notorious 1929 disputation

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[18] It is worth noting that Cohen, too, worked a great deal on Plato before turning his attention to Kant in the wake of the Fischer-Trendelenburg affair. It is perhaps no accident that the Neo-Kantians were Platonists and that Trendelenburg was an Aristotelian. (Trendelenburg, incidentally, was very nearly Natorp's *Gross-Doktorvater*; he trained Ernst Laas at Berlin.)

[19] Ernst Cassirer, *Die Philosophie der Aufklärung* (Berlin: B. Cassirer, 1932). Bruno Cassirer was Ernst Cassirer's cousin and frequent publisher of his and other Neo-Kantian works.

[20] Whether or not Heidegger himself would have endorsed this view of his work at any point is controversial. Certainly Division I of *Being and Time* seemed to some readers (then and now) to be advancing this kind of view. Being-in-the-world gets analyzed there, provisionally at least, in terms of "*Umwelt*" and "*Geworfenheit*"—Dasein's inauthentic absorption in its own "factical maintenance" or "coping" with what tradition has handed down. Many contemporary Heideggerian

with Heidegger in Davos, Switzerland—as well as the barbed reviews they exchanged prior to Cassirer's flight from Germany in 1933—as the vivid historical backdrop for his discussion of the Enlightenment book.

Cassirer was not just an intellectual historian, of course. Like other Marburgers, he also had research interests in epistemology, philosophy of science, and philosophy of mathematics. His attempt in the aftermath of the Einsteinian revolution to salvage the Kantian/Cohenian commitment to the constitutive *a priori* is a main focus of Friedman's contribution below. Friedman argues that the account of scientific progress that we find in Thomas Kuhn's famous work was *explicitly* inspired by Neo-Kantianism and that it owed a special debt to Cassirer. Indeed, Kuhn's big mistake, for Friedman, was to depart from the Marburgers in assuming that *any* kind of convergence in science has to be "substantial"—that is, with some physical referents remaining constant across successive theories—rather than merely "structural." In seeking to correct Kuhn's mistake, Friedman sketches an updated Neo-Kantian picture of the history and philosophy of science, one which accounts for revolutions and paradigm shifts without adopting the fashionable post-Kuhnian assumption that any sort of convergence is a philosopher's fantasy.

In my response to Friedman below, I raise some questions about the extent to which his account of structural convergence—both here and in some of his other recent works—goes further in the historicizing, antimetaphysical direction than is necessary, given his overall aims. I also express the worry that the kind of Neo-Kantian philosophy that Friedman promotes here requires scientific knowledge and expertise that would make it impossible for most contemporary philosophers to engage in it.

III. BADEN

The Southwestern or "Baden" school of Neo-Kantianism—located primarily in the Baden-Württemberg Universities of Heidelberg, Freiburg, and Strassburg—was led by Wilhelm Windelband, Heinrich Rickert, Emil Lask, and Bruno Bauch. This school tended, with some notable exceptions, to deemphasize epistemology and focus instead on alethic and axiological issues: the true, the good, and the beautiful, as well as the cognitive and cultural conditions thereof. Baden Neo-Kantianism first came to real prominence when Windelband (who was Liebmann's

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scholars argue, however, that the point of Division II, as well as some of the works in the later 1920s, was to demonstrate how the account of our mode of being in Division I must be contrasted with the possibility of "authentic" being-in-the-world that wrests free of its passive absorption in factical life. Thanks to Matthew Halteman for drawing my attention to some of the complexities here.

successor at Strassburg) declared that philosophers of culture and value would do best to "start out from Kant"—and in particular from Kant's claims about various kinds of normativity or "universal validity" (*Allgemeingültigkeit*). Windelband hoped that by starting there, philosophers could deduce the conditions of the possibility of valid judgments regarding different kinds of value: that is, truth in the natural sciences, goodness in ethics, and beauty in aesthetics. His main goal was to provide analyses and defenses of these various kinds of normativity, of course. But he also hoped, on the basis of these distinct transcendental conditions, to erect disciplinary boundaries between the "natural sciences" (*Naturwissenschaften*)—which discover and describe universally valid *general* laws—and the "cultural sciences" (*Kulturwissenschaften*)—which highlight normatively valuable features of *particular* "ideographic" events, artifacts, and personalities.[21]

Heinrich Rickert studied with Windelband at Strassburg, habilitated and then taught for a long period at Freiburg, and ultimately took over Windelband's chair at Heidelberg after the latter's death in 1915. While at Freiburg, Rickert wrote what was probably his most influential work—a development of the Windelbandian point of view in the ongoing disciplinary "*Methodenstreit*." The book was titled, quite appropriately, *Kulturwissenschaft und Naturwissenschaft* (1899), and featured the sorts of reflections on culture, value, and normativity that earned the Baden school its reputation.[22] After moving to Heidelberg in 1915, however, Rickert returned to pure theoretical philosophy, perhaps inspired by Lask's work. In 1930 he published *The Logic of the Predicate and the Problem of Ontology* and also completed a history of the Baden school entitled *The Heidelberg Tradition in German Philosophy*.[23]

Unlike their contemporary Edmund Husserl, Windelband and Rickert are now little-known in the English-speaking world. The work of Rickert's student, Emil Lask, is almost *completely* unknown, despite Lask's great influence on the likes of Georg Lukács and Martin Heidegger. The main reason for Lask's obscurity, no doubt, is that he published only two slim volumes of what were meant to be prolegomena before quixotically volunteering for military service in 1914 and then perishing, quite tragically, on the Eastern Front. Both of these books are clearly Kantian in letter if not always in spirit: *The Logic of Philosophy and the Doctrine of Categories* (1911) and *The Doctrine of Judgment* (1912).[24]

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[21] Wilhelm Windelband, *Die Geschichte der neueren Philosophie in ihrem Zusammenhange mit der allgemeinen Kultur und den besonderen Wissenschaften* (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1878).

[22] Heinrich Rickert, *Kulturwissenschaft und Naturwissenschaft* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1899).

[23] Heinrich Rickert, *Die Logik des Prädikats und das Problem der Ontologie* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1930); *Die Heidelberger Tradition in der Deutschen Philosophie* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1931).

[24] Emil Lask, *Die Logik der Philosophie und die Kategorienlehre* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1911); *Die Lehre vom Urteil* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1912).

Another reason for Lask's obscurity is that he is obscure in another sense: His writing is incredibly difficult to understand. In her contribution below, Dina Emundts makes an exemplary effort to untangle Lask's complex theories of logic, judgment, and truth, and in doing so provides Lask's interesting account of how what Kant calls "transcendental logic" is somehow prior to the general, purely formal logic that he associates with Aristotle. Transcendental logic is prior to general logic, for Lask, insofar as reference to or perhaps even experience of *objects* is somehow presupposed by any act of judgment. The only way to explain this, on Emundt's reading, is to posit a kind of primordial, non-judgmental acquaintance with objects that is itself prior to the use of any cognitive, categorial forms.

In the final contribution to the volume, Frederick Beiser fills out our picture of Lask's project by providing a detailed biographical and philosophical account. Beiser argues that at the time of his premature death, Lask had effectively left Kant behind, not only via the quasi-mystical doctrine of our primordial knowledge of objects, but also with respect to important doctrines regarding truth, logic, and our knowledge of things-in-themselves. It is hard not to wonder whether Lask, had he lived longer, would have openly broken with his Neo-Kantian teachers in the way that his fellow Badener Martin Heidegger ultimately did.

IV. THE FATE OF NEO-KANTIANISM

Neo-Kantianism did not immediately succeed in overthrowing the Hegelian establishment. Fifty years after Liebmann's book, Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel were still live philosophical options and required reading in Germany. Similarly, Hegelians on the other side of the Channel—T. H. Green and F. H. Bradley, most prominently—would compete with Moore and Russell for the attentions of English philosophers for at least another decade. Still, by the turn of the century Neo-Kantianism had become a powerful philosophical movement, and by the early teens it was the dominant *Schulphilosophie* in much of the German academy.

World War I and its aftermath finally brought a victory of sorts for Neo-Kantianism, at least with respect to its negative agenda. The Teutonic mode in which absolute idealism was often expressed made it quickly unpopular in English-speaking countries. More significantly, the idealists' alacrity about the march of history toward increasing self-conscious rationality seemed preposterous in the face of a world war, especially given the way in which claims about historical progress had been used to defend various forms of imperialism and aggression. The positivistic movements in Vienna and Cambridge offered to German- and English-speaking philosophers alike a kind of antimetaphysical and even antiethical counterpoint to all of that (in this sense it might be seen as a

philosophical analogue of the contemporaneous Dada movements in Zürich, Berlin, and New York). As one might expect of any anti-Hegelian movement, logical positivism had important roots in Neo-Kantianism.[25] It comes as no great surprise to learn that, for instance, during his time at Jena the young Rudolf Carnap immersed himself in a year-long course on Kant from Bruno Bauch (himself a student of Rickert),[26] or that Hans Reichenbach, later a prominent positivist philosopher of science at UCLA, had studied Kant with Cassirer in Berlin.[27] It also seems eminently fitting that one of the forefathers of analytic philosophy, Bertrand Russell, wrote the foreword to the first English translation of Friedrich Lange's *History of Materialism*, and that it was published in 1925, one year after Bradley's death.

On the other side of what would later become the analytic/continental divide, there was certainly no less by way of Neo-Kantian influence. For starters, Edmund Husserl was Rickert's successor at Freiburg, corresponded with Windelband on multiple occasions, and made ample references to the latter in his work. The influence of his longtime philosophical interlocutor Paul Natorp is also thought to have been profound.[28] Second, while it is well-known that Heidegger was Husserl's student, it is often forgotten that he was Rickert's student as well and that he owed a significant philosophical debt to his preternaturally talented but ill-fated fellow student, Emil Lask. Moreover, after surviving the war himself, Heidegger's first academic appointment was at Marburg, where his colleagues included the elderly Natorp (who aided Husserl in arranging the appointment) as well as the last great member of the Marburg school, Nicolai Hartmann. Finally, although Hans-Georg Gadamer's explicit targets in *Truth and Method* (1960) are Schleiermacher, Dilthey, and Husserl, it is worth noting that Gadamer was born and raised in the Neo-Kantian ambiance of Marburg and intentionally returned there after a stint in Breslau to study under Natorp and Hartmann.[29] This makes it very plausible that his arguments about the limitations of "method" are directed at least as

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[25] These are roots which Friedman has traced in some detail. See in particular Michael Friedman, *Reconsidering Logical Positivism* (New York: Cambridge, 1999) and *A Parting of the Ways: Carnap, Cassirer, and Heidegger* (Chicago and Lasalle: Open Court, 2000).

[26] See Michael Friedman, "Kuhn and Logical Empiricism," *Thomas Kuhn*, ed. Thomas Nickles (New York: Cambridge, 2003) 24.

[27] Of course, Reichenbach ultimately opposed strict Kantian theories insofar as they see *a priori* principles as "necessary and universal." But this was true of quite a few Neo-Kantians in the post-Einsteinian era. Reichenbach was still open to the broadly Kantian idea that there may be some constitutive *a priori* principles; he simply wanted to relativize them to broader theoretical and historical contexts. See Hans Reichenbach, *Relativitätstheorie und Erkenntnis apriori* (Berlin: Springer, 1920). Cf. Friedman (2003): 24–25.

[28] Cf. Iso Kern, *Husserl und Kant. Eine Untersuchung über Husserls Verhältnis zu Kant und zum Neukantianismus* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1964).

[29] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1960).

much against the *Doktorvater* whom Gadamer once dubbed a "*Methodenfanatiker*" as they are against the hermeneuts and phenomenologists.[30]

Neo-Kantianism had significant effects outside of mainstream German philosophy as well. In Jewish circles, the work of Hermann Cohen has always enjoyed an enormous influence; one contemporary source remarks that he was "probably the most important Jewish philosopher of the nineteenth century" even though "his major works, ironically, were purely secular, as he advanced the basic ideas of Immanuel Kant."[31] The explicitly religious thinker Franz Rosenzweig started out as a student of Badener Jonas Cohn but eventually became a student and friend of the great Marburger. Cohen and Rosenzweig later discussed plans that ultimately came to fruition in 1919 to found the Akademie für die Wissenschaft des Judentums in Berlin. And Cohen's *Religion of Reason out of the Sources of Judaism*, published that same year, is the only major part of his *corpus* that has been translated into English, presumably because it has become so important for students of modern Jewish thought.[32]

There were Neo-Kantian movements in many other European countries, but perhaps the most far-flung appearance is in the work of the St. Petersburg philosopher Alexsandr Vvedenskii and his student Ivan Lapshin. Many of the students who trained in this St. Petersburg school traveled to Marburg on visiting fellowships in order to acquaint themselves with the source. Russian versions of Neo-Kantianism tended to focus on formal issues in logic as well as on what is sometimes called "gnosiology"—that is, the study of the different *sources* and *kinds* of cognition. This reflects Kant's own concern with the particular sources, faculties, and structures of cognition (*Erkenntnis*), and his relative lack of interest in analyzing the general nature of propositional knowledge (*Wissen*). Russian Neo-Kantians ultimately came to regard the processes of cognition in such a highly antipsychologistic fashion that they spoke of a supra-individual knowing "I" that thinks in accordance with a series of ideal or abstract categories.[33]

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[30] In a eulogistic sketch, Gadamer uses this term to refer to Natorp. See Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Die philosophische Bedeutung Paul Natorps," *Philosophische Lehrjahre* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1977) 60–68, at p. 62. The speech was first published in 1958, four years after Gadamer gave it at the Marburg celebration of the centenary of Natorp's birth. I owe this information to Alan Kim's illuminating article: "Paul Natorp," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2003 Edition)*, ed. Edward N. Zalta. <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2003/entries/natorp/>.

[31] "Hermann Cohen," Jewish Virtual Library of the American Israeli Cooperative Enterprise. <http://jewishvirtuallibrary.org>.

[32] Hermann Cohen, *Religion der Vernunft aus den Quellen den Judentums* (Leipzig: Fock, 1919). The English translation is published by the American Academy of Religion (1995) and includes an introduction by Leo Strauss.

[33] See Vladimir Goneç, "Neo-Kantianism," *Ideas in Russia* 4 (2003): 182–87.

Perhaps the most significant effect of the classical Neo-Kantian movement, at least for the contributors to the present volume, is the groundwork that it laid for modern Kant scholarship. Hans Vaihinger trained with Liebmann, Lange, and Zeller and was prompted by the Fischer-Trendelenburg affair to extend his massive commentary on the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Much more important than Vaihinger's own "fictionalist" interpretation of Kant, however, was his work as founding editor of the journal *Kant-Studien* from 1896 to 1904,[34] and as founder of the German Kant-Gesellschaft in 1904.[35] Likewise, Dilthey's most significant scholarly efforts, for many of us anyway, were those that stemmed from his role as founding editor of the Prussian Academy Edition of Kant's *Gesammelte Werke*—now the international standard. Benno Erdmann, an Italian friend of Neo-Kantianism who took over this job upon Dilthey's death, edited what are now the standard A and B editions of the first *Critique* for inclusion in volumes 3 and 4. Finally, Erich Adickes, though not doctrinally a Kantian about many things, was still very much in the orbit of Neo-Kantianism. During his professorship at Tübingen, he spent countless hours organizing Kant's handwritten *Nachlass* into the now-invaluable volumes 14–19 of the *Akademie Ausgabe*.

V. BACK TO NEO-KANTIANISM?

Despite their massive importance in the first part of the 20th century, most Neo-Kantian texts have fallen out of favor in the last 50 years, and the movement itself is barely mentioned in contemporary surveys of the era. It is quite common for Anglo-American students to encounter a history of philosophy that goes through Hegel, Kierkegaard, Mill, and Nietzsche and then on to Frege, Moore, Russell, and Wittgenstein without any mention of the once-mighty Neo-Kantian schools. Only Cassirer's work is still familiar in the English-speaking world, thanks in part to his contentious relationship with Heidegger, in part to his widely read work on the "Philosophy of Symbolic Forms" and in part to his influence on famous American intellectuals like Suzanne Langer and Peter Gay.

Whatever the causes of its disappearance, a question that the publication of a volume like this raises is whether it would be *worth* revisiting Neo-Kantianism in the same way that scholars have been revisiting Kant's more immediate successors (Reinhold, Jacobi, Maimon, and Schleiermacher) in recent years. At first blush, such a revisitation seems like a worthy idea: There are more people working on Kant's philosophy now than ever before, and it is hard not to grow weary of the

[34] The first volume was produced in cooperation with a dozen prominent scholars, including Erich Adickes, Eduard Caird, Wilhelm Dilthey, Benno Erdmann, Alois Riehl, and Wilhelm Windelband.

[35] The other founding members of which included Dilthey, Liebmann, Riehl, Georg Simmel, and, interestingly, Alfred Weber—Max Weber's brother.

increasingly fine-grained sifting through the minutiae of the *Akademie Ausgabe*. Moreover, Neo-Kantianism seems to offer a set of bold and complex elaborations, many of which are in tension with Kant's own views, or at least with prominent contemporary readings of them. The enormity of the movement also promises plenty of room for research and reconstruction, along with the scholarly challenges of organizing and publishing texts, translating some of them into languages other than German, and so forth.

A major worry that might work against this sort of revisitation of Neo-Kantianism, however, is that the movement has been effectively surpassed or superseded by contemporary philosophy, on the one hand, and by contemporary Kant scholarship, on the other. If this worry is well-founded, then a revisitation of the movement would threaten to be an exercise in mere antiquarianism. Some of the authors who participated in the present project expressed this worry during the summer of 2007 as they worked through Cohen, Natorp, Lask, and others. The systematic views articulated by even the best Neo-Kantians (apart from Cassirer, perhaps) seemed to them to be too derivative, tendentious, and tediously expressed to merit prolonged revisitation, while the Kant interpretation seemed implausible, or at least severely handicapped by the absence of the secondary and tertiary resources of the contemporary scholar.

Tastes and tolerances differ on this sort of thing, of course, but it must be conceded that reading the classical Neo-Kantians can be a difficult slog, and that everyone from Lange to Lask could have used a more attentive editor. It should also be clear that we need not go back to Neo-Kantianism if our main goal is to find *accurate readings of Kant*. From Liebmann onward, there was typically no sustained effort by these thinkers to "get Kant right" in the sense of that phrase sometimes used by contemporary historians of philosophy. As noted earlier, most of the Neo-Kantians quite explicitly had agendas of their own, and their primary aim was to appropriate Kant's insights for contemporary perusal (consider in this connection Windelband's famous remark that "To understand Kant rightly we must go beyond him!").

A somewhat better motive for a serious revisitation of Neo-Kantianism would be that of sharpening our picture of the extra-Frege/Moore and extra-Husserl origins of contemporary philosophy, and the ante-Strawson and ante-Henrich origins of contemporary Kant scholarship. The first project would involve inquiry into the influence that Neo-Kantianism had on philosophers to whom posterity has been more kind.[36] The second would require looking at the way the Neo-Kantians made various primary and secondary sources available to later scholars and also

[36] Michael Friedman has been engaged in projects along these lines for many years, but there is certainly more work to be done, especially outside of philosophy of science.

made it clear, sometimes by way of personal example, where we are likely to find interpretive blind alleys and general implausibilia.

The third and perhaps strongest motive for a serious revisitation of Neo-Kantianism is that it seems likely to offer what the best history of philosophy always offers. By reconstructing the views of eminent philosophers of the past, the best history of philosophy highlights and rehabilitates various theoretical possibilities that are currently neglected due to some accident of history, prejudice, or fad and makes them available for use and perhaps even acceptance in the contemporary context. Lest it be thought that a specifically Neo-Kantian form of this revisitation and rehabilitation project is unnecessary, note that although there are numerous new books each year offering readings of Kant *himself*, there is still relatively little discussion of Kantian*ism* and its ongoing prospects. Indeed, *theoretical* (as opposed to practical) Kantianism is almost completely out of favor among contemporary philosophers: The analytic–synthetic distinction has been muddied, claims about a stable set of constitutive *a priori* principles have been challenged by mathematical discovery (e.g., Non-Euclidean geometry) and historicist theory (e.g., "all knowledge is local"), and there has been a return to the sort of substantive metaphysical speculation that Kant despised, almost all of it in a realist vein. Although anti-realism is still popular in some circles, phenomenalism and full-blown idealism have been massively unfashionable for decades. Universalistic claims about human forms of knowing are often decried as naïve, and many theorists cite Kant's talk of disinterested pleasure and universally valid judgments of taste as emblematic of what is deplorable in Enlightenment thought. It is really only in ethics and political philosophy that one encounters a flourishing school of contemporary Kantian thought, thanks in large part to the work of Jürgen Habermas (another Marburg product), John Rawls, and the students that Rawls trained at Cornell, MIT, and especially Harvard.

Several decades ago, Richard Rorty observed that (theoretical) analytic philosophy had finally progressed from its Humean phase to a genuinely Kantian phase (in the work of Sellars, Davidson, and Strawson); and he expressed the hope that its Hegelian phase would someday arrive.[37] More recently, Rorty has pointed to the work of Robert Brandom and John McDowell, among systematic philosophers, and Robert Pippen and Terry Pinkard, among historians, as the fulfillment of his hope.[38] It is far too soon to say, of course, but a certain

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[37] See the "Introduction" to Rorty's *Consequences of Pragmatism* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1982).

[38] "Reading McDowell's daring and original book side-by-side with Brandom's helps one to grasp the present situation in Anglophone philosophy of mind and language. One way of describing that situation is to say that whereas Sellars and Davidson use Kantian arguments to overcome the Humean dogmas retained by Russell and Ayer, Brandom and McDowell supplement Kantian arguments with Hegelian ones. Most Anglophone philosophers still do not take Hegel seriously, but

historical logic makes it tempting to wonder whether the time will come for yet another turn among analytic philosophers—this time back to *Neo*-Kantianism. If so, then perhaps the essays in this volume can be seen as a tentative, proleptic step in that direction.[39]

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the rise of what Brandom and McDowell refer to as their 'Pittsburgh School of neo-Hegelians' may force them to. For this school holds that analytic philosophy still must pass over from its Kantian to its Hegelian moment." See Richard Rorty, "Robert Brandom on Social Practices and Representations," *Truth and Progress: Philosophical Papers Volume 3* (New York: Cambridge UP, 1998) 122–37, at p. 124. See also Rorty's "Introduction" to Wilfred Sellars, *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*, ed. Robert Brandom (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1997) 11, and Rorty's review of Robert Pippin's *The Persistence of Subjectivity: On the Kantian Aftermath* in *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews*, October 2005. <http://ndpr.nd.edu/review.cfm?id=4101>.

[39] Many thanks to Thomas Teufel, Matthew Halteman, and Terence Irwin for helpful discussions of this material.