

sicians. When speaking of entities, processes, lineages, or symbioses, does talking about a “biological individual” do any metaphysical work that “individual” does not already do? Does biological individuality identify a different kind of thisness or haecceity distinct from the identity of individuals in general? If individuality always implies something about identity, unity, or mereological relationships, an ornery metaphysician might ask, What does the qualifier “biological” in “biological individuals” actually do for our metaphysics? As the explicit aim of the volume is to provide a conversation among the contributors that the reader can also participate in, I think the authors would welcome our ornery metaphysician into the dialogue.

**Catherine Kendig**, *Michigan State University*

---

Christian Damböck. <Deutscher Empirismus>: *Studien zur Philosophie im deutschsprachigen Raum 1830–1930*. Dordrecht: Springer, 2016. Pp. 213. €80.00 (cloth); €63.00 (e-book).

---

With this book, the author, Christian Damböck, proposes an interesting and unique new reading of nineteenth-century German-language philosophy. Against the common belief that German-language academic philosophy came to a halt between 1830 and 1870 and was only revived later in the century, Damböck argues that, quite the contrary, that period saw the emergence of a promising (albeit today largely forgotten) philosophical tradition, which he dubs <German empiricism> and which was characterized by an affirmative reference to a specific version of psychology, which he calls <descriptive psychology>. Damböck uses angle brackets throughout the book to indicate that he is well aware that the terms in question (empiricism, descriptive psychology) already have established meanings. Thus, he uses these expressions in a specific, technical sense, explained and laid out in the book. His thesis is that the kind of psychology that is being referred to here is not the natural scientific one that other philosophers relate to, either positively or negatively, but should be described as a mode of psychology specific to the human sciences (*Geisteswissenschaften*). Damböck identifies Wilhelm Dilthey and Hermann Cohen as the main proponents of this tradition, with Moritz Lazarus and Heyman Steinthal as important early figures and the young Rudolf Carnap as a late representative.

This short introduction should already make it quite clear that Damböck challenges some conventional historiographical assumptions and categories. In particular, it may seem *prima facie* implausible to classify either Dilthey or Cohen as an “empiricist,” since Dilthey’s notion of experience is clearly much broader than of British empiricism and Cohen explicitly posited an *a priori*, which makes it *prima facie* problematic to group him with an approach Damböck contrasts with a position he calls <apriorism>. Damböck is well aware of these problems, and his book reveals a high degree of sensitivity to the historiographical traps that his arguments might run into. Yet, he does not shy away from formulating a fairly bold thesis, and he is prepared to argue for it. He has an excellent grasp of the material as well as the recent secondary literature, and it becomes clear early on that it is worth taking his book seriously.

The book has five chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the reader to the topic and offers a number of methodological and conceptual clarifications. Chapter 2 presents what Damböck refers to as the “philosophical morphology of philosophy in Berlin around 1830.” Chapters 3 and 4 present characterizations of Dilthey’s and Cohen’s work, arguing that their work is more compatible than it might first seem and moreover shares some philosophical roots, most obviously in the figure of Heyman Steinthal. Chapter 5, which the author labels as a “postscriptum,” argues that Carnap’s early work (up to the *Aufbau*) should be understood as being situated in the tradition of <German empiricism>, bearing—in particular—the marks of some influences of Dilthey’s philosophy. I will now describe the arguments of each chapter in more detail.

Chapter 1 elaborates on the central thesis, namely, that there was an (at the time) important tradition of German academic philosophy that should be understood as “scientific,” even though the relevant sciences were not physics and mathematics. Rather, he links this movement to the fact that between 1830 and 1880 (i.e., before the well-known revolutionary shifts in physics and mathematics) there were fundamental historical developments within the human sciences. Within historiography, for example, this period was marked by a historization of reason, which in turn led to a “crisis of apriorism,” well before the better-known crisis of intuition in the philosophy of natural sciences. Before this background it becomes intelligible that the “empiricism” in Damböck’s <German empiricism> is slated against “apriorist” philosophical movements that came to be advocated in German-language philosophy in the latter part of the nineteenth century by figures like Lotze, Frege, Windelband, and Rickert.

According to Damböck, <German empiricism> and <apriorism> differed on the subject of <platonism>. By <platonism>, Damböck means the thesis that there is exactly one correct conceptual representation of X, for any object or phe-

nomenon X. For Damböck, this view is closely linked to the idea that a priori structures have a mind-independent validity, as was prominently supposed by members of the Southwest school of neo-Kantianism. By contrast, Damböck argues, Hermann Cohen thought of a priori structures as empirically constructed by our minds. This is why Damböck characterizes his Marburg brand of neo-Kantianism as an <empiricist> position. Damböck is at pains to argue that the kind of <descriptive psychology> practiced by the characters of his narrative was not an <introspectivist> one. By this term, he means a mode of psychological description that is closely tied to the experimental methods practiced by advocates of an emerging natural scientific psychology at the time.

In chapter 2, the author identifies a number of early human scientists and philosophers who would have been present in Berlin in the early decades of the nineteenth century. Among the human scientists, he names figures such as Leopold von Ranke, Wilhelm von Humboldt, Friedrich Schleiermacher, Wilhelm and Jakob Grimm, Carl Ritter, Alexander von Humboldt, and Gustav Droysen. His specific focus is on the philologist August Boeckh, of whom he says that his influence on Steinthal, Dilthey, and Cohen is more important than any others. Damböck attributes to Boeckh not only the term “hermeneutic circle” but also the tenet that speculative philosophy should not be rejected wholesale, but its abstract terms should rather be embedded inductively, with the aim of showing that speculatively derived concepts are in a relation of fit with the empirical world (56). Among the Berlin philosophers at the time, Friedrich Beneke and Adolf Trendelenburg are highlighted. With regard to the former, Beneke’s non-empiricist focus on psychology is of special interest for Damböck’s purposes. By this, he means that Beneke argued for a kind of psychology that was not restricted to an analysis of empirical sensations. In turn, Damböck highlights also in Trendelenburg’s systematic philosophy an interest in the empirical analysis of thinking and concept formation, with the aim of finding empirical access to transcendental concepts.

However, the single most important figure that emerges in Damböck’s narrative of this chapter is the philosopher and philologist Steinthal, who among other things founded the journal *Zeitschrift für Völkerpsychologie und Sprachwissenschaft* (1860–90), in which he articulated his interrelated views about philosophy, psychology, and theory of language. Steinthal (himself Boeckh’s student) was not only a close friend of the young Dilthey but also an important influence on Cohen, who published some of his early works in Steinthal’s journal. Steinthal’s own philosophy, as rendered by Damböck, emphasized a notion of empirical psychology that does not equate the empirical with the sensory but instead a kind of mental activity that can create mental contents (in turn allow-

ing for cultural progress) and argued that empirical concepts are always both products and preconditions of perception.

Chapters 3 and 4 look at Wilhelm Dilthey and Hermann Cohen respectively to make the case that they should be grouped together under Damböck's label of <German empiricism>. Dilthey was a student of Fischer, Trendelenburg, Ranke, and Boeckh. Damböck's main point is that contrary to a prominent reading, according to which Dilthey made an antiscientific (and prohermeneutic) turn, his philosophy was consistently a proscientific alternative to antiscience hermeneutics of the twentieth century, although, as Damböck keeps stressing, the underlying notion of psychology was very different from the natural scientific mode of psychology that was already practiced at the time. In this vein, Damböck argues that we should read Dilthey as having pursued a very specific brand of empiricism (namely, <empiricism>). Damböck tries to underwrite this by a detailed chronological overview of Dilthey's work, according to which it was Dilthey's achievement to historicize Kant's notion of the synthetic a priori while also, in a sense, reconceptualizing that very project (84) and while arguing that the kind of empirical research required for this was not exhausted by the notion of (sensory) experience advocated by traditional forms of (British) empiricism. In this vein, Damböck argues that the motto of Dilthey's text, "Empirie, nicht Empirismus" (from the *Breslauer Ausarbeitungen*), should be understood as meaning (in Damböck's terms) "<Empiricism> not Empiricism." It is in this context, too, that Damböck locates Dilthey's infamous 1894 critique of psychology as having been targeted at competing philosophical projects of searching for a foundation of the human sciences. Damböck argues that, in contrast with Windelband, who saw the dichotomy between the natural and the "cultural" sciences as fundamental, Dilthey viewed the relationship as more continuous. Damböck adds an appendix here, focusing on Dilthey's descriptive psychology and highlighting a notion of "unique pictures" as central to Dilthey's notion of mentality. We will return to this below, as Damböck sees some parallels to Carnap in this point.

Now, on the face of it, Cohen's entire approach could not be much more different from Dilthey's. Against this, chapter 4 argues that even though for Cohen philosophy started out with the natural sciences, he viewed the facts of culture (including natural science) from a standpoint of the human sciences, arguing that philosophy itself is part of that culture: philosophy, on this reading of Cohen, does not describe ahistorical relations of justification but formulates hypotheses that have to prove themselves in cultural reality. Damböck grants that Cohen (who studied with Boeckh and Trendelenburg) was not an empiricist in the classical sense, because Cohen had a very idiosyncratic notion of experience, according to which experience is the totality of the fact of culture. In this chapter, Dam-

böck goes on to argue that Steinthal was an important figure in shaping Cohen's specific views about psychology as well as his brand of Kantianism, according to which the a priori becomes part of experience. Cohen's transcendental method, Damböck argues, was intended not as metaphysical speculation but as coming out of a philosophical system that is itself a product of culture. Justification, on this reading, was genuinely context dependent rather than drawing on eternal truths of a Platonic sphere.

Now, with regard to similarities and differences between Cohen and Dilthey, Damböck argues that despite Dilthey's anti-Kantianism, there were affinities between Cohen's and Dilthey's approaches. Both viewed the abstractions of science as historically changeable. But it is important to keep in mind that where Cohen was an idealist philosopher, Dilthey, in addition to being a philosopher, was also a human scientist. There is a sense, then, Damböck argues, in which they share similar assumptions, but Cohen's end point is Dilthey's starting point: Cohen presupposed the objective contents of the facts of culture, whereas Dilthey sought to investigate them empirically (140).

In chapter 5, Damböck pursues the thesis that Rudolf Carnap, while not strictly a <German empiricist>, can be historically traced back to that tradition, and there is an interesting convergence between their views and his. He draws on Michael Friedman and Alan Richardson's thesis that the notion of structural definite descriptions is central in Carnap's *Aufbau* and that such structures are intended to allow for universal communicability. Damböck adds to this the thesis that Carnap was directly influenced by the tradition of <German empiricism> and that this influence was more significant than those of a number of other authors whom Carnap studied. In particular, Damböck highlights the influence of the Dilthey school, which he says would have been especially pronounced through Carnap's close friend, the educational theorist Wilhelm Flitner, as well as other friends from Carnap's time in the German youth movement during his student years. (This comes in conjunction with an argument that downplays possibly "platonic" elements that the *Aufbau* might have received via Frege or the Southwest school of neo-Kantianism or that his constitution theory was significantly influenced by Husserl.) This thesis is backed up by pointing out that some of the terminology Carnap uses in his *Aufbau* (such as *Bewusstseinstatsache* and *Erlebnis*) have a distinctly Diltheyan ring to them. In addition, Damböck points to a private 1920 workshop Carnap held with some of friends from this period, where a very early draft of what was going to be his epistemological conception of the *Aufbau* was discussed. Conversely, Damböck argues, the ways in which Carnap refers to psychology suggest that he does not have in mind the <introspective> (by which Damböck means experimental and natural scientific) psychology of his day but that his notion of psychology is more in accordance

with the kind of <descriptive psychology> Damböck sees as distinctive of <German empiricism>.

This claim calls for a more detailed account of distinctive features of the type of <descriptive> psychology Damböck sees at the heart of the enterprise of <German empiricism>. It appears that Damböck has pronounced views about this, which are expressed in relation to both Dilthey and Carnap. What becomes quite clear is that according to Damböck, both Dilthey and Carnap favored a notion of psychology that is empirically anchored yet does not necessarily coincide with any empirical psychology that was practiced at their time. In Carnap's case, for example, this comes out when we look closely at his construal of the "recollection of similarity." Damböck traces this back to a notion of experience in Dilthey's work, which, however, Dilthey himself did not fully articulate. According to Damböck's reconstruction, which is based on two fragments, the crucial point of Dilthey's psychology is a "picture theory," according to which mental pictures are unique and are determined relationally. Contrary to associationist theories of mind, mental content, on this approach, is not composed of sensations. Moreover, pictures are not simply formed by a principle of association out of basic sensory parts but rather are constructed in ways that transcend the horizon of sensory experience.

As should be clear from this brief overview, this book covers a lot of ground. It not only gives an excellent account of a broad range of authors in the German-speaking world of the nineteenth century but also offers a provocative and original thesis about some of the main currents of philosophy at the time. The book is currently available only in German, but it contains a great deal of material that would certainly also be of interest to a broader audience in the HOPOS community. That being said, the argument is very condensed at times. This is especially true of the places where Damböck lays out his views about distinctive features of, and the unique epistemic work done by, <descriptive> and non-<introspective> psychology. These are certainly topics that deserve to be laid out in more detail. In this vein, I hope that the author will consider presenting some of the themes developed in the book as parts of longer, stand-alone articles (preferably in English).

Uljana Feest, *Leibniz Universität Hannover*