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Editor's Introduction to *The Neo-Kantian Reader*

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Editor's Introduction

THE NEO-KANTIAN READER aims to make accessible to the English-speaking reader a representative selection of translations of primary readings of the Neo-Kantian tradition, which is without a doubt the most broadly influential movement of European philosophy between approximately 1850 and 1918.¹ The Neo-Kantian Movement was inspired by the battle cry "back to Kant," mainly to counter scientific positivism and *weltanschaulich*² materialism in the mid-nineteenth century. Both tendencies had entered the cultural mainstream and seemed to suggest an abolition of philosophy altogether and a general decline of culture and its values.³ Coming after the so-called collapse of German Idealism and on the heels of the rampant scientism, the Neo-Kantians wanted to revive the spirit of Kant by going back to Kant. Going back to Kant, however, meant "going beyond" him. Going beyond the founder of the critical method was motivated by the scientific and socio-political developments of the present, which necessitated, in turn, an updating of Kant's original position in the light of these novel developments.

Soon after an opening era that is rather hard to characterize in its varied tendencies, two "power centers" emerged in Marburg and in Germany's Southwest (Freiburg and Heidelberg), which brought forth such thinkers as Hermann Cohen, Paul Natorp and Ernst Cassirer (the Marburg School) and Wilhelm Windelband, Heinrich Rickert and Emil Lask (the Southwest or "Baden" School). The "imperial reign" (as Habermas once puts it) of Neo-Kantianism in German-speaking areas lasted from approximately 1860 until 1918. In the interim period after the Great War, Neo-Kantianism became identified as a staid, conservative philosophy that was attached, both intellectually as well as philosophically, to the German *Kaiserreich* and its stale values. Neo-Kantianism remained the philosophical paradigm during the 1920s, while newer movements such as phenomenology ascended.⁴ Its final deathblow occurred in 1933, when the last living representatives of an erstwhile domineering philosophical community were forced to leave Germany.

The readings selected here offer a representative selection of these thinkers. The choice of readings is intended to lead the reader through the main stages in the development of Neo-Kantianism. The selections are taken from the key works of the Neo-Kantian philosophers, starting from the polymath Heinrich Helmholtz to arguably the last Neo-Kantian, Ernst Cassirer, who died in 1945, though debates about when *exactly* Neo-Kantianism began and ended will no doubt continue.

Classical Neo-Kantianism: Attempt at a Brief Definition

What *is* Neo-Kantianism? Who *are* the Neo-Kantians? Let us begin with a brief (attempt at a) definition of Neo-Kantianism. In trivial terms, Neo-Kantianism is a philosophy that attempts to revive Kant's philosophy. Immediately, several questions may ensue. What is *Kant's* philosophy about? Why would his philosophy be in need of a revival? What does it *mean* to revive Kant's philosophy? It is fair to say that within the group of thinkers whom nineteenth- and twentieth-century historiography has grouped, somewhat randomly, into this category, these were the questions that were debated. But it is also clear that there were then, and are now, no unified answers to these questions. Indeed, the entire Neo-Kantian movement can be seen as discussing and emphatically disagreeing on possible answers to these (and other) questions. Even the term *Neo-Kantianism* was contested. As in most -isms, one needs to bear in mind that it is, for the most part, a label appended to these thinkers by *others*, mostly critics. Seen in this light, many of those whom we consider staunchly embedded in the Neo-Kantian movement, did not see themselves as furthering *Kant's* philosophy at all, and they would have rejected this label outright. Other titles were used by representatives we now group under the label Neo-Kantianism; some other titles were (Neo-)Criticism, value theory (or value-theoretical philosophy), and others. Other labels were used by the bystanders, for instance, Neo-Fichteanism. Within the Neo-Kantian movement there were at least two different "camps" (in Marburg and the Southwest), not to mention isolated "satellites," who disagreed on their interpretations of Kant and stood for very different philosophical directions.

Given the "imperial reign" of Neo-Kantian philosophers, it is perhaps best to call the *period* between approximately 1860 and 1918, in terms of philosophical historiography, the *age or era of Neo-Kantianism*. Its representatives were the most important thinkers of their day, both within academia and in terms of admiration bestowed upon them by a learned public, the German *Bildungsbürgertum*, who adored their "Mandarins," to use a term famously coined by Fritz Ringer to describe the German professoriate, with almost religious devotion.

Often slandered as "*Professorenphilosophie*" or "*Kathedersphilosophie*" ("philosophers' philosophy" or "lectern philosophy"), one formally defining, albeit completely extraneous, trait of Neo-Kantianism deserves to be emphasized. All Neo-Kantians were academics, i.e., they held positions of some sort within German academia (unlike the academic failures, intentionally or not, such as Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Marx, or Kierkegaard). As such, the Neo-Kantians were quite successful career philosophers who were influential within higher education in Germany and beyond, for instance in political debates of the day, and they were altogether quite comfortable in their bourgeois setting.⁵ In this capacity, they influenced and in some cases defined academic politics (esp. with respect to philosophy) at universities guided by the Humboldtian ideal (the unity of research and teaching). In this sense, a defining feature of the Neo-Kantians was certainly the image of the typical academic of the nineteenth century: male (on this more below), bespectacled, with impressive beards and gold-chained pocket watches adorning their equally impressive midsections. As Mandarins, they preached their philosophies from the lectern with a stern Teutonic demeanor.⁶ In hindsight, they appear as ultra-conservative defenders of the German *Kaiserreich*, despite the fact that politically, most of them were left-leaning liberals and socialists (or perhaps better, "social-idealists").

Thus, despite this formal commonality, when we speak of "Neo-Kantianism" and "*the* Neo-Kantians" today, the current reader should be aware that one is dealing with anything but a unified school or a unified group of philosophers who have some sense of agreement amongst themselves as to what they stand for. On the other hand, their stronghold in the academic (not just philosophical) scene of their time was hard-earned and not accidental; thus, what the reader can expect is a plethora of extremely interesting, original, and thought-provoking material that has relevance for today as well. When people nowadays use the term "Neo-Kantians" and mean

Christine Korsgaard or Jürgen Habermas, they should be aware that this practice has a tradition reaching back some one hundred years, in that Husserl or Heidegger referred to their contemporaries in the same way. For the intellectual development of European thought in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, an understanding of the positions and figures of Neo-Kantianism is close to being indispensable for understanding the transition from German Idealism to nineteenth-century scientific positivism to phenomenology, existentialism, hermeneutics, logical positivism, and beyond. Having been almost completely neglected for some half century, the Neo-Kantians are the great missing link in this historical trajectory. Nobody who wants to claim acquaintance with the history of modern philosophy and Western intellectual history can dispense with at least a certain amount of knowledge of this period and its thinkers. This anthology should be able to supply an initial introduction to this body of knowledge.

In the following, I will trace, in briefest terms, the developmental stages of Neo-Kantianism to give the present reader a certain historical map to orient herself (cf. also the timeline see pages ix–xvii).

Early History (1845–1871)

The stages of Neo-Kantianism are certainly debated and that is a good thing, as different perspectives will order the stages differently. Given the text selections of this Reader, I have opted to call this period, ranging somewhere from 1845–1871, the “early history” of Neo-Kantianism. This early period is bookended on the one side by Helmholtz’s early texts and, on the other, by the publication of Cohen’s first edition of *Kants Theorie der Erfahrung* (1871), which ushers in the flowering of the two schools in Marburg and the Southwest.

Prior to, and concurrent with, this period fall the writings of late Idealists or early Neo-Kantians, depending on how one wants to label them (figures such as the younger Fichte, Fries, Herbart), though I have chosen to extend this period to include Helmholtz, Liebmann, Lange, and Lotze. Especially the inclusion of Lotze in this group of thinkers shows how debatable these decisions are. Lotze is certainly not philosophically close to Liebmann and Lange, though he clearly has had an enormous influence on the Southwest School’s theory of value. Liebmann and Lange certainly belong to the group of outspoken Neo-Kantians, with Liebmann’s battle cry of “back to Kant” resonating with many thinkers at the time, and with Lange serving as the first Neo-Kantian professor in philosophy at the University of Marburg and being responsible for the contentious hiring of Cohen, a Jew, as his successor.

Philosophically, this early period is marked by a specifically naturalistic or psychologicistic reading of Kant, especially in Helmholtz and the early Cohen, who published his first writings in the *Zeitschrift für Völkerpsychologie und Sprachwissenschaft* (*Journal for Folk Psychology and Linguistics*), a journal that offers (in the words of Edgar), “an anthropological investigation of the origins of cultural products such as art and literature”. A common interpretation of Kant involved the rejection of the synthetic a priori in favor of a naturalistic interpretation of anthropological commonalities, such that one can speak of this first period as a *physiological Kantianism*. This characterization of the period is supported by the fact that it is a common trait in the transition to the flowering of the Neo-Kantian movement that the vast majority of major Neo-Kantians (with the exception, perhaps, of Alois Riehl) went on to *reject* any physiological or naturalistic Kant interpretation as constituting a retreat into subjectivism or psychologism. Indeed, Cohen came into his own, one can say, through a radically anti-subjectivistic reading of Kant in his 1871 *Kants Theorie der Erfahrung*, a reading that will become only stronger in subsequent editions. Likewise, the texts selected from Lange, Liebmann, and Lotze are already a reaction to the physiological interpretation of Kant that they encountered in the writings of their contemporaries. Thus, one can speak of “Neo-

Kantianism" in a more substantial sense of the term as the rejection of a psychologistic Kant interpretation, which thinkers such as Helmholtz found attractive, and as the only way one could remain a "Kantian" in light of the current developments in the sciences.

Flowering (1871–1914). The Formation of the Two Schools in Marburg and the Southwest

The latter quarter of the nineteenth century is without doubt *the era of Neo-Kantianism*, in the sense that it had established a stronghold in professional and academic philosophy. This era lasted until the beginning of the Great War. The two emerging power centers were in Marburg and the Southwest. Let us begin with the Marburg School.

The Marburg School, as a school with a distinct philosophical orientation, began historically with Cohen's arrival in Marburg in 1873 and his assumption of the chair left vacant by Lange's death in 1876. As already suggested, arranging for the Jewish Cohen to assume this professorship was quite the "coup" at the time, in light of the more or less open anti-Semitism in German academia. He was joined by Natorp in 1881, who first worked in the university library, assuming a professorship in 1893 (dedicated to philosophy and also pedagogy). The two can be seen as the "twin stars" of the Marburg School, exerting a wide-ranging influence in Marburg and beyond. The term "Marburg School" became an established term in German-speaking academia around 1900, where the idea of a *school establishment* (*Schulbildung*) was very much part of the philosophical "profile." This meant that there was a clear distinction between Cohen, who was the undisputed (intellectual as well as emotional) leader of the school, and Natorp, as the undisputed "second in command,"⁸ surrounded by a group of young novices whose task was to "sign on" and carry further the banner of the school after their teachers' demise.⁹ Ernst Cassirer was never a novice in this sense and was more of a distant satellite, though philosophically he can be seen as part of the Marburg School. The school's bloom was between 1900 and 1910, with some crises between then and the beginning of the Great War. In 1918, Cohen left Marburg to live in Berlin, while Natorp was left to fend for himself. Once Heidegger came to Marburg in 1922, the fox was in the chicken coop, so to speak, though it speaks to Natorp's honesty that he was in favor of Heidegger's move to Marburg. Natorp died in 1924 and left no students behind; none at least who would have been able to carry on the school tradition. In 1929, after the famous Davos Dispute between Cassirer and Heidegger, it was the general impression that Neo-Kantianism in the form of the Marburg School had been "finished off." In 1933, Cassirer left Germany altogether and the last remnants of the Marburg School had been all but obliterated.

Philosophically, the school can be subsumed under two key notions: the "transcendental method" as the general method utilized by the school, and the overall project of a *philosophy of culture*. The transcendental method was the method of starting out from a *factum* to begin the work of transcendental philosophy (following the analytic method Kant had used in the *Prolegomena*), with the important addition that this *factum* had to be the *factum of science* (*das Faktum der Wissenschaft*). Thus was Cohen's reading of Kant's first Critique: the notion of experience Kant had in mind was the experience of modern scientists, who "experience" nature not as a brute fact, but as obeying and standing under mathematical-physical laws. Hence, the transcendental method had to inquire into the conditions of the possibility of this Newtonian physical science, not as a psychological or historical investigation, but as an inquiry into the conceptual work that is underway as science produces its results, which are laws and concepts. This was the main "work" on the part of the Marburg School and it had its greatest impact here. It is for this reason that the Marburg School had come to be identified with critical or transcendental philosophy of science.

The second hallmark of this school – namely, its project of developing a philosophy of culture – is extremely misleading in light of the Marburg School's self-interpretation, although the overall reception of this school as offering mainly a theory of natural science might, in the end, be justified. For the overall goal of the School was to apply the transcendental method to all spheres of culture, following Kant's canonical distinction between logic, ethics, and aesthetics. Accordingly, the transcendental method had to be applied to each respective *factum* of science of each cultural sphere, and so to morality (legality) and aesthetics, in addition to science and cognition.¹⁰ Thus, the ambition was to account philosophically for each part of reality that is created by the human being and according to the latter's creative capacities, in short, for culture writ large. It might seem obvious that a philosophy of culture that began with the different *facta* of the sciences – for example, in Cohen's system, with jurisprudence as the science of ethics, and with art history as the science of aesthetics – could be conceived as problematic by their contemporaries, and it was for this reason that the Marburg School's ambition beyond logic and theory of cognition was for the most part ignored. When Cassirer famously declares in Volume I of *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* that "the critique of reason turns into the critique of culture," he was echoing the basic stance of his teachers, yet his success as a philosopher of culture lay, arguably, in his making a decisive break with the transcendental method as it had been conceived and practiced by Cohen and Natorp.

Other areas of work in the Marburg School included Natorp's writings on psychology, whose main influence lay in paving the way for Husserl's later phenomenology in a transcendental register, and Natorp's works in social and pedagogical philosophy, which all stood under the banner of "idealism" (hence "Social-Idealism" and "Social Pedagogy").

The Southwest School derived its name from its locations in Freiburg and Heidelberg, in the southwest of Germany, a two-hour train ride apart. Because it was located in the State of Baden (which was combined with Württemberg after World War II, to form the State of Baden-Württemberg), it was also called the Baden School of Neo-Kantianism. Due to its philosophical orientation, it was called – to contrast with the "criticism" of the Marburgers – the "value-theoretical" (*werttheoretische*) school of Neo-Kantianism. Its first representative – not quite with the nimbus of Cohen – was Windelband, who taught first at Freiburg and later (with stops in between) in Heidelberg. His most famous pupil was Rickert, who succeeded Windelband both in Freiburg and later, after Windelband's death, in Heidelberg. Though arguably more original and profound than Windelband, Rickert attracted fewer students due to a psychological impairment (agoraphobia). The "poster child" of the Southwest School was the younger Lask, whose premature death in the trenches of the Great War certainly helped to enshrine him in the pantheon of geniuses who died young. Lask was by all accounts an original thinker who took his philosophy in a more radical direction than his teachers, though, not having attained a professorship at the time of his death, was seen as academically dependent on Rickert (as well as Max Weber) in Heidelberg.

The overall philosophical tendency of the Southwest School is rightfully indicated with the term "value theory." Its philosophical predecessor is clearly Lotze in his "transcendental" reading of the Platonic theory of the Forms, which are more aptly to be described in their ontological status as "validities." It is in this "third realm" that values are to be located. Once again rejecting a psychologistic interpretation of ideal entities, such a reading was to be utilized as a bulwark against the threatening moral relativism that had been diagnosed, famously, by Nietzsche in his trope of the death of God. Thus, as a universal value theory, the Southwest interpretation was, like the Marburg School though with some decisive differences, to culminate in a philosophy of culture. In addition to a theory of values, the Southwesterners contributed to the general discussion at the time (especially in critical discussion with Dilthey) surrounding the theory of (value-free) natural sciences and (value-laden) *Geisteswissenschaften*, i.e., the human or cultural sciences. This latter concern grew organically out of their concern

with values, since it is the human sciences that deal with cultural values. Critically rejecting Dilthey's distinction between natural sciences as explanatory and the human sciences as interpretive, Windelband famously called for a methodological distinction between two different ways of attending to the object of cognition, either by way of singling out its individualities or seeing the individual object as a representative of universal laws (idiographic versus nomothetic sciences). Rickert's theory concerning the *object of cognition* is a more ambitious theory based on Windelband's more innocuous distinction. Nevertheless, with the focus on a theory of values in conjunction with the methodological distinction between individualistic and general sciences, the Southwest School displays thereby a distinctive profile vis-à-vis the Marburg School and other competing attempts at grasping the distinct character of the non-natural sciences, and thereby defending the status of philosophy itself. Lask took the latter problem into a new dimension when he set out to write a logic of philosophy itself and its *sui generis* doctrine of categories.

Decline and Late Neo-Kantianism

The decline of the late Neo-Kantian movement can most appropriately be told from the perspective of those who constructed for themselves, as Crowell puts it (quoted in note 4), a "liberation narrative," which would consist in calling out the shortcomings and mistakes on the part of the Neo-Kantians. This story can be best left to the heirs of the initial liberators. But from the perspective of the Neo-Kantian establishment, it was obvious that there were hardly any successors left after the Great War and that the remaining Neo-Kantians had a rather pessimistic view of the future of their movement. For instance, Heidegger, who had been a promising student of Rickert's, soon came under the sway of the phenomenologist Husserl and abandoned the ship. In Marburg, there were no pupils left who had the power to gain larger-scale influence¹¹, and with the two power centers coming apart, the scattered Neo-Kantians left (in places such as Munich or Göttingen) were not able to sustain school unity or a unified movement. Too strong were the novel philosophical forces that began chipping away at the foundations of what was once a Continent-wide movement. The Great War, which did away not only with Germany's political hegemony in Europe but its values and morals as well, is not to be overlooked in doing its part in Neo-Kantianism's demise. Indeed, in hindsight, the new crop of students flocking to the universities and attempting to find grounding in philosophical thought, were utterly disappointed by the seemingly empty gestures of the remaining Neo-Kantians. That some of them had been enthusiastic supporters of the Great War, such as Natorp, certainly did not help the movement. Hence, the Neo-Kantians who remained to carry its banner forward were perceived as backward-looking and incapable of providing any remedy to the rampant "crisis" all around. Not only were they incapable of providing help; worse, they were perceived as part of the old system that was held accountable for the catastrophe of the Great War and its devastating aftermath.

Thus, the interwar period has little to offer to the philosophical historian of Neo-Kantianism (though it is a most fruitful period for the historian of phenomenology). It was populated by (mostly second-rate) pupils of the great names, who have more or less rightfully been forgotten. The history of this short period is beset by political infighting, as detailed, in the case of Marburg, by Sieg, where the themes discussed can only be understood in historical hindsight. For instance, the skirmishes fought vehemently between "Aryan" and Jewish representatives of Neo-Kantianism – ridiculous debates over whether Jews could adequately understand Kant and could consequently be counted as part of the German cultural heritage – are uncannily prescient looking back at this period knowing what happened in Germany as of 1933.

The great schism came in 1933, when many Jews left Germany, among them many philosophers who had some relation to the Neo-Kantians (such as Cassirer or Hönlingswald), and most philosophers remaining in Germany were either incapable of resisting the national-socialist "pull," or, in the case of Heidegger, actively furthered it. It is, in this context, not surprising that Neo-Kantianism came to be identified and vilified by many Nazi "philosophers" as a philosophy of the *Kaiserreich*, both degenerate and inherently "Jewish" in its substance. But apart from the unfair identification of "Neo-Kantian" and "Jewish," it would be indeed an unwritten chapter of the philosophy of the twentieth century, which, were one to speculate on how it might have been written, would have had to assess what would have happened to the Neo-Kantian movement had someone like Cassirer lived some more years in the US and established a following. It perhaps would have completely re-shaped the philosophy of the second half of the twentieth century, had some Neo-Kantians prevailed in the New World after being driven from the European continent. As it was, Neo-Kantianism was dead in Europe, never caught on in the New World, whereas others who fled, such as Strauss, Arendt, Carnap and others, went on to become extremely influential, and the only philosopher to speak of who remained standing in Germany was Heidegger.¹² Imagining what could have happened had history played itself out differently is speculation, of course, but such speculation may be permitted a century after Neo-Kantianism's peak.

Reception and Legacy

Especially after their demise, the reception of Neo-Kantianism was for the most part critical and even destructive. It became fashionable to pit one's own attempts against the backdrop of Neo-Kantianism. This is especially true for the budding Phenomenological Movement, whose defining characteristic – "to the things themselves!" (not "back to Kant") – is a battle cry directed, in critical rejection, at the Neo-Kantian obsession with "empty speculation" and "ego metaphysics." The emphasis on the role of the subject and the individual and her existence is a direct reaction to the "logician" position of the Marburg School and the Southwest theory of values, which seem to float in some heaven inaccessible to the individual. More recent research reveals that this "dialectical" image of the new emerging philosophies, as negating in different ways the position of the Neo-Kantians, is certainly exaggerated and can only be understood in hindsight, and much more work must be done to fully uncover the many filiations and overlaps between the Neo-Kantians and their contemporaries.¹³

As for the legacy of Neo-Kantianism, it would lead too far afield to spell this out here¹⁴, but it bears mentioning that Kant scholarship in the twentieth century, including in the Anglo-American world, would have been impossible without the prior work done by the classical Neo-Kantians. If one defining project, among others, of Neo-Kantianism was its project of a philosophy of *culture*, then one must emphasize that today's cultural studies, both empirical as well as philosophical, owe a great deal to the Neo-Kantians. Finally, today's philosophy of science has discovered the interesting approaches especially of the Marburg School. Contemporary history of science has also come to the realization that the Neo-Kantian era is a nearly untapped resource for its work. Moreover, the theory of philosophical historiography has, as of late, sparked newer reflections. Perhaps reflecting a weariness with the many forms and shapes of contemporary historiography (history of effects, history of reception, postmodern subversive historiography etc.), there is a growing interest today in the time-honored history-of-problems approach (*Problemgeschichte*) that was developed, practiced, and executed with high historical fidelity and sensitivity by most Neo-Kantians. Finally, an important debate at the time, in which the Neo-Kantians were involved, was over the status and methodology of the cultural or human sciences vis-à-vis the natural sciences, predating the famous debate regarding

the "two cultures." In light of current debates over the humanities, the dialogue between the "two cultures" defining academia, and the overall project of naturalizing everything "spiritual" or "mental," the Neo-Kantians developed a whole arsenal of arguments and views on these issues, which will be interesting for the philosophical historian as well as theorists of science and the philosopher of mind.

One further issue deserves mentioning, especially in today's climate: namely, the absence of women in Neo-Kantianism. *There are no women represented in this entire movement.* Indeed, one feature that made newer philosophical movements attractive, especially phenomenology, was that they actively welcomed women into their circles. Indeed, women abounded in phenomenological circles, even to the extent that it irritated the traditional founding father, Edmund Husserl.¹⁵

Organization of this Volume

There are several ways in which one can present historical material of this sort, which are most likely equally justifiable. To list a few (non-exhaustive) options:

- One could make a selection *topically*, that is, based on certain philosophical canonical topics, such as epistemology, moral philosophy, social and political philosophy, aesthetics. Although many Neo-Kantians thought along these canonical divisions, the reason I have refrained from this organization is that selecting texts in this manner would have obscured the manner in which these thinkers themselves wished to present their work. Many of the conceptual and systematic distinctions they employ make it clear that these canonical divisions do not work for their system, or that they want to overcome, modify or subvert them.
- Another would be an organization according to problems and discussions *at the time when the Neo-Kantians lived*. Thus, following Beiser's latest presentation of "philosophy after Hegel," one could present the main discussions at the time, such as the materialism controversy and the *ignorabimus* debate, and select texts in which the Neo-Kantians contributed and reacted to them. The drawback here is that it would obscure the "positive" and original work, the systematic intentions, on the part of the Neo-Kantians and would present them simply as making contributions, among other intellectuals from other schools or outside of academia altogether, to these ongoing debates. They would be perceived as simply a voice within a larger choir. That historically this might have been the way the Neo-Kantians were heard is uncontested. The reason I have not opted for this principle of organization is due mainly to the fact that it would not have allowed the Neo-Kantians' positive contributions to come fully to the fore.
- The principle here was to select texts *in temporal succession* and according to *Schools*. Accordingly, the two main sections, II and III, feature a selection of the main members of the two schools in Marburg and Southwest Germany, respectively. The advantage was that in this way the two "blocks" could be most clearly discerned in their styles and intentions. Cohen and Natorp in Marburg, and Windelband and Rickert in Southwest Germany, not only collaborated especially closely, their philosophical contributions are not understandable without their partners. Moreover, the schools also saw themselves in competition, such that a great portion of their work is tacitly or overtly directed at their opponents in the other "camp." This way of presentation may certainly be contested in light of the two other options listed above, but so be it. Ideally, of course, the texts presented here will be read with a deep appreciation of the philosophical canon, especially since its reconception in Kant, and with a sensitivity to historical context.

Philological Note to the Present Selection

In taking on this project, I thought it would be a fairly easy job. After all, all(!) one had to do is select the relevant texts, scan them, write little introductions, *et voilà*. The reality of the project has proven to be much different and indeed more difficult than I anticipated, and completing this Reader has been, *mehercle*, a daunting job that has taken far too long. Indeed, over the years, I have received many queries as to when the book would finally be on the market, and all I could say was that the project was delayed for many reasons, some out of my control, some within my control, but impossible to get around. Thus, in finally presenting the public with this textbook, I apologize to all for its delay. I hope that the old German saying *Was lange währt, wird endlich gut* [Long in coming, but worth the wait] may be true of this project as well.

Not to list further excuses, but to give scholars willing to enter this area a sense of what they are in for and what future work awaits them, a few words of explanation are in order regarding the situation in which I found myself in undertaking this anthology. There is no doubt that the whole area called "Neo-Kantianism" is, for various reasons, one big "mess." Let us begin with the situation in German scholarship. First, as explained above, it is not clear what exactly Neo-Kantianism is and which philosophers or scientists fall under it. In many cases, the "-ism" suffix is intended to denigrate or critique an author. This is no different with respect to the label "Neo-Kantianism." Hence, identifying who exactly counts as a Neo-Kantian requires historical and philosophical judgment that may or may not be entirely fair with respect to a certain author. Hence, certain decisions had to be made, some of which were purely pragmatic and which may meet with approval or not, but so be it. When it comes to this area of philosophy, it is impossible to satisfy everyone.

Philologically, the situation is made worse by the sheer output on the part of the Neo-Kantians. Not only did they write entire books at the pace by which normal scholars today produce articles; also, it was common at the time to re-edit one's own previous books, but in re-editing them also partially to re-write them, noting more recent scholarship and commenting on the latter while revising one's own text, all the while revising one's very own position (cf., for instance, Natorp's "Metacritique" of his book on Plato, which nearly reverses his earlier position). Hence, to get a clear line on any philosopher's trajectory is nearly impossible to achieve, given the additional fact that of the, say, five editions a book has received, not all are available any longer in libraries. Thus, part of the reconstruction of this historical situation is guesswork at best or would require extensive research in university archives.

The situation becomes even worse when one looks at the situation on the side of the English language. Translations of Neo-Kantians are scarce and their quality very uneven. Some Neo-Kantians have been translated well – not always those one would recognize as standing out today, but important and popular at the time, such as Vaihinger. Of others, nothing or nearly nothing has been translated, or else only tangential pieces, as in the case of Cohen and Lask. Of the existing translations, figuring out exactly which edition of the German was translated has been an additional challenge. And of these existing translations, the quality of them varies greatly, including the manner in which they dealt with the scholarship cited by the original (again, some translated, some not). I tried to render the texts in as unified a way as possible, since the dates of translation (and accordingly standards of philological rigor) lay wide apart. I have also added some (hopefully helpful) footnotes, which, however, I attempted to keep to a minimum, sticking to the maxim that what I was producing was a *Reader*, not a critical edition (as much as the latter may be necessary). Although it might have been desirable, it was impossible to redo the older translations without further delaying publication. Most of them are good, even excellent, esp. in capturing the tone of voice of the philosophers of the Wilhelmian era; some, however, leave much to be desired. But in the hopes of giving a fair

presentation of the individual philosophers, I have had to "bite the bullet" when it came to using existing though perhaps questionable translations, rather than omitting important texts.

However, I did not content myself with just reprinting older and existing translations, since this would have rendered this Reader a collection that completely misrepresents the philological as well as philosophical situation. Instead, I had to commission new translations to deliver a more well-rounded image of the Neo-Kantian movement. Though the translators have done admirable work, I did have to go through each new translation several times and consult with the respective translators to ensure consistency.

It is my hope that the result will prove satisfactory; yet, the texts produced here will not and cannot replace a study of the original German; nor is this collection in any way a complete rendering of the Neo-Kantian movement. Indeed, what I was able to select from existing translations and in addition managed to get translated represents, of course, only a snippet of the works of these philosophers. In the case where little or nothing was translated so far, I tried to make an even-handed selection (e.g., Cohen, with the help of Hyder and Patton¹⁶). In the case where a good amount of works has been translated, e.g., Cassirer (though the existing older translations leave much to be desired as well), I tried to pick texts that move off the beaten path.¹⁷

The resulting bottom line is that, after many years of research in this area, this Reader can only be a start for further work that will have to be carried out by others. Far from an *Editio Critica*, I would like to refer to it as an *Editio Minima*, with the intention of pointing the reader to where more can be found. It is my hope that this Reader will not only be received with charity, as merely a first stab at this nearly untapped area of European philosophical history, but that a novel wave of interest in the Neo-Kantians will ensue within English-speaking scholarship, which will finally give the Neo-Kantian movement – a movement more vilified and slandered than perhaps any other in the history of modern philosophy – its full due. To the perceptive eye, this is a philosophical movement rich in innovative and original thought, profound in its scholarship, and vast in its scope.

A note of thanks goes to the following people:

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seminar "nineteenth Century German Philosophy" in the Fall of 2014 at Marquette University, who were the first brave readers of the texts of this volume. It is, in closing, my hope that the way courses such as this one will be taught will be changed through the availability of English translations of philosophers who were the dominant voices in philosophy in the nineteenth century.

Milwaukee, Fall of 2014
Sebastian Luft

Notes

- 1 A previous plan was to include a selection of French Neo-Kantians, but this would have exploded the confines of the present selection, both thematically as well as in length. A selection of French Neo-Kantian texts can be found in *The Philosophical Forum* of 2006 (37[1]).
- 2 "*Weltanschauung*" is the term for a worldview, oftentimes ideologically charged.
- 3 There are different timelines and different narratives by which one can define classical Neo-Kantianism. Cf. especially the work by Beiser on this movement, but cf. also Crowell 1998 and Friedmann 2000. The narrative given here is meant to be as open and inclusive as possible. The purpose of this collection and its introduction is not to steer interpretations in any particular direction, but rather to make this material available to the English-speaking reader.
- 4 As Crowell aptly puts it, regarding this interwar period, the treatment of Neo-Kantianism becomes part of "liberation narratives" (Crowell 1998, p. 185); "here, Neo-Kantianism is the *terminus ad quem* of a 'liberation from the unbreakable circle of reflection' toward recovery of the 'evocative power of conceptual thinking and philosophical language'. It thus enters the lore of Continental philosophy as the father who had to be slain in order that philosophy might live" (ibid.; the quotations stem from Gadamer in his recollections in *Philosophical Apprenticeships*).
- 5 That is, with the exception of the Jewish representatives of Neo-Kantianism, such as Cohen or Cassirer, who suffered from anti-Semitic attacks throughout their careers.
- 6 Many a philosophy professor to this day is a caricature of this ideal, or self-consciously emulates it, though it has certainly also become the prime target of the revolutionary students of the 1960s, when they declared that "*Unter den Talaren, Muff von tausend Jahren*" (under the robes [there is] a thousand-year-old fustiness).
- 7 Edgar 2012.
- 8 Cohen also referred to himself as "minister of the exterior" (since he liked to travel and escape the small university town of Marburg) and Natorp as the "minister of the interior."
- 9 Holzhey details this school formation and its activities in Holzhey 1986/I & II.
- 10 Religion is conspicuously absent from Cohen's *System of Philosophy*, although the philosophy of religion, especially the philosophical assessment of Judaism, became a dominant part of his later work.
- 11 Cassirer, who was recruited to the University of Hamburg in 1919, was seen as a representative of Neo-Kantianism, and arguably the most important one, as becomes clear in the Davos Debate in 1929, but he himself distanced himself somewhat from his Marburg teachers philosophically.
- 12 This qualification pertains to the philosophers of that generation. Certainly, a new crop of original thinkers emerged, although they did not become famous until much later. I am thinking of names such as Hans-Georg Gadamer, Dieter Henrich and Jürgen Habermas.
- 13 Cf. Makkreel, Rudolf and Sebastian Luft, *Neo-Kantianism in Contemporary Philosophy*. Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2010.
- 14 Cf., however, the 2010 essay collection edited by Makkreel and Luft, and the new essay collection, dealing directly with this legacy, edited by Staiti and De Warren (forthcoming).

- 15 Husserl had Edith Stein as his assistant for some time and also other female students who wrote their dissertations under him. He discouraged them, however, from pursuing a university career. In the case of Stein, he blocked her *habilitation*, the traditional entry gate to an academic career, in Göttingen, and wrote a negative letter when she applied elsewhere. For a list of female phenomenologists, cf. the page of the *North American Society for Early Phenomenology*, <http://nasepblog.wordpress.com/2014/03/08/the-women-early-phenomenology/>.
- 16 The help I received from other scholars is credited visibly at the outset of each reading.
- 17 A new translation of Cassirer's *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* (all three volumes) is in the works, to be published by Routledge (translated by Stephen Lofts).