

LOOKING FOR A GREAT SYNTHESIS PHILOSOPHY AROUND 1900

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The world as it was around 1900 has become alien to us. Fifty years ago the American historian Barbara Tuchmann observed that the First World War "lies like a band of scorched earth dividing that time from ours."¹ Not much has changed since then. It is still difficult to study this time and do justice to all the various problems and hopes they had at the outset of the 20th century. While it is certainly true that historians should not construct their narratives with a single aim in mind, it is equally unhelpful to ignore what we already know about how history has played out. It is this very

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- ¹ Barbara TUCHMANN. *The Proud Tower: A Portrait of the World before the War, 1890–1914* (New York, 1966), xiii.

knowledge that enables us as historians to interpret and to assess in a way that contemporaries could not.

The cultural climate around 1900 was rather unclear. Many of the contemporaries were full of praise for the rapid technological progress that had brought people closer together, added to their wealth, and increased their life-expectancy. Accordingly, you could find many a self-confident advocate of various scientific or political 'Weltanschauungen' that shared a certain utopian quality. On the other hand there was no denying the underbelly of globalization. The middle-classes were wondering how much longer Europe could prevail over the world, or which upheavals would be caused by the social problems experienced by the great industrial nations.² And the desire for clear-cut and meaningful world views grew everywhere.

Today's historians should aim for a balanced judgment, which is not an easy task when looking at an era oscillating wildly between vibrant *joie de vivre* and oppressive angst.³ Fascinating ideas and utopian designs originated early in the 20th century and still give us a lot to think about today. Even the political world order of the time that seemed so obsolete during the years of the Cold War regained much of its relevance. Furthermore there are complicated hermeneutic tasks. For instance, around 1900 palpable conflicts of interests tended to be formulated in a highly stylized language. Due to this, it is far from easy to identify the historically crucial forces.

Much the same is true for the great philosophers of the turn of the century, who, for the most part, preferred a language rich with metaphors and broad generalizations. They were all competing in an ever overheating market of 'Weltanschauungen,' linking their analysis of current trends with far-reaching predictions. Accordingly, they presented ideas more bold than verifiable, seeking wide-spread approval rather than ensuring precise reasoning. As important as it may be to assess the limited rationality of their designs—it is equally important to trace the reasons for their erstwhile success.⁴

I will approach this vast topic in four steps. Firstly I shall look at Herbert Spencer and his concept of evolution, which in the 1860s was considered to be a successful combination of idealism in the spirit of Hegel and modern natural sciences (I). The opposing point of view was taken up by German epistemologists and I will introduce

² For the rapid changes on the eve of World War One cf. Eric HOBBSBAMM. *Das imperiale Zeitalter, 1875–1914* (Frankfurt, 2004); for a global perspective cf. Jürgen OSTERHAMMEL. *Die Verwandlung der Welt: Eine Geschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Munich, 2009).

³ Cf. Philipp BLOM. *Der taumelnde Kontinent: Europa 1900–1914* (Munich, 2008).

⁴ Cf. the extensive analysis by J[ohn] W. BURROW. *The Crisis of Reason: European Thought, 1848–1894* (New Haven / London, 2000). As a case study cf. chap. 4 of Ulrich SIEG. *Geist und Gewalt: Deutsche Philosophen zwischen Kaiserreich und Nationalsozialismus* (Munich, 2013).

their ideas using the Neo-Kantian philosopher Paul Natorp by way of example (II). Thirdly I will deal with Rudolf Eucken who thought of himself as being a modern synthesis of Hegel and Kant and who enjoyed international renown after being awarded the Nobel-prize for literature in 1908 (III). Using this as a backdrop I will describe and analyze why Inoue Enryō campaigned so emphatically for the reception of western philosophy in Japan (IV). Finally I shall attempt to characterize the philosophical concepts that were predominant around 1900 and to explore the reasons for their swift disappearance after the First World War.

I.

The British philosopher and sociologist Herbert Spencer ranked among the most influential thinkers of the second half of the 19th century. He was an ardent follower of Darwin and conveyed to his readers the credo that the success of the natural sciences had but a single root. He promised to unify human knowledge. His universal "principle of evolution" was supposed to not only explain the world's natural history but also to put in order the insights produced by modern science.⁵ Accordingly, "diffuse" and "overreaching" are two terms which come to mind when looking at his definition of evolution "to which he gave the highest general sense possible, incorporating not only organisms but the inorganic and the social."⁶

Spencer expounded his ideas in his monumental *System of Synthetic Philosophy*. Between 1860 and 1896, for no less than thirty-six years, he incessantly labored to finish his opus magnum. It consists of fifteen volumes and emphasizes evolution's importance not only for the natural world but also for the development of human society. Spencer agreed with Lamarck's opinion that evolution is influenced by the environment and he highlighted the value of social statistics for explaining human behavior. A great sense of optimism permeates his work that relied equally on strict reasoning as well as on empirical evidence. For instance, Spencer, a staunch liberal, was convinced that in the long run the state would lose almost all influence. He argued that every day people would get better at using their freedom sensibly so that regulations could be dispensed with more and more.⁷

⁵ Ferdinand FELLMANN, ed. "Positivismus," in *Geschichte der Philosophie im 19. Jahrhundert: Positivismus, Linkshegelianismus, Existenzphilosophie, Neukantianismus, Lebensphilosophie* (Hamburg 1996): 15–98, see 68 et seq.

⁶ BURROW. *Crisis of Reason* (see note 4), 45.

⁷ Cf. Herbert SPENCER. *System der synthetischen Philosophie*, trans. B. VETTER (Stuttgart, 1875), vol. 11, ch. 29. For Spencer's decades-long work on his philosophical system cf. David WHILTSHIRE. *The*

Despite its cumbersome style, Spencer's contemporaries, having experienced the progress of human knowledge and the many blessings of technology, embraced his work. By the end of the century, however, an increasing number of critical voices could be heard asking whether it really was possible to encompass the whole of humanity's knowledge in only one philosophical system. Bernhard Lewes, a friend of Spencer's, ironically observed, "With Spencer, everything is continually evolving except his own theories."⁸ Lewes believed it to be unfeasible to fit all of the scientific disciplines, ever transforming and diversifying, into a categorical framework that dated back to the middle of the 19th century.

Even Spencer himself began to doubt his own optimistic outlook. He was alarmed by the idea of the "heat death of the universe" that stemmed from the second law of thermodynamics and he wondered whether the historical process really would conclude sensibly.⁹ He was, however, unfaltering in his utilitarian belief that "the greatest happiness of the greatest number" was a worthwhile objective. And he was certain that the state would soon wither away, since only the rationale of the market could sustain progress and ensure individual freedom. At the height of imperialism, when the world was getting ever smaller and conflicting interests between different states became apparent everywhere, this appears to be a view strangely removed from reality. It did not even begin to allow for the tremendous power nationalism was exerting over people's hearts and minds. By 1900 all had become quiet around Spencer. Apparently, his belief in progress, inspired by Hegel and counting on Darwin's theory of evolution without foregoing the importance of individual freedom, had finally outlived itself.

II.

At the turn of the century central European philosophy was dominated by epistemological concepts. To name but one example, August Stadler, teaching in Zurich, measured Spencer's philosophy against Kant's thinking. He criticized Spencer's insufficient knowledge of the *Critique of Pure Reason* and his lack of interest in metaphysics. Furthermore, he considered his eudaemonistic ethics to be deficient since even "the most refined happiness would not fully comprise the purpose of man" nor would it substantiate the concept of duty.¹⁰ In the 1870s Stadler had studied in Marburg under Hermann

Social and Political Thought of Herbert Spencer (Oxford, 1978), 73–99.

⁸ WILTSHIRE. *Social and Political Thought of Herbert Spencer* (see note 7), 94.

⁹ Cf. FELLMANN. *Positivismus* (see note 5), 70.

¹⁰ August STADLER. "Spencers Ethik," in *Herbert Spencer: Spencers Ethik: Schopenhauer*, ed. J. PLATTER (Leipzig / Zürich, 1913), 99–157, quoted 156.

Cohen, who was of very high renown at the turn of the century. He was considered an original genius in philosophy and attracted young and gifted people like the Russian Boris Pasternak or the Spaniard José Ortega y Gasset to the town of Marburg that was widely regarded as the "Mecca of continental philosophy."¹¹

Cohen had developed his *System der Philosophie* using Kant's Critiques as a template, while at the same time devising it as an open set of categories allowing for the dynamics of scientific diversification.¹² It was an unusually complex philosophical program that was difficult to translate into distinct tasks. As regards content, Cohen's writings were considered exceptionally intricate, even dark. His friend and colleague Paul Natorp had many more readers, despite his thinking being equally profound he made a conscious effort to write in an accessible and comprehensible manner. Because he was loyal to Cohen without fail, it was Natorp who ensured the inner cohesion of the "Marburg school." He was also responsible for much of the school's impact beyond Marburg.¹³

Natorp favored a rather normative approach to the history of ideas. While he emphasized the need for philological accuracy when interpreting philosophical texts, he was, first and foremost, concerned with proving the concepts of the Marburg Neo-Kantianism to be correct. He presented interpretations of Galilei, Descartes, and Leibniz in which he accentuated only those of their considerations and ideas that would justify turning them into precursors of Kant's criticism, he thus forced them to fit into a teleological concept of history. In his opinion, calculus, which had revolutionized physics since the days of Newton, was at the very heart of the development of modern, math-based natural sciences.¹⁴ Just how far Natorp pushed his normative and teleological

¹¹ Thomas NIPPERDEY. *Deutsche Geschichte 1866–1918*, vol. 1: *Arbeitswelt und Bürgergeist* (Munich 1990), 190. Essential for studying Marburg's Neo-Kantianism is Helmut HOLZHEY. *Cohen und Natorp*, 2 vols., vol. 1: *Ursprung und Einheit: Die Geschichte der 'Marburger Schule' als Auseinandersetzung um die Logik des Denkens*, vol. 2: *Der Marburger Neukantianismus in Quellen: Zeugnisse kritischer Lektüre; Briefe der Marburger; Dokumente zur Philosophiepolitik der Schule* (Basel / Stuttgart, 1986); for a perspective embedded in the history of science and universities cf. Ulrich SIEG. *Aufstieg und Niedergang des Marburger Neukantianismus: Die Geschichte einer philosophischen Schulgemeinschaft* (Würzburg, 1994).

¹² The key position of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, whose table of judgement ("Urteilstafel") has always been imperative for Cohen, is made clear in Hermann COHEN. *System der Philosophie: Erster Teil: Logik der reinen Erkenntnis*, new ed. with an introduction by Helmut HOLZHEY (Hildesheim / New York, 1977).

¹³ He would be worthy of an extensive biography for which his papers in the archive of Marburg University could supply ample material. For a more or less hagiographic account, see Norbert JEGELKA and Paul NATORP. *Philosophie, Pädagogik, Politik* (Würzburg, 1992).

¹⁴ He takes the lead in this from Hermann COHEN. *Das Prinzip der Infinitesimal-Methode und seine Geschichte: Ein Kapitel zur Grundlegung der Erkenntniskritik* (Berlin, 1883), which is easily accessible in a new edition with an introduction by Peter SCHULTHESS (Hildesheim / Zurich / New York, 1984).

concept of history is apparent in his book, *Plato's Theory of Ideas: An Introduction to Idealism*, published in 1903.

Natorp was not interested in the statistical linguistics that was fashionable at the time. When he wanted to assign a Platonic dialogue a certain place within the complete body of work, he boldly based this placement on considerations of philosophical content and disregarded philological details. At the height of historicism, Natorp was looking for systematic rigor when interpreting philosophical texts. He perceived the Platonic idea as being an equivalent to the natural law and assigned to it the characteristics of the modern notion of function. At the same time he regarded the idea as being an hypothesis and thus transformed Plato into the crucial harbinger of modern science.¹⁵ The classicists did not really know how to deal with Natorp's updating of Plato and accordingly the reviews were rather skeptical. Natorp was criticized for his anachronistic terminology and his interpretation of Plato was considered somewhat brutal. In time, however, it turned out to be Natorp's unconcealed Neo-Kantian ideas that led to his monograph becoming a classic of systematic Plato-exegesis.¹⁶

Natorp's educational thinking had a certain impact, too. As he was experiencing the rapid changes of Wilhelmine society, he was also interested in sustaining its inner unity, which was an issue much discussed at the time. Natorp trusted in teaching classic civic virtues at school and in the unifying potential of human community. In 1899 he published his book *Sozialpädagogik*, an ambitious attempt to prove the conceptual relevance of the idea of equality for an educational system. Even though Natorp approved of Germany's tripartite system of education and was in favor of selecting the gifted and talented, he warned of an uncontrolled increase in social differentiation. Improving primary schools, the Volksschulen, was, in his opinion, of eminent importance, so that all social classes would have access to education and thus had a chance to participate in society.¹⁷

Natorp's philosophy promised a synthesis of individual freedom and sound human community. This played to the needs of the time. It is therefore no coincidence that Natorp's *Sozialpädagogik* became the most successful among all the programmatic writings of Marburg's Neo-Kantians. It was translated into several European languages and

¹⁵ Cf. Karl-Heinz LEMBECK. *Platon in Marburg: Platonrezeption und Philosophiegeschichtsphilosophie bei Cohen und Natorp* (Würzburg, 1994), see especially 89–100.

¹⁶ For the reception of Natorp's book cf. SIEG. *Marburger Neukantianismus* (see note 11), 267–269.

¹⁷ Paul NATORP. *Sozialpädagogik: Theorie der Willensbildung auf der Grundlage der Gemeinschaft*, 7th ed. curated by Richard PIPPERT (Paderborn, [1899] 1974); for an interpretation cf. Christian NIEMEYER. "Zur Systematik und Aktualität der Sozialpädagogik Natorps vor dem Hintergrund ihrer ideengeschichtlichen Einlagerung," in *Neukantianismus: Kulturtheorie, Pädagogik und Philosophie*, ed. by Jürgen OELKERS, Wolfgang K. SCHULZ, Heinz-Elmar TENORTH (Weinheim, 1989), 241–260.

received many editions.¹⁸ Nevertheless, Natorp's harmonious conjunction of collective and individual aspects bore utopian features and left little room for an informed description of social realities. Just how very much in demand broad syntheses were early on in the 20th century can be shown by looking at the success of Rudolf Eucken.

III.

Generally, a history of philosophy in the Long 19th Century follows a simple pattern. The "collapse of the Hegelian system" brought to a close the gilded age of German idealism and initiated a long interlude of philosophical decline. This period was ended by Neo-Kantianism that prevailed until the Great War. Its emergence in the 1870s was, in actual fact, a rather complex matter and fairly different contributory factors can be discerned. The Prussian Ministry of education, in the hands of the liberal left, and its strategic appointment of professors was perhaps the most important one. While Neo-Kantianism remained influential in academia, many thinkers of the Fin de Siècle strove towards an all-embracing "Weltanschauung" that would overcome the contradictions of the time and serve the needs of a broader audience.¹⁹ Many of these saw themselves as "Neoidealists" because they considered materialism to be the root of all evil and intended to tie in with the legacy of Goethe's Weimar. The most important exponent of this school of thought—almost forgotten today—was Rudolf Eucken, who held Fichte's chair in Jena.

Since the 1890s Eucken was making use of the new means for publishing and wrote unremittingly for the feuilletons of the major newspapers. We still do not know exactly how many articles he penned, however, the best expert believes them to number about 2,000.²⁰ Looking at Eucken's career, one could hardly have guessed this development, because the Jena professor was a solid and respectable scholar who earned his academic merits early with studies on Aristotle. But the modern newspapers promised prestige and large earnings, and only few could resist these temptations. Fur-

¹⁸ SIEG. *Marburger Neukantianismus* (see note 11), 284.

¹⁹ For the success of "Weltanschauungen" around 1900 cf. H[orst] THOMÉ. "Der Blick auf das Ganze: Zum Ursprung des Konzepts 'Weltanschauung' und der Weltanschauungsliteratur," in *Aufklärungen: Zur Literaturgeschichte der Moderne: Festschrift für Klaus-Detlev Müller zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. by Werner FRICK et al. (Tübingen, 2003), 387–401. For the emergence of Neo-Kantianism see Klaus C. KÖHNKE. *Entstehung und Aufstieg des Neukantianismus: Die deutsche Universitätsphilosophie zwischen Idealismus und Positivismus* (Frankfurt am Main, 1986).

²⁰ Uwe DATHE. "Rudolf Eucken: Philosophie als strenge Wissenschaft und weltanschauliche Erbauungsliteratur," in *Die höchste Ehrung die einem Schriftsteller zuteil werden kann: Deutschsprachige Nobelpreisträger für Literatur*, ed. by Krzysztof RUCHNIEWICZ and Marek ZYBURA (Dresden, 2007), 37–60, see 51.

thermore, it should not be overlooked that Eucken discussed and pushed forward serious issues in his articles. Admittedly, the philosophical "universal synthesis" that he called for remained rather nebulous. Eucken even failed to suggest a method suitable for achieving his aim of integrating existing knowledge. But his criticism of the hounded nature of the existing cultural life or of the estranged lives that many people had to live in an industrial society was not made up out of thin air. It should also be taken into account that he particularly denounced those phenomena of the modern media business that had been responsible for his own swift rise to fame.²¹

Eucken's reputation became apparent at the awarding of the Nobel-prize for literature in 1908. Since the members of the Swedish Academy failed to agree on an author, the philosopher was suggested as a sort of compromise. Eucken was valued for his criticism of the shallowness of present day culture, for his belief in the virtues of education, and for being a devout Lutheran. On 10th December 1908 he received the Nobel-prize for literature in Stockholm "in recognition of his earnest search for truth, his penetrating power of thought, his wide range of vision, and the warmth and strength in presentation with which in his numerous works he has vindicated and developed an idealistic philosophy of life."²² Over the following years Eucken's activities encompassed nearly the whole globe; seven American universities awarded him honorary degrees and there was no end to the translations of his works.

In Japan especially, Eucken enjoyed high renown. Even long before receiving the Nobel-prize for literature Japanese students traveled to Jena to listen to his lectures on European philosophy.²³ Eucken's idealistic approach to the fundamental questions of his time met with widespread approval in Japan and his advocacy for international understanding was considered exemplary. In 1909 the Japanese association "Concordia" contacted the scholar and asked him to support their peaceful cause. Eucken promptly agreed and in his reply he emphasized that it was imperative for the great nations to

²¹ Cf. Ulrich SIEG. "Kulturkritik als Zeitgeistverstärkung: Der Jenaer Neoidealist Rudolf Eucken," in *Romantik und Freiheit: Wechselspiele zwischen Ästhetik und Politik*, ed. by Michael DREYER and Klaus RIES (Heidelberg, 2014), 241–259; for Eucken's harmonising ideas of reconciling differences cf. Friedrich W. GRAF. "Die Positivität des Geistigen: Rudolf Euckens Programm neoidealistischer Universalintegration," in *Kultur und Kulturwissenschaften um 1900*, vol. II: *Idealismus und Positivismus*, ed. by Gangolf HÜBINGER and Rüdiger vom BRUCH (Stuttgart, 1997), 53–85.

²² Ulrich SIEG. *Geist und Gewalt: Deutsche Philosophen zwischen Kaiserreich und Nationalsozialismus* (Munich, 2013), 90. For a careful study of the circumstances of Eucken receiving the Nobel-prize cf. Uwe DATHE. "'Philosophen können den Statuten zufolge mit in Betracht kommen': Neue Dokumente zur Verleihung des Literaturnobelpreises 1908 an Rudolf Eucken," in *Das kulturhistorische Archiv von Weimar-Jena* 2/4 (2009), 269–283.

²³ This can be gleaned from the account book of the academic bursary in Jena's university archive: In the summer of 1890 Tsiosiro Kusaka attended Eucken's lecture "Introduction to philosophy" (Universitätsarchiv Jena, G Abt. I, Nr. 326).

overcome their prejudices in order to achieve "a mutual understanding [...] between the peoples of the East and of the West."²⁴ In general, the interest in Western education and philosophy was on the rise in Japan. One public figure in particular had been responsible for this—Inoue Enryō.

IV.

Since 1868, all through the Meiji era, Japan had been experiencing dizzying transformations. In only a few decades the country was turned into a modern industrial nation that also claimed military success. This was only possible because by and large the Japanese society supported changes in the educational system. But there was a great uncertainty regarding in which direction "education"—or "Bildung" to use the more encompassing German term—should be developed. This becomes strikingly obvious looking at the Tokyo University: from 1855 until its eventual foundation in 1877, its precursor institution received no less than ten different names.²⁵ Beyond dispute, however, was the importance of the natural sciences, that replaced the interest in Christianity, and the high regard for Western philosophy.

In 1881 Inoue Enryō left the university as the first graduated philosopher in Japan. He came from a Buddhist family and had originally been destined for priesthood. At Tokyo University, however, Enryō engrossed himself in the study of Western philosophy. Inspired by Ernest Fenollosa he absorbed the idea of progress, studied Kant and Hegel and even more diligently the figureheads of modern positivism: Comte, Mill, and Spencer.²⁶ At first glance these interests may appear surprising, considering Enryō's Buddhist background. But the principle of Mahayana Buddhism "to be useful to one-self and to others" may have been the bridge to the utilitarian idea of "the greatest happiness of the greatest number."²⁷ Furthermore it should not be overlooked that Enryō favored pragmatic considerations and preferred practical application of philosophical concepts over abstract speculation.

Enryō was deeply convinced of his subject's relevance for modernizing Japan and accordingly he founded his own private university centered on philosophy. In order to

²⁴ Uwe DATHE. "Rudolf Eucken: Ein Gegner des Monismus und Freund der Monisten," in *Monismus um 1900: Wissenschaftskultur und Weltanschauung*, ed. by Paul ZICHE (Berlin, 2000), 41–59, quoted 57.

²⁵ Cf. Rainer SCHULZER. *Inoue Enryō: A Philosophical Portrait*, phil. Diss. (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, 2012), 40. The following paragraphs owe a lot to Schulzer's study.

²⁶ Toyo University, pub. *The Educational Principles of Enryo Inoue* (Tokyo, 2012), 24.

²⁷ SCHULZER. *Inoue Enryō* (see note 25), 175.

spread philosophical ideas, he set up a publishing house and traveled the country giving lectures. Between 1890 and 1893 alone he gave 816 talks in 220 different places. Looking at the years 1906 to 1918, his audience per lecture apparently numbered on average about 250.²⁸ His publishing activities were on a similar scale and are reminiscent of Eucken both in scope and in style. Enryō's oeuvre consists of more than 800 newspaper articles and 182 monographs.²⁹ Enryō was guided by his enlightened beliefs. Vanquishing superstition—very common in his day in Japan—was particularly high on his agenda since he considered it to be incompatible with modern times.

Politically Enryō hoped for a harmonious conjunction of national and universal values. Ceaselessly he emphasized that a mere imitation of the West was insufficient for maintaining independence. Rather, Japan had to uphold its culture and its traditions and make its own way into the present. Just as Eucken did, Enryō complained that people lacked idealism and he attacked the prevailing materialism. On 8th December 1888, an article in *Japan Weekly Mail* referred to Enryō's (an others') views when observing, "It is maintained by some, and we think justly, that the lack of idealism in the Japanese mind renders the life of even the most cultivated a mechanical, humdrum affair when compared with that of Westerns."³⁰ Obviously, Enryō was not content with holding a mirror up to the faces of his fellow men but also strove to encourage them to actively remodel their lives.

Again like Eucken, Enryō put his trust in all-embracing syntheses to overcome the contradictions and centrifugal tendencies of his time. He hoped, for instance, that a harmonious conjunction of Japanese and universal values could be realized in the educational system. He, just like so many other professors, was looking for a sort of middle ground: "Japanism and Universalism were not separate entities. When intertwined as one thread, they became flawlessly complete. Neither was sufficient alone as they were needed to complement each other."³¹ There is a lot to be said for this approach but at the same time it poses the question of how to sustain a balance between national and universal values. At the height of imperialism, intellectuals everywhere tended to attest to the final supremacy of their own nation. Enryō was no exception—he valiantly advocated the idea of Japanese uniqueness. To name but one example, I would like to draw your attention to a statement he made in 1889, explaining why the new college

²⁸ *Educational Principles of Enryō Inoue* (see note 26), 81 and 177.

²⁹ SCHULZER. *Inoue Enryō* (see note 25), 89.

³⁰ "The Japanese Philosophical Society," in *The Japan Weekly Mail* (December 8, 1888), quoted in Rainer SCHULZER. " 'Philosopher's Ashes Return to Tokyo': Inoue Enryō as Seen in Historical Roman Alphabet Sources," in *Annual Report of the Inoue Enryō Center* 20 (2011): 232.

³¹ *Educational Principles of Enryō Inoue* (see note 26), 73.

would be dedicated primarily to the Japanese tradition of learning: "Its goal must be the independence of the Japanese people and the independence of Japanese learning."³² In principle, there is no reason to repudiate this strong emphasis on cultural identity. But it put a new issue on the political agenda—how would it be possible to reconcile these different but also related national concepts with each other in the long run?

As a matter of fact, Enryō's thinking was not only similar to Eucken's philosophy but also to Natorp's. I am not alluding here to any specific reference to Kant and his critique of reason. It does not seem as if Enryō had studied in detail the writings of the Königsberg philosopher, he was rather using the name "Kant" primarily as a cipher for thinking independently. From a hermeneutic perspective this may appear questionable, especially since Enryō's praise of Western discourse did not entail an unequivocal approval of the idea of freedom in his practical philosophy.³³ But it shows a keen sense for the fact that, in order to have an impact on the world as it was around 1900, ideas had to be personalized and embedded in an impressive imagery.

Especially Enryō's knowledge of "the West" may have contributed to his heroic image of the history of philosophy. In 1889, during his first trip around the world, he ascertained that the Catholic as well as the Anglican Church were but little interested in change. For him it was beyond doubt that even religious institutions had to change and to adapt in order not to lose contact with people's social realities and with people's hopes.³⁴ Enryō's Temple Garden of Philosophy illustrates how sincere he was in his endeavors but also how intense. The Memorial Stone of Philosophers names Buddha, Confucius, Socrates, and Kant, thus calling for a synthesis of Orient and Occident. Kant was being transformed into the key figure of the history of philosophy—his unprejudiced understanding of human knowledge made him the bridgehead of modernity.³⁵

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Looking at Enryō's philosophy today it appears both impressive and vexing. Embracing free discourse was, according to the philosopher, the very reason for Western superiority. At the same time he was striving for philosophical meaning. It would certainly

³² William M. BODIFORD. "Inoue Enryō in Retirement: Philosophy as Spiritual Cultivation," in *International Inoue Enryo Research 2* (2012): 19–54, quoted 22. For the concept of nation cf. Isaiah BERLIN. *Der Nationalismus* (Frankfurt am Main, 1990).

³³ Cf. SCHULZER. *Inoue Enryō* (see note 25), 130.

³⁴ SCHULZER. *Inoue Enryō* (see note 25), 179.

³⁵ See BODIFORD. "Inoue Enryō in Retirement" (see note 32), 29–32.

be difficult to transfer his thinking into the present, but there is no doubting its historical impact. It is imbued with a steadfast belief in the power of philosophy for solving problems and for education, which perfectly matched the enlightenment promoted during the Meiji era. Especially by giving prominence to the classical philosophers, Enryō responded to the need for stability in a society that was ever transforming.

Just like the thinking of Spencer, Eucken, or Natorp, Enryō's philosophy bore utopian traits. Confidently he praised the significant thinkers of the past because he trusted in the future of the historical process. The First World War did not only shatter this belief but at the same time it discredited the great philosophical syntheses. This does not mean, however, that we should forgo studying these ambitious concepts. Because they tell us of thoughts and desires that are essential for a proper understanding of the world around 1900. Neither should we airily dismiss their belief in the value of "Bildung" and in the importance of community. Ultimately, it cannot really be argued that we have too much of either today.