

Rudolf A. Makkreel and Sebastian Luft, eds.
Neo-Kantianism in Contemporary Philosophy.
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At the end of the 19th century, German academic philosophy was dominated by the two major schools of Neo-Kantianism, the Marburg School, and the Baden, or Southwest, School. Their influence was vast, not only on philosophy, but also on pedagogy, legal theory, and theology, among other areas. A volume dealing seriously with the influence of the major schools of Neo-Kantian thought on contemporary philosophy has been needed sorely for some time.

But this volume of essays aims higher: it ‘is published in the hopes that it will secure Neo-Kantianism a significant place in contemporary philosophical discussions’ (‘Introduction’, 1). The aim of the book, then, is partly to provide a history of major Neo-Kantian thinkers and their influence, and partly to argue for their importance in contemporary (continental) philosophy. Those who work in the continental tradition, broadly construed, will find the book an intriguing chapter in its history. Moreover, though, those who work on German Idealism, on phenomenology, and on the philosophies of Robert Brandom and John McDowell, will find novel and informative material here. However, it will be helpful to consult recently published work on these topics to round out the perspective offered by the volume.

As the editors observe, the term ‘Neo-Kantianism’ is misleading. The influence of Fichte and Hegel, and even Plato, on some figures is just as great as the influence of Kant. However, for diverse reasons, the name has stuck, and indeed, Kant was especially significant for the birth of the movement. In 1865, Otto Liebmann published *Kant and the Epigones*, in which he argues that Kant’s philosophy had been misread even by those who seek to defend idealism, including Fichte and Hegel. That same year, Kuno Fischer published the second edition of his *System of Logic and Metaphysics*, in which he addresses the differences between Kantian and Hegelian philosophy, and argues that Kant and Hegel can be reconciled to a degree, *pace* Liebmann. In the 1870s, Fischer engaged in a heated polemic with Adolf Trendelenburg over the interpretation of the Kantian doctrine of space and time. The so-called Trendelenburg-Fischer debate left an indelible imprint on German academic philosophy. The philosophers who cut their teeth on the debate include Trendelenburg’s student, the founder of the Marburg school, Hermann Cohen, and Fischer’s student, one of the founders of the Baden school, Wilhelm Windelband.

By the end of the 19th century, as the essays in this volume illustrate very well, both schools of Neo-Kantianism had moved on from narrow concerns with the

interpretation of Kantian philosophy. As Manfred Kühn observes in his essay in the volume under review, the question of whether the neo-Kantians interpreted Kant correctly is no longer the correct question to ask (126). Engagement with the phenomenological movement, with the sciences, and with the study of history, culture, ethics and religion all generated moves away from as well as back to Kant.

The book is divided into four parts: 1. Phenomenology, Hermeneutics, and Neo-Kantianism; 2. The Nature of Transcendental Philosophy; 3. The Neo-Kantians and the Sciences; and 4. History, Culture, and Value. The essays are of a high quality overall, from a distinguished and diverse group of contributors.

Substantive philosophical questions addressed by the essays in this volume include: perception (Rudolf Bernet, Helmut Holzhey), concept formation and the relationship of concepts to intuitions (Holzhey, Steven G. Crowell, Rudolf Makkreel), subjectivity (Bernet, Sebastian Luft, Jürgen Stolzenberg, Massimo Ferrari), the unity of consciousness (Stolzenberg, Reiner Wiehl), the history and philosophy of science (Michael Friedman, Fabien Capillières, Ferrari), and the debate over the *Geistes-* versus the *Kulturwissenschaften* (Jean Grondin, Makkreel).

Two problems stand out as themes repeated over several essays: the unity of consciousness, and the relation of concepts to intuitions, including the more recent debate over John McDowell's notion of the 'unboundedness' of the conceptual. Both the Marburg and the Southwest Schools have the unity of consciousness as a special problem. The Marburg School, beginning with Cohen, attempted to divorce the epistemic conditions for the unity of consciousness from psychological or naturalist explanations. Both schools appealed to the ideal goal of the unity of cultural consciousness to defend claims of normativity. Recently, a special issue of the *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* featured a cluster of essays on the theme of normativity (February 1, 2009, Vol. 17, no. 1). The questions raised there touch on the interpretation of German Idealism by Robert Pippin, Frederick C. Beiser, Henry Allison, Terry Pinkard, and Charles Larmore, among others, as well as on the work of McDowell and Robert Brandom. The essays in *Neo-Kantianism in Contemporary Philosophy* achieve the goal of showing how Neo-Kantian thought is related to these contemporary discussions. However, perhaps owing to spatial constraints, the essays here do not reach as broad a perspective on the problems of normativity and of the unity of consciousness as is found in this issue of the *International Journal*, so those working on these problems will find it very useful to read the journal in tandem with the book.

The publication of *Neo-Kantianism in Contemporary Philosophy* is timely, since, in the past several years the number of volumes on Neo-Kantian thought has increased. Three such volumes with which this reviewer is particularly familiar are Alan Kim (2010), Reinier Munk (2005), and Andrea Poma (2006). All three are excellent complements to the work under discussion. Kim discusses the key question of the influence of Plato on

Neo-Kantianism and on phenomenology, and focuses on the virtues of the reading of Plato of Paul Natorp, a member of the Marburg school, and on Heidegger's criticisms of that reading. Munk and Poma evaluate the work of Hermann Cohen, including investigations of his relationships with the phenomenological tradition and with other neo-Kantians, including the Southwest School. Tom Rockmore (2000) approaches the historical task from the other direction, evaluating Heidegger's philosophy in the context of his idealist and Neo-Kantian influences and interlocutors from both schools. Finally, an excellent pair of special issues of *Philosophical Forum* has appeared recently, both edited by Andrew Chignell. The first (2008, Vol. 39, no. 2) deals with classical Neo-Kantianism and its relation to Kant, while the second (2010, Vol. 41, nos. 1-2) investigates the relationship of Neo-Kantianism to phenomenology and to later continental scholarship. The first of these (*Philosophical Forum* 2008) is the place to start to get a handle on the basic issues. In fact, this reviewer would advise taking a look at the 2008 issue of *Philosophical Forum* before reading *Neo-Kantianism in Contemporary Philosophy*, to become better oriented in the basic problems and issues of classical Neo-Kantian thought. The broader historical and systematic perspective opened up by the best of the new work on Neo-Kantianism offers an intriguing window into the development and evaluation of central contemporary problems.

The appearance of these new works indicates significant and growing interest in the history of Neo-Kantianism with respect to German Idealism, phenomenology, and contemporary interpretations of continental thought. *Neo-Kantianism in Contemporary Philosophy* makes a significant contribution to this growing literature, and even accomplishes the more ambitious task of showing how Neo-Kantian thought can contribute to current debates.

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