

Reveal specifics of social knowledge in W. Windelband and H. Rickert's doctrines.

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*PREPARED: RELIGIOUS SCHOLARS-MASTERS OF THE
FIRST COURSE.*



Neo-Kantianism

*In late modern Continental philosophy, **Neo-Kantianism** was a revival of the 18th-century philosophy of Immanuel Kant. More specifically, it was influenced by Arthur Schopenhauer's critique of the Kantian philosophy in his work *The World as Will and Representation* (1818), as well as by other post-Kantian philosophers such as Jakob Friedrich Fries and Johann Friedrich Herbart.*



The "back to Kant" movement began in the 1860s, as a reaction to the German materialist controversy in the 1850s.

*The return to Kant of Neo-Kantianism in the second part of the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth century took place due to two main reasons. **First**, the ambitious systems of the German Idealists (in particular Hegel) linked to the irrationalism of the Romantic Era had run their course and began to be rejected as unfounded speculation. **Second**, Positivism had led to a rejection of all metaphysics in favor of an often undeclared reductionistic materialism, and came to be regarded by many as equally unfounded and unsatisfactory.*

Kant's cautiously rational approach appeared as a safe refuge and seemed to be the desirable starting point for further philosophical investigation which would not contradict the development of science, but not limit itself to its conclusions. Accordingly, thinkers of a diverse array of orientations and interests in Germany, and elsewhere in Europe, came to use Kant's views and method as the foundation for their own work, making Neo-Kantianism the predominant philosophical school of that period.



*The historian of philosophy **Kuno Fischer**, another leading influence in the development of Neo-Kantianism, had published his *A System of Logic and Metaphysics* (*System der Logik und Metaphysik*) in 1852, followed by his epoch-making *Kant's Life and the Foundations of his Teaching* (*Kants Leben und die Grundlagen seiner Lehre*, 1860).*

*Fischer was early involved in a dispute with the Aristotelian Friedrich Adolf Trendelenburg concerning the interpretation of the results of the Transcendental Aesthetic, a dispute that subsequently prompted Vaihinger's massive commentary on the **Critique of Pure Reason**.*

*The Neo-Kantian revival of the second half of the nineteenth century primarily originated in the field of logic, scientific thought, and epistemology, essentially based on discussion of Kant's Critique of Pure Reason. But, like Kant's philosophy itself, it would come to include many other aspects, notably related to the question of meaning and value (**axiology**), **ethics**, **political theory**, and, **ultimately, the unresolved questions of metaphysics**.*

*The overall orientation of Neo-Kantianism remained that of moderate idealism, as had been the case with Kant's own philosophy. But, with thinkers coming from a variety of backgrounds and involved in a variety of endeavors, ranging from the empirical sciences to mathematical thought and the study of religion, Neo-Kantianism came to encompass perspectives as diverse as that of empiricism, realism, and psychologism, Kant's critical idealism often modified beyond recognition. What remained was the starting point in an **analysis of the functions of the human mind**.*

Schools within Neo-Kantianism



*The major thinker of importance in the first generation of the Neo-Kantian movement was Hermann Cohen (1842-1918), who became known as the founder and leader of the Marburg School, the other prominent representatives of which were Paul Natorp (1854-1924) and later Ernst Cassirer (1874-1945) and Nicolai Hartmann (1882-1950). **The Marburg School**—representing the most important current within Neo-Kantianism—had a strong mathematical and scientific orientation.*

The Marburg School

***The Marburg School's interest** in the philosophical foundations of political theory led to Eduard Bernstein's Revisionism and Victor Adler's "Austro-Marxism." Thus, the ethical aspects of Neo-Kantian thought often drew its proponents within the orbit of socialism. Lange and Cohen in particular were keen on this connection, leading Ludwig Von Mises to view Kantian thought as pernicious. This form of Neo-Kantianism also had a significant influence on the political stage of early twentieth century Russia, as it represented a middle ground between atheistic materialism and Orthodox mystical metaphysics.*

The Baden School

*By contrast, the Baden School of **Wilhelm Windelband**, **Heinrich Rickert**, and Emil Lask tended to emphasize the questions of values, or axiology.*

***Windelband** considered philosophy to be first and foremost a teaching about universally valid values, namely truth in thinking, goodness in will and action, and beauty in feeling, a tripartite classification that is directly based on Kant. Windelband made a clear distinction between history and the natural sciences.*

W. Windelband

Wilhelm Windelband was a German philosopher of the Baden School.

Windelband was born the son of a Prussian official in Potsdam. He studied at Jena, Berlin, and Göttingen.

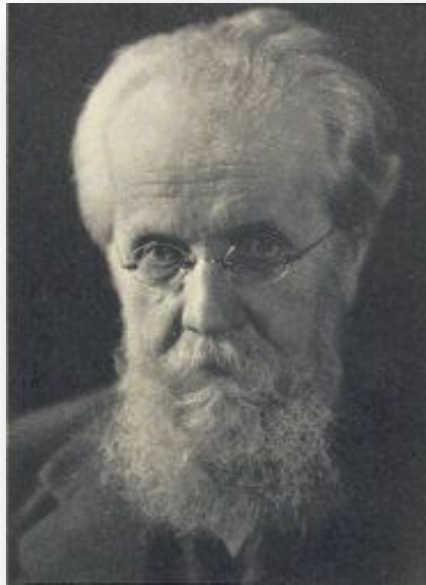
Windelband is now mainly remembered for the terms **nomothetic and idiographic**, which he introduced. These have currency in psychology and other areas, though not necessarily in line with his original meanings.



*He also insisted that “**to understand Kant means to go beyond him,**” a slogan that would generally remained attached to Neo-Kantianism. Windelband’s successor, **Heinrich Rickert**, developed his own axiology, insisting that the critical philosophy of Kant had to be expanded so as to include all aspects of the sciences, including the “Geisteswissenschaften” (the sciences of the mind, or cultural sciences). This brought him in touch with the heritage of German Idealism.*

*With its concentration on the issue of meaning and value, rather than the primacy of the physical sciences, the Baden School was able to create links to, and influence, a number of other contemporary thinkers trying to find answers to the prevailing cultural chaos. **These include Wilhelm Dilthey and Georg Simmel.***

Heinrich Rickert



Heinrich John Rickert was a German philosopher, one of the leading Neo-Kantians.

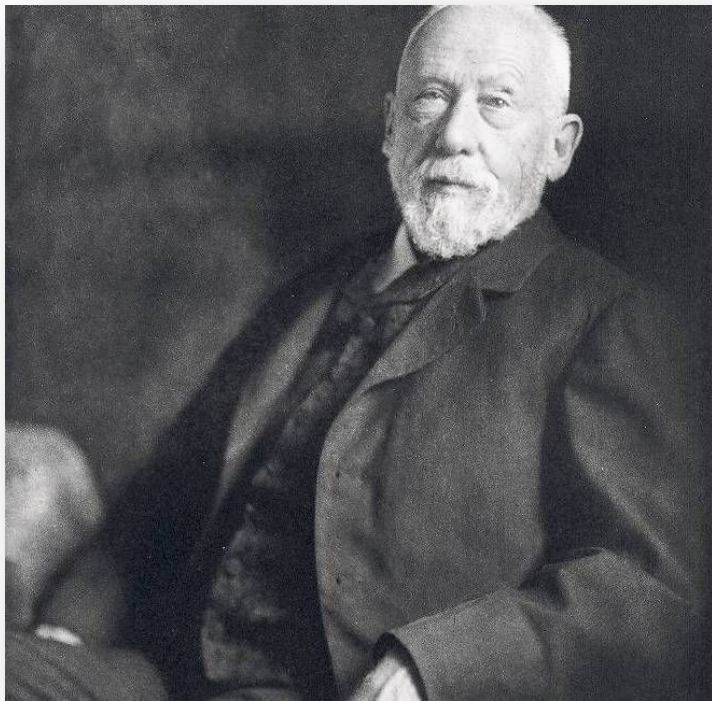
Rickert was born in Danzig, Prussia (now Gdańsk, Poland) to the journalist and later politician Heinrich Edwin Rickert and Annette née Stoddart. He was professor of philosophy at the University of Freiburg (1894–1915) and Heidelberg (1915–1932). He died in Heidelberg, Germany

He is known for his discussion of a qualitative distinction held to be made between historical and scientific facts. Contrary to philosophers like Nietzsche and Bergson, Rickert emphasized that values demand a distance from life, and that what Bergson, Dilthey or Simmel called "vital values" were not true values.

Rickert's philosophy was an important influence on the work of sociologist Max Weber. Weber is said to have borrowed much of his methodology, including the concept of the ideal type, from Rickert's work.

Charles R. Bambach writes:

In his work Rickert, like Dilthey, intended to offer a unifying theory of knowledge which, although accepting a division between science and history or Natur and Geist, overcame this division in a new philosophical method. For Dilthey the method was wedded to hermeneutics; for Rickert it was the transcendental method of Kant.



Wilhelm Dilthey



Georg Simmel

Psychological Neo-Kantianism and beyond: The issue of religion

Not directly part of Neo-Kantianism, but strongly related to it, and clearly derived from it historically, are the efforts by several thinkers to use Kant as a basis for a theory of religion through the use of the psychological approach that had been attempted earlier by Fries. Two thinkers in particular stand out, Leonard Nelson, a professor from Göttingen (1882-1927) and Rudolf Otto (1869-1937). Together, they form the “Neo-Friesian School.” For Nelson, the mind has an immediate, indisputable certainty about the principles of reason. Based on this certainty of an intuitive type (rejected by Kant but introduced by Fries), all further steps flowed according to strict logic.

*Otto's views were largely shared by theologian and philosopher of religion **Ernst Troeltsch (1865-1923)**, who believed that neither Positivism nor the Pragmatism of William James could fully account for the nature of religion, and who considered that taking the side of Kantian idealism was ultimately a matter of choice, rather than a decision that could be rationally justified.*

Twentieth century theologian Paul Tillich was strongly influenced by both Otto and Troeltsch. He founded the philosophy of religion of his early, German period (the 1920s) on Kant's critical philosophy and Otto's added intuitive element. More recently, the religious element of Kant's own thought has been rediscovered by various scholars who see Kant's entire system as an attempt to account for that element, rather than an effort to lead away from religion towards an Enlightenment-type agnosticism. In this, these scholars essentially follow the view of some Neo-Kantians that an "inductive metaphysics" was possible based on empirical observation (the teleology of Kant's Critique of Judgment).

Legacy

While the movement of Neo-Kantianism includes a number of significant thinkers, ironically none of the really major philosophers influenced by Kant were part of it, making the term “epigones” used by Liebmann more appropriate to describe the Neo-Kantians themselves. Thus, Neo-Kantianism’s importance mostly rests on the overall impact it had on the philosophical, religious, and literary life of Germany and neighboring countries.

Accordingly also, the Neo-Kantian line of thought only represents part of Kant’s legacy. The other, perhaps more important in the end, is to be found in Kant’s influence on thinkers who went their own way, often radically departing from his thought, both in the early years (such as Hegel, Schopenhauer) and much later, beyond Neo-Kantianism, Edmund Husserl, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Rudolf Carnap, Martin Heidegger, and all the way up to Postmodernism.

Neo-Kantianism was a temporary return to stability after the upheavals of the nineteenth century. Its mixture of guarded liberalism, taste for scientific accuracy, and repulsion towards speculative hyperbole as well as down-to-earth materialism allowed for many brilliant intellectual achievements.

As a movement, it broke apart after the renewed upheavals of **World War I** and it was replaced by much more radical solutions. The various directions taken by philosophy after the era of Neo-Kantianism, culminating in **the Deconstruction of Postmodernism**, have brought Kant's initial criticism of philosophical dogma to a nearly total rejection of foundationalism, that is, to full skepticism about one's abilities to know any ultimate truth in an unequivocal way.

This trend is in turn being criticized today as having gone overboard in its attempt to eliminate unfounded assumptions, making Kant's moderate and balanced approach a fruitful starting-point for further philosophical investigation.

