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LEFT-KANTIANISM IN THE MARBURG SCHOOL

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Acknowledgments

This book focuses on the political ideas that emerged in the Marburg School of neo-Kantianism, a philosophical school of the second half of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. While recent years have seen a growing interest in the Marburg School, the political philosophies of the figures associated with the school remain overlooked. The original idea for this book can be traced back to my PhD research, which I completed at the University of Vienna in 2022.

Every chapter is introduced by an interpretative thesis that changes our view of the left-Kantian approaches in the Marburg School. Chapter 1 contextualizes their ideas historically. Chapter 2 is based on the paper "Psychophysiological Transcendentalism in Friedrich Albert Lange's Social and Political Philosophy," which was published in 2022 in the *Journal of Transcendental Philosophy.* § 2.5 is based on a section of the paper "'Left-Kantianism' and the 'Scientific Dispute' between Rudolf Stammler and Hermann Cohen," which is forthcoming in 2023 in *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie.* Chapter 3 is based on the paper "Elements of Völkerpsychologie in Hermann Cohen's Ethical Idealism," which was published in 2021 in *Idealistic Studies.* In Chapter 4, I present Cohen's critique of capitalism as a functional account of Kant's ethics. In Chapter 5, I highlight different paths of left-Kantianism in Natorp, Stammler, and Cassirer. The comparison between Stammler and Cohen has its origins in the aforementioned article, "'Left-Kantianism' and the 'Scientific Dispute' between Rudolf Stammler and Hermann Cohen." Chapter 5 includes parts of the article "Functional Objectivity and Relative Truths: The Contingent Conception of Universality in Ernst Cassirer's Ethics," which is currently under review.

The translations of the German quotations and passages are mine. I aimed for as literal a translation as possible. Where this was not possible, I either bracketed the term in German or added a footnote explaining the deviation from the original. For the sake of coherence, I have translated some book titles and articles I quote in the running text. The original titles are to be found in the bibliography.

I am honored to have the opportunity to acknowledge the contributions of many individuals without whom this book would not have been possible. First and foremost, I would like to express my deep gratitude to my first PhD advisor, Martin Kusch, whose support throughout the writing process has been invaluable. I have been fortunate to benefit from Martin's exceptional dedication to creating a supportive academic environment, which has given me the confidence to pursue my research interests with passion and determination. I would also like to sincerely thank Lydia Patton, my second PhD supervisor, for her incisive and engaging conversation. Our meetings have helped me contextualize and connect my work

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Introduction: Marburg Left-Kantianism in Context

This book illuminates the philosophical tradition of Marburg Left-Kantianism. Marburg Left-Kantianism refers to a philosophical movement that aimed to critique capitalism by utilizing a teleological perspective on rationality and, in so doing, justified socialism as a viable historical political movement. The advocates of this movement believed that socialism had the potential to drive social progress and therefore represented a path toward a more just and equitable society. The term "Marburg" is a reference to the "Marburg School," a renowned philosophical movement of the nineteenth century that understood the Kantian system as a critical "methodology." Following an era of Hegelianism, the members of the Marburg School, such as Friedrich Albert Lange, Hermann Cohen, Rudolf Stammler, and Paul Natorp, defended socialism and left-wing ideals on the basis of Kantian principles.

Friedrich Albert Lange (1829–1875) is considered the founder of the Marburg School, renowned for his involvement in several contemporary discussions, including his significant contributions to the discourse surrounding the "worker's question." He was instrumental in bringing Hermann Cohen (1842–1918), a prominent Jewish-German scholar and one of the most notable figures of Marburg neo-Kantianism, to Marburg. Cohen's defense of socialism, grounded in ethical considerations, greatly influenced Paul Natorp (1854–1924). Natorp endeavored to apply Cohen's ethical framework to pedagogical questions, leading to a defense of socialism. Following his habilitation in Marburg, Natorp remained at the university until his retirement. Rudolf Stammler (1856–1938), a close friend of Natorp, was also deeply influenced by Cohen's neo-Kantianism during his tenure in Marburg. Stammler developed his own justification of the legal social-democratic state, drawing heavily upon Cohen's work. Although Ernst Cassirer (1874–1945) did not develop a neo-Kantian defense of socialism, it is worth noting that he played a significant role in advancing the neo-Kantian system as he utilized these ideas to oppose the fascist state and its ideology in response to the Second World War.

Prior to the period in question, it was atypical to utilize Kantian philosophy as a basis for left-wing theories—a trend that gained prominence in the latter half of the twentieth century. While this book will illustrate that the philosophical and political approaches of Marburg Left-Kantianism varied, several distinct features can be identified. Marburg Left-Kantianism is characterized by (i) a teleological perspective on rationality; (ii) advocacy of socialism as a historical political movement; and (iii) a Kant-inspired methodology for formulating normative demands grounded in their potential to foster progress. Let us have a closer look at these aspects.

First, the Marburg left-Kantians aimed to critically examine historically evolved norms from a Kant-inspired account. They utilized Kantian rationality to identify teleological progressions in the course of history. While their conceptions of transcendental logic, idealism, materialism in ethics, legal philosophy, and the philosophy of the social sciences varied, they shared the conviction that the conditions for freedom lay the foundation to criticize social norms. This, in turn, promotes progress. It is important to note that their teleological accounts should not solely depict the logical progression of history but also qualitatively distinguish between developments that facilitate progress and those that impede it. This qualitative differentiation was a significant deviation from the Hegelian tradition that took rationality to evolve antithetically.

Second, in their Kantian teleological accounts, the Marburg left-Kantians regarded socialism as a historical movement that advances progress. This marked a significant departure from Kant's non-historical political writings, such as *The Metaphysics of Morals*, where he outlined the requirements for a free republican state. The Marburg left-Kantians did not assert that democratic socialism was the *only* legitimate form of organization. Rather, they argued that, in light of the problems that characterized nineteenth-century capitalism, democratic socialism emerged as the only appropriate form of state organization capable of addressing and combatting the ills of capitalism. In this context, social democracy proved to be the most suitable approach for their time.

Third, the Marburg left-Kantians' perspective is also reflected in their applied philosophy, which contrasts with the Marxist view that revolution is essential to overcome capitalism. The Marburg left-Kantians were more doubtful of such radical actions. They did not categorically reject the idea of revolutions on a priori grounds, unlike Kant's legal philosophy, but they considered injustices to be the product of the absence of legal laws regulating the market. Their teleological account of rationality did not mandate a revolutionary restructuring of society, so they viewed incremental changes like legal reforms as having substantial potential.

The main objective of this study is to shed light on a neglected aspect of the Western philosophical tradition and refute mistaken claims that have resulted in a distorted perception of the political philosophies of the Marburg School. First, I aim to demonstrate that the left-Hegelian and Marxist traditions were not the only significant philosophical sources of socialist critique in nineteenth-century Germany, as the left-Kantians identified problems that the left-Hegelians could not adequately address. By contextualizing their philosophies, it becomes apparent that their Kantian critique was well-suited to provide a thorough account of normativity, which had until then been a blind spot in the Marxian tradition. Second, I aim to challenge the neo-Kantian literature's suggestion that the political

philosophies developed in the Marburg School can be comprehensively character-
ized as a unified school of "ethical socialism." The goal in this regard is to demon-
strate that not all the theories developed by the Marburg School were based on an
ethical account. They varied regarding their political views and their philosophical
foundations of socialism.

Let us come to the first issue. "Left-Kantianism" is not a philosophical current
that emerged in a vacuum or ignored the new problems that arose since Kant. In
fact, it shared various similarities with the left-Hegelians. The term is meant to sig-
nal that in addition to left-Hegelianism—represented by David Friedrich Strauß
(1808–1874), Bruno Bauer (1809–1882), Ludwig Feuerbach (1804–1872), Karl
Marx (1818–1883), and Friedrich Engels (1820–1895)—a politically left-wing and
progressive current of idealism emerged that took its cue from Kant. Both the
left-Hegelians and the left-Kantians comprised a group of progressive thinkers
who were positively and negatively influenced by German Idealism. According
to John Edward Toews (1980), the left-Hegelians aimed for an "actualization of phi-
losophy with the implicit or explicit claim that such actualization demanded a
transformative revision and development of Hegelian theory" (Toews 1980, 206).
Similarly, Marburg left-Kantianism consisted of a group of progressive intellectuals
with the shared goal of trying to actualize Kantian philosophy, thereby developing
egalitarian and reformist theories of social justice.

Another characteristic feature shared between these schools is their goal of
improving or correcting the philosophical foundations of their respective author-
ities by their "methodological" approach emphasizing the critical procedure of
his philosophy. They both give particular attention to the material basis of social
practice, in contrast to the speculative metaphysics of German idealism. Conse-
quently, their theories integrate new insights from cultural-material history, soci-
ology, anthropology, and psychology. Both schools emerged from a common spirit
of materialism, historicism, and naturalism, which were prominent themes in Ger-
man philosophy during the nineteenth century (Toews 1980, 206; HM; WQ; KFE;
EPW).

Both the left-Hegelians and the left-Kantians shared a focus on the materialist
conception of sociality, which is evident in their respective critical relationship to
Feuerbach's idealist justification of ethics. While Marx and the Marburgers appre-
ciated Feuerbach's adherence to materialism, they criticized his reliance on imma-
terial idealism. In his work, *The Essence of Christianity* (1841), Feuerbach argues
that the acquisition of knowledge is based on sensory activity while still maintain-
ing an idealistic justification of practical norms. This idealistic foundation is prob-
lematic for both historical materialism and Marburg neo-Kantianism. As the
founder of historical materialism, Marx emphasizes the material conditions of
human existence and takes issue with Feuerbach's idealism. Lange also adheres

to an idealistic foundation but begins from material societal norms like the rest of the Marburgers. Lange criticizes Feuerbach for deploying "an incurable dichotomy" between sensibility and insensible thinking, a problem that the Marburg School sought to overcome (HM, 308/526). Although they did not reject idealism, as was common in the Marxist tradition, they defended idealism in a manner that aimed to break with the "dualism between intuition and thinking and between matter and form" (Natorp 1986, 65). Cohen, for example, suggests that objective judgments in ethics proceed from the material practices or the historical "facts of culture." By assuming an absolute purpose, one can distance oneself from given norms and judge the social and cultural world from a free, humanistic standpoint. Renz aptly describes this process in relation to Cohen as a "purification process" of the empirical-causal elements (Renz 2002, 51).

Another similarity that can be observed between left-Hegelianism and left-Kantianism is their shared perspective on the role of philosophy in critiquing religion, law, and society. In his work, *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* (1843/1844), Marx articulates the function of philosophy as follows: "It is first of all the task of philosophy, which is in the service of history after the sacred figure of human self-alienation has been unmasked, to unmask self-alienation in its unholy guises" (Marx 1982, 171, emphasis added). Marx bases his philosophical program on empirical facts, and as is evident in the "eleventh thesis" on Feuerbach, his primary concern is to establish a methodological foundation that has practical significance: "Philosophers have hitherto only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it" (Marx 1969, 5 ff., emphasis added).

Marx and Engels are not alone in seeking to make theoretical insights useful for political practice. The proponents of the Marburg School, too, share this aim. Lange, for instance, contends that practical implications can be derived from empirical sciences, which provide a starting point for solving new problems. To overcome speculative metaphysics, Lange combines the deductive method of philosophy and the empirical sciences, arguing that empirical facts offer the objective basis of culture. "My logic is the calculation of probability, my ethics moral statistics, my psychology rests on physiology; in a word, I seek to move only in exact sciences" (Lange cited in Ellissen 1894, 106). Similarly, Stammler utilizes empirical facts to counter the ideological delusions of capitalism and as a basis for normative claims. According to Stammler's view, statistical calculations demonstrate that external circumstances within a capitalist system have a greater impact on occupational careers than individuals' diligence and willingness to work—an ideology ubiquitous in capitalism. The mathematically calculated grievances provide a starting point from which normative demands can be derived. Cohen and Natorp substantiate their claims not with empirical facts but with a conceptual analysis that measures norms against the absolute end in itself. Cohen, for example, argues that

in the capitalist legal system, we witness both a personification of capital and an objectification of the worker, who, for a certain period of time, becomes the property of the employer. Although the left-Hegelians and left-Kantians differ from each other in terms of their methodological approach, their aim is like that of the left-Hegelians: to provide practical insights that have political consequences on real-life practices.

Finally, both left-Hegelians and left-Kantians differentiated themselves from a politically conservative right-wing tradition. While the right-Hegelians defended the state, leaving no space for a legitimate revolution, the right-wing neo-Kantians aimed to provide an idealistic justification for morality to validate the bourgeois social norms of the Prussian kingdom. Klaus C. Köhnke (1986) and Ulrich Sieg (2013) demonstrate that the years 1878/1879 marked an "idealist turn" in German-language philosophy as a result of two assassination attempts on Kaiser Wilhelm I. This period saw the conservative, pro-Prussian press and Otto von Bismarck (1815–1898) make use of these assassination attempts to strengthen their critical stance toward the Social Democratic Party. Heinrich von Treitschke (1834–1896) published the pamphlet "Socialism and Assassination" in June 1878, in which he denounced social democracy as a cause of cultural ruin. According to Treitschke, social democracy promoted sensual greed, hatred, and envy by allegedly "mocking everything that is holy." He also argued that the Marxist criticism of religion and the materialist stance, which he referred to as "red terrorism," must come to an end (Treitschke 1878, 7). Treitschke's views were widely shared, including by neo-Kantian intellectuals like Jürgen Bona Meyer and Hermann von Helmholtz: the right-wing counterpart to the Marburgers.

Jürgen Bona Meyer argued that the "dangerous doctrine" that allegedly left no room for property rights was to be traced back to Fichte (Köhnke 1986, 412). According to him, the socialist doctrine violated the moral principle that commanded: "to leave to each his own." Similarly, Hermann von Helmholtz (1821–1894) also alluded to socialism in a speech when he reflected on the days when philosophers knew how to immerse themselves in metaphysical problems not yet characterized by the "cynical contempt for all ideal goods of the human race" (cited in Sieg 2018).

While the full extent of the importance of the left-Kantians will become apparent in the subsequent chapters, it has thus far been demonstrated that their perspective served as a counter-narrative to the prevailing right-wing stance of the era and bore striking resemblances to Marxist traditions. By drawing parallels with Marxist historical materialism, it becomes evident that the left-Kantians approached socialism with a significant degree of intellectual depth and rigor, discussing socialism against the background of systematic philosophical theories that touched upon the main philosophical problems of the time. Their critique of capitalism and defense of socialism were anchored in robust philosophical theories.

I shall now further clarify the second objective of this work: to challenge the existing neo-Kantian literature's claim that the political philosophies developed in the Marburg School can be categorized comprehensively as a unified school of "ethical socialism." Later, I will delve into this issue in greater depth and demonstrate that Cohen and Stammler fundamentally disagreed on the philosophical justification of law, leading to distinct accounts of socialism. I will show that their political theories differed fundamentally even in cases where the Marburgers were inspired by the same (Cohenian) philosophical foundations—as is the case with Natorp and Cassirer. However, before discussing this matter, I would like to take a moment to reflect on *why* the prevailing narrative, as presented in works by Thomas Willey (1978) and Frederick Beiser (2018), has endured.

While Willey and a few other scholars (Köhnke 1986; Sieg 1994; Keck 1975; Giesecke 1991; Lübbe 1974) were among the first to examine the political side of the Marburg School, they did not seek to reconstruct the members' philosophical theories systematically. Consequently, their analyses remain rather shallow due to their sociological, historical, or history of ideas perspectives. This lack of thorough engagement with the philosophical views of the Marburg School means that the wide variety of views among the School's members is left out of the narrative. Although Frederick Beiser's excellent works have significantly contributed to introducing neo-Kantian developments to a broader philosophical audience, even his engagement with the subject matter remains relatively brief. Consequently, the argument I will present in Chapter 5 is not an attempt to refute a misinterpretation but rather the first endeavor to contemplate the political-philosophical issues of the Marburg School in depth.

A crucial reason for the neglect of the political philosophies developed by the Marburg School is to be found in the historical development of how their ideas were discussed. In a speech delivered on Kant's 220th birthday in 1954, the critical theorist Ernst Bloch accused the neo-Kantians of "perverting" Kant's philosophy and suppressing its "revolutionary impulses" (Bloch 1974, 351). This critique exposes the dilemma that the Marburgers have faced ever since: their political philosophies have been deemed too centrist-liberal by the left-wing, yet too left-wing for the progressive liberal camp.

The story of the political side of the Marburgers finds its starting point in the 1850s. When Bertrand Russell discussed this period in his lectures on *German Social Democracy*, he said that "by 1850 all remnants of the democratic movement had disappeared" (Russell 1896, 46). The aftermath of the failed March Revolution led to a reactionary movement. It became more difficult to form coalitions and trade unions, which gave socialists a hard time selling their ideas. Marx was arrested in the wake of the French February Revolution. After the March Revolution, he returned to Germany to work as an editor for the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*. Ration-

alism, pantheism, and atheism were considered the causes of the revolutions in the public eye. It was widely held that a stronger faith in God could restore the social order for which people longed (cf. Köhnke 1986, 143).[1]

The economic upswing of the 1850s provided a perfect starting point for the Progressive Liberal Party (*Deutsche Fortschrittspartei*). After a while, the aftereffects of the March Revolution were forgotten, and various members of the Progressive Party were seeking a more left-wing course (see Russell 1896, 47). In 1863, the party members even invited Ferdinand Lassalle to comment on the newly revised political program. Many liberals considered Schulze-Delitzsch's ideas insufficient and were in favor of taking Lassalle's *Reading Book for Workers* (1863) as a doctrinal foundation for their party. However, the intended cooperation between the Social Democracy and the Progressive Party did not occur. Lassalle's program overlapped in various respects with the demands of the liberal party, but their ideological differences were ultimately considered too significant to overcome. While the consumer associations (*Konsumvereine*) were uncritical toward capitalism, Lassalle's doctrine was founded on the "iron law of wages," which held that wages under capitalism are necessarily depressed to the minimum standard needed to sustain life (Lassalle 1863).

Due to Lassalle's positive outlook on the state, his works *The Workers' Program* (1862), the *Open Response Letter* (1863), and the *Reading Book for Workers* (1863) gained great popularity within a short period of time. The socialists adopted Lassalle's ideas as their doctrine. The 1860s were characterized by a blurry demarcation line between the socialists and the progressive liberals. It was then when *The Worker's Question* (1865) by the neo-Kantian Friedrich Albert Lange (1828–1875) found a large readership.

Lange was born in Solingen in 1828 into the family of a Christian pastor, Johann Peter Lange—a descendant of a peasant family (cf. Ellissen 1894, 1). His mother, Amalie Lisette Friederike, was from a wealthy family (Ellissen 1894, 4). His parents made great efforts to teach Lange a Christian sense of equality. He was sent, together with his older sister, to a public elementary school. According to his biographer Ellissen, the parents were eager to teach their children "not to think of themselves as better than the children of the poor" (Ellissen 1894, 9).

In his habilitation, Lange recalls his first encounter with philosophy during his high-school years. Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807) sparked his passion for philosophy. "Among the few who thought they understood it was I," Lange writes

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1 This is also reflected in Köhnke's sociological distinction between the pre-March period, characterized by a "wave of jurists" and the post-March period, characterized by a "wave of theologians" (1986, 146).

(Ellissen 1894, 24). After passing the school-leaving exam in Zürich in 1847, he matriculated at the *Züricher Hochschule* to attend lectures in theology and philosophy (Ellissen 1894, 22). During his university years, Lange became acquainted with the writings of Johann Friedrich Herbart (1776–1841), which fostered his interest in psychology (Ellissen 1894, 25). By the age of 20, Lange had left his Christian faith behind. In a letter, he states: "The absolute difference of Christianity against other religions is no longer certain to me" (Ellissen 1894, 31).

In place of his faith, Lange developed an interest in political matters. During the revolutions of 1848/1849, he claimed that republican Switzerland still had to go through the developments he saw "passing through France and Germany" (Ellissen 1894, 30). Although Switzerland had been a republic for some time, the conservative country still lacked, in Lange's eyes, the sense of liberalism for which Germany and France were fighting (Ellissen 1894, 29). Even before joining the SPD, Lange was highly concerned with socio-political matters. In 1848, he wanted to build a gym for young boys with disabilities (Ellissen 1894, 33). Despite his socio-political engagement, Lange did not consider himself ready for party politics. In a letter from 1849, he noted that he still lacked the "self-reliance and independence" to "attach himself to a party" (Ellissen 1894, 34).

After completing his military service, and teaching at high schools in Cologne and Duisburg, he finally turned to politics in 1862. Lange became a member of the progressive liberals and a political editor for the *Rhein- und Ruhr-Zeitung* (Ellissen 1894, 121). A year later, he became the secretary of the Duisburg Chamber of Commerce (Ellissen 1894, 121). Besides his duties as a secretary, Lange worked on the *History of Materialism*, which would become one of the most widely read books of the nineteenth century. Lange initially intended to publish the *History of Materialism* in 1863 (Ellissen 1894, 122); however, it took him another three years to finish the book that was intended to transform him into a renowned scholar.

As a member of the German Progressive Party, Lange saw the conservative tendencies in the empire very critically. Lange saw a "weakness" of the Progressive Party with respect to their limited interest in "material interests," as they would ignore the "social question stirring throughout Europe with an unimagined strength" (Ellissen 1894, 132). Influenced by Schulze-Delitzsch, Lange organized the *Duisburg Konsumverein* in 1862 (Ellissen 1894, 133). He saw in those associations a great opportunity for the working classes to help and strengthen themselves from the bottom-up in order to become economically independent. However, due to a lack of consideration of issues of social equality, Lange distanced himself more and more from the Progressive Party. Finally, he founded the journal *Der Bote vom Niederrhein,* stating: "The main matter of the progressive party is of secondary interest to me; the progressive party does not deal with the aspect that is

most important, namely the social question" (Ellissen 1894, 133). In this vein, in 1864, Lange resigned from his position as secretary of the Chamber of Commerce.

In the first issue of *Der Bote vom Niederrhein*, Lange defines the journal's scope as follows: "Prussia cannot and must not return to absolutism, either openly or covertly. [...] Because the existing constitution is called into question, the friends of freedom must not shy away from preserving its rights, and extend them" (Ellissen 1894, 145). Lange indicates that the "despotic military government" poses the "greatest danger" to the freedom of citizens (Ellissen 1894, 146). The journal is meant as a platform, allowing people to "communicate [...] what is needed" (Ellissen 1894, 146). In 1866, *John Stuart Mill's Views on the Social Question and Carey's Alleged Overthrow of Social Science* appears. In the same year, the Prussian-Austrian War breaks out. Lange decides to cancel the journal. He defends his decision in the last issue as follows: "Due to the war, the readers are now more concerned about political and social issues" (Ellissen 1894, 151). He considers returning to Switzerland to open a small publishing house for popular science books but finally accepts a position as an editor at the newspaper *Der Landbote* (Ellissen 1894, 167).

In 1865, the first edition of *The Worker's Question* is published. Lange reaches out to Marx and Engels, asking them to collaborate with him. In a personal correspondence with Engels, Marx writes: "Do not reject his offer. Tell him to mail you two copies [of *The Worker's Question*], one of which I shall receive. As he [Lange] correctly points out, we need to preserve our cooperation with German papers" (Eckert 1969, 74). The initially promising answer was followed by a devastating judgment by Engels. In a letter to Marx, Engels writes: "I received Lange's pamphlet via Siebel. Confused, Malthusian with Darwinian tendencies, flirting on all sides. Yet he said some nice things against Lassalle and the bourgeois worker associations" (Eckert 1969, 74).[2]

Similarly, Wilhelm Liebknecht (1826–1900) responded negatively to Lange's offer to help with the Workers Association Day (Eckert 1969, 338). Not least because of Lange's liberal thoughts that were considered bourgeois, his attempt to find recognition in the left camp remained futile. In the summer of 1868, August Bebel finally invited Lange to give a "presentation on the question of defense" at the German Labor Association Day in Nürnberg (Eckert 1969, 188). Due to time constraints, however, Lange declined. Strengthened in his esteem, he criticized the socialists' hostile attitude toward religion as follows: "Germany lacks socialist literature. Al-

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2 Although Lange speaks in favor of these associations, he problematizes their organizational structure. According to Lange, it often happens that an educated speaker speaks in place of the workers, thereby undermining the emancipatory potential these associations may have. Lange calls those who uncritically follow Schulze-Delitzsch's idea of worker associations "Bourgeoiskonsumkerls" (Sieg 1994, 95).

though Karl Marx is scientifically the most important representative of socialism and one of the most profound economists of all times, he is a fierce enemy of Christianity" (Eckert 1969, 189). While Lange caught the attention of left-wing circles with his controversial views, his ally Hermann Cohen, 14 years Lange's junior and who would later become head of the Marburg School, was occupied with his studies.

Cohen was born in 1842 as an only child into a poor middle-class Jewish family in Coswig, Germany. His father was a teacher and cantor; his mother had a small hat store. Their joint income was necessary to finance their son's schooling (see Beiser 2018, 7–8). His father, Gerson Cohen, taught his son the Jewish teachings and Hebrew, and as a teenager, the young Cohen wanted to become a rabbi. Although he decided against this career path, throughout his life his practical philosophy was significantly influenced by the Jewish teachings. Cohen was not a child of a classical working-class family, but nor did his family belong to the bourgeoisie. Yet his father was a convinced democrat and socialist (Beiser 2018, 8).[3] Cohen's encounter with Judaism and social thought left a remarkable imprint on his thinking, as he took Judaism to be inseparable from socialism throughout his intellectual life.

Cohen stayed away from politics in his younger years. In Breslau, he studied rabbinical and philosophical literature. Through his teacher Zacharias Frankel (1801–1875), Cohen became acquainted with a "moderate" form of Judaism (Beiser 2018, 10). It is also during these years that Cohen learned about German Idealism and one of his teachers even advocated Jewish Kantianism. However, there are no traces of this idea in Cohen's later thinking (cf. Beiser 2018, 12–13). Until receiving his doctorate in Berlin in 1865, Cohen dealt extensively with Jewish theology, and in his dissertation, he elaborated on the Platonic foundations that would later play an essential role in his philosophy.

How actively the young Cohen followed the political developments cannot be judged by his early psychological writings. As Chapter 3 will show, in his early years, Cohen was mostly concerned with *Völkerpsychologie.* However, the article "Heine and Judaism," which appeared anonymously in 1867 in the *Berlin Wochenschrift für Jüdische Angelegenheiten*, could be read as a reflection of Cohen's early socialist view.

Until that time, Heine had been discussed only by Christian thinkers. Cohen sought to reclaim Heine as a Jewish thinker. He shared the then commonly held view that "Judaism" marks a distinct way of thinking, independent of one's confession, writing: "Ideas are no isolated entities of the human mind. They arise out of

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3 Beiser notes that his father read the left-liberal *Berlin Volkszeitung*, and in the Cohen household, the maid sat with them at the table (2018, 8).

and through each other, run into each other, intertwine among each other, and merge with one another sometimes completely, sometimes only partially" (Cohen 1867/2012, 231). By examining the Jewish roots of the German poet from a Jewish perspective, Cohen followed a *cultural-political motive.* While Christian intellectuals were quick to condemn Heine to the "literary Jewish hell" (Cohen 1867/2012, 195 – 196), Cohen aimed for a more thorough altercation with the Jewish elements.

Cohen's argument is that the Jewish thought in Heine led toward his socialist stance. By preaching the Jewish-inspired "progress of mankind with pantheistic thought," it was a logical step to demand "equal rights for all people," Cohen claims (Cohen 1867/2012, 218). In *History of Religion and Philosophy in Germany* (1834), Heine wrote: "The great word of the revolution, which Saint-Just pronounced: *le pain est le droit du peuple*, reads with us: *le pain est le droit divin de l'homme.* We do not fight for the material needs of the people, but for divine rights of man" (Heine 1834, 175). Cohen welcomes Heine's *idealist* notion of egalitarian justice, concluding that because Heine grew up Jewish, he was an early advocate of "socialist thought[s] of the equality of all estates" (Cohen 1867/2012, 219). As Beiser has noted, the connection between Judaism and socialism is "the most important message" of this essay (2018, 43). When Cohen later turns toward Kant's critical philosophy, he lets go of Spinozism and pantheism. Yet the relationship between Judaism and socialism as well as the juxtaposition of materialism and idealism apparent in this text remain relevant issues throughout Cohen's intellectual life.

In the Franco-Prussian War of 1870 – 1871, the socialists voted in the parliament against a continuation of the wars of conquest (cf. Nipperdey 2013c, 354). At the time, the party's program was less radical as they were still in favor of a Lassallean program that included the endorsement of the state. Yet due to their critical attitude toward the war, the socialists were seen from this point on as "opponents of the constitution" and stigmatized as "enemies of the empire" (Nipperdey 2013c, 354).

The constitution of the German Empire in 1871 introduced universal suffrage. *Prima facie*, it would seem that the constitution played into the hands of the socialists. However, the three-class electoral system in Prussia was deeply inegalitarian. Not only were women excluded; Bismarck had also introduced universal suffrage in the hope of getting the liberals on his side—a wish that remained unfulfilled (Ullrich 2013, pos. 428). While the Prussian state that was divided into legislative, executive, and judicial powers appeared democratic, it was so composed that the emperor and the chancellor had full control over the executive (Ullrich 2013, pos. 488). Military decisions rested with the emperor and Bismarck, his closest ally (Ullrich 2013, pos. 516). What, at first glance, might look like a democratic state in practice resembled more a "military-state authoritarian" regime (Ullrich 2013, pos. 498).

When the memories of the March Revolution finally faded, the SPD gained more supporters. The party was hit all the harder when Lassalle unexpectedly died in 1864. Finding a suitable successor proved difficult. Johann Baptist von Schweitzer (1833–1875) initially seemed to be the most suitable person for the party presidency. He was the editor of the party newspaper The Social Democrat (*Der Sozial Demokrat*), which was initially run by Marx, Engels, and Liebknecht. However, it quickly became clear that Schweitzer was extremely favorable to Bismarck's social reform measures. The members feared that the SPD could lose its oppositional status under his leadership. A series of articles was published, in which Bismarck's social policy was presented in an extremely positive light. When Schweitzer was finally elected as a member of the liberal-conservative Landtag in 1871, the Socialist Party forced him to resign. Schweitzer was considered a traitor, and the party was now more willing to follow a radical course.

In the 1870s, the SPD was the strongest opposition in the empire (Ullrich 2013, pos. 542). In 1875, the socialist workers' parties merged to jointly acquire more voters (see Nipperdey 1992/2013, 354). The Gotha Program still included some aspects of Lassalle's workers' program, such as productive cooperatives and Lassalle's "iron law of wages" (Nipperdey 1992/2013, 354). More radical Marxist elements, such as the "characterization of the state as a class state" or a "commitment to revolution," did not find their way into the program (Nipperdey 1992/2013, 354). Although the Gotha Program was promoted by Marxists, Marx criticized it in a letter to Wilhelm Bracke, stating that it showed a superficial understanding of his principles (Marx 1875).

Meanwhile, Lange had set foot in the academic world. In 1869, the University of Zürich was urgently looking for someone who could teach logic. They contacted Lange who by then had gained great popularity through the first editions of the *History of Materialism* and *The Worker's Question.* In that same year, Lange became a professor (Eckert 1969, 191) and received the news that he was seriously ill. After declining several professorships in Germany, he finally accepted a call from Marburg in 1872 (ibid., 201). As his condition worsened, he finished the second edition of the *History of Materialism* in 1873, two years before his death (ibid., 208). Lange had just started out as an academic, intending to write a book on "Logic," a "Textbook of Psychology," an "Edition of Schiller's Philosophical Poems," and a "Theory of the Democratic Republic" (ibid., 210). Much to our detriment, Lange finished all of them *except* for his political work, which he considered to be his *oeuvre* (ibid., 210). On the plus side, he managed to get Cohen to come to Marburg, where the young and promising scholar was able to finish his first major book on Ethics, *Kant's Foundation of Ethics* (1877/1910/2001).

In this book, Cohen develops two fundamental ideas that are central to the ethical underpinnings of social democracy. As we will see later, Cohen argued that eth-

ical deliberation takes its start from the "facts of culture." Based on this idea, he provided a novel interpretation of the moral law that was meant as a *social* ideal. Cohen was incredibly grateful to Lange for bringing him to Marburg after his habilitation proposal had been declined in Berlin. Regardless, Cohen did not hold back on his opinions about Lange's naturalization of the Kantian framework. In opposition to Lange's psychophysical interpretation, Cohen argued that the study of transcendental consciousness must preclude naturalist commitments.

In Cohen's view, the "functions of ethical judgments," based on the moral law, are reflected in the social norms we create—a thought that later reappeared in Natorp's understanding of the "basic structures" of the social world (Natorp 1899, 147). This functionalist interpretation does not leave any interpretative room for a naturalist conception of apriorism. Especially in ethics, where the prescriptive laws must deviate from the norms we perceive, the foundation of ethical judgments cannot be based on "psychic organ[s]" but are to be considered as rules guided by the "noumenal idea" of freedom (Natorp 1899, A179 B206). Similarly, this anti-psychological conception of consciousness is to be found in the work of Rudolf Stammler who takes the task as "an epistemological one, but not a psychological one" (EL, 23). In the same vein, Natorp turns to an "epistemological criticism" in order to separate it from "psychology" (SP, 23). While Lassalle's writings still determined the doctrines of German social democracy, Cohen accompanied his friend Lange on his way to death. At the same time, he provided an anti-psychologist and purely critical interpretation of the Kantian system, which would go on to become one of the most distinct features of the Marburg School.

1878 marks a crucial turning point in the history of German Social Democracy. As it was mentioned earlier, on May 11 and June 2, there were two assassination attempts on Kaiser Wilhelm I, which were followed by a series of events that not only had drastic effects on the social democratic party but also on university institutions (Sieg 2013, 19). Both assassins were associated with the socialist party. However, due to the press and pressure from Bismarck, in the view of the general public, the assassination attempts were seen as being initiated by socialists.

In the case of Max Hödel (1857–1878)—the first assassin—the discovery of a Social Democratic membership card was sufficient to link the assassination to the party. Hödel was an unemployed journeyman plumber who once belonged to the SPD in Leipzig but had been expelled from the party at the time of the assassination. The SPD distanced itself from Hödel in a public letter published in the *Berlin Freie Presse* by making his resignation letter public. In the letter, Hödel stated that it was below his "dignity" to remain a member of "a party that uses the present state of society so that its functionaries can live a pleasurable life" (Sieg 2013, 21). The atmosphere created by Bismarck and the press, however, did not allow for a more nuanced evaluation of the situation. Attempts to correct the nar-

rative were futile. At the next *Reichstag*, Bismarck submitted a motion for the so-called "Socialist Law," which prohibited any party activities.

Bismarck's first attempt failed. However, after another assassination attempt on the emperor took place on June 2, 1878, Bismarck found himself in a different situation. The second assassin was Karl Nobiling, a descendant of a well-respected bourgeois family (Sieg 2013, 22). Like Hödel, Nobiling was once tied to the party but had left at the time of his assassination attempt. In the case of Nobiling, however, a different narrative was created. As an unemployed philosopher with a doctoral degree, Nobiling was stylized as an expression of an alleged educational crisis. On the evening of the second assassination attempt, Theodor Fontane (1819–1898) wrote: "One thought to have found in 'education' the substitute [for religion as the force to maintain the social order], and glorified 'compulsory schooling' and 'compulsory military service.' Now we deal with the consequences of this wrong assessment" (Sieg 2013, 23).[4]

After the second assassination attempt, Bismarck's second motion on passing the Socialist Law was accepted by the Reichstag. From 1879 onwards, the party was prohibited from activities such as forming organizations, distributing leaflets, and publishing socialist literature (Nipperdey 2013c, 355). As a result of these events, Prussia underwent a "conservative turn" (Sieg 2013, 27). Employers heeded the ministry's call to stop hiring socialists. Numerous citizens were locked away for improper behavior. In his lectures on the German SPD, Bertrand Russell claimed that a man was imprisoned for two years and five months for drunkenly bawling "The emperor is dead" (Russell 1896, 91). The socialists met in secret, despite the law, more open than ever to Marxian radical ideas as a reaction to the government's unreasonable measures (Nipperdey 2013c, 356).

Not only the socialist party but also the universities struggled with the aftermath of the assassination attempts. After the second attempt, humanistic education was held responsible for the anarchistic views of the youth. Bismarck criticized universities for not preparing their students for reality (Sieg 2013, 36). Heinrich von Treitschke's article "Der Socialismus und der Meuchelmord" (1878), published in the *Preußische Jahrbücher*, linked the events to the increase in "academic left-liberalism" (Sieg 2013, 36–37; von Treitschke 1879). Hermann von Helmholtz (1821–1894), Julius Bergmann (1839–1904), and Jürgen Bona Meyer (1829–1897) tried to defend humanistic education while distancing themselves from socialism (Sieg 2013, 38–39). Cohen remained quiet on this issue. At the time, he

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4 Translation note: The original Fontane quotation says "Jetzt haben wir den Salat." My translation renders the meaning of the German idiom.

was involved in the "Jewish Question"—a topic evoked by Treitschke's antisemitic piece "Our Prospects" that initiated the *Berlin Anti-Semitism Controversy*.

Originally, the Socialist Law was scheduled to expire in 1881—the same year in which Paul Natorp habilitated under Cohen in Marburg. But when the time came, it turned out that the party's popularity had increased compared to the pre-law state. Bismarck's plan to win over left-wing voters while they were suppressed failed and so he advocated for an extension of the Socialist Law. The Reichstag, which by then consisted of conservative members, voted for a nine-year extension. While there is little textual evidence of the socialists' activities at the time, we know from Eduard Bernstein that their lively exchange that would later lead to the "revisionism dispute" that began already in 1881–1882 (Bernstein 1925, 11). When the Socialist Law was finally abandoned in 1890, the party had to reorganize.

At that point in time, Natorp had already achieved the position of associate professor, and shortly thereafter he assumed the chair for philosophy and pedagogics. Natorp was raised in Düsseldorf as the son of a pastor. He had a diverse range of interests in addition to philosophy, studying music, history, and classical philology. He was a passionate and devoted musician who composed various sonatas. He even reached out to Brahms, who advised him against attempting to support himself through music. Due to his interest in pedagogics and participation in a student society, Natorp naturally took an interest in political matters. However, unlike Lange, who had experienced less divided times, the young Natorp found himself in a dramatically different era where political statements made by public officials were scrutinized carefully after the assassination attempts.

Heavy police interventions and Bismarck's attempt to fight social democracy admittedly did not help to strengthen the socialists' confidence in the state. Yet Bernstein thought little of anarchist strands within the party. Inspired by Lange, he argued for a reformist version of democratic socialism (Bernstein 1892b, 102). Bernstein distinguishes between three levels of consciousness: the natural, the scientific, and the critical consciousness (Bernstein 1892b, 103). Only the latter, he argues, is capable of providing the robust normative framework that the party needs (Bernstein 1892b, 104). The final chapter of *Prerequisites of Socialism* (1899/1902) is titled "Kant against Cant." "Cant" thereby stands for the naïve repetition of Marx's doctrines by the so-called "orthodox Marxists" (Bernstein 1892b, 104).[5]

The era of neo-Kantianism was infamously inaugurated by the motto "Back to Kant." Bernstein introduced the revisionist program with an allusion to this motto, claiming that the SPD needed to go "back to Lange" (Bernstein 1892b, 104). Howev-

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5 Bernstein attacks figures such as Nikolaj Berjajev (1900a, b, c), Georgij Plechanov (1899a, b, c), Karl Kautsky (1906/1970), and Franz Mehring (1974a, 1974b).

er, Bernstein did not uncritically adopt Lange's views: "However appropriate the mathematical-physiological method may be, it is insufficient to analyze the laws of social development" (Bernstein 1892c, 135). Although Bernstein's considerations were closer to Marx than those of the neo-Kantians, the orthodox Marxists rejected his revisionist program.

In "Bernstein and Materialism" (1898a, 1898b) and "Materialism or Kantianism?" (1899), the orthodox Marxist Georgy V. Plekhanov (1856–1918) reacted to Bernstein's Kant-inspired, reform-based socialism. In reference to Gottlob Ernst Schulze (1761–1833), Plekhanov argued that Kant's practical philosophy was based on a contradiction. On the one hand, causality was taken to be valid only in experience, but on the other, Kant would attribute a causal function to the idea of freedom. Bernstein replied that he envisioned the *First Critique* as the epistemological foundation for socialism (Bernstein 1899/1902). What had the appearance of a philosophical discussion was in fact a discussion of whether the SPD should adopt a reformist or revolutionary doctrine.

In the course of events, Cohen confessed his socialist stance in the "Critical Appendix" to the new edition of Lange's *History of Materialism* (1896). At the time, Cohen's affirmative stance on socialism was largely unknown outside of his narrow circle.[6] Cohen's decision to publish his socialist views as an appendix to Lange's work might be related to an event that took place in 1893.

In the same year, an essay by an unknown author entitled "Fraternity and Social Democracy" appeared in the journal *Burschenschaftliche Blätter*. The article stated that "the social revolution could take place peacefully and without bloodshed," and so it called out to fight unitedly against the socialist's propensity to violence by "stepping onto the battlefield" at their respective universities (Anonymous 1893, 205). This call resulted in various protests all over the country, Marburg included.

During these events, Natorp addressed the protests in one of his lectures, recommending that his students study the socialists' demands carefully before forming a judgment (Jegelka 1992, 38). This provoked harsh criticism. In a public letter, Natorp was attacked by an anonymous person, claiming that he would seed antinational ideas in the young people's hearts instead of educating them on how to lead a state (Jegelka 1992, 38). Natorp was even asked to vindicate his actions in front of the Prussian Minister of Culture, Friedrich Althoff (1839–1908). Natorp's

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6 Like Lange, Cohen was also in favor of the liberals. In correspondence with Natorp, Cohen wrote: "I would advise [...] to be cautious in criticizing the liberals, firstly, because they are always forced to defend themselves, and secondly, out of prudence, because without them ideals could not be discussed. Apart from the liberals, no one understands that the authority of the state is only a means to establish and guarantee the independence of the individual" (Cohen 1892/1986, 204).

statement reads as follows, "[W]hen the fraternities in particular, including here in Marburg, were called upon to hold public demonstrations against Social Democracy, I, who had been a fraternity member myself, believed that I should counter such exuberance; I recommended that the students refrain from the daily political struggle and study the relevant issues more thoroughly. In so doing, however, I took a different attitude toward social democracy than the one prevailing in the press. What I have in mind as a goal is a more peaceful development of the inevitable class struggle" (cited after Holzhey 1986b, 236). Cohen made use of his good relationship with the education minister Althoff to mend fences.[7] After paying Althoff a personal visit, Cohen reported to Natorp that the "matter was now settled" (Cohen 1895/1986b, 235). The public attention, however, hurt his career. When Natorp got rejected for a professorship in Halle for a second time, he speculated that these events might have played a role in this decision.[8] Similarly, Cohen was angered by the way the government handled the issue. In a letter to Natorp, he criticized that "[t]he gentlemen would not recognize the seriousness of their times" (Cohen 1895/1986b, 235).[9]

Against the background of this event, Cohen's decision to publish his socialist thoughts as a critical appendix to Lange's *History of Materialism* appears in a dif-

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[7] The relationship between Cohen and Althoff is discussed in a letter from 1885, where Cohen reports: "I met Mr. Althoff on the street. He stopped me and we had such a nice chat that we continued walking down the street arm in arm" (Cohen 1895/1986, 157–158). On another occasion, Cohen thanks Althoff for the book "Bibliography of the German Universities" (Cohen 1895/1986a, 238).

[8] After receiving a rejection for a professorship in Halle, Natorp published an opinion piece in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* in 1908. Against the accusation that he was pursuing political motives, he objected: "I have hardly ever attended Social Democratic meetings [...]. What I have often and unabashedly said in a similar vein is the warning to bourgeois democracy: to prevent its policies from forcing genuinely democratic men into the ranks of Social Democracy even more than they already are. [...] I am a socialist and a democrat; that is precisely why I hold to the state as long as the trace of its idea can still be recognized in it" (Natorp 1908, quoted in Holzhey 1986b, 366–367). Cohen then advises Natorp to "write as little as possible about the matter. Denunciations are best answered by contempt" (Cohen 1908/1986, 365).

[9] That the conservative government under Bismarck preferred to regulate its political power in camera is also reported by Bertrand Russell: "I had always been told that, in the *Reichstag*, the members had perfect freedom of speech [...]. To some extent this is true, and especially during the Exceptional Law, Socialist members would often speak for hours, apparently to empty benches, but really, through the press, to their followers and the whole country. But Bebel, on the only occasion when I heard a Social Democrat speak in the *Reichstag*, was called to order by the President, for mentioning that 'in the highest quarters' things had been said against Social Democracy. Some facts about the Emperor, it would appear, are so discreditable, that merely to mention them is an insult to Majesty" (Russell 1896, 88).

ferent light. Cohen understood that Lange's bestseller could reach a much wider audience than his detailed, philosophical treatises. At the same time, his reflections were formulated carefully enough so as not to interfere with the Ministry. His somewhat odd decision of presenting his commitment to socialism in the critical appendix might thus be read as an attempt to spread ethical socialism without repeating Natorp's mistake.

The period from 1890 onward in Germany is characterized by nationalist tendencies. Not only in Germany, but throughout Europe, nationalism was one of the "strongest forces shaping political and social life" (Nipperdey 2013c, 595). The time saw a turn from left-wing "cultural nationalism" to a "right-wing nationalist movement" (Nipperdey 2013c, 595). Nipperdey distinguishes three types of nationalism characterizing this period: "average" nationalism, characterized by "the feeling of being German" (Nipperdey 2013c, 595); "normal nationalism," characterized by an attitude against the British and social democracy (Nipperdey 2013c, 597); and "radical nationalism" based on "racial faith and cultural criticism" (Nipperdey 2013c, 602). Cohen is at times ambiguous on racial matters (as we later see in his stance in the Antisemitism Controversy), but he certainly rejected racial bigotry. Yet Cohen was a German patriot and defender of the idea that Germany fought for the right cause in the First World War. In this vein, Cohen's ethical justification of the state went against both the left-wing and the right-wing camps. With his a priori justification of the state, Cohen went against left-wing theories that conceived of the state exclusively in an empirical sense. At the same time, Cohen went against the hostility to the state in the right-wing camp, arguing that only a socialist organization of the state would align with its underlying ethical function. "Law and state must […] be strictly and surely recognized as the reality of justice […]. The reality of law and state must thus be transformed according to its underlying ethical idea" (Nipperdey 2013c, 78–79).

A similar ignorant stance is noticeable in Cohen's and Natorp's attitudes toward imperialism. The years before the First World War were characterized by an "irrational fleet appropriation" (Nipperdey 2013c, 671). England had allied with Russia, Japan, France, and unofficially with the United States, and despite Germany's obvious weaker position, the emperor opted for an expansion of military rearmament. The aim was to assert Germany as a world power (Nipperdey 2013c, 678). During these years, the nationalist right and Social Darwinism gained popularity (Nipperdey 2013c). Despite some initial reservations, the SPD finally voted in favor of war. Various left-wing intellectuals believed in the positive effects of the war; among them were Cohen and Natorp. Cohen even planned to travel to the US to "enlighten" American Jews about the cause of justice that Germany allegedly fought for (Cohen 1914/1986a, 433). In a letter from 1915, Cohen writes: "It does not

seem utopian to me to think that after the war we shall call everyone German friends throughout the world" (Cohen 1915/1986, 440).[10]

In Cohen's eyes, Germany and the Jews were not only united by their Jewish-Christian culture, but also by their fate. In a letter to Natorp from 1914, Cohen states: "What happens to the Germans happened to the Jews, which is why I understand our German fate more easily than you do" (Cohen 1914/1986b, 439). We find this idea in several of his works such as "Inner Relations of Kant's Philosophy to Judaism" (1910/2009), "The Social Original Sin" (1915/1995b), "The Social Ideal in Plato and the Prophets" (1916/2002), and the *Religion of Reason Out of the Sources of Judaism* (1918/1966). During the last years of his life, Cohen became more concerned with the issue of what it means to be German, claiming that "only with deep insight into the essence of Germanness (*Deutschtum*) can one make true progress" (Cohen 1915/1986, 440–441).

According to Cohen, wars are just if "they bring about peace" (Cohen 1910/2009b, 440). War should never be idealized (Cohen 1910/2009b, 340). Yet, in Cohen's eyes, the consciousness of other nations still lacked "theoretical insight into the foundations of moral thought" while German culture was based on an ethics that allowed for a consideration of the "bloody changes of the history of nations" under the basic moral problem between "the poor and the rich" (Cohen 1915/1997a, 558). In connection with the Jewish spirit, the German culture would provide the true universal and cosmopolitan foundations. Natorp was, if anything, worse than Cohen. In *The German Vocation (Der Deutsche Weltberuf)* (1915/1918), Natorp portrays the German Empire as the final stage of the telos of reason, thereby revising intellectual history in hegemonial and chauvinist terms.

As the war progressed, enthusiasm within the Social Democratic Party, which was comparatively low from the outset, ultimately petered out. Various members saw through the Imperialist agenda, which went against the "war of defense" they had initially signed up to. But when Russia ordered general mobilization on June 30, the Social Democrats were convinced that Germany acted against this agreement (Nipperdey 2013c, 692). In the same year, the SPD broke into two camps as the more radical left-wing camp was no longer willing to support the Imperialist war party. With Karl Liebknecht as the head, the USDP and the Third International were brought to life (ibid., 784). The SPD, on the other hand, transformed into a

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10 Despite the "humanitarian attitude" in Cohen's writings, Sieg considers his late political writings as "war literature," thereby opposing Lübbe's reading according to which Cohen's views secure him a position in the "tradition of Enlightenment thought" (Sieg 1994, 393, cf. Lübbe 1963). The propagandistic tendencies in "An Appeal to the Jews of America" (1915) and works such as "Perpetual Peace" (1914/1997b), "About the Peculiarity of the German Spirit" (1915/1997a), and "Germanness and Judaism" (1916/1997b) support Sieg's thesis.

"national reform party" that continued to support Germany's active stance in the war (ibid.).

Natorp made no secret of his positive outlook on imperialism. In *The German Vocation*, he writes: "Certainly we want to preserve our own. But why did the whole world have to begrudge us that? Why were we not allowed to place our little ship quietly in the harbor?" (TGV, 2). According to Natorp, "Germany" developed into a "world nation" because it was, above all, committed to "higher" rules: "be it God, be it spirit, the reason for world development, or whatever. The idea [that grounds ethical thinking] is what distinguishes our position from others, for which we must fight for or fall" (TGV, 2). Echoing Cohen, Natorp argues that German thought was, after all, so progressive because it included a "concept of history" focused on the future—a thought derived from "Hebrew prophecy" (TGV, 12).

I will not try to veil the problematic aspects of the proponents of the Marburg School. Even though the Marburgers had the philosophical means to tackle the imperialist wrongs of the pre-war era, their practical implementation failed. Despite Natorp's attempt to address the mistakes made in his post-war published work *Social Idealism*, he failed to succeed in anchoring the school of thought in the left-wing theories of the twentieth century.

In the works of Ernst Cassirer, however, we can detect traces of an ethical theory inspired by Cohen that could translate the philosophical underpinnings of the Marburg School into a practical political approach at the outset of the twentieth century. While studying under Georg Simmel in the 1890s, Cassirer encountered Cohen's interpretation of Kantian philosophy, which sparked his interest in the Marburg School. Due to his Jewish background, Cassirer was compelled to emigrate and eventually settled in Sweden and the United States. Although Cassirer's ambitious theory of symbolic forms drew on a range of other sources, he continued to be influenced by Cohen's interpretation of Kantian philosophy throughout his career. It was through this lens that Cassirer developed a critique of fascism.

In spite of the imperialist views held by some of the members of the Marburg School, the present book will show that they addressed fundamental issues that are still relevant to contemporary discussions surrounding capitalist critique. In particular, they sought to understand how structural injustices could be addressed from a Kantian perspective while also grappling with the complexities of historical development. These questions remain pertinent today, as evidenced by Charles Wright Mills' critique of John Rawls' Kantian-inspired account of justice, which highlights the problematic nature of a priori reasoning and the potential for reinforcing structural inequalities through a misguided notion of universality (Mills 2017). Similarly, Gerald Allen Cohen's attempts to translate Marx into an analytic account of functionalism were met with criticism for not sufficiently reflecting

the normative implications, resulting in a lack of justification of the differentiation between norms that reinforce capitalism versus those that do not (cf., e.g., Vrousalis 2020, Roemer 2017). While this book does not engage with these more recent debates, it will demonstrate that the Marburg left-Kantians developed fruitful accounts that sought to overcome the limitations of ideal approaches by engaging more extensively with the structural nature of political injustice and by embedding their Kantian critique in descriptive factual circumstances at hand that may be fruitful for contemporary debates.

Apart from the overall original thesis, which argues that the Marburg School deployed various distinct theories, requiring that they be revisited in light of a more general trend of socialist Kantianism at the turn of the century, every chapter herein develops at least one novel thesis that is meant to correct current narratives and interpretations about this topic. I have structured the book so that each chapter can stand independently without interrupting the wider argument. Balancing these two aims was not always easy, and I hope the reader will forgive me if, at times, one needs to go back to get the full scope of the argument.

The current chapter has provided a historical overview of the central figures and ideas constituting Marburg Left-Kantianism with a view to contextualizing their ideas within the political landscape at the time, showing the appreciation and drawbacks they experienced due to their left-liberal positions, justifying the choice of rendering their ideas under the term of "Left-Kantianism" by comparing some key features they shared with the Left-Hegelians, and giving an overview of the structure of the book.

The second chapter presents Friedrich Albert Lange as a "naturalist left-Kantian." In recent literature, it has been suggested that Lange's social and political philosophy is separate from his neo-Kantian program. *Prima facie*, this interpretation makes sense, given that Lange argues for an account of social norms that builds on Darwin and Smith rather than on Kant. Still, I argue that elements of psychophysiological transcendentalism can be found in Lange's social and political philosophy. A detailed examination of the second edition of the *History of Materialism*, *Schiller's Poems*, and the second edition of *The Worker's Question* reveals that Lange sought to develop a systematic foundation of psychophysiological transcendentalism that is presupposed in his social and political philosophy. Because Lange adheres to both materialism and idealism, we find two lines of argument in his philosophical justification of jurisdiction and, consequently, in his account of socialism, which later played a critical role in Cohen's and Stammler's left-Kantianism.

The central theme of the third chapter is Cohen's embedded account of ethical rationality. The first section of the chapter demonstrates that Cohen's formulation of the categorical imperative already incorporated a context-sensitive framework.

The subsequent section traces Cohen's evolution from his earlier psychological phase to his mature stage. Contrary to the commonly held belief that Cohen was an "anti-psychologist," I contend that a thin foundation of *Völkerpsychologie*, a philosophical movement that concentrated on the materialized forms of knowledge, persists in his mature ethical doctrines. By accentuating the psychological components, I argue that Cohen's practical philosophy is best comprehended as a functionalist interpretation of the categorical imperative that scrutinizes material concepts and beliefs with regard to their ethical function in society.

The fourth chapter focuses on Cohen's Kantian functionalist political philosophy, which has so far been overlooked. Aiming to provide a more thorough interpretation of Cohen's justification of socialism that tackles his view from the logical presuppositions, I embed his critique of capitalism within his logical system of the "pure will." First, I show that his ethical critique is best illustrated in his late philosophy of religion. There, we see that his ethical critique focuses on liberation movements that allow for qualitative distinctions in history and counterfactual considerations in the genesis of moral progress. Second, I argue that these tendencies are best understood as a functionalist account of moral rationality that evaluates institutions, belief systems, and practices with respect to their ethical purpose. Third, I conclude that, at the time, Cohen's Kantian functionalism proved to be a valuable theory for those who were dissatisfied with the historical materialist foundation that left no room for tackling the problem of capitalism in normative or ethical terms. I conclude that Cohen's critique of capitalism is best understood as a *functionalist* account that evaluates empirical movements normatively with regard to their ethical purpose.

In the fifth chapter, I challenge the idea that the Marburg School's views on socialism were a coherent school of thought. Instead, I propose the concept of "left-Kantianism" as an open term that encompasses a wide range of innovative socialist approaches to Kant's ideas at the time. To explore this concept further, I examine the works of three neo-Kantian scholars: Stammler, Natorp, and Cassirer. First, I discuss the "scientific dispute" between Hermann Cohen and Rudolf Stammler, highlighting the differences in their Kantian justifications of socialism, particularly in their notions of law, history, and the political implications of their practical philosophies. Next, I focus on Natorp's defense of the First World War and reveal the flaws in the ethical approaches taken by both Cohen and Natorp. Finally, I demonstrate that crucial elements of Cohen's ethics survived in Cassirer's critique of fascism in his book, *The Myth of the State*, which was published in 1946 as a reaction to the Second World War. Through this exploration, it will become clear that Marburg left-Kantianism contains a rich foundation for various political theories.

In the sixth chapter, I briefly summarize the main achievements of the left-Kantians' approaches, hinting at possible fields and discussions where their views can potentially have a meaningful and fruitful impact.

2 Friedrich Albert Lange's Left-Kantianism

2.1 Introduction

In recent years, historians of philosophy have shown a growing interest in the early neo-Kantian thinker Friedrich Albert Lange (1828–1875).[11] Intellectuals like Hans Vaihinger (1852–1933)[12] and Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) were deeply inspired by Lange's aesthetics (Breazeale 1989; Hill 2003; Hussain 2004; Hussain and Patton 2016; Wilcox 1989, Salaquarda 2010). Lange also left an indelible mark in the fields of psychology, logic, and philosophy of science (e. g., Beiser 2014, 2018; Bellucci 2013; Eckert 1968; Edgar 2013; Freimuth 1995; Köhnke 1986; Patton 2011; Sieg 1994; Teo 2002). Even his social and political philosophy was widely read by his contemporaries. Lange's political works enjoyed a small resurgence in the 1890s, when the SPD politician Eduard Bernstein (1850–1932) tried to revise the socialist party program with the slogan "Back to Lange" (Retter 2007, 103).[13]

Influenced by the physiologists Hermann von Helmholtz (1821–1894) and Johannes Müller (1801–1858), Lange naturalized the a priori conditions of experience and offered a psychophysiological interpretation of the Kantian framework. This means that the a priori conditions of experience are not taken as principles separated from the psychological faculties; they are instead grounded in our psychology. Until recently, it has been common to emphasize Lange's evolution theory-based explanation of class struggle in his social and political philosophy where he draws on Smith to explain social behavior. Some scholars conclude that Lange's social and political philosophy is not Kantian (Beiser 2014, Klein 1994, Vorländer 1911/1974). Although Frederick Beiser acknowledges a common "starting point" in Lange's and Kant's practical philosophy, he argues against a connection between Lange's socialism and his neo-Kantian program (Beiser 2014, 362). According to Beiser, Darwin and Smith, rather than Kant, influenced Lange's view of the social realm.

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11 This chapter is based on the paper "Psychophysiological Transcendentalism in Friedrich Albert Lange's Social and Political Philosophy," which was published in 2022 in the *Journal of Transcendental Philosophy*, and § 2.5 draws on parts of the article "'Left-Kantianism' and the 'Scientific Dispute' between Rudolf Stammler and Hermann Cohen," which is forthcoming in *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*.

12 Vaihinger discusses Lange in *Hartmann, Dühring, and Lange: A Critical Essay* (1878). The influence of Lange's aesthetic position on Vaihinger is also evident in the *Philosophy of Als-Ob. System der theoretischen, praktischen und religiösen Fiktionen der Menschheit auf Grund eines idealistischen Positivismus; mit einem Anhang über Kant und Nietzsche* (1911).

13 For Bernstein's critical treatment of Lange's philosophy, see the introduction or the series of articles "Zur Würdigung Friedrich Albert Lange's" (1892), which appeared in the *Neue Zeit.*

Similarly, Lange's contemporaries such as the Marburg neo-Kantian Karl Vorländer (1860–1929) argued against a "connection between his [Lange's] socialism and Kantianism" (Vorländer 1911/1974, 122). On the same token, we find Armin Klein stating: "An ethical justification in a Kantian sense does not exist in Lange's thought. Precisely because only his theoretical philosophy was Kantian, he thought he was not permitted to transfer it in his ethics" (Klein 1994, 138). *Prima facie*, these views seem plausible.

If viewed in isolation from his other works, we get the impression that Lange's moral and political philosophy breaks with his Kantianism. With a concept of class struggles inspired by August Weismann's (1834–1914) adaptation of Darwinian evolutionary theory and Adam Smith's (1723–1790) notion of moral sentiments, Lange argues that the capitalist class struggle is a result of evolution. His account of social norms seems to have little to do with Kant. In the second edition of *The Worker's Question* (1870), where Lange deploys his evolutionist explanation of capitalist class struggle, he views "sympathy" and "egoism" as human dispositions that result from the "struggle for survival." In *Mill's Views*, Lange considers the possibility of interpreting Kant's categorical imperative as a psychological principle; however, he ultimately rejects this option and accepts a sensualist foundation of morals. Moreover, Lange claims in the *History of Materialism* (2005) that Kant's "positive" (=practical) philosophy would not suffice in modern times characterized by breakthroughs in the natural sciences. Because of the metaphysical entanglements of Kant's deductive approach to justify the a priori foundation of the moral law, Lange was convinced that his practical philosophy was not compatible with an enlightened scientific worldview (HM, 254).

Because Lange supports a psychophysiological conception of the conditions of experience, his heirs use his philosophy mainly as a negative foil to demarcate their anti-psychologistic thought of line (Cohen KFE, 1896/1974, 33; Vorländer 1900, 1911/1974). Although Cohen appreciates Lange's efforts regarding the social question, he criticizes Lange's naturalist approach to justify socialism (1896/1974). With this difference in mind, Beiser claims: "If Lange is the father of Marburg neo-Kantianism, then that tradition was based on patricide" (2014, 357). Lange's naturalist interpretation of Kant has, thus, been excluded from the "classical" stream of the critical-idealist neo-Kantians in a strong sense (Heis 2018, 3; Ollig 1979, 219).

My central aim in this chapter is to show that Lange's social and political philosophy builds on his neo-Kantian framework after all, leaving us with two separate lines of argument that justify his account of socialism. I argue that Lange implicitly presupposes psychophysiological Kantianism when dealing with psychophysics and normativity in *The Worker's Question*. Even though Lange did not sufficiently outline the Kantian foundation, I suggest that his social and polit-

ical philosophy involves a naturalist justification of the categories and an aesthetic account of ethical idealism.

The argument unfolds as follows. In the second section, I present Lange's *prima facie* naturalist (Darwinist and Smithian) conception of class struggle in more detail and as an alternative to the most influential positions of Marx. In the third section, I highlight the neo-Kantian aspects of Lange's philosophy of science. Against proponents of natural-scientific materialism, I show that Lange argued for a novel adaptation of Kantian transcendentalism inspired by the materialism controversy (*Materialismusstreit*). In the fourth step, I emphasize those sequences in his social and political writings suggesting that Lange presupposed his Kantian foundation. Thereby, I show that Lange's political approach is not exhausted if explained by his adherence to Darwin and Smith. I argue that Lange's naturalism leads to a Kantian foundation that he previously worked out in the *History of Materialism.* In the fifth section, I outline the primary aspects that distinguish Lange as a Marburg left-Kantian. Through an examination of Lange's adherence to both materialism and idealism, I identify two distinct lines of argumentation that justify socialism within his conception of jurisdiction. These arguments align Lange with both the natural law and positivist traditions of his contemporary context, making him an invaluable inspiration for later Marburg left-Kantians.

2.2 Lange's Naturalist Socialism as an Alternative to Marx

In the first chapter of the book, I mentioned that after a failed March revolution took place, a reactionary phase followed. In the mid-1850s, the economic upswing led to a strong liberal party, The German Progressive Party. Hermann Schulze-Delitzsch (1808 – 1883) developed the main ideas for the party. Instead of a proletarian revolution, Schulze-Delitzsch believed that worker unions and loans would provide the working class with the means to improve their situation (Herkner 1916, 463). However, in the eyes of Marx and Engels, Schulze-Delitzsch's approach was "bourgeois" and failed to address the structural origin of the problem (Herkner 1916, 463). While these two camps characterized the 1850s, the decade after required a novel assessment of the "social question."

Lange was among those progressive liberals who sought for a more left-leaning course of the Progressive Liberal Party. Whereas Marx's ideas were too radical for the liberals, most of the left-liberals preferred Lassalle's notion of legal reforms and a democratic organization of the state. As I have mentioned earlier, in 1863, the Progressive Liberals invited Lassalle to comment on their new program (Russell 1896, 47). Lange, however—who was drawn to statistics—was unsatisfied with

the intellectual landscape. In a letter, he says: "I did not come to socialism by study-ing socialist literature but by studying national economy and statistics" (Lange cited in Ellissen 1894, 189). This becomes clear in *The Worker's Question* (1865/ 1870), where Lange provides an evolutionist and naturalist explanation of class struggles. He favors thinkers such as Darwin, Mill, Malthus, and Smith over Marx and Lassalle.[14] Instead of finding the reasons for inequality in the logic of capitalism (Marx) or the undemocratic organization of jurisdiction (Lassalle), Lange offers a theory of socialism that allows for a naturalist perspective on the social question.

This section outlines Lange's naturalist or—as he called it—"materialist" ap-proach. For now, my primary aim is to demonstrate why Beiser, Vorländer, and Klein suggest excluding Lange's socialism from his Kantianism. This materialist line of argument also inspired other left-Kantians in the Marburg School, which is an aspect I will discuss later in the book.

Lange's materialist position can be broadly summarized as follows: Class divi-sion is neither a result of the logic of accumulation nor is it caused by the historical development of positive laws. Instead, it originates in the egoistic human nature seeking to gain an advantage in the evolutionary "struggle for survival." Human nature, however, is also equipped with sympathy—a disposition that evokes the in-clination to constitute an ethical society. Societal progress is not dependent on a revolutionary transformation but proceeds incrementally and requires legal re-forms. Lange agrees with Marx that one of the main problems of capitalism is that the "products of labour are treated as [private] commodities." In his view, Marx was correct in pointing out that the production of commodities is based on collective action and, thus, should be treated as such (WQ, 11). However, without denying the crucial role of economic and juridical laws, those are only effects of an underlying natural cause grounded in human social nature: egoism.

Lange explains the social nature of human beings with Adam Smith's sensual-ist ethical theory. Like Smith, Lange assumes that the moral character of human beings consists of two contradicting tendencies: egoism and sympathy. Whereas our egoist nature is responsible for the inclination to secure a high position, our sympathetic disposition allows us to ignore personal interests and to think collec-tively. Sympathy is, thus, the natural desire opposed to egoism. Capitalism pro-motes competition, unequal opportunities and entails a high degree of luck. Social-ism, by contrast, strives for a just distribution of goods, equal opportunities, and

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14 I focus here on the second edition of *The Worker's Question* and the *History of Materialism.* I weigh his later works more heavily for two reasons. First, in my view, Lange was working toward a systematic account of psychophysiological transcendentalism that is not yet noticeable in his early works. Second, I take it that his revisions mirror more accurately what Lange actually had in mind.

the minimization of the role of chance in a person's outcomes. It thus goes back to our sympathetic character. Capitalism and socialism are both historically contingent. However, the natural cause of human nature disposed toward class struggle appears to be timeless.

Although both sympathy and egoism are natural dispositions, sympathy is grounded in our consciousness. It allows us to picture the social realm as it is and as it should be. Later, I will say more about Lange's conception of normativity. For now, it is important to note that Lange is convinced that we can resist the demands of evolution, which is why he declares himself "not to be an unconditional supporter of the Darwinian system" (WQ, 31). In contrast to orthodox Darwinian positions such as those found in Ernst Haeckel's (1834–1919) *Natural History of Creation* (1868) or Herbert Spencer's (1820–1903) *The Principles of Ethics* (1879–1893), Lange refrains from purely causal explanations. In Lange's eyes, the capacity to create and act on self-given laws is the most distinctive feature of human beings.

Lange argues that Malthus' law of population—based on statistics—came methodologically closer to reality than Marx's method. Malthus formulated in *An Essay on the Principle of Population* (Malthus 1998) a law that claims an imbalance between food production and the rising number of people in the world. While food production—due to the limits of crop fields—progresses arithmetically, the human population increases exponentially. With this principle, Malthus tried to prove that food shortages were inevitable. In *The Capital* (1867/1962), Marx criticizes the Malthusian naturalist explanations of impoverishment that confuses human malfunction with natural laws. While Lange provides a Darwinist alternative to Marx's method of historical materialism that is sympathetic to Malthus' law of population, Marx's historical materialist notion of class struggles is meant to critique Malthus' naturalism. According to Marx, periods of food shortages and poverty must not be explained by the scarcity of natural resources. Instead, Marx tries to identify historical laws that reflect economic logic and lead to industrial "necessities" (Marx 1867/1962, 731).[15]

Lange acknowledges the point raised by Marx that Malthus' law of population played directly into the hands of classical economic theories. Malthus' theory would allow the blame for structural problems to be shifted onto nature (WQ, 14). Yet Lange prefers Malthus' methodology over Marx's and Lassalle's Hegel-inspired ideas of class struggle. He translates the current class struggle into Weis-

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15 Similarly, Lassalle's juridical explanation of class division refrains from naturalist explanations. For Lassalle, class struggles are an expression of historically contingent power relations. Abuse may be prevented with a democratic principle that allows the participation of all members of society (Lassalle 1861). Lange criticizes Lassalle's account, which would show "reactionary tendencies" (WQ, 4).

mann's Neo-Darwinist account: "The foundational law of the struggle for survival lies in the physiological nature of a surplus production of germs of life (*Lebenskeime*) that are doomed" (WQ, 48). While nature creates manifold versions of an organism, only the one best suited to the environment continues to exist. This law, Lange continues, "also applies to the societal human life" (WQ, 48). The "germs of life" are replaced by the "germs of skills needed for a leading position" (WQ, 48). For each leading position, a high number of skilled and capable people are to be found. Lange believes that this mechanism demonstrates that the Darwinist principle also applies to the social realm (WQ, 50).

Judging solely from this section, it may seem plausible to separate Lange's neo-Kantianism from his social and political philosophy, as Beiser, Vorländer, and Klein suggest. Since Lange is drawing on naturalist explanations instead of Kantian elements, it makes *prima facie* sense to exclude his neo-Kantian framework from his Darwinist and Smithian approach in his social and political philosophy. However, Lange's view on naturalism or materialism and Kantianism is more complex. The following two sections show that naturalist explanations are preliminary steps to Lange's "psychophysiological transcendentalism." He thus presupposes this Kantian foundation in his social and political philosophy.

2.3 Lange's Inductive Logic of the Natural Sciences

This section highlights the Kantian elements of Lange's view on logic in the natural sciences. Further below in the chapter, I will argue that he presupposes this foundation in his social and political philosophy. But first, I depict Lange's psychophysiological examination of scientific logic in the context of the "materialism controversy" (*Materialismus-Streit*).

The materialism controversy emerged in the 1850s at a time when German universities became internationally competitive in the field of the natural sciences. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, England and France were the leading countries in this field. A favorable funding structure, the implementation of research awards, the establishment of new disciplines, and the "federal competition" amongst universities, however, led in the 1850s to high-quality research in Germany (Nipperdey 2013a, 495). Under these conditions, the romantic worldview appeared outdated. Philosophers and natural scientists sought a more favorable outlook on the natural sciences free from speculative entanglements. Materialism was the answer.[16]

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16 Although natural-scientific materialism is naturally concerned with questions of knowledge,

The most famous proponents were Carl Vogt (1817–1895), Rudolph Wagner (1805–1864), Jacob Moleschott (1822–1893), Immanuel H. Fichte (1796–1879), Heinrich Czolbe (1819–1873), and Louis Büchner (1824–1899). The most radical monistic and deterministic position is found in Carl Vogt. Carl Vogt is of the opinion that human consciousness and the will are mere "brain functions" (Vogt 1847/2012, 5). According to Vogt, the physiological causes of the soul's activity are therefore to be investigated by natural-scientific methods. He claims that "every natural scientist [...] with reasonable logic skills must come to the conclusion [...] that thoughts stand in the same relationship to the brain as the bile to the liver or urine to the kidneys" (Vogt 1847/2012, 6). Others such as Rudolph Wagner defended a more moderate form of materialism. Wagner justified his dualistic point of view with the argument of non-contradiction: as long as faith does not come into conflict with the natural sciences, materialism and religion can be combined. He regards the world of faith as a closed system that can be accepted independently of the sciences: "To me, faith and science are two worlds, each of which resembles a system of concentric circles, placed in relation to each other in such a way that both systems touch and intersect each other at certain points, therefore act on each other, but their curves never run into each other, but into themselves" (Wagner 1852/2012, 46). However, the materialism controversy was not meant to clarify differences within the movement; from the beginning on, this debate was meant as a public discussion with the aim of promoting a materialist worldview. This worldview assumed the existence of a mind-independent external world that can be scrutinized with empirical-scientific methods; takes objective validity to be pertaining to empirical claims; and takes materialism pertaining to the natural realm only, thereby rejecting sociality as a materialistic matter as it is assumed in historical materialism.[17]

Lange agreed with the materialists and even more so with the empiricists of the anglophone tradition that objective empirical statements require inductive logic. At the same time, Lange was convinced that necessary logical judgments regarding the conditions of experience were possible. Due to the latter, Lange remained Kantian as he explained the foundation of logic based on subjective categories of understanding. However, in contrast to Kant, Lange argued for an a

the current has also been involved in sociopolitical issues since its inception. The materialists understand their political task not only in defending their position against conservative attacks. They are also concerned with making the new scientific knowledge accessible to a wider readership in the form of popular literature (cf. Gregory 1977, 7–8).

17 Frederick Gregory identifies a fourth principle: the non-existence of God (Gregory 1977, x). Although there is a clear tendency to atheism among materialists, this does not pertain to Rudolph Wagner.

posteriori examination of the a priori conditions of experience. Although Lange appreciated the materialists for steering philosophy into the "right naturalist direction," he identified severe shortcomings in their positions and aimed to solve them in a Kantian manner. We now take a closer look at this.

Lange argues that we *nolens volens* create idealized concepts in science that play a crucial role in inductive inferences.[18] As mentioned earlier, he claims that "inductive logic" was the only methodology of the sciences that allows for objective statements about the world (HM, 274). In contrast to the materialists, however, Lange does not accept a realist position that leaves mental states and the subjective conditions of experience unexplored. Lange is convinced that objective statements need to be viewed in relation to subjective categories.

Lange rejects the Kantian method that tries identifying a priori conditions through transcendental deduction and argues for the empirical scrutiny of the conditions of experience. Whereas Kant deduces a priori necessary conditions of experience, Lange believes that only empirical investigations, hence psychological and physiological scrutiny, will lead us to necessary judgments about the conditions of experience. Lange thus changes the Kantian framework in fundamental aspects and avoids claims based on the assumption that we can derive objective principles from the perceived things without clarifying the natural laws structuring our perception (HM, 287).

Despite Lange's empirical orientation, he is eager to find a theory that investigates the crucial role of mental idealizations in the logical foundation of science. According to Lange, a theory of scientific knowledge must reflect all elements—including hypostatization, ideas, and presuppositions—that are part of scientific inferences. Since we necessarily create ideal concepts that deviate from our sensual experience, we must accept that these idealizations play an essential role in our knowledge generation. We have never perceived the "forms of geometry" nor the "algebraic form" of "magnitude or force in their absolute accuracy" in nature (HM, 263). And yet, we would necessarily draw on geometrical idealizations to make inferences about natural phenomena.

To underpin this claim, Lange discusses the elliptical form of a planet's orbit. The ellipse has never been perceived in its shape, nor is it possible to know the shape of the planet's orbit independent of our perception. However, we create an image or a "hypothesis" based on our mathematical measurements (HM,

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[18] Lange added this discussion in the second edition of the *History of Materialism*, more specifically in "Die Physiologie der Sinnesorgane und die Welt als Vorstellung" and "Der Standpunkt des Ideals."

263). Even though Lange rejects the Kantian method as a scientific method, he is convinced that Kant offered the best available explanation regarding this matter.

Lange illustrates his neo-Kantian or transcendental foundation of inductive logic with two hypothetical cases. In the first case, we observe that complementary colors appear "exceptionally vivid" next to one another (HM, 265). If we then experience a case that refutes this principle, we must find another generic term to explain the phenomenon. However, a different picture is painted in the second case, where we learn something about the "quality" of the "physiological condition of experience" (HM, 265). If we look through a telescope that has a stain on the lens and notice a black spot, we can infer that a black spot will always (or necessarily) appear when using the telescope. Even though the stain on the lens is a contingent aspect we perceive a posteriori, it allows for a necessary judgment because it deals with the condition of the (telescope) experience. If we then pick up the telescope and find out that the stain on the lens is gone, Lange notes that it was the "material" aspect of our judgment that was wrong (because, e.g., we might have confused the telescope for a different one) (HM, 265). The "form of necessity," however, was correct all along (HM, 265). Here, the Kantian implications of his theory are illustrated: "It would not be possible" to call "a combination of two sensations knowledge if the foundation for this combination was not grounded in the organization of our consciousness" (HM, 288). Instead of Kant's deductive critique, Lange views the a priori conditions of experience as natural properties that shape human reasoning and appear in the way we perceive and think about the empirical world.

Lange's argument against materialism requires a thorough understanding of Heinrich Czolbe's position. Czolbe is an extreme empiricist who holds that the "basic principle of materialism" is based on a commitment to inductive logic (Czolbe 1855/2012, 136). He compares using deductive logic with "someone trying to make a liquid clear but throwing unclear things in it" (Czolbe 1855/2012, 136). Since materialism is meant to deliver "a sensually clear conception," it must be based on inductive judgments only (Czolbe 1855/2012, 137). Lange aims to show that materialism is only a preliminary step to Kantianism—a thought that reemerges in his social and political philosophy. He agrees with Czolbe that "inductive logic" was the only methodology allowing for objective statements (HM, 274). However, he saw a severe problem in Czolbe's radical empiricist rejection of apriorism, namely, the lack of attention given to mental states that make necessary judgments possible.

Lange criticizes that the materialist Czolbe would base his epistemology unknowingly on the "postulate of perceptiveness" (*Postulat der Anschaulichkeit*). In Lange's view, this postulate was committed to the metaphysical claim that we can derive objective principles from the perceived things without clarifying the

laws that structure our perception (HM, 287). The materialists would face the following problem. On the one hand, materialism would reject a priori conditions of knowledge that allow for necessary assertions and hold onto the belief that all objective principles are derived from sensations. On the other hand, materialism would claim that the laws of nature—such as the Newtonian laws—are necessary. "It is true always and forever that a stone, which is not backed up by a base, falls toward the center of the earth," claims Büchner (1855/2012, 186). According to Lange, the materialists must accept that they either have to buy into the empiricist's stance that knowledge is genuinely hypothetical and necessary judgments are, thus, not possible.[19] Or—if holding onto the view that necessary principles are possible—they must bite the bullet and admit that empiricism and materialism are wrong (HM, 265).

However, by accepting the possibility of necessity on natural grounds, Lange faces a problem that neither the empiricists nor the Kantians had to face before. How is it possible that the naturalist conditions of experience can only be grasped empirically and at the same time be justified as a priori necessary conditions?

Because Lange was aware of this problem, he welcomed the critical reading of the Kantian framework in the second edition of the *History of Materialism* that offered a solution to this problem. In the first edition, Lange did not see the possibility of viewing the idea of the thing-in-itself and the categories merely as methodological concepts. Lange was convinced that the thing-in-itself was based on a metaphysical claim that assumes the existence of things beyond their empirical appearance. However, Cohen's *Kant's Theory of Experience* taught him differently. "[W]e cannot know if a thing-in-itself" exists, but a "consistent application of the laws of understanding" results in a "problematic something, which we take for the cause once we have accepted that our world consists only of mental representations" (HM, 265).[20] Since every perceived object is dependent on a mental representation that fundamentally shapes how we experience sensory input, Lange differentiates between objective and subjective concepts. We proceed objectively when we eliminate "the impact of prejudiced pictures and inclinations" and find

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19 Lange claims that classical empiricists such as Hume, Mill, and Smith were more nuanced on this issue (1875/2015, 287). Mill did not assume that our experience consists of external things. By accepting that the experienced objects are mediated through sensations, Mill protected his position from problematic metaphysical claims and argued against the possibility of necessary judgments.
20 Beiser rightfully points out that Lange did not consequently argue for a critical concept of the thing-in-itself, which is why we sometimes still find the claim that the thing-in-itself exists in the second edition of the *History of Materialism* (Beiser 2018, 84). For Edgar, this means that Lange did not offer a theoretical basis that managed to overcome the tension between his psychophysics and his Kantian dualism (Edgar 2013, 110).

laws that can be tested and verified (HM, 473). Lange realizes that embracing a metaphysical interpretation of the thing-in-itself would entail committing to a notion of truth transcending the empirical world. Cohen's critical and methodological interpretation of the absolute proves to be more alluring for Lange's empiricist perspective. This view allows him to take the thing-in-itself as an idea that manifests non-ideally within the perceived object.

Regarding the logical principles, however, the issue seems to be more difficult. On the one hand, Lange takes them as logical categories that constitute our experience; on the other hand, he argues that it is possible to investigate them with empirical methods. In other words: Lange seems to contradict himself, agreeing to empiricism and idealism at the same time. To solve this issue, Lange advocates a "problematic" interpretation of the categories of understanding analogously (HM, 288).

Lange argues that while Kant, who calls the categories "*Stammesbegriffe*," would grasp the categories as if they had metaphysical status, we would develop an idealized notion of the categories that "appear" in substantial judgments (HM, 288). Even though it is in Lange's view possible to investigate the natural (physiological and psychological) foundation that constitutes our logical thinking, the categories are also taken as logical idealizations. A critical or "problematic" reading of the categories allows Lange to uphold the idea that there is a rational foundation that constitutes our thinking and, at the same time, to agree with materialism, believing that these principles are based on our nature. In contrast to Kant, Lange argues that we neither deduce nor define the categories definitively. Instead, we first assume them by presupposing an idealized image of the a priori conditions. In a second step, we empirically scrutinize the psychological conditions constituting our thinking. Lange thereby argues for a framework that allows—as Lydia Patton formulates it regarding Lange's *Logical Treatise*—for "an account of necessity not reducible to materialism or psychologism" (Patton 2011, 150). For Lange, necessary judgments are possible, even if the epistemological preconditions are natural factors that require empirical scrutiny.

We have seen that Lange's approach combines idealized concepts with empirical research to identify foundational psychophysiological principles constituting our experience of objects. Thus, Lange's psychophysiological transcendentalism can be read as both an accommodation of materialism and a Kant-inspired critique of materialism.

2.4 Psychophysiological Transcendentalism in Lange's Political Philosophy

I have shown that, for Lange, a thorough reflection of scientific practice leads necessarily to a Kant-inspired position of critical idealism. Since we rely on Kantian idealizations when we deliberate objectively in science, we need to accept an adapted version of the Kantian framework that can explain necessary judgments while doing justice to the latest insights of psychophysics at the same time. Instead of the Kantian method based on the transcendental deduction, we ideally assume and empirically investigate the physiological and psychological preconditions that allow for logical inferences. In this section, I argue that in *The Worker's Question*, Lange's naturalist explanation that presupposes an empiricist or a materialist worldview is likewise just a preliminary step to a Kant-inspired investigation of the conditions of social experience. What Lange is after is the scrutiny of the psychophysiological preconditions of our social reality. Egoism and sympathy appear as temporary concepts or placeholders that require further scientific scrutiny.

According to Lange, Darwin has shown that humans share one crucial aspect with plants and animals: the "struggle for survival" (WQ, 2). Lange transfers the evolutionist struggle for survival to the social realm. He claims that "analogously" to the physical principle, we find the same tendencies in our social behavior (WQ, 48). From an evolutionary standpoint, Lange explains this against the background of the egoistic nature of human beings. The "struggle for survival" that plays out in the capitalist organization of the social realm is a manifestation of a human trait. Egoism alone, however, does not suffice as an explanatory concept. As we can investigate the natural world with the inductive logic of the empirical sciences, we can examine our social behavior and social reality with the methods of the natural sciences.

To Lange, understanding capitalism means scientifically scrutinizing the psychophysiological principles that are responsible for injustices in capitalism. In the second edition of *The Worker's Question*, Lange draws on psychophysics' latest developments to explain the mechanisms of our behavior that constitute injustices in the social realm. As the following paragraphs show, Lange was not fully satisfied with Darwin, Malthus, and Smith's account of morality. Similar to his aim in the *History of Materialism*, he argues that the psychophysiological scrutiny of the conditions of social experience would provide the "scientific foundation" constituting our social experience and behavior. Knowing the principles of our actions allows us to counteract unjust behavior.

This becomes clear when Lange builds on the Weber-Fechner law to formulate a principle of pleonexia. The original Weber-Fechner law says that our perception of pressure grows linearly to the logarithm of objective growth. The amount of

pressure that is needed to feel a difference depends on the pre-existent pressure level. The higher the pre-existing pressure level, the more pressure is required in order to feel a difference. Lange translates this principle into one of the feelings of joy evoked by the increase in money. The principle of pleonexia says that a slight rise in income would significantly impact their well-being for poor people. However, a considerably higher raise for wealthy people is required to create the same effect (WQ, 115–118).

Lange is operating here on two levels. The Smithian account contains a naturalist explanation of (un)ethical behavior; Lange is dealing here with a vague concept of morality. The psychophysiological account is a more precise way of explaining human actions; it asks about the conditions of social experience, thereby drawing on Kantian transcendentalism. Lange identifies egoism as a fundamental character trait that is needed to assert oneself in the capitalist "struggle for survival." However, the concept of egoism is too vague to account for a scientific principle of human cognition. In *Mill's Ansichten*, Lange claims that Adam Smith offered with his sensualist explanation one of the "most appropriate concepts," however, he considers his ethical principle "deficient" (MAS, 21). Lange claims: "Smith's moral principle is too one-sided in the emotions of pain and pleasure" (MAS, 39). By stepping away from a simplified sensualist explanation and agreeing on a scientific explanation of pleonexia, he, thus, moves away from a vague materialist (sensualist) to a neo-Kantian (scientific) explanation.

In the *History of Materialism*, Lange claims: "Materialism has always been based on the observation of nature; in the present day, however, it [...] must place itself on the ground of exact research" (MAS, 329).[21] Materialism, naturalism, and sensualism are only correct insofar as they seek to find naturalist explanations of our actions. Lange's primary goal in the *History of Materialism* is to show that in the history of philosophy, materialist movements—such as the one from the 1850s—often functioned as a critical tool by setting limits to metaphysics. However, this is not a full concession to materialism on Lange's part. Lange counteracts materialism with a Kantian adaptation of transcendentalism that demands studies of the exact sciences. When Lange pays merits to Smith who traces ethical behavior back to egoism (and sympathy), he takes the same argumentative path. Like the materialists, Smith offers a helpful theory that moves away from an unfounded conception of actions. However, the Smithian concept of egoism needs to be replaced by scientific principles that explain our social behavior.

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21 As Hermann Cohen correctly points out, Lange's concept of materialism is to be understood in a broad sense: "He grasped materialism not in the narrow sense of the psychological question of body and soul, but in its universal significance for the problem of matter" (Cohen 1896/1974, 37).

One might object that the resemblance between Lange's theoretical and his political philosophy alone does not yet prove that he builds on the same presuppositions as in *History of Materialism.* However, a closer look into *The Worker's Question* shows that Lange explicitly mentions that he aims to exchange vague naturalist explanations of human morality for scientific-anthropological explanations.

At the beginning of the third chapter on "luck and happiness," Lange outlines the chapter's goal. Lange is—among other things—concerned with the "connection of man's inner happiness with his outer situation" (WQ, 83). This is important "in so far as one wishes to rise above the standpoint of vague moral considerations" (WQ, 83). Lange is instead concerned with insights that "belong to natural scientific anthropology" (WQ, 83). Lange clarifies that materialism cannot account for the explanation of scientific principles. Instead, Lange takes a scientific approach that deals with constitutive principles of social behavior that can be tested and verified. Letting go of vague concepts, however, means letting go of materialism. Since for Lange, identifying the necessary conditions of our (social) experience presupposes Kantian idealism, the principle of pleonexia leads away from an empiricist or materialist stance and toward a Kantian position. It is, thus, only possible to accept the psychophysiological law as a general principle if we overcome materialism.

However, the philosophical foundation of natural-scientific explanations in Lange's social and political philosophy is not the only aspect that displays Kantian elements. In his moral philosophy, Lange takes inspiration from Kant and Schiller and their discussion of aesthetic consciousness. In the last chapter of the *History of Materialism*, Lange argues: "The same principle that prevails in the realm of beauty, art, and poetry, prevails in the realm of action as the true *ethical norm*" (HM, 554, italics added). He states that "[o]ne thing is certain: that man needs a supplement of reality by an ideal world created by himself, and that the highest and noblest functions of his spirit cooperate in such creations" (HM, 557). Lange believes that ethics or the "world of values" is an aesthetic hence fictitious but necessary complement to the "world of being" (HM, 557).

Prima facie, this may seem surprising since Lange advocates moral statistics, thereby defending a descriptive notion of morality. Before Lange was a professor in Marburg, he held a chair in Zürich that focused on the philosophy of the inductive sciences. In a letter from 1862, Lange states: "My ethics are statistics" (Ellissen 1894, 106). Additionally, Lange takes the moral law as an a posteriori and fictitious product of Western civilization that leads to ethical behavior but turns out to be wrong (MAS, 57–68).[22] However, in the last chapter on idealism in the *History of*

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22 According to Lange, the Kantian moral law may reflect the Zeitgeist, but it does not tell us any-

Materialism and *Schiller's Philosophical Poems*, Lange's aesthetic consciousness bears some systematic resemblance to Kant's notion of practical reason. Imagining a better world is, for Lange, not arbitrary. Like the logical consciousness, the imaginative consciousness follows a structure that is reminiscent of Kant's practical philosophy. Lange claims that there is "one fundamental idea" in Kant's ethics that survives an aesthetic foundation of ethics, namely, "Kant's idea of moral freedom" (SPG, 14–15). Although Lange criticizes Kant's methodology for being "speculative" and based on outdated metaphysical assumptions, he views the idea of freedom as a feature that originates in Kant's ethics (SPG, 14–15). However, since Lange's concept of freedom still differs significantly from that of Kant, this statement should be taken with caution. Lange adopts a Schiller-inspired concept of moral freedom. Despite the moral agent's capacity to imagine a counterfactual world, the idea of human beings as ends-in-themselves does not allow for deductive inferences about the metaphysics of the intelligible world. Instead, a fictitious idea opens an ideal "standpoint," from which society is imagined harmoniously. It shares the same origin as the unified notion of the 'thing-in-itself,' a concept presupposed within the realm of natural sciences. "The point of unity, which makes the facts a science and the science a system, is a product of free synthesis and thus arises from the same source as the creation of the ideal" (HM, 553). Although Lange believes Schiller came much closer to an aesthetic conception of morality than Kant, he regrets that even Schiller would sometimes fall back into a Kantian and rationalist notion of the moral law. Most evidently, in the 10th letter of *Schiller's Aesthetic Education of Man* (1793), Schiller would disregard his naturalist foundation and claim that the moral law was based on a "deduction of reason," making his theory susceptible to problematic metaphysical entanglements (MAS, 21). Because of this mistake, Lange believes that Schiller's poems are more instructive since they deal with "figurative" truths (HM, 559).

By accepting a concept of figurative truth, Lange introduces another notion of objectivity that differs from objectivity presupposed in empirical studies. For Lange, true art is not just fiction but conveys a statement considered objectively true. "Art" proceeds "objectively" in so far as it manages to bring across a message in a sensually appealing manner (SPG, 16). He illustrates this thought by comparing the "didactic genre" with the "fable" (SPG, 16). Although both genres aim to teach a practical life lesson, the fable is, in Lange's view, a higher form of art because it

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thing about the form of moral judgments or its function as a rational testing procedure (MAS, 57 –58). However, he endorses Kant's ethics because it fosters ethical behavior. Lange does not differentiate between Kant's Groundworks, the Bible, or, e.g., Mandeville's The Fable of the Bees. In Lange's view, they would all have a favorable influence on people's behavior because they help overcoming selfish behavior (SPG, 2).

manages to wrap up the message more appealingly. In Lange's estimation, Schiller's poems—executed in the purest metrical form—surpass all other genres: The "highest goal" of art is to find the "right form of language" that speaks the most to our senses (SPG, 20).

There is another systematic component in Lange's ethics that recalls Kant: the "general will" or the concept of the "absolute," which prompts us to imagine social norms as a coherent picture of the social realm (SPG, 10). Although Lange rejects Kant's transcendental logic, he believes that the idea of a cohesive whole goes back to a genuine aesthetic inclination of our consciousness. While we find unjust norms in the real social reality, we inevitably create a mental image of a just society. It is only natural to overlook unjust interests and imagine society as a unified whole. Our aesthetic nature forces us to exceed the "empirical reality" (HM, 509). And this idea of a cooperative and harmonious society is, in Lange's view, the "origin" of "what is everlasting in morality" (HM, 509). Lange, thus, offers an aesthetic alternative to the rational and moral "will" that fundamentally determines Kant's ethics.

Another Kantian resemblance is noticeable regarding Lange's dualist conception of morality that leads to an inner conflict. The Kantian agent deals with the battle between sensual inclination and practical reason. The Langean agent's struggle, however, takes place between the empirical "reality" (the world as it is) and moral "fiction" (the world as it ought to be): "An inclination of our nature constantly wants to combine the truth and the beauty" (SPG, 2). In Lange's view, we naturally "detest the shiny robe of a lie," which is why we are not "satisfied if the truth appears in a distorted way" (SPG, 2). The "gleam of the beautiful" is in a "constant fight" with reality (SPG, 2). This inner conflict is shown best in Schiller's poem "Ideal and Life" ("Ideal und Leben").[23] Lange argues against orthodox Kantian interpretations of this poem, such as Kuno Fischer's *Schiller as a Philosopher* (1858). Whereas Fischer believes that the protagonist of this poem is dealing with the inner conflict between inclination and reason, Lange interprets it as the struggle one must face in finding pleasure in the "pure form of beauty" (SPG, 76). An enlightened agent is not dependent on "articles of faith"; the aesthetically and scientifically educated agent can differentiate between fictitious ideals and empirical reality and, thus, must accept their deviation. This differentiation, however, comes with the never-ending conflict between knowing what is the case and desiring a coherent set of norms that ought to be the case.

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23 In the *History of Materialism*, Lange sometimes refers to this poem as "The Realm of the Shadows." In his view, the "beauty" of the realm of the shadows and its "value for human beings" were more strongly emphasized in this title (SPG, 60).

By arguing for an ideal of harmony, Lange offers a normative foundation that is inspired by and distinct from Kant's rationalistic approach. So far, I have only shown that Lange has an aesthetic-ethical account that justifies normative statements. In the preface of *The Worker's Question*, however, it seems that he moves away from the "Platonic" and thus idealistic aspects of his theory. "Some reader, who has taken a Platonic affection to the more abstract picture of my views in the last chapter of the 'History of Materialism,' may recoil from these applications and concrete explanations" (SPG, IV). What is still missing is the textual evidence showing that Lange presupposes this account in his social and political philosophy. I shall now argue that Lange implicitly presupposes this normative foundation in *The Worker's Question.*

This is indicated by the passages which Lange's critiques Lassalle and Marx. Lange identifies a biased view in Lassalle's "iron rule of wages" ("ehernes Lohngesetz") that says that the wage of the working class is always reduced to the minimum standard (1863, 5). Lange is sympathetic to this idea, mainly because it refutes the classical economists' assumption that the principle of "supply and demand" would regulate the free market justly. However, he criticizes Lassalle for not underpinning his thesis with empirical facts. Instead, Lassalle's argument relies on "referencing authorities" (WQ, 167).

Lange identifies the same problem in Marx's interpretation of the great Irish famine of 1845–1852. As mentioned earlier, Marx was eager to refute Malthus' law of population. Against the common assumption that the natural catastrophe of the potato blight was responsible for the significant food shortages in 1846, Marx tried to show that this was yet another effect of capitalism (Marx 1867/1962, 731). According to Lange, however, Marx's view was blinkered by his dialectical understanding of the class struggle that tries to boil all societal disruptions down to capital accumulation. Even though Marx builds on statistical data, Lange accuses him of a biased and one-sided depiction of this historical event. Marx and Lassalle—both influenced by Hegel—are said to suffer from "conflating the deductive and empirical method" (WQ, 237).[24]

Here, Lange "interlaces" a "methodological comment" (WQ, 226). He claims: "National economy requires both deductive inferences based on assumed laws,

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[24] In a footnote in *The Worker's Question*, Lange criticizes Hegel's concept of reason that would "declare the real for the rational" (WQ, 245). Already in 1865, Lange identifies in a letter to Engels a severe problem with Hegel's "mathematical and natural-scientific education" (Eckert 1968, 82). He accuses Hegel of presupposing a notion of nature that leads to a biased view of empirical facts. Although Engels agrees with Lange that Hegel's perspective on the natural sciences is—compared to the rest of Hegel's works—not one of his best works, he disagrees strongly with Lange's *Worker's Question* (Eckert 1968, 74).

and empirical facts, which only in combination can help to achieve one's aim" (WQ, 227–228). We have seen that Lange advocates a scientifically oriented perspective on socialism that builds on scientific and "empirical facts." But what is the philosophical basis in Lange that allows for deductions based on "assumed laws"?

These passages need to be interpreted against the background of the previously introduced aesthetic-ethical foundation of normativity. We find textual evidence for this claim in Lange's affirmative notion of "rationality" in *The Worker's Question.* Despite Lange's reservation against Kantian rationalism, he claims that human nature is installed with a "call for equality" based on "rationality" (WQ, 52).

According to Lange, we naturally feel inclined to create hierarchical societies. However, our nature exhibits features that prevent us from giving in to this inclination. It is the "pursuit of reason and freedom," Lange claims, that naturally "counterbalances" the self-centered tendencies of our nature (WQ, 56). Further below, he argues: "It is the pursuit of reason to improve the circumstances created by the struggle for survival. Reason requires the reduction of inequalities among peoples, a better proportion between effort and pleasure, and the abolition of slavery, where one part of humanity is sacrificed to enable a dignified life (Dasein) for others" (WQ, 266). Given Lange's aversion toward a wrong rationalization of ethics, it would be inappropriate to believe that Lange falls back into Kantian rationality. "Rationality" serves Lange rather as an umbrella term for the critical human consciousness that is responsible for the possibility of the scientific scrutiny of the conditions of our behavior based on a concept of equality that distinguishes human nature from animals. While we share with other organisms our egoistic nature, we can reflect upon our actions and choose to act otherwise. Since we—as calculating and aesthetic-ethical beings—inevitably create a universal image of a better world, the history of humanity is shaped by constant fights against the biological imperatives of evolution.

Although Lange does not elaborate on the concept of rationality or the foundation of his normative statements, it seems plausible that he draws on the notion of aesthetic consciousness when claiming that "the actual solution to inequalities must be measured by the idea of a harmonious society" (WQ, 52–53). As Lange replaces a materialistic with a scientific explanation of egoism, sympathy is replaced by an aesthetic-ethical principle of harmony. In both cases, Lange draws on systematic elements inspired by Kant.

One last objection might be that Lange's inclusion of Kantian elements in his ideal theory does not necessarily presuppose psychophysiological transcendentalism. Since this position requires a justification of the conditions of experience on psychological and physiological grounds, it would require an empirical and scientific justification of aesthetic experience to count as such.

Lange, however, differentiates between "primitive" pleasure and more "refined" pleasure. Whereas we find in Kant the distinction of "dutiful actions" and "acts out of duty" (G, 4:397), Lange argues for a sensualist equivalent. He distinguishes between pleasurable actions because of personal motives and moral actions we find pleasing because we act under the fictitious idea of a harmonious society, where everyone is treated equally (HM, 509). Because the normative realm deals with inner states that are not measurable, Lange's idealism ultimately remains subjective and unscientific. But precisely because of this subjectivist and speculative stance, he deliberately excludes his aesthetic standpoint from the scientific realm. His aesthetic-ethical Kantianism is part of his psychophysiological transcendentalism because it necessarily accompanies it.

Once we know more about the conditions of social behavior—as Lange tries to show with the psychophysiological principle of pleonexia—we strive for action-guiding laws under the idea of harmony that counteract the violation of this image. Lange's aesthetic renewal of the Kantian system not only allows to overcome a metaphysically charged method of deductive reasoning. It also aligns with a rational foundation of socialism that draws on the newest insights of psychophysics and aims for a harmonious society. We are interested in discovering the principles shaping our sociality because we—as aesthetic beings—necessarily create an "image" of equality.[25]

Lange does not refer explicitly to Kantianism in his social and political philosophy. However, in the first edition of the *History of Materialism*, Lange notes that he originally had planned to include a section on the "ethical and political sciences" or a "critique of the national economy" in his systematic Kantianism (Lange 1866a, XIII). Instead, we find passages in *The Worker's Question* suggesting that Lange's account presupposes psychophysiological transcendentalism. As mentioned earlier, Lange died before working out his systematic account in *The Theory of Democratic Republicanism* (Lange 1897, ix). However, the introduced sections suggest that naturalism or materialism and Kantianism are not mutually exclusive in Lange's account. Instead, it is a necessary preliminary stage for a psychophysiological renewal of the Kantian framework: "Often already an epoch of materialism was only the silence before the storm, which should break out from unknown crevices and give the world a new shape" (HM, 566). Lange was undoubtedly not a Kant-philologist who was concerned with merely repeating Kantian ideas. However, his account would be treated one-sidedly if not considered in light of his Kantianism. In his philosophy, Lange had a systematic understanding of transcenden-

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25 Cohen later criticizes Lange's aesthetic approach to the social question: "Ethics is not poetry, and the idea has truth value without relying on an image" (Cohen 1896/1974, 115).

talism in mind that not only fundamentally shaped his theoretical but also his political works.

Ursula Renz states that it is a distinct feature of neo-Kantianism that its proponents problematized the systematic character of philosophy but seldom overcame their systematic thinking (Renz 2002, 4–3). Although Renz is not targeting Lange *per se*, this statement holds true of Lange as well. Lange draws on psychophysiological laws that shape the social realm, and he connects rationality with the aesthetic image of a harmonious society. Thus, it would be wrong to argue that his social and political philosophy was merely built on naturalist thinkers such as Darwin and Smith.

2.5 Idealism and Materialism in Lange's Legal Philosophy

By adhering to materialism and idealism, Lange presents both materialist and idealist lines of argument, leading to different ways of interpreting his account of socialism. While Lange did not conduct a thorough philosophical study of legal norms, his vague stance on jurisdiction allows for his allocation to both the natural law tradition and the historicist tradition. As this section shall show, Lange's idealist justification of law aligns with the nineteenth-century natural law tradition, which posits that justice is a formal concept that is explicable through our aesthetic desire to harmonize our values. Conversely, Lange's materialist line of argument aligns with the ideas typical of the positivist tradition, which highlights the time-sensitive substantial aspects of justice and refrains from utilizing formal or ideal criteria to assess the validity of legal norms. While the purpose of this section is to provide a comprehensive account of Lange's socialism, the relevance of these two lines of argument will become evident in Chapters 3 and 5, where I shall demonstrate that Cohen derived inspiration from Lange's aesthetic line of argument, while Stammler drew upon the materialist account of socialism.

Let us first look at Lange's account of aesthetics that moves in a similar direction to that of the natural law tradition. As earlier shown, Lange is convinced that we can investigate the social realm like the natural realm with empirical-scientific methods due to the subjective psychological categories of understanding. However, there is one crucial difference between the social and the natural sciences. While in the realm of nature, scientific practice is guided by a critical conception of the "thing-in-itself," the examination of the social domain presupposes an ethical ideal of "equality" (Lange 1870, 266). Lange's aesthetic account is reminiscent of the natural law tradition as it argues for an innate moral conception of justice as an ahistorical idea, which allows us to criticize social norms. To Lange, the "idea of equality" functions as a critical concept. Injustices of an unequal distribution of goods,

the exploitation of workers, and the mechanisms supporting capitalism are viewed and criticized from an ideal point of view. Following the idealist line of thought, socialism appears as a moral movement striving for legal reforms based on an aesthetic foundation of justice.

But as noted in the beginning, we find, alongside Lange's aesthetic idealism, another line of argument that will later inform Stammler's materialist and positivist focus on class struggles. In this line of argument, Lange bases his political philosophy, inspired by an adapted version of Adam Smith's *A Theory of Moral Sentiments*, on two opposite natural dispositions underlying class struggles: Our inclination for "sympathetic" behavior and our inclination for "egoistic" behavior. Class struggles appear if structures promoting egoistic behavior are in place. Here, Lange takes legality in its contingent appearance: "Between Spartans and Helots, [...] between lords and subservient, between the noble and rabble existed a moral law based on class prejudices" (MAS, 57). Lange builds on a relativist conception of legality, suggesting that what counts as "right" depends on a legal contract that makes a legal norm just. "Even slavery or the payment of tribute to a robber can be regarded as a contract that was once considered lawful" (WQ, 252). His relativist conception of justice is also found in *History of Materialism*, where he states: "The whole practical philosophy is the changing and variable part of Kant's philosophy" (HM 254/453).

To illuminate the legal causes for social tensions, Lange's materialist account of socialism requires statistical investigations of tensions occurring within society. According to Lange, "class struggles" indicate that a system has not accommodated the material challenges of their time, thereby deploying a legal basis promoting egoistic (instead of sympathetic) behavior. The struggle between classes would refer to "real forces" based on unsatisfied needs and desires, requiring a change of laws so that the social tensions are minimized: "If [...] one complains of lack of promotion, and others regard him as a vain miser, both parts are often right in a certain sense; only the former should realize that the greater part of his reproach strikes at the social institutions existing at the time, and the latter should bear in mind that real forces are hidden behind such feelings, namely unsatisfied needs" (WQ, 49). Lange does not value one legal system over another based on an ideal principle. While the current system might have been a "right" fit in previous times under different empirical conditions, it now causes "unsatisfied needs," responsible for promoting egoistic behavior. Instead of moral deliberations, Lange argues here for empirical methods based on inductive reasoning to examine class struggles, allowing us to understand an unequal distribution of goods as an indication of an egoistic society. In a letter, Lange characterizes his historical relativism based on a sensualist account of morality aptly as follows: "My logic is probability calculation, my ethics are moral statistics, my psychology is based

on physiology; I try in one word to move solely in the exact sciences" (Ellissen 1894, 106). Socialism, in this line of argument, appears as a political movement based on a sensualist-empirical notion of justice, advocating to minimize class struggles by reforming legal norms so that material needs are satisfied more evenly, thus leading to structures promoting social or sympathetic behavior.

2.6 Lange: A Left-Kantian?

Can Lange's theory be classified as a "left-Kantian" one? In Chapter 1, I identified three key features that characterize Marburg left-Kantianism: (i) a teleological perspective on rationality; (ii) advocacy for socialism as a historical political movement; and (iii) a Kant-inspired methodology grounded in potential progress. Lange's approach, which considers the course of history with regard to sympathetic and egoistic tendencies, embodies such a teleological theory. This theory deploys a telos, which is considered an aesthetic idea of harmonious unity that informs our normative reactions to historically evolved injustices; the theory positions socialism as a movement requiring ethical-aesthetic solutions to historically evolved wrongs; and it justifies socialism by substantiating these fictional solutions as necessary for progress.

However, simply arguing that Lange should be included in the study of left-Kantianism based on the features I identified would be circular. Instead, we must examine the background conditions that led in the first place to his inclusion in the narrative of Marburg left-Kantianism. There are at least three reasons for this.

First, Lange's aesthetic idealism draws inspiration from Schiller's Kantianism. He posits an a priori idea of harmony that structures moral perception, leading to the imagination of a social world governed by systematically ordered norms. Lange critiques legal norms under capitalism from an ideal standpoint, identifying "wrongs" as conceptual inconsistencies between the harmonic idea and empirical prescriptive concepts.

Second, Lange is a Kantian who seeks to supplant the empirical tradition with scientific inquiry into the physiological basis of egoism and sympathy. The demands of socialists stem from the human conditions of social cognition, aiming to minimize class struggles and reduce unjust structures by actualizing "outdated" legal systems under new social conditions.

Third, Lange's political-ethical theory was a key part in the advancement of the left-Kantian movement. It was the first account to combine Kant and socialism in a manner that inspired various left-Kantian accounts in the Marburg School. Although later Marburgers developed their accounts based on presuppositions that

differed from Lange's naturalism, some of Lange's ideas are echoed in the "scientific dispute" that later arose between Cohen and Stammler (see Chapter 5). Therefore, Lange's account can be classified as a "left-Kantian" theory whose ideas continued to influence the development of Marburg left-Kantianism.

3 Hermann Cohen's Embedded Account of Ethical Rationality

3.1 Introduction

Cohen's practical philosophy is best comprehended as a functionalist account of ethical critique.[26] In this context, "functionalism" denotes a philosophical stance that evaluates social norms in relation to their function in society measured by their societal purpose, determined by the conditions of our subjective consciousness. As we will see in Chapter 4, Cohen argues that the labor laws prevalent in his time uphold an unjust capitalist system that fosters inequality. He proposes that we must instantiate ethical regulations, which are laws that do not contradict the Kantian notion of humanity, so that they fulfill their societal function. This functionalist interpretation of social norms commits Cohen to a thin notion of psychologism, which—in the nineteenth century—signifies a current concerned with the material side of knowledge. Although the complete explication of this perspective will be revealed in the forthcoming chapter, the current chapter endeavors to underscore Cohen's unwavering dedication to an account of rationality embedded in history and psychology.

Cohen holds on to a Kantian notion of transcendental logic, which is why he is typically considered an advocate of an anti-psychologistic and critical Kantian position. This, however, was not always the case. The young Cohen started his academic career in psychology, specifically the Berlin school of *Völkerpsychologie*,[27] before developing a Kantian philosophical system of the possibility of scientific and cultural cognition. On the one hand, various passages in Cohen's ethical theory suggest that he is highly concerned with the historical development of normative concepts that exclude a psychological approach. On the other hand, we also find in Cohen's philosophy an increased focus on intellectual figures, thought systems, and ideas that have fundamentally shaped and reshaped the academic and cultural discourse constituting our understanding of right and wrong. Cohen considers philo-

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26 This chapter is based on the article "Elements of *Völkerpsychologie* in Hermann Cohen's Mature Ethical Idealism," which was published in 2021 in *Idealistic Studies*, and includes parts of "'Left-Kantianism' and the 'Scientific Dispute' between Rudolf Stammler and Hermann Cohen," which is forthcoming in *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie.*

27 Interpreters sometimes use the translation "folk psychology." Since it is more common to stick with the German word, I will use the original name, *Völkerpsychologie.* Sometimes I will use the abbreviation "VP."

sophical concepts also as contingent or historically relative manifestations entangled with causal features and shaped by the cultural discourse within which they emerge. Various scholars focusing on Hermann Cohen's systematic philosophy have pointed out these two tendencies in his epistemology and religion (Adelmann 2000, 2012; Bernstein-Nahar 1998, 2004; Biagioli 2014, 2018; Bienenstock 2015; Bruckstein 2000; Edel 2010, 2013; Edgar 2020a, 2020b; Erlewine 2010; Fiorato 2018; Gibbs 2000; Giovanelli 2011, 2016, 2018; Heidenreich 2021; Howritz 2000; Hyder 2013; Kim 2015; Kinzel 2021; Kluback 1984, 1987, 1989; Melber 1968; Mosès and Wiedebach 1997; Motzkin 2000; Munk, 2000, 2005, 2006; Palmer 2006; Patton 2004; Pecere 2021; Poma 1988/1997, 2000, 2006; Renz 2021; Richardson 2003, 2006; Wiedebach 2000; Damböck 2017, 2018). They agree that in Cohen, the functions of consciousness are reflected in the materialized facts we produce—the "facts of culture" and the "facts of science." I will show that the historical elements in Cohen's Kantian philosophy do not exclude but in fact trace back to *Völkerpsychologie*—a philosophical current introduced by Moritz Lazarus and Heymann Steinthal, concerned with the materialized forms of knowledge responsible for his embedded account of ethical rationality.

It is common to differentiate between Cohen's early psychological phase and his later phases as an anti-psychologist, critical, and Kantian philosopher (Sieg 2003). Lately, however, there has been increased interest in *Völkerpsychologie* and Cohen's early phase (Beiser 2018; Edgar 2020b; Kusch 2019; Reiners 2020; Steizinger 2020). These works shed new light on Cohen's intellectual development. Egbert Klautke has shown that *Völkerpsychologie* "left its mark" on a wide range of academic fields in the nineteenth century (Klautke 2013, 2). Scott Edgar has argued that Cohen's development from psychologism to anti-psychologism was not a "rapid conversion" but a development, which was—at least to some extent—already inherent to his early view (Edgar 2020b, 255). In this chapter, I take a step further and show that even in Cohen's mature ethics, where we usually deal with historically embedded norms, we find psychological components incorporated (1907–1910). The view suggested here challenges the standard classification of Cohen's alleged anti-psychological phase and sets out the logical conditions that pave the way for his functionalist critique of capitalism.

I first outline the standard classification of Cohen's intellectual phases, which I shall criticize. In the early years, influenced by Moritz Lazarus (1824–1903) and Heymann Steinthal (1823–1899), Cohen advocated a broadly Herbartian position, which he built on the "apperception" thesis. According to this thesis, concepts contain a history and imagery that give them their meaning. For Lazarus and Steinthal, perception was not a passive but an active undertaking of the mind, relying on unconsciously "compressed" contents (*verdichtete Inhalte*) that shape our thinking (Kusch 2019, 254). *Völkerpsychologie* then seeks to decompress, hence reveal the

underlying stories and meanings. In this context, the young Cohen investigates the origins of myths, the idea of gods, and other concepts in a causal manner to trace the psychological roots of these knowledge contents. Later, however, he advocates a method that rejects a causal view of norms, ideas, and concepts and draws on transcendental logic to investigate the formal conditions of experience.

In his mature philosophy, most notably in *Logic of Pure Knowledge* (1902/2005) and *Ethics of the Pure Will* (1904/1908/1981), it seems *prima facie* striking that Cohen was more concerned with the "pure" and formal side of cognition. Since Cohen argues for a normative and ideal concept of experience constructed by objective, hence scientific and moral judgments, he seems to be rather unconcerned with psychological causal explanations of cognition.

A detailed examination of his mature ethical works, however, reveals that his focus on the historically shaped "facts of culture" builds on his earlier psychological works. Cohen's critical method has a twofold aim: On the one hand, it strives to give an account of pure, formal, and logical laws that regulate our critical thinking. On the other hand, it attempts to overcome Kant's ahistoricism, anti-materialism, and anti-psychologism by viewing critical thinking embedded in causal laws—including not only historical but also psychological and physiological laws. Highlighting these elements shows that Cohen adopts a view that comes remarkably close to the *völkerpsychological* positions of Lazarus and Steinthal—the most prominent leaders of *Völkerpsychologie.* Whereas these aspects are considered in historical terms, I show that Cohen's ethical theory contains commitments to both historical and psychological features. By highlighting the logical presuppositions of his psychologically and historically embedded account of rationality that finds its origins in Trendelenburg and Lange, I aim to offer a systematic guide to situate the causal aspects that deviate from critical idealism and are foundational for his functionalist ethical critique.

My interpretative argument develops in four steps. First, I demonstrate that Cohen's formulation of the categorical imperative already incorporated a context-sensitive framework. Second, I show that in 1869–1871, Cohen defends a "strong" program of *Völkerpsychologie* that views transcendental philosophy as a supplementary method to psychology. Third, I show that Cohen breaks with the "strong" program in 1877 when he commits himself to a normative notion of experience. Fourth, I show that Cohen's historical embeddedness comes with a commitment to a "thin" program of *Völkerpsychologie.* Fifth, I argue that this commitment to a thin program of psychology is entailed in his embedded account of ethical rationality. Sixth, I set out the logical presuppositions of his ethical theory, which pave the way for his functionalist critique of capitalism. Finally, I summarize the main points of this chapter.

3.2 Cohen's Ethical Idealism

Scholars focusing on Cohen's political philosophy usually concentrate on two works: the "Critical Appendix" and *Ethics of the Pure Will*, where we find Cohen's considerations of the ideal state (*Allheit*) (cf. Furner 2019; van der Linden 1988; Schwarzschild 1956; Pascher 1995; Meyer 2005; Willey 1978; Keck 1975; Giesecke 1991). However, systematic studies of his ethical and legal philosophy show that Cohen's mature ethical theory is mistreated if considered merely as an application of Kant's Formula of Humanity to capitalism. Cohen's neo-Kantian adaptation of the Kantian framework that comes with a critical advancement of Kantian theory is best understood as a refinement of the principles he worked out in his first major work in ethics, *Kant's Foundation of Ethics* (Schmid 1995; Müller 1994; Winter 1980). Cohen reformulates Kant's categorical imperative so that it leads to historically and psychologically embedded normative principles, including a scientific third-person point of view, an increased focus on institutionalized social norms, and ascribes a telos to ethical reasoning, namely, the purpose to create a more just society.

Let us first have a look at Cohen's understanding of ethical rationality as the "logic of the cultural sciences." Logic is used here in a Kantian sense as *Erkenntnislogik*, building on the transcendental argument that the necessary condition of the possibility of moral knowledge is the good will. The a priori and formal principle of the good will provides the conceptual framework to identify conceptual contradictions. According to Cohen, knowledge is based on logical operations that allow for objective insights into norms that ought to govern the cultural realm. The difference between the natural realm seeking causal explanations is that we presuppose the idea of freedom when deliberating ethically. Thus, we do not seek causal explanations but rather action-guiding norms with the right *purpose.*

Cohen argues that the systematic exploration of ends would ground the foundation of the cultural sciences investigating the "facts of culture" (KFE, A16 B188).[28] In Cohen's view, mathematics is the method of the natural sciences that necessarily presupposes an idea of systematicity. Ethics is, analogously, the logical method of the cultural sciences that presupposes the "idea of systematicity of ends" (KFE, B298). Cohen's systematic philosophy has also rightfully been called a rationalist-idealist account of "constructivism" (Falkenburg 2020, 132; Luft 2015, 29). Cohen's

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28 Note that the scientific character of the "facts of culture" is introduced in the second edition of *Kants Begründung der Ethik.* In *Ethics of the Pure Will*, Cohen takes the "facts of science" to be most purely reflected in legal norms (Gigliotti 1994; Gibbs 2006; Holzhey 1994, 2006, 2011). The conjunction with the legal sciences is what Cohen takes as the "scientific" character of those facts.

rational constructivism is based on the assumption that what we consider "real"—
as in true, objective, scientific—are not the empirical social phenomena we per-
ceive but the laws we rationally construct by reordering the ends of action-guiding
norms with respect to the "systematic idea of ends." Cohen demonstrates a simpli-
fied model of his transcendental idealist account in *Kant's Foundation of Ethics*
(1877/2001, B73–86) that goes as follows.

> P1. *All* humans are mortal.
> P2. Cajus is human.
> C. Cajus is mortal.

Cohen argues that all objective statements rely on an "ideal universalization," illus-
trated here in the concept "all." Only through this ideal concept, we are able to de-
duct a true statement about the singular case (Cajus is mortal) (Cohen 1877/2001,
A65 B77–78). The same goes for inductive judgments, with the difference that
the ideal generalization is not to be found in the premise but in the concluding in-
ference. What follows is that true statements in the natural sciences rely upon an
ideal generalization that makes logical reality judgments possible. In other words,
cognition is possible under the premise that the empirical world can be grasped in
a non-contradictory and logically coherent manner. This grounds the transcenden-
tal idea of systematicity.[29]

The "cultural sciences" that rely on normative judgments follow the same
structure. Ethical judgments about cultural norms rely upon the idea of systemat-
icity of ends, which is the logical presupposition when thinking ethically about the
social realm. By investigating the moral permissibility of social norms as an ethi-
cal-cultural practice, Cohen lets go of the rigorous first-person point of view we
find in Kantian ethics. Instead, he adopts the moral law as a third-person principle
that makes insights into the moral permissibility of social norms possible. The
Kantian framework, strictly speaking, does not allow for a third-person point of
view for two reasons. First, it is impossible to know the internal reasons of an
agent. Even if the agent acts in accordance with the law (*pflichtgemäß*), she may
do so for the wrong reasons, which is why moral insights are only possible

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29 For a less abstract demonstration of this transcendental idealist account, consider Cohen's
claim that it is not the perception of the "stars in the sky" but "astronomical calculations" that
would constitute our "reality" (KFE, B27–28). In the nineteenth century, two mathematicians
had noted irregularities in the planetary orbit of Uranus. Based on their mathematical calcula-
tions, they predicted the location of a planet that was later called Neptune. Cohen takes this math-
ematical discovery to show how ontological inferences follow from mathematical predictions in
the natural sciences. If we presuppose the idea of logical systematicity, scientific objects are pre-
sented to us in a manner that allows for hypotheses that constitute the natural realm.

from the first-person point of view. Second, for the subject to act autonomously, the individual subject must engage with the right procedure—the categorical imperative. Cohen, in contrast, combines the Formula of Humanity and embeds it in the teleological structure of the Formula of the Kingdom of Ends in order to formulate the "systematic idea of ends" as a theoretical principle that we presuppose when we deliberate ethically (Cohen 1877/2001, A196 B224).[30] Cohen's foundational "principle of ethics" that grounds the cultural sciences goes as follows:

> No person is allowed to be used "merely as a means." Every person must always, at the same time, in the administration of the moral world, be treated as ends in themselves. (KFE, B279– 280)

The modal form of "must" indicates that the idea of the systematicity of ends is a theoretical assumption about the constitution of the "moral world" that we presuppose when deliberating morally.

Another essential issue to note in Cohen's "principle of ethics" is the increased focus on the institutionalization of social norms. According to Cohen, the idea we presuppose when deliberating morally is not concerned with the inner attitude of an agent toward their actions but with the "administration" of society, thereby allowing insights into how the social world ought to be regulated. Cohen overtakes, in fact, elements of both formulations. Kant's moral law is primarily targeted at individual agents seeking to test the generalizability of a maxim. Cohen, in contrast, overtakes the content of the Formula of Humanity and embeds it in the teleological structure of the Formula of the Kingdom of Ends in order to target *social* norms. The idea of the systematic unity of ends is meant to justify *social* rules governing *our* actions. It is this social component against which he claims that it is the "universal will that sets itself to itself" (*ihr [der Menschheit] Wille ist es daher, welcher jenes Verhältnis zu sich selbst setzt*) (KFE, B279– 280). Cohen emphasizes that the Kingdom of Ends is not to be understood as a "collective or additive notion of human beings" (KFE, B279– 280). It rather asks for the moral *institutionalization* or—in his own words—"administration" of society.

The third aspect I shall draw attention to is the political implications of the telos motivating moral reasoning. One of the most fundamental aspects of Kant's deontological ethics is the claim that no other value or purpose counts as good except for the "good will," emphasizing that the moral law must not be "conditional

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30 Scholars have claimed that Cohen would prefer the Formula of Humanity over other formulations, suggesting that Cohen would condemn capitalism on the basis of the Formula of Humanity (Schwarzschild 1956; Furner 2019; Pascher 1995). Others, however, claim that Cohen would have preferred the Formulation of the Kingdom of Ends over the Formula of Humanity (Beiser 2018, 12).

on any further goal to be reached by that conduct" (Kant G 4:416). Cohen deviates from Kant as he argues for a purpose that motivates the engagement with ethical questions as he takes it that the "fundamental problem of ethics" deals with "the *ethicization* of the entire human culture" (KFE, A8 B9, emphasis added). Alongside his scientific and social reformulation of the Kingdom of Ends, Cohen takes the "ethicization" of culture as the fundamental political end.

Against this background, Cohen interprets socialism as a political movement striving toward this end: "In truth, it is not only an advance of ethical culture but indirectly also of ethical science, that the question of optimism has been replaced in our century by the problem of socialism" (KFE, B368). Kant differentiates in the *Doctrine of Right* between "autocratic," "aristocratic," and "democratic" systems of government, without preferring one form of government over another as they are all—especially democracy—vulnerable to despotism (Kant, MM 6:338). Cohen, in contrast, considers socialism as a historically manifest political movement that reflects the ethical solution at the time. "The Job of our age no longer asks whether man has more sunshine than rain; but whether one man suffers more than his neighbor" (KFE, B368). While Cohen appreciates the scientific character of historical materialism in identifying the mechanisms of social differences, he is skeptical of the Marxian premise that takes our social history entirely reducible to material appearances. Instead, Cohen aims "to derive it [socialism] from the genuine root" which is the moral will (KFE, B368).

Cohen defends a theory of moral rationality that includes a scientific third-person point of view, an increased focus on institutionalized social norms, and a political telos. Cohen's endeavor to interpret ethics as a scientific discipline oriented toward the "facts of culture" evaluates substantive ideas with respect to the goal of rebutting ethical contradictions and overcoming social injustices. As we will see, Cohen uses in *Ethik des reinen Willens* a more direct approach to combine his view of the moral will with a historical dimension in his "dynamic" conception of rationality (Luft 2015, 54; Friedman 2001).[31] But before I go further into Cohen's account of history, I want to draw attention to the fact that Cohen is not to be considered an anti-psychologist philosopher who turned his back on his early stage of psychology. While Cohen rejected radical forms of psychology that reduce knowledge solely to its content, I shall show that his embedded theory of rationality inherits claims from the nineteenth-century psychological tradition.

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31 Morality is not concerned with individual duties; by taking the Kingdom of Ends as an "analogy of the reality of experience," Cohen evaluates cultural movements with respect to their purpose of creating a morally better society (KFE, A198 B226). For a more detailed understanding of Cohen's concept of "moral reality," see Centi (2015).

3.3 Völkerpsychologie and Transcendental Critique, 1869 – 1871

To highlight Cohen's thin program of psychology, I will focus on Cohen's interpretation of "form" and "matter" at different stages of his development. In this section, I argue that Cohen's early intellectual phase goes hand in hand with a view on form and matter that leaves aside the empirical conceptualization of logical forms. The young Cohen viewed *Völkerpsychologie* and deductive critique as two different methods that "are necessary complements to one another" (Edgar 2020b, 263). This section aims to show that Cohen could only hold onto this view because he advocated a "strong" program of *Völkerpsychologie* in his early years, which was restricted to a causal explanation of belief content (Kusch 2019, 251)[32] and excluded the formal investigation of cognition. In opposition to Cohen's early method of *Völkerpsychologie*, I introduce selected works of Lazarus and Steinthal and present an alternative program of *Völkerpsychologie* that aims to include explanations based on free-will causation and "normative interests" in their psychological investigations (Kusch 2019, 251).

The young Cohen views Kant's transcendental critique as a philosophical discipline that deals with the logical possibility of the formal conditions of cognition. The scrutiny of the formal conditions of experience is not yet concerned with the material and psychological basis of transcendental subjectivity. *Prima facie*, it seems plausible to assume that Cohen's shift to transcendental philosophy marks a crucial turning point in his development. However, a detailed investigation of his stance on form and matter suggests that in *Kant's Theory of Experience,* Cohen still holds on to a distinction that matches the view in his early psychological writings. To underpin my view, I focus on "Poetic Phantasy" (1869/2012a); "Mythical Imagination" (1869/2012b); and *Kant's Theory of Experience* (1871/1987).

In "Poetic Phantasy and its Mechanism," Cohen investigates the "conditions of poetry as a psychological process" and argues that even poetic elements of language such as metaphors were once generally accepted as true beliefs (Cohen 1869/2012a, 350). Cohen develops his account of aesthetics in opposition to two notions: first, against Friedrich Theodor Vischer, who argued in *Aesthetik oder Wis-*

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32 This distinction might irritate some Cohen scholars who are less familiar with the *Völkerpsychologie* debate of the nineteenth century since Cohen refers to *Völkerpsychologie* only in a "strong" sense. However, as Klautke points out, one of the core aims of Steinthal's and Lazarus' work was to merge the causal and deterministic explanation of knowledge "with the idea of universal progress" (Klautke 2013, 4). Although one could say much more about the Jewish elements—especially about the concept of the "future" (Fiorato 2006)—in Lazarus, Steinthal, and Cohen, I bracket this topic here.

senschaft des Schönen (1857) for an idealist foundation of aesthetics; and second, against Henry T. Buckle's historicist explanation of poetry, which is presented in *The History of Civilization* (1857). Cohen argues that "poetic contents" (*Dichtungsinhalte*) come into existence when a hitherto true belief proves to be false. Even in the post-Copernican age, for example, the expression "the sun goes down" remained in our cultural memory as figurative speech (Cohen 1869/2012b, 430). A belief once considered true turns into a metaphor when it loses its ascribed value of truth. The picture Cohen draws is the following: an external object—explained differently at different stages of human development—stimulates our senses. *Völkerpsychologie* is not concerned with the legitimacy of these explanations. The foundation on which we decide if a concept is true requires a philosophical or (at this stage of his development) a metaphysical investigation of the evaluative basis. *Völkerpsychologie* investigates the "mechanical laws" of the conceptual and psychological necessity of "compressed content" (*verdichtete Inhalte*) caused by sensory input (Cohen 1869/2012a, 386). Suppose an unknown sensory input is merging into a new concept. *Völkerpsychologie* calls this process "apperception." If, for example, I see a table and recognize it as such, I subordinate the sensory input under a category that was "apperceived" at an earlier stage (Cohen 1869/2012a, 387).

The method based on the apperception thesis, which includes efforts to lay open compressed contents, becomes even more evident in Cohen's "Mythologische Vorstellungen." In this article, Cohen reconstructs a possible case in which early peoples (*Urmenschen*) "apperceived" the concept of gods. The early peoples observed lightning hitting trees, which, as a result, started to burn. Since they knew that grinding ash trees causes a fire, they inferred that the clouds in the sky must have the same function as the ash trees on earth. This hypothesis is underpinned by the shared linguistic roots of the Indo-Germanic concept of "cloud" (*Wolke*) and "ash tree" (*Esche*) (Cohen 1869/2012a, 404).

Further, the early peoples inferred that some beings in the sky, gods, rub the sticks and cause fire on earth. Hence, the "apperception" of gods came into being when this was the best explanation for the natural phenomenon in question (Cohen, 2012a, 406). According to Cohen, not only myths but also scientific progress can be explained based on the apperception thesis. The task of science is, according to Cohen, to produce concepts that are free from any subjective "elements of sensation" and replace them with non-ambiguous and objective concepts (Cohen 2012a, 418). Since non-formal language based on "sound patterns" is always "poetic" to a certain extent, Cohen argues that science needs to refrain from non-formal language (Cohen 2012a, 437). Mathematics—the formal language of science—is liberated from aesthetic and subjective elements (Cohen 2012a, 438). Thus, scientific

progress appears to be a development where subjective descriptions based on sensations yield objective and formal explanations of natural phenomena.[33]

Cohen did not claim, however, that *Völkerpsychologie* was the only method that could explain cognition. Metaphysical investigations of logical reasoning based on transcendental and deductive logic are a legitimate discipline on their own in Cohen's view. To depict the distinct features of this discipline, he illustrates the difference with the following example. An empirical or psychological law—the subject of *Völkerpsychologie*—is violated if a concept is used inadequately: "If I see a tree, I must recognize it as such even if I don't want to" (Cohen 1869/2012b, 387). *Völkerpsychologie* does not differ between "physical" and "mythical" laws (Cohen 1869/2012b, 401). "Metaphysics," on the other hand, is concerned with true logical principles (Cohen 1869/2012b, 445). Cohen upholds in his early intellectual phase the idealist view that "perpetual truths" in epistemology and ethics are based on "platonic ideas" (Cohen 1869/2012b, 445). Although he does not clarify this thought further, this shows that *Völkerpsychologie* is merely concerned with the emergence of substantive concepts that originated in prior times. However, the task of metaphysics is to investigate the foundation of theoretical and normative reasoning to identify principles that allow for logical inferences. Thus, the young Cohen believes that *Völkerpsychologie* and metaphysics do not mutually exclude but rather "complement" one another (Edgar 2020b, 263).

It remains unclear at what moment exactly Cohen gave up the view that there were two epistemological methods. When Cohen turns to *Kant's Theory of Experience*, one might think that despite his openness toward idealism and metaphysics in his early psychology, Cohen may have lost his interest in psychology once he

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33 Cohen recognizes "Plato, Descartes, Leibniz" and Kant as "the leaders of [theoretical] philosophy" (Cohen 1896/1974, 46). In contrast to his ethics where the ideal of unified humanity is set against the individual, the problem of knowledge in natural science consists of the "collision between perception (*Anschauung*) and thinking (*Denken*)" (Cohen 1896/1974, 47). The supposed paradox in which the infinitesimal calculus gets entangled also boils down to the problem of the collision of view and thought. For on the one hand, according to Schulthess (2005), one demands "from the infinitesimal quantities that they are smaller than any given quantity" and on the other hand, they should be "nevertheless different from zero" (Schulthess 2005, 14). In the differential method, Cohen recognizes the proof that geometrical quantities have a "validity in reality" independent of sensory perception (Cohen 1896/1974, 49). For this reason, Cohen also rejects the view of infinitesimal calculus as a "limiting method." He interprets the limit method as an attempt to compensate for the "lack of evidence in perception" (PIM, 31). The concept of the "infinitesimal[s]" is the peak of critical philosophy as it does not rely on any sensory input (PIM, 31). Cohen thus believes that the infinitesimal method was proof that the "methodological value" ultimately lay in the critical function of transcendental consciousness and that the spiritual function of ideal unification was to be regarded as the "real and only source" (Cohen 1900, 49).

turned over to Kantian philosophy.[34] However, the following paragraphs suggest that he worked out *Kant's Theory of Experience* with the idea to focus on the complementing (and hitherto missing) discipline: The metaphysical foundation of cognition.

During the "epicrisis of a new era" (Köhnke 1986, 168), that is, at a time when the intellectual aftermaths of the 1850s "materialism controversy" (*Materialismusstreit*) were still noticeable, and neo-Kantianism was on the rise, a skeptical view toward the metaphysical implications of Kant's theory was widespread. As I have mentioned in § 2.3, Friedrich Albert Lange tried to correct materialism with Kantian philosophy. In metaphysics—including Kantian metaphysics—Lange saw an outdated discipline that needed to be replaced by the methods of natural sciences (AF, 254 – 255, HM, 254).

Cohen, who was convinced of deductive reasoning as a legitimate philosophical method, saw himself confronted with the task of setting transcendental philosophy apart from examining empirical knowledge. To prove the legitimacy of transcendental philosophy, Cohen defended the following principles.

First, the Kantian categories are not arbitrary and operate on a different level from that of the natural sciences. The purpose of the "transcendental logic"—even though it starts with a "metaphysical deduction"—is to offer a formal framework of logical principles that are apparent in judgments and explain the possibility of rational thinking (KTE, 110 – 111).

Second, transcendental philosophy deduces the necessary and constitutive forms of experience: "The apriority of the categories compares to the apriority of space and time. We first presuppose them as basic concepts (*Stammesbegriffe*), and then they are being intensified (*vertieft*) as forms of experience" (KTE, 110 – 111).

Third, transcendental philosophy is concerned merely with the "internal" conditions of experience (KTE, 128). Critical philosophy is, at this stage, not yet concerned with the empirical and external conditions of knowledge, but only with the transcendental principles of subjectivity. By accepting the metaphysical implications of Kant's method, identifying the categories, and focusing on the internal and subjective elements, Cohen's early view differs fundamentally from his late view which starts with the historical facts of science.[35] In defining transcendental philosophy as being concerned solely with the "internal," formal, and antimaterial-

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34 I am grateful to an anonymous referee for *Idealistic Studies* for raising this concern.

35 Renz (2021) and Patton (2005) point out that Cohen sets out his philosophical stance on history already in "Zur Controverse zwischen Trendelenburg und Fischer" (1871b). However, as in *Kant's Theory of Experience,* Cohen does not yet integrate historical elements in his transcendental method; history and critical thinking are still considered separate from one another.

istic conditions of logical thinking, the transcendental method refrains from an empirical and historical starting point to discover the "formal character of the intellect" (KTE, 128).

But since the transcendental method differs so fundamentally from *Völkerpsychologie*, what reasons do we have to believe that Cohen held onto a twofold methodology in *Kant's Theory of Experience?*

First, there is a systematic reason to believe that Cohen defended a twofold methodology. Precisely because the young Cohen strictly separates these two disciplines, they can complement each other. *Völkerpsychologie* examines truth-neutrally and causally the empirical formations of knowledge manifesting in concepts, ideas, metaphors, and myths. Metaphysics or the transcendental method, on the other hand, seeks to discover the evaluative aspects of truth by investigating the a priori principles that constitute experience. A coherent connection between these two methods is possible because Cohen interprets the distinction between form and matter as two separate issues that each require their methodology. Martin Kusch's observations on the late nineteenth-century *Völkerpsychologie* is thereby instructive.

Kusch has recently argued that the young Cohen belongs to the "strong program" of *Völkerpsychologie*, which includes "methodological neutrality and symmetry; causal explanation of beliefs based on causal laws; a focus on groups, interests, tradition, culture, or materiality; determinism; and a self-referential model of social institutions" (Kusch 2019, 251).[36] Cohen's early view that captures only causal explanations of knowledge belongs to a "strong" program.

Second, there is a historical reason to believe that Cohen did not give up on the material form of knowledge once he focused on *Kant's Theory of Experience.* In 1869 and 1877, Cohen showed great interest in the material aspects of knowledge. Had he lost interest in the material side of knowledge in between, *Kant's Theory of Experience* would appear as a rather unusual exception to his earlier and later philosophy. Moreover, Cohen published his first commentary on Kant only two years after his articles on *Völkerpsychologie.* If we consider the preparation time for this book, Cohen would have undergone an extremely quick change of heart only to let go of it later. Cohen does not focus on psychology in *Kant's Theory of Experience* because he is merely concerned with transcendental philosophy. We find textual evidence in "Zur Controverse"—an article that was published in the same year as *Kant's Theory of Experience.* There, Cohen argues that the history of philosophy is based on a "psychological method," which is excluded from his critical thoughts on space and time (Cohen 1871b, 292). Thus, it is more plausible

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36 I do not elaborate on all of Kusch's aspects since his aim differs from mine.

to assume that Cohen held onto a twofold methodology that accepts *Völkerpsychologie* as a co-existing method to Kant's transcendental critique until 1871.

Cohen's twofold epistemology, however, does not come without problems. While *Völkerpsychologie* is based on the view that all concepts can be explained causally, the critique of knowledge assumes that the formal ideas of the transcendental deduction are excluded. But if all linguistic elements are products of a historical discourse underlying psychological laws, does this not also apply to (Kant's) philosophical concepts of transcendental philosophy? To provide a solution to this problem, Cohen has to give up the view that there are two different yet complementary methodologies that allow for a material and a formal investigation of cognition based on two methods.

To prove that Cohen incorporates elements of *Völkerpsychologie* into his mature ethical thought, I first show that Cohen's view of *Völkerpsychologie*, which is reduced to causal explanations of contents, covers only one strand of it. Alongside the "strong" program, Kusch identifies a "weak" program of *Völkerpsychologie* characterized by "the blurring of explanatory and normative interests; an emphasis on freedom of the will, and antirelativism and anti-materialism" (Kusch 2019, 251). By focusing specifically on Lazarus' and Steinthal's conception of the ideas in history, I now introduce elements of the weak program in Lazarus' *The Life of the Soul* (1858) and *About Ideas in History* (1863) as well as Steinthal's *Universal Ethics* (1885) that show systematic similarities with Cohen's mature ethics.

Lazarus claims that the "origin" of language needs to be explained by the laws of "apperception" (Lazarus 1884, 14). As Lazarus puts it, the apperception thesis in epistemological processes assumes a two-way connection between mental and physical activity. The mind is "receptive" as it grasps sensual inputs from the environment, and it is "productive" as it incorporates new information by drawing on earlier apperceived concepts (Lazarus 1884, 32). On these grounds, Lazarus differentiates "simple sensations" such as the recognition of "red or blue, sweet or bitter, tone A or C" from more complex and abstract "apperception" processes—like the idea of an absolute union—that require a prior set of knowledge (Lazarus 1884, 38 – 39).[37] Lazarus applies this line of thought to actions by differentiating "unintentional" acts that merely cause "noise" (reflexes) from "intentional" speech

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37 From a contemporary Kantian perspective, this might appear questionable. R. Lanier Anderson argues that for Kant, conceptual derivations from sensory experience are possible and presuppose the concept of matter to conceptualize the sensations of colors (Anderson 2015, 338). However, it would be unjust to treat the accounts of VP merely from a contemporary perspective. Their merit was to draw on essential insights of German sensualism without neglecting the rich tradition of German idealism. Neo-Kantianism is rather to be understood in light of the psychologism debate of the nineteenth century (Anderson 2007; Kusch 1994).

acts, where physical matter is brought willingly into "motion" for communication purposes (Lazarus 1884, 59–60). By drawing on Johannes Müller's physiology, Lazarus emphasizes the possibility of bodily movement caused by nature and free will (98; Müller 1838, 268). In *About Ideas in History* (1863), Lazarus focuses on the concept of "motion" to emphasize free will in actions. Even when we describe actions retrospectively in history, free will is to be viewed—at least partially—as a cause for physical body movements, human actions, and normative ideas (Lazarus 1863, 32). By criticizing the merely "mechanical" and deterministic method of the historical sciences that undermines the free agent, Lazarus aims to show that ideas are also a product of actions based on free will (Lazarus 1863, 13–14). Despite the influence of "geographical, physiological," and "economic" affairs in historical processes, he ascribes a great deal to "psychological processes," including moral ideas, that are caused freely and promote progress in the "history of mankind" (Lazarus 1863, 32). The history of ideas is then to be viewed as a cumulation of "self-motions" (*Selbstbewegungen*) (Lazarus 1863, 32), meaning that mental states are, on the one hand, expressed in language and therefore inevitably determined by history and physiology and, on the other, determined by a free will. Ethical and scientific ideas in history, which are responsible for the progress of humanity, thus involve a free cause despite their causal determination.

What follows from the concept of free causation of ideas in history is a criticism of Hegel's unfolding idea of freedom in history. Lazarus rejects the alleged "dictatorial power" of Hegel's speculative and dialectical method (Lazarus 1863, 38). Hegel's philosophy of history, which in Lazarus' view dogmatically presupposes a superior force that stands on its own, would not sufficiently consider the fact that it takes natural forces—subsumed to causal or "mechanical" laws—to realize internal free ideas (Lazarus 1863, 53–54). Lazarus believes that we necessarily develop a teleological perspective when judging objectively. In ethics and science, Lazarus argues, we necessarily presuppose a concept of the "absolute" or the idea of "coherent unification." By so doing, we recognize an individual case or token subsumed under a general abstraction, idea, or type (Lazarus 1863, 77–82). In ethics, the idealized concept of absolute union opens the view on free human actions to differentiate "objectively" between morally good ideas (that are coherent with the idea of universality) and ethically wrong ideas that lead to conceptual contradictions (Lazarus 1863, 83).

Although Lazarus rejects a "transcendental" view of ideas (Lazarus 1863, 66), he defends an account that comes close to Kant's theory on synthetic a priori judgments: "We cannot know the absolute, but we have an idea of the absolute," which allows gaining moral knowledge (Lazarus 1863, 84). That Lazarus tries to incorporate a Kantian understanding of transcendental ideas in his program of *Völkerpsychologie* becomes evident when he claims that "space, magnitude, logical rela-

tions, and moral norms" are explainable with our psychological "nature" (Lazarus 1863, 87–88). Moreover, Lazarus reminds one of Kant when he differentiates between "passionate" motifs and "pure" motifs in actions (Lazarus 1863, 89). "Psychological analysis"—just like transcendental philosophy—is supposed to keep them apart and to "conserve the pureness" of moral "ideas" (Lazarus 1863, 89).

By contrast, Steinthal is more straightforward in adopting a Kantian view in *Universal Ethics* (1883). Though with a much stronger emphasis on the variability of moral norms over time, he explicitly accepts the following aspects: a Kantian monotheistic view of the absolute (God) that justifies a logical system of moral norms (Steinthal 1885, 10); a compatibilist view of history that allows for a mechanical and a normative perspective on laws that co-exist coherently (Steinthal 1885, 19); and (more in Jewish-messianic than in Kantian terms) an account of the progress of humankind as a development caused by "free human beings" (Steinthal 1885). Steinthal suggests using the "moral law," or the principle of "human dignity," as a guiding principle for evaluating ideas in history (Steinthal 1885, 20 and 23). Although we have only recently found the terminology to grasp the fundamental principle in morality, Steinthal argues, humans would have always "carried the original idea inside them" (Steinthal 1885, 65). Kant, however, was setting the foundation, which allows for a differentiation between the "material" and the "intellectual" elements of ideas in history (Steinthal 1885, 66). Even though moral "deeds" (*Taten*) that appear in history follow *nolens volens* causal laws, they are based on a "free will" (Steinthal 1885, 73). As a defender of *Völkerpsychologie*, Steinthal is aware that moral deliberation draws on empirical concepts deeply interwoven with cultural conventions and norms. Despite all this, however, he does accept an a priori moral foundation that underlies moral ideas caused by free wills in history.

I have shown that *Völkerpsychologie* need not necessarily be restricted to a "strong" program as Cohen defends it in his early years. The young Cohen maintains that *Völkerpsychologie* is a deterministic, neutral, causal, empirical, and material examination of concepts of cognition that is to be kept separate from the transcendental, formal, and deductive critique. However, Lazarus' and Steinthal's "weak" version of *Völkerpsychologie* combines causal and normative perspectives on ideas. By so doing, they incorporate causal and logical elements, a natural and free-cause explanation of ideas, and an ethical view into their psychological program. Further below, we will see that we find similar features in Cohen's mature ethics. But first, I show that Cohen went through a fundamental change in *Kant's Foundation of Ethics* (1877/1910/2001), where he adopted a dynamic conception of the a priori that takes the functions of consciousness reflected in substantive norms.

3.4 Cohen's Turning Point in *Kant's Foundation of Ethics*

Earlier, we looked at *Kant's Foundation of Ethics* in order to set out the ideal foundation in Cohen's ethical theory. We now come back to this book, but this time with the aim of showing that this book marks the crucial turning point where he lets go of the view of a strong version of *Völkerpsychologie* as a complementary discipline to transcendental philosophy. Cohen's conceptual change may be summarized as follows: From now on, Cohen advocates a purely regulative understanding of the conditions of experience and builds on a concept of natural and normative reality created through scientific and ethical reasoning. Cohen argues that judgments in "science" and "culture" deliver the substantive and empirical content of reason, which are "given in books and became true in history" (KFE, A27 B35). By adopting a normative concept of experience that starts from a historical foundation of objective judgments, Cohen gives up the idea that the distinction between form and matter would justify two different methods. The formal basis of knowledge does not require a distinct approach. He now views a priori principles as apparent in the empirical formation of objective judgments in science and culture.

Interpreters have tried to find reasons for Cohen's rather sudden change. For Sieg, Cohen's early phase appears as a "riddle" (Sieg 2003, 261). Peter Schulthess argues that August Stadler's influence on Cohen is responsible for his turn (Schulthess 2012).[38] Edel emphasizes Lange's influence on Cohen to explain Cohen's transition from psychology to critical philosophy (cf. Edel 1998). But while it is typically argued that Cohen's mature ethics deals with a historically embedded account of rationality that overcame his psychological phase, I aim to show that his increased focus on history is, in fact, to be understood as an advancement of his psychology. Cohen does not aim to let go of a focus on the psychological elements of knowledge altogether. Instead, he aims to provide an account that is compatible with the novel notion of experience he develops in this book. As I will show, Cohen gives up on the assumption that a priori categories and ideas are to be deduced regardless of their material formation and are to be seen as elements unfolding themselves in the historical judgments of science and culture. Instead of breaking with psychology, I shall show that Cohen deploys a weak *völkerpsychological* program that includes (i) an emphasis on free will, (ii) the concept of motion in historical processes, and (iii) a critical view of a dialectical conception of history. He thereby offers an ethical foundation as an evaluative criterion to judge causally

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38 Cohen's and Stadler's interaction is captured in Hartwig Wiedebach's anthology *Hermann Cohen. Briefe an August Stadler* (2015).

developed and psychological ideas in history, which will later become relevant in his functionalist critique of capitalism.

In order to highlight this transformation, we will now come back to the form-matter distinction (KBE, A24 B32). As we have seen earlier, Cohen accepted in *Kant's Theory of Experience* the metaphysical assumptions preceding the transcendental method. Cohen now criticizes "Kant's depiction" that would suffer from an insufficient separation of the "transcendental a priori" and the "metaphysical a priori" (KBE, A24 B32).[39] In contrast to his earlier view, Cohen is now seeking a notion of experience that allows one to take the appearances of objective judgments as a starting point. This way, Cohen argues that the transcendental method determines the "possible experience from the conditions of experience" without agreeing on metaphysical assumptions (KBE, A25 B33). Transcendental philosophy is not about constructing an empty metaphysical "scaffold" filled with empirical content (KBE, A25 B33). Instead, a priori forms of judgments appear in the practice of objective judgments. Against his earlier view, Cohen criticizes Kant's conceptual use of "basic concepts" (*Stammesbegriffe*) as being misleading (KBE, A25 B33). As we will see in detail in the next chapter, Cohen argues for a "functional" view of transcendental principles to determine the a priori aspects of objective judgments (A27 B35; Edel 1998, 37). Science and normative judgments are practices based on synthetic a priori judgments striving for a coherent and logical union. By basing transcendental philosophy on the facts of "culture" and "science," Cohen offers a teleological or normative reading of Kant's system.

Secondly, Cohen's shift is noticeable when we look at his view of the thing-in-itself. Beiser claims that Cohen "eliminated" the thing-in-itself already in the Trendelenburg-Fischer debate (Beiser 2018, 75). Beiser, however, is correct only insofar as Cohen eliminates a *metaphysical* reading. The thing-in-itself remains a crucial methodological concept marking the "limit of experience" (KFE, A35 B43). As a "limiting concept," the thing-in-itself functions as a "helping tool," which is a necessary condition of an idealized concept preceding the scientific practice (KFE, A36 B45). By viewing the concept of a coherent union as a functional ideal, Cohen offers a normative or teleological view of culture and science that determines the task for objective and synthetic judgments in culture and science.

Earlier, in § 3.2, I have shown that, according to Cohen, the ideal notion is essential for deductive and inductive inferences. In both cases, synthetic judgments would rely on the practical idea of a coherent whole (KFE, A65 B77– 78). General statements rely on an "idealized universalization" which is an essential part of

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39 For a detailed discussion of the relation of the metaphysical and critical a priori, see Gianna Gigliotti's reconstruction of Cohen's methodology (Gigliotti 2006).

any syllogism. If we want to infer other propositions, we necessarily presuppose a unified idea to infer truths for individual cases. To make a premise epistemically valuable, we need to add the functional idea of unity. We assume that the observed cases pertain to all human beings; hence if we undertake an idealized generalization, we operate with a premise that allows us to infer further principles. In other words, for Cohen, observed facts need to be idealized if we want to draw inferences from empirical observations.

According to Cohen, even the empiricist John Stuart Mill saw this problem, which is why he claimed that inductive reasoning necessarily relies on an "axiom" of generalization (KFE, A63 B76). What Mill misunderstood in Cohen's eyes, however, is that this "axiom" would mark the shortcomings of empiricism. Because inductive inferences are based on ideas beyond what we perceive, we would have to accept that synthetic reasoning necessarily relies on idealism; thus, empiricism is wrong.

The same applies to the ethical foundation of judgments in culture. Cohen—convinced that objective moral judgments are possible—claims that if we deliberate about the rightness or wrongness of an action-guiding norm, we rely on an idealized, absolute concept, which is the end-in-itself. It is the task of transcendental philosophy to investigate this idea and offer a formal concept that is free from subjective elements. Indeed, Cohen believes that Kant's moral law does come remarkably close to defining the fundamental moral idea that governs our ethical deliberation. However, according to Cohen, Kant's justification of the moral law would rely too heavily on metaphysical claims, for example, when he talks about the moral law being a "fact" or reason or understanding the rational agent as pertaining to a metaphysically distinct realm from the realm of experience. Due to these problems, Kant failed to see the epistemological value of the moral law. Cohen, who takes the categorical imperative as a purely methodological principle to critique norms, refrains from these metaphysically laden concepts, and offers an anti-materialist, anti-relativist, and genuinely social interpretation of the moral law. Apart from the earlier mentioned reformulation of the categorical imperative (in § 3.2), we also find other formulations such as: "Every human being is [...] a member of the Kingdom of Ends and must be regarded as an end-in-itself" (KFE, A246 B279–280). By offering a purely ideal formulation of the will, Cohen deduces the ideal concept of a free society that we necessarily and inevitably presuppose when judging objectively and morally.

In the preceding paragraphs, I tried to show that Cohen introduces a normative notion of experience based on an ideal generalization. This change marks a break in Cohen's systematic development. Indeed, Cohen does not yet pay much attention to the "material" side of critical philosophy (KFE, B182). *Kant's Foundation of Ethics* aims to justify an epistemological foundation that does not rely on

sensual experience. And yet, by basing his methodology on the "fact of historical science," Cohen clears the path for his mature view, where these elements play an essential role. Whereas in the first edition of *Kant's Theory of Experience*, Cohen still accepts sensations as the starting point and content of experience, he rejects sensual experience as a methodological aspect in his epistemology. He argues for an ideal concept of experience. Reality is not what we sensually perceive but rather the intelligible result of what we "construct" if we reason objectively (Luft 2015, 54; Falkenburg 2020, 132).[40] Neither Stadler nor Lange—as scholars have suggested—made Cohen change his early conception of experience that came with a fundamental shift of his methodological approach. Given his aim of justifying ethics as an epistemological discipline, Cohen had a *systematic* reason to renew his view on content and matter and replace it with a normative and dynamic notion of the a priori sensitive to the causal formations of knowledge. However, if there is an autonomous will that produces new content, we must identify these psychological components in history: a task Cohen is concerned about in his mature ethics.

3.5 History and Psychology in Cohen's Mature Ethical Thought

This section aims to show that, in Cohen's mature ethics, we find crucial aspects that resemble Lazarus' and Steinthal's weak *völkerpsychological* program. In *Ethics of Pure Will*, which was first published in 1904 and followed by a second edition in 1907, and in the second edition of *Kant's Foundation of Ethics*, which was published in 1910, Cohen now draws more attention to the "historical formations" of the "pure will" (Cohen 2001, B410). Beiser too has recently claimed that the second chapter in *Ethics of the Pure Will* would originate in *Völkerpsychologie* (Beiser 2018, 236–237). In contrast to Beiser, however, I do not believe that Cohen advocates the same program as in his early years. With this new emphasis on history, Cohen's ethics comes remarkably close to the program of *Völkerpsychologie* advocated by Lazarus and Steinthal. Briefly summarized, Cohen argues here for a free-will perspective on ideas in history, a concept of "motion" that captures actions based on a free cause, and an ethical evaluation of historical ideas. The "pure will" is yet another concept standing for an idealized community of free wills,

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40 Charlotte Baumann has recently claimed that Cohen does not fully give up on sensations in his mature philosophy of science (Baumann 2019, 2016). While this is true, it does not challenge his position as a constructive realist.

which Cohen views from now on as the "ideal concept of the state" (*Allheit*). According to Cohen, this ideal concept allows us to evaluate ideas in history by opposing substantive rules to the ideal community, where all rational and human beings are universally seen as ends-in-themselves (EPW, 5). Cohen's most crucial aim is to answer a question previously raised by Lazarus and Steinthal: What is the fundamental basis that allows us to view the history of free ideas from a moral perspective if historical ideas are substantive and therefore necessarily entangled in natural causes?

Like Lazarus and Steinthal, Cohen tries to prove that contemporary physiology and psychology do not contradict a Kantian notion of free will. Cohen shares a common ground with Lazarus when he refers to Johannes Müller's *Handbook of the Physiology of Man* (1838) to argue for the coexistence of natural and free causation. According to Cohen, it is not the physiology of the nerves that creates the "content of sentiments (*Empfindungen*)," which causes physical bodily movements, but rather a mental image accompanied by experience (EPW, 156): "This is the path of real scientific idealism. It is not the stimulant but the condition of consciousness that is prior to the stimulant. [...] This condition (*Anlage des Bewusstseins*) constitutes the foundation of our psychology" (EPW, 156). Likewise, Lazarus explicitly draws on Müller to emphasize the priority of mental images in bodily movements or actions: "Not only feelings but also perceptions and mental images are responsible for organic effects" (Lazarus 1872, 95). Both Cohen and Lazarus value Müller's physiology precisely because of his psychophysiological account, allowing for a notion of free causation based on an immaterial basis. A similar thought is to be found in Steinthal.

By differentiating between a "dogmatic" and a "logical" conception of god, Steinthal argues for a Kantian view of the concept of the absolute that allows for a logical deduction of duties: "It is the philosopher's task to investigate the strict logical concept of god and to determine the legitimacy of this concept, whereby it is required to connect the logical and the warm predicates of religion" (Steinthal 1885, 10). Steinthal argues for a coherent coexistence of mechanical and normative laws regarding ideas in human history (Steinthal 1885, 19). A compatibilist view that engages in the physiology of the time alone may not be sufficient to draw a line between Steinthal/Lazarus and Cohen. However, if we look at the relevance of the free will's emphasis, a different picture emerges.

By emphasizing the free will in historical processes (most prominently in Chapter 7 of *Ethics of the Pure Will*), Cohen rejects the concept of historical "development," which was first defended by Hegel and undermined a normative per-

spective.[41] Cohen criticizes the naturalistic view of social relations in contemporary sociology, namely, Herbert Spencer's *The Social Organism* (1860/1982) and Albert Schäffle's *Construction and Being of the Social Body* (1878). The problem he identifies with these accounts is that their concept of historical "development" would presuppose "basic elements" of social relations within a community (EPW, 40). This is problematic because while they investigate changes and developments in culture, they draw dogmatically on presupposed elements that cannot explain deviations (EPW, 40). Cohen thereby does not deny the relevance of sociology, but in "ethics, the sociological approach must not serve as a precondition" (EPW, 41). Cohen criticizes that all psychological and sociological approaches depend on a purely causal, backward-looking, and deterministic view of human culture. Instead, he argues that political and religious ideas in the present and the past originate in pure will. In other words: These accounts fall short of explaining concepts that promote human progress in history.

Like Lazarus and Steinthal, Cohen uses the concept of "motion"—in contrast to the idea of "development"—to signal that cultural products rely on the idea of free will (EPW, 40). To offer a methodology that allows for a formal evaluation of ends, Cohen argues against the idea that actions in history are merely empirical "deeds" (EPW, 40). Even though they inevitably adopt empirical ends in hindsight, they need to be traced back to a free cause to make them epistemically and normatively evaluable. The concept of "self-motion" ought to mark the idea of free will in historical processes (EPW, 133). Human history is treated justly if it is considered not as a "natural" development, but rather as a will-based development created by humanity (EPW, 39). This is reflected in Chapter 7, which deals with free will at different stages of the history of humanity (EPW, 283 ff). There, Cohen is not concerned with the critical foundation of free will but rather with the "history of ethics" that puts "the problem of freedom in the foreground" (EPW, 238). As Lazarus and Steinthal base ethics on a free-will basis that justifies historical developments, Cohen tries to show accordingly how the idea of freedom played out in the history of humanity.

By viewing the moral law as the normative basis on which to evaluate ideas in history, Cohen develops an argument against Hegel, which is reminiscent of Lazarus' and Steinthal's conception of history. Like "weak" *Völkerpsychologie* that was presented in the section before, Cohen rejects Hegel's conception of history for its alleged dogmatic, speculative, and schematized method that fails to take human

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41 As we will later see, Adolf Trendelenburg also criticized Hegel in his Logical Treatise (1862) for not sufficiently considering the notion of "coming-into-being" (*Werden*)—a different label of motion—in his logic (Trendelenburg 1843/1870, 28 – 29). I agree with positions claiming that Trendelenburg was influential for Cohen (Beiser 2014, 12; Poma 1997).

actions and an ethical point of view into account. By now, many interpreters have pointed out that Cohen—despite his merely critical treatise on Hegel—approximates a Hegelian view (Kim 2015; Bienenstock 2012; Gibbs 2000; Willey 1987). Whether Cohen's view on Hegel is justified is an interesting question, but I will not address this here. My aim instead is to show that in Cohen's critique of a dialectic conception of history, we find another similarity to Lazarus and Steinthal. They built their concept of history on a very similar criticism of Hegel's speculative method. Against Hegel's statement: "The rational is real, and the real is rational," Cohen defends the formal moral law—or the "ideal state" (*Allheit*)—as evaluative criteria for the ideas in history (EPW, 332). Cohen tries to avoid subsuming all human actions, undertakings, and ideas to the dialectical power of historical reason. It is not that a "hidden plan" of reason unfolds itself in history, but rather that the moral law is the normative basis on which to judge these ideas (EPW, 28). Lazarus as well rejects a dialectical view of history that is focused too much on the empirical formation of contradictions rather than on the idea of the good that governs historical development: "The power of the idea may be a force of the good, but it is a blind force. We not only take the end, but also the way, thus, not only the [empirical] success but the process in an ideal manner" (Lazarus 1872, 35, emphasis added).

For Cohen, these systematic resemblances emerge in an ethical view on history. This means that only since Kant offered the basis for the moral law, which allows us to differentiate between moral and immoral ideas, do we have the terminological and methodological basis to view history under the concept of an ideal community governed by the state. According to Cohen, the methodological concept of the ideal state "first needed to be discovered" before it was possible to grasp "the problem of history as a scientific [hence moral] undertaking" (KFE, B498– 499). Kant missed, in Cohen's view, that the moral law was the formal foundation for ethical, legal, and historical rationality. Hence, by drawing on elements of *Völkerpsychologie*, Cohen broadens the realm of ethical reasoning. History is neither free from natural causes nor limited to rational and free ideas. The philosopher's task is to entangle the pure and autonomous ideas and judge those ideas' moral and political relevance by the moral law that is the ideal state. The moral, political, and ideal conception of the state is the "sheet anchor" in the "floods of history" (KFE, B498– 499). Likewise, the historian needs to refrain from a merely causal method of history. It is the historian's task to rely on the philosophical foundation of the moral law and to offer a narrative that allows for an ethical judgment of the ideas in history.

3.6 Cohen's Hidden Psychologism

I have highlighted the similarities between Cohen's ethics and the "weak" program of *Völkerpsychologie* proposed by Lazarus and Steinthal. They all share the idea that a historically embedded account of rationality necessarily involves psychological commitments. While historical norms are inevitably linked to causal norms, the concept of "motion" emphasizes the psychological aspects of ethical reasoning in historical processes. It comes as no surprise that Cohen shares with the *völkerpsychological* tradition the critique of a dialectical historical approach for undermining this moral perspective on historical ideas. In this sense, Cohen argues for a Kantian moral foundation for a philosophy of history in which a thin psychological program prevails. However, despite these similarities, there are also good reasons to exclude Cohen's mature philosophy from the tradition of *Völkerpsychologie.*

First, Cohen explicitly distances his philosophical explorations of the pure will from *Völkerpsychologie* for its limited approach. Second, Cohen does not commit to the "apperception" thesis, which is undoubtedly the most distinctive aspect of *Völkerpsychologie.* Third, Cohen does not even mention Lazarus or Steinthal in his mature ethical philosophy. The question then arises: Why can we and, more importantly, why should we reconsider Cohen's mature ethical thought in light of *Völkerpsychologie?*

The first objection dissipates if we look closely at how Cohen defines *Völkerpsychologie:* "What has been done in the name of *Völkerpsychologie*, is restricted to language, mythos, and morals" (EPW, 11). Cohen rejects only the causal, deterministic, and neutral method or the "strong" program of *Völkerpsychologie* that is restricted to investigating the material manifestation of cognition. Thus, Cohen argues here against the view to which he was committed in his early years; this, however, is no rejection of a "weak" program, which I believe we can find in his mature ethics.

The second objection raises a more fundamental problem. Cohen presupposes a purely logical system, which requires deductive logic and therefore a different methodological basis than psychological explorations based on the apperception thesis. Although both approaches use explanations based on natural and free causation, one might argue that indeed it does make sense to differentiate these two approaches on the mere fact that Lazarus' and Steinthal's positions are psychological undertakings. Cohen, on the contrary, offers a logical and critical investigation on a transcendental basis. This explains also why some scholars believe one of Cohen's chief aims was to prevent his idealism from having "any independent or additional psychological meaning" (Pringe 2017, 12). A systematic analysis, as I have tried to provide in the sections above, shows, however, that Lazarus, Steinthal,

and Cohen do find a joint meeting point: Lazarus and Steinthal, on the one hand, accept a thin basis of absolute idealism by acknowledging that there are ideas—such as moral and scientific unity—that we necessarily presuppose in scientific reasoning. Cohen, on the other hand, reopens his philosophy of pure thought to psychological, physiological, and historical facts by considering the Kantian forms as reflected in substantive concepts. Pure thinking cannot be investigated without empirical concepts; by basing the idealist system of scientific and normative judgments on an empirical and historical foundation, the transcendental foundation becomes evident in the process of critical and ethical thinking. In his mature philosophy, he commits to the idea that the explication of reason depends on physiological movements and linguistic concepts that rely on physiological laws and historically formed concepts. For Cohen, ideas in history are based on an autonomous will and depend on natural causes exceeding the realm of transcendental philosophy. Thus, even though Cohen does not commit to the apperception thesis, he tackles the issue from the transcendental-idealist side and thereby comes systematically close to the weak program of *Völkerpsychologie.*

But since Cohen was undoubtedly aware of the wide range of *Völkerpsychologie*, what prevented him from discussing their work? One reason to answer the third objection might be that, at that time, it was not common to cite contemporary work. Although Cohen was undoubtedly influenced by Paul Natorp (his closest interlocutor)—for example, in respect of his theory of virtues[42]—Natorp is not mentioned even once in Cohen's mature ethics. When it comes to Cohen's relation to Lazarus and Steinthal, however, another socio-political dimension might explain Cohen's hesitation to engage with *Völkerpsychologie:* the "anti-Semitism controversy" (*Berliner Antisemitismusstreit*), which led to a break between Cohen and his teachers.

The anti-Semitism debate emerged during an economic crisis. Rather than attributing the societal problems to the recently legalized speculations on the stock market that were responsible for the economic downfall, Treitschke put forward a theory of cultural decline. While Jewish emancipation seemed to have been welcome in the decades before, Heinrich von Treitschke's essay "Our Prospects" (1879) launched a full-scale controversy about the role of Jews in the German *Kulturnation* (Germany as a cultural-national unity), claiming: "The Jews are our misfortune" (1879, 11).

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42 For a more detailed discussion, see Peter A. Schmid's "Tugendlehre in der 'Religion der Vernunft'" (2000) and *Ethik als Hermeneutik* (1995), where he deals with the foundational basis of virtues in Cohen's philosophical system.

Lazarus responded to this, defending the Jewish Germans. In the lecture, "What does national mean?" (1880), Lazarus points out the fact that the Jewish community has been and still is a non-neglectable part of the German culture that has fundamentally shaped it. "We have fought for Germany, we have consulted the parliament, we have worked in laboratories, we have healed patients in hospitals, and we have lectured at higher educational institutions [...]. Whether we like it or not, we work as Germans" (Lazarus 1880, 27).

Shortly after, Cohen published the essay "A Confession in the Jewish Question" (1880/1965). To everyone's surprise, Cohen seemed to *defend* Treitschke's assimilation claim. "Much to my regret," Cohen states, "I have to confess that I disagree with Lazarus' approach that is certainly interesting but leads to a wrong generalization" (Cohen 1880/1965, 133). Although Cohen aligns with his well-respected colleague when it comes to a foundation of a culture that aims to overcome differences, he seems to align with Treitschke when emphasizing the differences between the "German religion" (Christianity) and "Judaism" (Cohen 1880/1965, 133). He even explicitly agrees with Treitschke that, in the long run, only one unified religion could survive in a culture (Cohen 1880/1965, 134). However, in contrast to Treitschke, this means that the Christians and Jews need to critically address and overcome the cultural differences and merge into a "purer form" of culture (Cohen 1880/1965, 134). For Cohen, at least at this stage of his life, assimilation was a necessary and favorable aspect to reach this goal.[43]

Prior to the controversy, Cohen was highly respected by his teachers, Lazarus and Steinthal, who maintained a friendship even after he had left Berlin. His early articles were all published in *Zeitschrift für Völkerpsychologie und Sprachwissenschaft*—a journal edited by Lazarus and Steinthal. Cohen wished to calm the situation by emphasizing that a fruitful German-Jewish culture also required a rapprochement from the Jewish people to Germanism, he promoted precisely the opposite. Lazarus saw in Cohen's objection a smarmy approach that played right into the hands of the antisemites. Disappointed by Cohen's views, Lazarus broke ties with his former friend and student. Later, Cohen realized that he had misjudged the situation. Although he knew that he did not sufficiently consider how his view might be conceived in such an anti-Semitic environment, it was already too late to repair the damaged friendship.

Considering these events, Cohen might not have been especially keen to contextualize his philosophy within a philosophical tradition dominated by intellectuals who had broken ties with him. Even if Cohen consciously had a weak program

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[43] For a more detailed depiction of Cohen's view on nationality, see Hartwig Wiedebach's *Die Bedeutung der Nationalitaet fuer Hermann Cohen* (1997).

in mind while working on the physiological and psychological, and historical entanglements of the pure will, it may have been a deliberate choice on his part to prevent his mature system from labeling the *völkerpsychological* elements as such.

3.7 The Logical Presuppositions of the "Motion" of the Pure Will

So far, I have demonstrated that Cohen's embedded account of the pure will is based on a notion of "motion" that entails not only historical but also psychological commitments if we understand psychology here as a thin program of *Völkerpsychologie.* Whereas Kant's philosophical explorations start from a concept of experience that stands apart from scientific facts and cultural norms, Cohen embeds his transcendental method in the causal nexus of empirical reality. His ethical theory aims to detect the moral foundation in historical cultural judgments as products of reason or "hypotheses," as he calls them, following Plato. We have given attention to the material aspects of knowledge that show Cohen's commitment to a weak psychological program. We now look at the logical justification of Cohen's embeddedness, which—as I try to show in this section—allows us to locate him in the natural law tradition and sets the foundation for his functionalist critique.

Cohen broadens the meaning of Kantian ethics by arguing that we must scrutinize the "methodical unity" under which "the three cultural areas [law, religion, history] were combined to test the application of the moral law" (KFE B377). Cohen's ethical theory remains individualistic as it relies on the transcendental subject. However, as his reformulation of the moral law has already shown, his conception of individual freedom is integrated "in societal and natural entanglements" (Esser 2011, 227). Embedding critical thinking, however, leads to a fundamental problem: How can we disentangle the moral value of ideas in history from the causal nexus of natural and psychological components with which they are inevitably interwoven?

Interpreters have argued that Cohen's theoretical philosophy was deeply inspired by Trendelenburg (Beiser 2014b, 12; Poma 1997, 4–10 and 269–270; Patton 2005). In this section, I argue that this also holds true for his political philosophy, where he draws on Trendelenburg's concept of "movement" or "coming-into-being" (EPW, 44). Additionally, Cohen also finds inspiration in Lange's idealist line of argument, as demonstrated in § 2.5.

But before I outline the parallels between Cohen and Trendelenburg and Cohen and Lange, which give further insights into how his ethical theory is to

be understood, I briefly draw attention to those aspects where Cohen differs from his predecessors. Cohen's ethical account differs from Trendelenburg's Aristotelianism insofar as he provides—what he considers—a "Platonic" and "scientific" interpretation of transcendental idealism. This implies that moral principles do not originate in perceptual content. Instead, they are considered ideal rational constructions grounding the logic of the legal sciences. Cohen's account also differs crucially from Lange's Kant interpretation. Lange takes ethics to be a sub-discipline of aesthetics, thereby letting go of Kant's categorical imperative. Cohen defends ethics as a systematically independent field grounded by the moral law that takes historical-cultural norms (the "facts of culture") as a starting point. Despite this difference, however, systematic similarities suggest that, in his advancement of Kantian logic, Cohen takes inspiration from what I earlier called Trendelenburg's category of "movement" and Lange's "critical" methodology.

Let us first take a look at the early nineteenth-century philosopher Adolf Trendelenburg. Trendelenburg predominantly influenced natural law theory in the nineteenth century. Natural law theory in this context signifies the idea that juridical practice or legal judgments are ultimately grounded on a principle of justice that is innate to human nature or rationality. Trendelenburg was influenced by Aristotle and Kant. He offered an interpretation of the categories of time and space as being both ideal and real at the same time—a position that evoked the famous Trendelenburg-Fischer debate. In his practical philosophy, Trendelenburg defended a historically embedded view of practical rationality materialized in a "concrete" conception of the Kantian notion of universality, which grounded the basis for his natural law theory (Brüllmann 2019, 207).[44]

To understand Trendelenburg's historically embedded concept of natural law, we first need to look at his logical and epistemological framework. In his *Logical Treatise* (1870), Trendelenburg "reforms" the logical foundation in natural philosophy (Hartung 2019, 79–83). He criticizes both Kant's formal logic and Hegel's dialectical logic, arguing that neither provides a framework that thoroughly reflects the practice of reason and its metaphysical implications in the natural sciences. Kant's epistemological framework of transcendental logic is considered deficient because it refrains from content-based logical operations, such as "inductive inferences" and "analogies," containing metaphysical claims (Trendelenburg 1840/1879, 29). However, Hegel would fail to note that contradictions rely on our intuitive understanding of gradual change. "[S]patial movement is the precondition of Hegel's

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[44] This position builds on an "anthropological" and "ethical" notion of law (Hartung 2008, 298). Politically, Trendelenburg was a "loyal Prussian who believed that the Hohenzollerns [the ruling German aristocracy] were the very model of enlightened rule" (Beiser 2013, 71).

logic" (42). With this claim, Trendelenburg argues for an approach that relies on—what I call—the "principle of continuity."

Let us take a closer look at this principle. Trendelenburg's "dynamic" reading of the Aristotelian framework (Hartung 2008, 315) allows us to view contradictions in their transitional state. He stresses that Aristotle would emphasize that truth relies on the "essence of the nature of objects" (Trendelenburg 1840/1879, 32). Since logic deals with ontological assertions, the sentence "A and not-A is true" may not be judged solely by formal logic but also by an ontological point of view. Although Aristotle would hold on to a concept of pure thinking, his philosophy would prevent us from the Hegelian mistake, arguing that the dialectical progress of pure thinking would refrain from any presuppositions. Trendelenburg argues that "contradictions" are "based on receptive intuitions," meaning that pure thinking would inevitably rely on an intuitive category of coming-into-being (Trendelenburg 1840/1879, 56).

Trendelenburg illustrates this with the following example: "While the day is coming, it is already, and it is not yet" (Trendelenburg 1840/1879, 38). Logically, this sentence violates the law of identity, which says that A and not-A cannot both be true at the same time. However, the problem is presented differently if we include the human being's ability to perceive the object in its transitional mode of existence. When "a new day is coming," it is daytime, and it is not daytime. When an apple "is rotting," it is rotten, and it is not rotten. When a towel "is drying," it is dry, and it is not dry. In short: We conceptually grasp an object in between its states of being and not-being. Neither Kant, whose logic would remain formal and ahistorical, nor Hegel, who would miss the intuitive notion of spatial movement, sufficiently reflect upon the principle of continuity, saying that we can ascribe A and not-A ontologically to an object due to our intuition of coming-into-being.

Trendelenburg uses the sense of coming-into-being to reformulate an account of historical reason. In his view, it is the philosopher's task to "recognize the objects of knowledge that find their origin [...] in the a priori conditions" (Trendelenburg 1840/1879, 236). Methodologically, this requires the identification of concepts and norms that were initially generated by reason. "[A]s the spirit opens its senses, [...t]he a priori principle of freedom is found in its movement (Bewegung) in physical objects and ethical norms" (Trendelenburg 1840/1879, 237). In other words: we recognize ideas in their transitional state between autonomy and heteronomy.

This is what Trendelenburg had in mind when he wrote about the principle of continuity reappearing in *Natural Law on the Foundations of Ethics* (1868). Trendelenburg criticized approaches that take an ideal principle of justice as a "last foundation" (*letzter Ursprung*) without considering its appearance. He believed that philosophy must "screen history regarding its [rational] origin" (Trendelenburg

1868, 5) and claimed that the principle of justice "must be found in its historical formation" (Trendelenburg 1868, xi).

Trendelenburg retained a Kantian approach, holding on to a logical and a priori understanding of the notion of ethical freedom that guides our focus on the historical instantiations of positive laws. He maintained the distinction between the ideal and empirical notions of morality, arguing that we must judge legal norms by their underlying focus. He stated, "In contrast to the changing particular (*Besondere*) of the many wills, which dresses in the majority of votes only appearing to be universal, we demand the universality (*Allgemeine*) as the essence of reason that underlies juridical judgments" (Trendelenburg 1868, 16).

However, Trendelenburg's ethical account went beyond Kant as he aimed to disentangle the ethical elements in juridical laws and grasp them in their transitional state from freedom to determinism. The "organic worldview," as Trendelenburg called it, allowed for a continuous view of the normative and ethical origins underlying substantive ideas in history. The principle of continuity in the practical sphere says that we recognize a set of norms in their transitional state between freedom and determinism under the category of an "ethical end."

By ethicizing the legal sphere, Trendelenburg faced a novel problem. In Kant's view, the legal and moral realms ideally coincided, but systematically they targeted different norms. In the moral sphere, we deal with subject-internal and autonomous law, while in the legal sphere, we deal with external and coercive laws. However, if all empirical social standards—including juridical models—are measured by an underlying ethical end, how is it possible to uphold a distinction between the internal and external realms?

Trendelenburg's answer to this problem is as follows: "The merit of this [Kant's] legal concept lies in its generality (*Allgemeinheit*) but its defect in the generality conceived only externally" (Trendelenburg 1868, 16). Since Trendelenburg considers all social norms as "ethical germs" measured by their "ethical end," he rejects the Kantian systematic differentiation between legality and morality, where the former is based on "external means" of "coercion" (Trendelenburg 1868, 12). Instead, he argues that even legal norms—materialized in the social realm—are measured by their ethical end. "[I]t is only in a community where the not yet rational becomes possible" (Trendelenburg 1868, 49).

Cohen makes use of Trendelenburg's logic in his embedded account of transcendental philosophy. Together with Wilhelm Dilthey, Gottlob Frege, Franz Brentano, Heinrich Rickert, and Edmund Husserl, Cohen was one of many students of Trendelenburg (Beiser 2013, 1). In "Zur Controverse zwischen Trendelenburg und Kuno Fischer" (1871), the young Cohen commented on the Fischer-Trendelenburg debate. I will not focus on this debate here; instead, I will argue that when Cohen worked out the moral law as a natural law underlying his ethical historiog-

raphy, he drew on Trendelenburg's category of "movement" or "coming-into-being" and renewed the principle of continuity on neo-Kantian grounds.

In various passages, Cohen argues that the moral ideal—his novel interpretation of the ethical concept of universality—is the rational concept that vouches for continuation in history. In the introduction, Cohen writes: "This book attempts to present Kant's epistemological justification of ethics in the psychological movement (*Bewegung*) in its developments" (EPW, vi, emphasis added). Later in the book, he states: "The movement in law and state contains an immanent appeal to an external forum [...]. We shall later claim the concept of history for this purpose" (EPW, 439, emphasis added). In another passage, Cohen claims: "It is history on which the idea of perpetual peace is grounded, and it vouches for the continuous movement" (EPW, 454, emphasis added). Cohen argues that what makes ideas in history intelligible is the ideal foundation of the moral law that allows for a continuation in the history of humanity. Like Trendelenburg's dynamic conception of reason, Cohen's philosophy of history is grounded upon a category that allows us to rationally evaluate norms in two respects: their factual state and their ethical purpose.

As I outlined earlier, Cohen formulates a novel interpretation of the moral law in the second edition of *Kant's Foundation of Ethics* (see § 3.2). He criticizes Kant's ethical theory for using materialistic terms that have led to a flawed depiction of the moral law. While Kant's moral law asks what I ought to do, the Cohenian law asks how the social world must be "administered" to protect human dignity, thereby adding a social and teleological aspect to the moral law. As I have shown earlier, Cohen thereby provides an evaluative principle that allows us to identify developments stemming from a free moral will, even if the norm in question is materialized in history and thus entangled in the causal nexus. It is important to note that norms that are conceptually incoherent with the moral law must be dismissed if society is to progress.

By setting out the development of culture in its progressiveness, Cohen gives up the systematic distinction between law and morality. For Cohen, there is only one fundamental moral right that allows for a critical examination of normative concepts. He argues that Kant's conception of "coercion did not grow on the ground of transcendental freedom" (KFE, B395). Some passages later, he claims: "Kant did not exercise that free, unbiased, sovereign criticism of positive law that gives his transcendental criticism its true life and its powerful fruitfulness" (KFE, B399). Like Trendelenburg, Cohen accuses Kant of mistakenly "separating law and morality," which hindered him from seeing the potential of the moral law as a "natural law" underlying all cultural practices (KFE, B399). Concepts consistent with the moral law are manifestations of ethical ideas, grounding the continuation of human progress.

In *Ethics of the Pure Will*, Cohen adds a political component to the ideal notion of the moral law or the "pure will." The substantive prescriptive concepts constituting society change continuously; however, the state's task has been and will always be the same, namely, to protect the dignity of its citizens. To signify the political implications, Cohen introduces the concept of "Allness" (*Allheit*). "The state [*Allheit*] is the universal institution in which history represents the human race and brings it to its development" (EPW, 378). At first glance, it may seem like a radical idea to view the state as a moral idea. However, Cohen emphasizes that the idea of the state is a purely methodological concept that allows us to take an ethical viewpoint on society.

Cohen's novel political conception of the moral law relies on an adaptation of Trendelenburg's category of coming into being or the motion of pure will. We remember that Trendelenburg takes the category of coming-into-being as the cognitive capacity to grasp an object in its state between "being" and "not-being" or a norm in its state between "autonomy" and "heteronomy." In the same vein, Cohen's "principle of continuity" grasps laws in their state between rationality and historicity. Like Trendelenburg, Cohen argues that legal systems have a shared focus on an ethical end, thereby taking norms in their autonomous origin and their materialized form.

Cohen employs the methodological concept of the ideal state to disregard the causal factors on which moral ideas in history rely. The idea of the moral state functions as a "lighthouse" and an "anchor for the flood of history. It contains the last magic key for the continuation of humanity" (EPW, 503). The materialized rational norms differ fundamentally over time. However, the focus on an absolute end that grounds our will to systematize norms enables us to regard the history of humanity in its progressive continuation. In other words, the concept of *"Allheit"* (totality) provides continuity in the cultural domain. Like Trendelenburg, Cohen bases his practical philosophy on an ethical principle, claiming that we recognize the lasting moral value of norms under an ideal of unity, which he equates with the state.

Let us now turn to the critical component in Cohen's ethics reminiscent of Lange's idealism. Cohen agrees with Lange that ethics must proceed critically. In contrast to the historicist camp that engages with an inductive method to examine empirical facts, Cohen's methodology starts from historically evolved and psychologically manifested legal facts—the "facts of culture"—and discusses their underlying ethical end. To illustrate Cohen's Kant-inspired critique of empirical concepts, we take a brief look at his critique of capitalism.

As I will discuss in more detail in the next chapter, Cohen criticizes the conceptual presuppositions of a capitalist legal system, where persons and objects are confused. Inheritance laws in capitalist societies are based on the misleading as-

sumption that a "person's will could be materialized" in an object (EPW, 608–609). "Capital," on the other hand, "no longer seems to be a mere thing; it becomes a person because it acts like persons" (EPW, 609). With regard to the concept of labor, Cohen argues that the employer would gain, for a certain amount of time, "ownership" over the worker (EPW, 605). Thus, under capitalist law, objects are treated as persons, and laborers are reduced to their physical skills and thus treated as objects—incompatible with the moral law. This conceptual problem causes—to use Cohen's words—"serious damage" (EPW, 607).

Cohen does not use the moral law to test maxims; instead, he critically analyzes prescriptive concepts constituting the legal framework of a capitalist society, thereby reminding us of the function of the "idea of harmony" in Lange's account. Building on his teleological and social interpretation of the moral law (or later the "*Allheit*"), Cohen's investigation of prescriptive notions involves, similar to Lange, a critical moment, as it allows us to identify inhumane prescriptive concepts that hinder society from progressing. Cohen's interpretation of the moral law serves as a conceptual criterion against which misleading prescriptive concepts are criticized. This is also foundational for his understanding of socialism: We do not overcome capitalism by revolutionizing it; we gradually gain insights into immoral prescriptive concepts manifested in legal laws through ethical deliberation. Society progresses by bringing norms into consistent order with the moral law.

Cohen's use of the ideal state (*Allheit*) comprises systematic components of Trendelenburg's logic and Lange's idealism. Trendelenburg is reflected in Cohen's focus on norms considered in their autonomous origin despite their heteronomous appearance. The critical component of Lange's idealism is reflected in Cohen's conceptual critique, illuminating misleading developments. The moral law or the *Allheit* grounds, on the one hand, ethical continuation in human history and, on the other hand, the critical foundation that allows us to examine the contingent appearances of cultural norms. Thus, Cohen's methodology views human history in its teleological process, marking prescriptive concepts hindering moral progress as structural wrongs.

3.8 Summary

I have proposed that Cohen initially held a robust version of *Völkerpsychologie*, which included a method that is neutral toward truth and explained materialistic concepts in a causal and deterministic manner. During his early years, Cohen believed *Völkerpsychologie* to complement critical philosophy. Cohen underwent a transformation in 1877, when he began to view synthetic a priori reasoning as evident in scientific and cultural facts. While scholars have usually claimed that

Cohen was letting go of psychology at this point, thereby moving forward to a teleological account of rationality, I have shown that the historical embeddedness entails a thin program of *Völkerpsychologie* that continues to exist also in his mature ethical theory.

This systematic shift is also reflected in his logical presuppositions that set the foundation for Cohen's later political philosophy. The "embedded" account of rationality entails presuppositions that are not to be found in Kant, but in his teachers Trendelenburg and Lange. In order to highlight the logical presuppositions of his embedded account, I have focused on the notion of "motion" in Trendelenburg and Lange's critical aspect of his aesthetic-ethical theory that set the foundation for Cohen's political philosophy. Only so is it possible to argue for a historically and psychologically grounded explanation of rationality that distinguishes between rational and non-rational developments, which enable us to both explain our past and critically evaluate it.

Cohen draws on Lange's idealist critique, as outlined in § 2.6, and Trendelenburg's natural law theory to support this perspective. As Chapter 4 will demonstrate, this historically embedded account of rationality remains formal only insofar as the underlying principle is *functionally* reflected in our search for ethical norms. By relinquishing metaphysical claims from which we can derive a fixed set of categories that determine the possibility of experience, he argues that in order to make claims about the possibility of truth and morality, we must critically examine the historical developments of the material or "psychological" side of knowledge.

4 Cohen's Functionalist Critique of Capitalism

4.1 Introduction

Thus far, I have shown that two features characterize Cohen's practical philosophy. On the one hand, Cohen provides a conception of the Kantian "pure will" that[45] grounds ethical deliberation on the regulative idea of the "systematicity of ends." This idea is transcendental as it is an a priori necessary condition of the possibility of moral knowledge, has Kantian-logical implications as it reveals contradictions that ground normative principles, and is idealistic as it is created purely by our consciousness. On the other hand, Cohen is highly concerned with the psychological and historical materialization of normative concepts. These empirical components have fundamentally shaped and reshaped the academic and cultural discourse constituting our understanding of right and wrong. The previous chapter was meant to show that Cohen considers philosophical concepts also as contingent or historically relative manifestations entangled with causal features and shaped by the cultural discourse within which they emerge. This chapter will show that this embedded account is presupposed when Cohen provides his functional critique of the "fact of culture" and the "fact of science." In the practice of the natural sciences, we produce scientific facts with the "function" to come further to the truth that is the idea of a set of non-contradictory principles. The "function" of cultural norms is to establish ethical norms that do not contradict the moral law. In both cases, this ideal explains our presuppositions in our teleological-rational endeavor; it is not meant as an idea that is ever purely reflected in our empirical practice.

Cohen's Kantian functionalist political philosophy has so far been overlooked. Frederick Beiser, for example, argues that Cohen failed to fulfill his promise of providing a transcendental method for moral thinking. Consequently, Cohen's social-democratic view is discussed in biographical terms instead of as an integral component of his systematic philosophy (2018, 100). Harry van der Linden (1988, 1991, 1994) has provided a more thorough study of the socialist potential of the Kantian framework. But with his attempt to actualize Cohen's philosophy, his engagement with Cohen's systematic philosophy remains selective, thereby missing the functionalist aspects where Cohen deviates from Kant (van der Linden 1988, 206). A similar problem is to be noted in James Furner's discussion of Cohen's account.

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45 This chapter builds on the article "Functional Objectivity and Relative Truths: The Contingent Conception of Universality in Ernst Cassirer's Ethics," which is currently under review.

(2019). With his attempt to answer the question of whether capitalism can be condemned on the grounds of Kant's Formula of Humanity, he focuses solely on Cohen's formulation of the Law of Humanity without considering the philosophical presuppositions against which Cohen formulates this principle. Steven Schwarzschild (1956) has given so far the most accurate depiction of Cohen's democratic socialism. Schwarzschild understands Cohen's left-Kantian account as an alternative to Marx's historical materialism, claiming that his political account ought to be understood against the background of his "idealistic historiography" that "defines ideal aims which are to be accomplished and are, therefore, ethical in nature" (Schwarzschild 1956, 426).

This chapter aims to provide a more thorough interpretation of Cohen's justification of socialism that aims to tackle his critique from the background of his anti-metaphysical and dynamic understanding of transcendental logic. By embedding his critique of capitalism within his logical system, I argue that his systematic philosophy is best understood as a *functionalist* account that evaluates empirical movements normatively with regard to their ethical purpose.

My argument unfolds in the following steps. First, I argue that his ethical critique is best illustrated in his late philosophy of religion. There, we see that his ethical critique focuses on liberation movements that allows for qualitative distinctions in history, and for counterfactual considerations in the genesis of moral progress. Second, I argue that these tendencies are best understood as a functionalist account of moral rationality that evaluates institutions, belief systems, and practices with respect to their ethical purpose. Third, I conclude that, at the time, Cohen's Kantian functionalism proved to be a valuable theory for those who were dissatisfied with the historical materialist foundation that left no room for tackling the problem of capitalism in normative or ethical terms. Although Cohen's account was vulnerable to the same weaknesses of cultural chauvinist ideologies as I will show with respect to Natorp (see Chapter 6), I argue that Cohen's functionalist-ethical justification of socialism was valuable at the time as it redirected the philosophical debates of socialism at the turn of the twentieth century.

4.2 Functional Critique of Christianity

To outline Cohen's functionalist account, we need to go back to his "narrative elements [...] exemplifying the historical development of morality," which were already partially discussed in Chapter 3 (Wiedebach 2006, 87). I take functionalism here as a position that evaluates factual norms with regard to their function to promote societal or ethical progress. In this vein, social norms have a twofold aspect:

they explain *and* prescribe social developments. In the Kantian system, the categorical imperative has no explanatory power for two reasons. First, the Kantian framework is based on the principle "ought implies can." From a backward-looking perspective, historical deeds and institutional practices exceed the normative realm as they become facts, which require causal explanations. Second, Kant compares the formal law with a mathematical formula that first needed to be discovered. While Kant would agree that various pre-enlightenment historical developments have led to a more just society, we miss in the Kantian system the conceptual framework that allows also identifying pre-enlightenment practices as "rational." However, Cohen's functionalization of ethical rationality contrasts with this idea.

The "pure will" is seen as a normative principle as well as a constitutive principle that explains ethical movements in human history. Cohen explains ancient movements in their ethical purpose or function they had in previous times. In the following paragraphs, I focus especially on his late philosophy of religion, where his functionalist view on history had been fully developed. Cohen's theory of the "pure will" shows that social norms are *functionally* reflected in our historical social facts. In contrast to forward-looking normative rules, these facts are intermingled with causal and symbolic features.

In his system of "pure thought," Cohen differentiates between two types of cognition: mathematical and normative cognition. The method of the natural sciences, mathematics, is constituted by the categories of theoretical reason. Cohen refrains from giving a definite view of the table of categories. He argues that the logical categories were represented in our scientific practices. While substantive scientific claims would change over time, Cohen argues that their "function" to provide causal explanations remains the same. "Causality is only one of the categories. But it is the category of *function*, that is, of the basic means of pure cognition" (EPW, 179 – 180). This functional reading of the principles of logic shows that despite the changing scientific discourses, the functions that are reflected in our rational practices remain the same.

The same applies to the realm of culture, more specifically, to religion and politics. While his early *völkerpsychological* writings show that the "early peoples" (*Urmenschen*) did not differentiate yet between "cause" and "purpose," Cohen seeks to show that with the implementation of monotheism, the outlook on a unified purpose or the unification of ends was born. The outlook on a unified purpose is thereby taken as an extension of the category of causality that "encompasses the field of the will, the field of the religious sciences and of moral culture" (EPW, 80). In *Religion der Vernunft*, Cohen claims: "The religion of reason makes religion a general *function* of human consciousness" (RR, 8). This functionalist reading is also presupposed when Cohen defines the state in its function of the unification

of ends. Not only the monotheistic conception of God but also the idea of the state —the "*Allheit*" to use Cohen's words—has the potential to impact cultural practices for the better: "The function has logical meaning, and that is that of unification" (RR, 122). Cohen seeks to investigate political movements, legal institutions, and normative concepts that manifest the ethical function in concepts that seek to unify the ends of our practices.

Let us commence by examining Cohen's concept of the causally intertwined pure will in *Ethics of the Pure Will.* As demonstrated in the preceding chapter, the moral will is based on the notion of systematicity of ends, which concentrates on the communal realm and progresses teleologically. Cohen regards moral reasoning as an exercise of embedded thinking that is interwoven with historical, natural, and material factors. Cohen criticizes sociological explanations for their naturalistic outlook of society as a "social organism," thereby overlooking the fact that a significant portion of culture is fashioned by ethical ideas that strive for the integration of ethical goals.[46] In his view, sociological explanations that confine themselves to causal explanations neglect the fact that human history is molded by efforts oriented toward an ethical objective of creating a just society. If cultural studies are restricted to natural causes, there is a risk of overlooking the ethical advancements that trace back to the autonomous moral will, which has shaped our culture throughout human history. Cohen believes that a comprehensive account is necessary to identify the practices that have contributed to a shift in the normative thought and promoted the betterment of society. Such an account must be capable of recognizing the critical role of free will in cultural development and identifying the ethical practices that have led to meaningful changes in our understanding of normative matters. With the lens Cohen provides, he seeks a more nuanced view on our cultural evolution as well as the potential for continued progress toward a more just and equitable society.

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46 Cohen critically observes that similar deterministic tendencies are already to be found in German Idealist accounts—in Hegel and Schelling who influenced sociologists with their idea that society resembled an organism based on human inclination. In the literature, Cohen's idealistic historiography is often depicted as "Kantian" or "Hegelian" in essence (Waszek 2018; Kim 2015; Bienenstock 2012; Gibbs 2000; Willey 1978). However, Kant refrains from an ethical view on history, claiming that "our empirical ends or ends of inclination can never give themselves the moral form," while Hegel argues that "human inclination, rather than having to be subsumed under laws originating from an intelligible or nonempirical subject, can give itself or generate moral law, can itself be rational" (Sedgwick 2001, 182). Cohen's critique is that the historical agent is thereby reduced to "particular interests" (EPW, 33). Note that Cohen understands "naturalism" here in a broad sense, including historicism, naturalism in a narrower sense, or materialism as in views seeking causal explanations of the emergence of society (EPW, 41).

Cohen endeavors to construct such an account by positing the existence of a free moral will in historical actions. In his advanced thinking, Cohen refers to the notion of systematic ends as the "pure will," which does not manifest itself as such in the empirical world. Nevertheless, Cohen argues that as rational beings, we create concepts that represent this idea to enable its comprehension. In this way, Cohen attempts to reconcile the tension between the abstract nature of the pure will and its concrete expression in historical events. By recognizing the significance of human agency and the role of ethical principles in shaping cultural evolution, Cohen's framework offers a valuable perspective on the complex interplay between normative thought and historical action.[47]

I have mentioned earlier that Cohen refers—just like Lazarus—to Johannes Müller's work, *Handbuch der Physiologie des Menschen* (1834), to substantiate his claims regarding the existence of a free will in historical developments (see § 3.4). Müller posits that bodily movements are not determined by nerves but rather by the "mental image" that precedes them (Müller 1838, 268). Building on this insight, Cohen argues that such mental images can be rationally and ideally constructed. Consequently, he maintains that various belief systems were established for ethical purposes (Cohen 1904/1981, 156). By invoking Müller's understanding of the relationship between mental imagery and bodily movement, Cohen seeks to underscore the importance of agency and conscious intentionality in historical events. Through this perspective, he highlights the critical role of ethical ideas and their manifestation in social practices, thereby providing an account of cultural progress.

Cohen's concept of the "pure will" finds its most extensive application in his treatment of religion. In his view, monotheism should be regarded as an ethical movement that sought to bring about a more just society. The idea of the monotheistic god served the ethical function of the pure will. By incorporating the concept of the "pure will" into the analysis of cultural developments, Cohen's approach centers on identifying the factors that have contributed to moral progress. His work on religion offers an illustration of the ways in which normative thought and ethical principles have played a critical role in shaping cultural development,

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47 This point is also meant as a critique of Hegel. Although Cohen—like many other neo-Kantians—does not do justice to Hegel, there is a crucial difference between their accounts. In Hegel's account, historical freedom consists of interpretations that result in concepts and institutions that serve as an interpretative resolution to overcome existing contradictions. Those artifacts are *speculative* as they are bound to history and an act out of freedom as it is *us* setting these concepts (Sedgwick 2017, 15–17).

and it highlights the potential for continued progress toward a more just and equitable society.[48]

In his analysis, Cohen also focuses on pre-Enlightenment movements, where he analyzes "symbolic" concepts to capture the evolving nature of these developments. He highlights the significance of Jewish monotheism as the first belief system to provide the conceptual tools necessary to articulate a regulative idea of systematicity that aimed to counteract the atrocities of the time. By identifying the role of symbolic concepts in shaping cultural evolution, Cohen offers a unique perspective on the ways in which abstract ideas and normative thought have contributed to historical change.

The idea of God had a huge impact on ethical progress and the development of the scientific foundation of ethics. The Jewish teachings of the revelation, moral education, the creation of the world, and moral world authorship (*moralische Urheberschaft*) [...], and the idea of a systematic unity have promoted the kingdom of freedom, [they] have consolidated the reality of moral autonomy, [and they] have given a *symbolic* existence to the autotelic community. (KFE, B364, emphasis added)

Cohen introduces here a "symbolic" meaning of the concept of God. Symbolism is here taken in opposition to the "critical" system that defines meanings in their formal function. Symbolic beliefs or symbolic belief systems are expressed in concepts that resemble the function of the formal conception of the pure will without being entirely free from speculative assumptions exceeding the limits of what we can know.

Cohen's understanding of pre-critical symbolic concepts that yet have served the ethical function of promoting progress is best illustrated in *Religion of Reason out of the Sources of Judaism.*[49] Cohen leads his readers through the historical steps

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48 Prior to developing his own oeuvre, Cohen offered critiques of contemporary developments, thereby refining his conceptual logic. For example, in "Deutschtum und Judentum" (1915/1977), Cohen claims that the Zionists' call for the establishment of a "Jewish state" would fail, because the Zionists would emphasize the natural elements of Jewish nationality, which would lead toward a destabilization instead of a unionization of the German-Jewish state.

49 Ever since the posthumously published *Religion der Vernunft aus den Quellen des Judentums* (1919) appeared, scholars have wondered about Cohen's concept of rational religion, which seemed to deviate from his earlier writings. Prior to this book, Cohen had gained recognition for his anti-metaphysical and critical interpretation of the idea of God based on an explicit criticism of Kant's doctrines of the postulates. In the *Second Critique*, Kant claims that the belief in the "existence of God" (*das Dasein Gottes*) was a "practically necessary condition for the fulfillment of the moral law" (PR 5, 132). Cohen contested this idea, claiming that religion was a "sub-field to ethics" based on a normative idea instead of a metaphysical conception of the absolute (God) (Cohen 1896/1974). In *Religion der Vernunft*, however, Cohen seems to let go of his view of religion as a sub-field, claiming that ethics would "fail in front of the problem of the Though" (RR, 18). What

with the aim of showing that the implementation of Judaism has led to the "ethi-cization" of cultural practices. In the introduction, Cohen states that he would build on "literary sources" and "institutions" to show the emergence of "religious reason" (Cohen 1919/1966, 3, 6). By rejecting the "inductive" method of the historical sciences, Cohen focuses on the "straight path from the historical concept of Juda-ism to the philosophy of religion" (Cohen 1919/1966, 6, 28). Measured by the idea of the systematicity of ends in the kingdom of ends, Cohen argues that the Jewish writings were the first to introduce a concept with the normative purpose of the pure rational will.

The rational or ethical function of the symbolic concept of the Jewish God is illustrated in a genealogical argument. Cohen's historical reconstruction is sup-posed to show that the implementation of the Jewish thought system dissolved the contradictions caused by a polytheistic belief system. Following Maimonides, Cohen claims that the teachings of the Talmud were spread in an oral tradition at a time when the majority of people believed in polytheism—a religious belief system that included cruel sacrificial rituals that were meant to "soothe" various gods (RR, 399; Cohen 1908/2009, 178). The polytheistic belief system did not yet have the conceptual conditions to differentiate between morally "good" and "bad." For them, the same type of action could satisfy one God while offending another. The Jewish conception of a monotheistic god, in contrast, made it possible to think of a systematically coherent moral belief system, striving toward a systematic unifica-tion of ends. While the pagans pictured their gods as human-like entities and based their practices on the belief that sacrificing living beings would allow them to merge with their gods, the Jewish tradition took the monotheistic idea of God

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is meant by that is that religion is not viewed a sub-field but as a necessary "complement" to ethics (RR, 18). Moreover, Cohen claims that ethics need to be complemented not just by any religion but by Judaism in particular. These somewhat surprising remarks raise the question of whether Cohen underwent a systematic change and if his universal concept of rational religion is compatible with his preference for one religion. Franz Rosenzweig was the first to claim that the book would mark a systematic "turning point" in Cohen's thinking (Rosenzweig 1924/1994, 140). Although most schol-ars agree that Rosenzweig's interpretation is not fully accurate, some scholars still maintain that Cohen broke with his earlier systematic philosophy (Rosenzweig 1924/1994, 140; Zank 2020, 2; Holz-hey 2000, 51). Others, however, are more hesitant in considering the *Religion der Vernunft* as a sys-tematic shift in Cohen's account (Poma 1997; Wiehl 2000, 63; Novak 2000, 227). I follow their lead and take his philosophy of religion as a continuation of his mature system of critical idealism. I thereby take Cohen's philosophy of religion as an illustrative case study of his functionalist concep-tion of social norms. Even though we miss such a detailed genealogical study in his political phi-losophy, I believe that we can make better sense of Cohen's left-Kantian critique of capitalism if we take his endorsement of socialism to be a consequence of his functional conception of ethical prog-ress.

for a "reconciliation" with the absolute (RR, 399). Cohen critically points out that the fifth book of the *Torah*, "The Book of Deuteronomy," would still show some mythical residues of ancient laws of sacrifice (*Opfergesetzgebung*) (RR, 32). However, he emphasizes that the Jewish rituals were reformed by the prophet Jescheskel so that they would not contradict the ideal and regulative meaning of the idea of the absolute. In this sense, the Jewish belief system provided the conceptual framework that overcame the cruelty of the pagans. Judaism thus established an ethical culture.

Another illustration of the pre-critical symbolic meaning of social norms is to be found in Cohen's differentiation between "symbolic" and "ethical" Jewish practices (RR, 398). According to Cohen, purely symbolic rituals, such as the Jewish dietary restrictions or the custom of wearing tzitzits, are historically contingent rules that were once meaningful but have lost their relevance in modern society. Due to their mythical elements, these practices cannot be generalized, and they are only indirectly relevant for ethical purposes as they strengthen the moral character by reminding the individual of their relation to the absolute ideal (God).[50] However, other rules, such as the rule to help strangers, are genuinely *ethical*. Ethical rules survive critical scrutiny even if the conceptualization of that rule is intermingled with non-critical elements.[51]

What we see here is that Cohen takes the pure will as an *evaluative* and *explanatory* concept at the same time. The focus on the purpose of belief systems shows that even though the Jewish conceptualization of the idea of God emerged in times prior to enlightenment, that is, a time when we lacked the conceptual tools to grasp the formal aspects of the good will, the *function* of the monotheistic god and the pure will are the same. It is this focus on the function of historical movements that allows Cohen to evaluate the substantiation of normative concepts with regard to their actual purpose: to promote ethical progress.

In the previous section (§ 3.7), I tried to show that Cohen draws on two crucial notions: (i) Trendelenburg's notion of coming-into-being that allows him to detach his methodology from a factual understanding of history and (ii) Lange's idealism that allows him to conceptualize the critique of social norms. These two presuppositions also lay the foundation from where he undertakes counterfactual deliber-

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50 Already in *Ethics of the Pure Will*, Cohen develops a virtue ethical framework. In *Religion of Reason*, Cohen shows that virtues played a great part in the implementation of the Jewish pre-critical ethical framework.

51 Note that Cohen rejects the notion of a "stranger" because the concept reflects the personal relationship with the other, while a critical conception entirely disregards contingent factors and directs its action toward the pure idea of systematicity.

ations to "correct" misleading Christian influences that allegedly clouded the pure ethical notion of functions we find in the Jewish religion (Zank 2000, 321).

Cohen's counterfactual functional critique proceeds in two stages. The first step involves the argument that Christianity represents a regression in the evolution of moral reason by reintroducing a metaphysical conception of God. Cohen suggests that with the implementation of the second sacrament, whereby believers receive the "sacred wafer," Christians reintroduced sacrificial rituals that imply that God is not merely a regulative idea but an existing entity (RR, 399). This, he argues, established a way of thinking about religion that includes an outdated metaphysical notion that had already been abandoned in the Jewish tradition. Cohen contends that by consuming the "body of Christ," the Christian believer is reminded of God's blessing to merge with God, thus reinforcing the idea of a metaphysical God (RR, 400). This regression, Cohen maintains, is also evident in Paulinian Christianity, which reintegrated the idea of a metaphysical God, and which was subsequently picked up by Kant. Cohen suggests that this development marks a step backwards in the conceptual development of the idea of the absolute. Through this critique, Cohen seeks to underscore the importance of maintaining a critical perspective on the development of religious ideas and their potential implications for moral reasoning.

Cohen's second step in his counterfactual functional critique targets the concept of an "immortal soul" reintroduced by the Pauline letters. He argues that while the Jewish concept of "mizwa" had already advanced enough to combine "law and duty" without resorting to the mythical idea of a soul that transcends worldly existence, the Pauline conception of law regresses to mythical elements, suggesting the existence of a true self beyond our physical existence. According to Cohen, this concept influenced Kant's problematic dualism, where an ideal metaphysical self opposes the natural desires of the self. In contrast, Judaism was already more advanced in conceptualizing the ethical function of religion as it introduced the concept of "mitzvah" to represent duties without relying on the problematic idea of an "immortal soul" (RR, 400).

What follows from this passage is that Cohen is not concerned merely identifying an underlying cause given the causal facts in history, but with a qualitative judgment about the progressiveness of different belief systems. Normative and ontological concepts, institutions, and thought systems are evaluated with regard to their function to promote ethical progress. Cohen's late take on Judaism illustrates this thought: it lays open developments that allowed for conceptual changes that led to ethical progress.

4.3 Functional Critique of Capitalism

I have shown that Cohen's functionalist interpretation of the pure will provides a foundation to examine historical social norms not only in their factual state but also with regard to their ethical purpose. Influenced by Trendelenburg and Lange (see § 3.7), historical social norms are thereby viewed not only in their causal but also in their normative value. But so far, we have seen how his functionalist view provides a critical foundation to criticize regressing developments in the emergence of ethical thought. In this section, I aim to show that the same foundation provides the critical basis for a functionalist critique of capitalism that—according to Cohen—is likewise considered a step backwards.

In the "Introduction and Critical Appendix" to Lange's *History of Materialism* (1896), Cohen claims for the first time that "Kant was the true and real originator of German socialism" (Cohen 1896/1974, 71).[52] Cohen is convinced that if Kant's notion of practical reason were thought through, we would conclude that democratic socialism was the only ethically justified governmental form fit to combat unethical practices in capitalism. In his work *Ethics of the Pure Will*, Cohen directs his attention toward the development of ethical rationality within the political domain. In particular, he argues that socialism represents a contemporary movement that endeavors to address social injustices through the pursuit of a unified conception of ends. Throughout history, Cohen observes that various ideas have emerged in response to societal injustices. One such example is Plato's idealism, which aimed to counteract a relativistic conception of morality by promoting a "morally better culture" through the ideal concept of the self (EPW, 268). Cohen also notes the role of God in moral practices during the Middle Ages, despite the "denial of freedom" and "the consciousness of guilt" prevalent during that era (EPW, 288).

In recent times, Cohen views socialism as a movement that endeavors seeking to establish norms that can effectively surmount the unjust developments that stem from capitalism (EPW, 290). Throughout history, there has been a recurrent and substantial concept that has materialized the systematic idea of ends, such as the concept of God. Just like Judaism has sought to unify ends while simultaneously "ethicizing" culture, Cohen considers socialism as a righteous movement, as it challenges the inconsistencies in capitalism and the structural injustices that such inconsistencies give rise to. Similar to how the Jewish thought system once

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52 Before the *Critical Appendix* was published, Cohen mentioned his positive attitude toward socialism twice. First, at the end of the first edition of KFE from 1877, he argues that socialism is a sign of moral progress. Second, in KFAE from 1889, where he writes that in the current system, we would "belong exclusively to the mechanism of social economy, in which every natural being as if it were only a machine part, acts as a means, and is consumed as a means" (KFAE, 39).

overcame the injustices of the polytheistic belief system, socialism represents the contemporary movement with the aim of counteracting the modern-day capitalist injustices that plague our society.

Cohen distinguishes between three distinct types of judgments: (i) "individuality judgments," (ii) "plurality judgments," and (iii) "allness judgments" (Holzhey 1986a, 107). "Individuality judgments" refer to subjective assessments that express one's personal evaluation of a particular subject matter. For instance, one might admire the aesthetic qualities of Catholic churches without subscribing to the Catholic faith. Conversely, "plurality judgments" concern objective claims about a social group, which may be empirically examined to make generalizable assertions about their practices. However, neither "individuality judgments" nor "plurality judgments" provide any insight into the moral permissibility of these practices. In contrast, "allness judgments" involve ethical-logical evaluations of social norms, assessing the extent to which social norms or institutions align with their ethical purpose.

Cohen criticizes Marxists for relying solely on "plurality judgments," which entail explaining social practices merely from an empirical point of view. However, in Cohen's view, this approach falls short in terms of accounting for the ethical motivation that underlies the socialist movement.

> Our interest is not whether actions are carried out by actors that are actually free; this is the metaphysical question [...]. But the modern person's heart beats for whether the action has an absolute end, an end for which a person is not merely a means [...] or a tool; but in which they, as a person, remain the end in itself of humanity. (Cohen EPW, 321)

Cohen argues that the Marxist's conception of the social sciences ought to let go of the misleading idea that moral evaluations are "unscientific" (EPW, 214). The conceptual evaluation of the function of political movements would be based on logical grounds and thus would have the same status as the natural sciences.

In order to establish a culture in which laborers are treated accordingly, Cohen argues for a reconsideration of legal concepts that justify wrongs in capitalism. As shown earlier, he sees capitalism as problematic as it conflates persons with things. Apart from Cohen's critique of laws that protect the growth of capital rather than the dignity of the citizens (§ 3.6), Cohen also argues that the "worker unions" (*Genossenschaften*) are a desirable "expression of ethical rationality" as they long for humane working conditions that align with the ethical idea of systematicity (EPW, 237).[53]

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53 The progressive liberals (*Deutsche Fortschrittspartei*) typically endorsed worker unions, who took their inspiration from Hermann Schulze-Delitzsch (Herkner 1916, 463). The foundational

Cohen's critique of inhumane practices and his demand for socialism thus appears as a contemporary answer to capitalist ideas materialized in legal institutions causing structural-societal problems. "Justice is the virtue of man, as the man not of the other, but the *new world*" (EPW, 616). Just like Judaism sought to ethicize culture, socialism is taken as an ethical movement seeking a more just society. The socialist movement is the materialized expression of rationality with the function of promoting ethical progress.

Cohen's functionalist critique was considered valuable especially by those who were dissatisfied with the lack of normativity in the Marxian framework. Intellectuals such as Otto Bauer (1881–1938), Max Adler (1873–1937), Conrad Schmidt (1863–1932), and Ludwig Woltmann (1871–1907) believed that the historical materialist's position was insufficient. In their view, Marxism needed to be combined with Kantian idealism. After Eduard Bernstein had unsuccessfully attempted to subject the party to a Kantian-Darwinian revisionism, Staudinger and Vorländer set themselves the task to spread the thoughts of Marburg left-Kantianism beyond academic circles.[54] This was widely appreciated. Victor Adler mentioned, "I confess that apart from, say, Konrad Schmidt and Sadi Gunter [Franz Staudinger], I have read little philosophical in our recent party literature [sic!] that has not been downright painful to me. This is true from Plekhanov to Bernstein and Bernstein to Plekhanov" (cited in Vorländer 1902, 84). Although these theorists were also critical of Cohen's ethical underpinnings, Cohen's socialism was widely discussed in left-intellectual circles.

The debate between naturalism and criticism, which had previously taken place between Lange and Cohen, resurfaced in a public discussion between Vorländer and Schmidt. Vorländer presented Cohen's ethical views to the public through his article "Kant and Socialism" (1900), which was published in Kant-Studien. In opposition to Schmidt, who advocated a return to Kant's epistemology, Vorländer contended that Schmidt would commit the error of psychologically ex-

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idea of Schulze-Delitzsch—as I have mentioned earlier—was to enable people to start their businesses by receiving loans under good conditions. Cohen's understanding of worker unions differs, however. He endorses worker unions because of their ethical potential to demand laws that liberate workers from their slave-like status and seek working conditions that do not contradict the pure will.

54 In "Cohens *Logik der reinen Erkenntnis und die Logik der Wahrnehmung*," which appeared in 1903 *Kant-Studien*, Staudinger criticized Cohen's infinitesimal method for falling back into a metaphysical position (Staudinger 1902/1986a, 292). It is arguably due to Cohen's difficult personality that Staudinger notes in a letter, "I have treated Cohen as gently as possible and have not lost sight of the respect and gratitude toward his achievement" (Staudinger 1902/1986b, 298). As unpublished letters show, Staudinger aimed to develop a novel Kantian socialist account that deviated in various respects from Cohen's (1904/1974, 1914, 1915a, 1915b, 1915c; Schaefer 1918).

plaining knowledge, thereby reverting to a naturalistic stance akin to Lange's position (cf. Vorländer 1900, 395). Vorländer posited that Schmidt had "not yet recognized that ethics requires a strictest epistemological justification" (1900, 395–396). Vorländer asserted that Marx and Kant share a parallel not only regarding their task of scientific systematicity but also implicitly in their shared humanistic goal.

In response to Vorländer, Schmidt acknowledged that Kant's practical philosophy bore some resemblance to Marxism. He noted that the socialist state would exhibit similarities to Rousseau's social contract, by which Kant had also been influenced (cf. Schmidt 1900/1974, 93). Additionally, both Marxism and Kantian ethics were predicated on a "principle of equality" (cf. Schmidt 1900/1974, 95). However, Schmidt believed that these tenuous parallels were insufficient to conflate such "heterogeneous things" (Schmidt 1900/1974, 95). While "modern socialism" subscribed to a naturalistic conception of social norms, Kant's religious and metaphysical justification of ethics, despite an "epistemological" reinterpretation, could not be reconciled with Marxism (Schmidt 1900/1974, 102). According to Schmidt, the "rigid dogmatism of the moral system[s] derived from pure reason" would effectively "rape" ethical consciousness (Schmidt 1900/1974, 102). Schmidt thought that since Kant's ethical foundation was unable to account for the "moral judgment from this natural context," reason would be regarded as a "fetishism" (Schmidt 1900/1974, 100). Schmidt maintained that Kantian "rationalism" was pushed to the extreme with the neo-Kantian attempt to treat ethics as the logic of the cultural sciences (Schmidt 1900/1974, 100). By rejecting Kantian ethics, Schmidt also, at least in terms of ethics, consistently adhered to a naturalistic justification of the foundations of knowledge as it is to be found in Lange. In his view, normative claims of social democracy were not to be understood ethically, but rather resulted from theoretical cognition.

In the same year, Woltmann presented a rebuttal to Schmidt's article in his own work, "The Justification of Morality" (1900/1974a), contending that Marxist naturalism could not be established without metaphysical claims. However, Woltmann believed that Schmidt's conception of social norms would also be predicated on metaphysical assumptions. The "naturalistic thinker," Woltmann argued, would inevitably engage with metaphysics (Woltmann 1900/1974a, 110). As demonstrated in Schmidt's subsequent article, "On Morality, Again" (1900/1974b), Woltmann reinforced Schmidt's doubts about the rationalism of Kantian ethics.

Staudinger entered the debate with the publication of his article, "Socialism and Ethics" (1900), wherein he explained that the neo-Kantian understanding of ethics consisted of the "thoughts of order" which are used to evaluate ends (Staudinger 1900, 130). What was innovative about the critical interpretation was that the "realm of purposes" was not presupposed as a "ready-made entity" requiring faith, as per Woltmann's Kantian interpretation (Staudinger 1900, 130). As elucidat-

ed by Cohen, Natorp, and Vorländer, the realm of ends was rather to be understood as a "collaboration of self-determining individuals" and an "infinite task" (Staudinger 1900, 130). No action would be deemed inherently "right or wrong," and the "quality of good and bad" would be determined by the overall context, namely, the idea of the absolute end-in-itself (Staudinger 1900, 131). According to Staudinger, Woltmann's steadfast adherence to the "old Kantian" framework was regrettable (Staudinger 1900, 132).

Later in 1906, Kautsky also discussed Cohen's ethics in his work entitled "Ethics and the Materialist Conception of History." Kautsky had previously rejected Bernstein's revisionist demands and upheld the orthodox dialectic of history as espoused by Marx during the Erfurt congress in 1891. However, Kautsky's position on Kantian epistemology differed from Schmidt's in that he saw no conflict between it and the materialist worldview. In fact, Kautsky believed that Kant had placed himself "on the same ground as the materialists" by acknowledging the reality of the world beyond our senses and recognizing the role of sensuous experience in cognition (Kautsky 1906, 197). Kautsky rejected the moral law as a mere unfounded rationalist principle (Kautsky 1906, 202). This rejection of Kantian ethics stands in stark contrast to Cohen's ethics, which emphasized the importance of the moral law and its role in establishing a just and harmonious social order. Even Vorländer, who once defended Cohen's functionalist account, distanced himself from Cohen. In "Kant and Marx" (1911), he argued that Cohen had distanced himself too far from Marx's materialist dialectic, and that Kant's thoughts on human history could provide a more fruitful basis for understanding historical development than Cohen's antinaturalism.

Despite various critical voices, Cohen's ethical underpinning of socialism generated together with Lange's work *The Worker's Question* a range of fruitful discussions. Even his left-wing critics sought to introduce Cohen's account to a broader audience as they viewed his ethical underpinning of socialism as a fruitful basis to redirect the ongoing discussions. Cohen's introduction of a normative framework was a significant step forward in approaching the issues of capitalism from an ethical perspective.

4.4 Functional Objectivity and Relative Truths in Hermann Cohen

Before delving deeper into other Marburg left-Kantian approaches, it is essential to highlight a significant philosophical premise that underlies Cohen's functionalist criticism. Throughout his work, Cohen draws a distinction between the logic of the natural sciences, which aims to provide non-contradictory and causal explana-

tions of the world as it is, and the logic of ethical deliberation, which enables us to discern how the social world ought to be regulated. As I show in a different paper, the aversion to metaphysical claims leads him to Cohen's functionalist interpretation of the principles of consciousness that also comes with a fundamental re-evaluation of the notions of objectivity and truth as we will see it reflected in Cassirer's political philosophy in Chapter 5 (see Widmer 2024, forthcoming).

We have seen that with Cohen's social interpretation of the moral law, we gain a new principle of progress that focuses on *ethical* ideas in history. This comes, at the same time, with a novel view on objectivity and truth. As earlier mentioned, Cohen's ethical functionalism argues that the Talmud was spread when most people held a relativist stance toward ethical truth (Cohen 1908/2009, 178; 1919/1966, 399). For a better illustration of this claim, take, for example, Homer's Agamemnon.

> *Agamemnon.* Agamemnon receives two contradicting imperatives from his gods. Zeus orders him to go on an expedition against Troy to avenge the kidnapping of Helen by Paris. The goddess Artemis seeks to prevent the mission by laying obstacles in Agamemnon's way. The remedy is to sacrifice his daughter.

Agamemnon is an illustrative case of Cohen's claim, which says that ancient times were characterized by a polytheistic and relative belief system that did not yet have the conceptual tools to differentiate objectively between right and wrong (see also Widmer 2024).

In contrast, the Jewish conception of a monotheistic god made it possible to think of a systematically coherent moral belief system, striving for a non-contradictory set of moral beliefs. While the pagans pictured their gods as human-like entities, the Jewish tradition took the monotheistic idea of God as a regulative idea for a "reconciliation" with the absolute (RR, 399). Take, for example, the following Jewish rule.

> *The Jewish Stranger.* Love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. (Deuteronomy 10:19 Torah)

Cohen emphasizes that the Jewish rituals were frequently reformed so that their maxims constituted a more consistent set of rules. He infers that the Jewish belief system was the first to introduce a concept—the idea of a monotheistic god—which made a logically consistent or objective depiction of moral imperatives possible (see Widmer 2024).

Given that the origins of Jewish thought emerged long before the advanced Kantian framework provided the tools to conceptualize the notion of unity, Cohen seeks to highlight the pre-critical concepts that are reflective of our ethical

consciousness. As we have seen, exploring the function of crucial cultural rules allows Cohen to distinguish between "symbolic" rituals and "ethical" practices in pre-enlightenment times even though ethical rules are partially mixed with symbolic elements (RR, 398). Cohen takes symbolism in a different direction in comparison to Cassirer, arguing that phenomena such as Jewish dietary restrictions or the custom of wearing tzitzits are contingent conventions that once served a social purpose but have lost their moral meaning over time. The imperative of loving strangers, however, deploys a genuinely moral purpose and is thus reflective of the ethical "function" (RR, 8). The "idea of systematicity of ends," functionally considered, allows for a study of the emergence of practical rationality in pre-enlightenment times when a rational conceptualization of the idea of universality was still lacking (see Widmer 2024).

For Cohen, the functional account of ethical objectivity and the relative actualization of moral truth is not merely of historical relevance. In Cohen's critique of capitalism, he makes use of these concepts to provide an answer to contemporary wrongs. Just as Judaism had to overcome a relativist and immoral belief system, so Cohen thinks of Kant as the safeguard leading the nineteenth century out of a relativist worldview, of which he considers materialism, historicism, and positivism to be characteristic. Even Marx, whom he admires, is criticized for not clarifying the ethical-normative implications of his theory. The historical materialists lack a method to account for the moral purpose of the socialist movement. Now better equipped with the Kantian theory (compared to ancient Judaism), Cohen criticizes normative concepts that are conceptually inconsistent with the moral law. According to Cohen, what is needed is an ethical reconsideration of the purpose of work; this reconsideration must be reflected in the material instantiation of positive laws. Cohen's critique of inhumane practices and his demand for socialism thus appear as *contemporary* answers to legal institutions failing to fulfill their ethical function (see Widmer 2024).

While the ahistorical account of ethical objectivity is a content-free idea, it must manifest itself in the consciousness—be it via the concept of a monotheistic god or the concept of universality—to fulfill its underlying moral function. Cohen deploys an a priori functional understanding of ethical objectivity, defined by the idea of the unity of ends, which makes ethical considerations possible. However, this idea must be conceptually actualized. Because the historical and epistemic nexus condition this actualization, Cohen can account for an ahistorical and *absolute* account of objectivity, reflecting the function of ethical consciousness, and a *relative* notion of moral truth, reflecting the standards of the time (see Widmer 2024).

Cohen's functionalist account of ethical rationality was not universally accepted. Yet this chapter was meant to show that Cohen's account deserves to be con-

sidered in the course of history as it was the first to uncover the wrongness of exploitative practices in capitalism from an ethical point of view. As the next chapter will show, his account provided the fruitful grounds of the advancement of political philosophy, particularly the left-Kantian developments in the Marburg School (see Widmer 2024).

5 Stammler, Natorp, Cassirer

5.1 Introduction

Research focusing on the legal and political philosophies in the Marburg School is still rare.[56] In cases where scholars do discuss the political side, we find the view that the proponents of the Marburg School defended a coherent view of ethical socialism. Thomas E. Willey argues that "Marburg neo-Kantian Socialism" was a "coherent intellectual movement" just before the First World War (Willey 1978, 116). Similarly, Frederick Beiser subsumes Rudolf Stammler, Franz Staudinger, Karl Vorländer, and Kurt Eisner under the umbrella term of "ethical socialism" without noticing that Stammler explicitly refrained from advancing an ethical foundation (cf. Beiser 2018, 2). However, this view does not correspond to the self-conception of the school's members, nor does it reflect the rich varieties of accounts that were developed over the years.

In this chapter, I will follow three neo-Kantian scholars, Stammler, Natorp, and Cassirer, in order to demonstrate their distinct take on Kant and politics. First, I will show that Stammler's legal philosophy differed fundamentally from Cohen as he developed a positivist legal theory that takes legality as a separate domain to ethics. Second, an interesting divide is also noticeable when we look at the developments before and during the First World War. Natorp developed on the background of Cohen's ethics a cultural-hegemonial theory, defending the idea that the German culture needs to spread all over the world. Third, Cassirer, on the other hand, used Cohen's ethics to identify those chauvinist intellectual ideas that led and evolved into fascist Nazi ideology. Through this exploration, it becomes clear that Marburg left-Kantianism contains a rich foundation for various political theories that cannot be lumped together as one philosophical or political view.

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56 This chapter builds on parts of the paper "'Left-Kantianism' and the 'Scientific Dispute' between Rudolf Stammler and Hermann Cohen," which is forthcoming in *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*, and parts of the article "Functional Objectivity and Relative Truths: The Contingent Conception of Universality in Ernst Cassirer's Ethics," which is currently under review.

5.2 Rudolf Stammler and the "Scientific Dispute"

I have shown that Cohen was concerned with an embedded account of rationality (see Chapter 3). This embeddedness was characteristic of the nineteenth century. The Marburg School evolved during the peak of "historicism," a current concerned with the historicization of the conditions of knowledge.[57] The neo-Kantian Marburg School's "critical idealism" seemed to counteract these developments with a teleological account of rationality that tried "to overcome the dualism between intuition and thinking and between matter and form" (Natorp 1986, 65). With their novel teleological approaches to Kant, new questions arose: How is it possible, on the one hand, to historicize social norms and, on the other, to uphold a normative and ideal foundation allowing for political critique? What is the systematic foundation for normative critique? How can we promote societal progress? And what practical implications might follow from this?

The answers to these questions offered by the Marburgers diverged in a number of crucial, if not irreconcilable, respects. As we have seen in Chapters 3 and 4, Cohen drew on an adaptation of Kant's moral law and defended it as a universal principle of culture that is inspired by Trendelenburg and allows one to criticize capitalist norms from an ethical point of view. In contrast, Rudolf Stammler (1856–1938) provided a transcendental justification of law separated from morality. In Stammler's view, the inconsistencies between the legal system and the material or economic conditions provided the normative foundation for political criticism. Whereas Cohen remained in the natural law tradition as it was shaped by Trendelenburg, we find another influential philosophical view on juridical laws in *About the Profession for Law and Jurisprudence in Current Times* (1814) by Savigny—the founder of the "historical school."

In contrast to the natural law tradition, Savigny rejects the idea of an innate rational principle of justice guiding our legal practices. As Reutter aptly puts it, for Savigny, "being" is "positive law" or the "concrete legal being" (Reutter 2011, 75). In contrast to the natural law tradition, Savigny rejects the idea of an innate rational principle of justice guiding our legal practices. Methodologically, Savigny argues that the legal sciences (*Rechtswissenschaft*) need to restrict their investigation to inductive investigations of historically formed legal contents.

Savigny's methodology is restricted to the causal investigation of substantive norms or positive laws in their empirical appearance. What counts as "just" cannot

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57 Historicism is typically divided into a "positivist" strand, which is characterized by a value-free attitude toward empirical facts of history, and a "relativist" strand, which is characterized by active resistance against absolute claims about truth and morality (Schnädelbach 1983, 51).

be answered on the basis of an ideal principle underlying historical judgments. Instead, justice can only be measured by the standards of the period within which such judgments emerged. While Trendelenburg argues that it is possible to recognize different sets of legal norms over time with respect to their ethical basis, Savigny criticizes such approaches for their "bottomless idleness" in assuming an ideal foundation "standing up and above" human practices (Savigny 1814, 6). The legal sciences' task is to investigate the "substantial formation" of legal systems and define the most characteristic traits of a certain period (Savigny 1814, 6). In contrast to the natural law camp, which emphasizes the rational continuity in legal judgments, Savigny's framework focuses on the contingent aspects of legal norms, saying that general claims are based on recognizing the changing character traits of different sets of legal norms over time.

Savigny does not refrain entirely from normative assertions; however, he grounds his view on a psychological theory of the *Volksgeist.* According to Savigny, investigating the individual character traits of legal systems means identifying the psychological principles of a society that ground the epistemic conditions of reality. This allows for inferences to be made about the stage of the "consciousness of the people" (*Bewußtsein des Volkes*) (Savigny 1814, 9). What follows from studying historical legal textbooks is the identification of "general characterizations of a period" (Savigny 1814, 9). Savigny differentiates between arbitrary moral and religious convictions, which develop "naturally" in society, and "objective" laws we intentionally institutionalize in order to regulate social behavior. Law does not evolve in a vacuum; it is the institutionalization of what we consider right (Savigny 1814, 13). Savigny thus claims that the "only true and natural law is the one understood in relation and interaction to the general [political] culture" (Savigny 1814, 48). Undertaking historical comparisons enables one to identify and contrast character traits of "primitive" and "higher" legal cultures. The normative principle based on which Savigny distinguishes between "primitive" and "higher" legal cultures is of a linguistic nature; the more abstract and formal the (legal) language of a culture is, the more cultivated society is.

This method is illustrated in his analysis of modern civil law. While civil law was characterized by "symbolic deeds" in earlier stages of humanity, modern civil law was marked by more "formal" language and behavior (Savigny 1814, 10). Savigny claims that modern law would presuppose a level of linguistic abstraction similar to that of ancient Roman law. This example illustrates what Savigny is after methodologically: "We try to present general features of a period in which law, like language, lives in the consciousness of the people" (Savigny 1814, 9). Thus, the analysis of language, focusing on the level of formality, is taken as a criterion based on which "general" statements about the cognitive stage of a "Volk" become possible (Savigny 1814, 23).

Trendelenburg and Savigny both aimed to historicize knowledge, and, in this sense, they were part of a tradition reacting to ahistorical forms of idealism. Yet their reactions to ahistorical idealism differed. Savigny's theory does not allow for a context-free evaluation of norms. Social norms are merely depicted in their coercive, empirical, and external manner. Legal and moral norms are institutionalized (objective) reflections of a specific period. Trendelenburg seeks to identify the ethical norms underlying legal judgments, thereby holding onto a continuous and idealist view of norms by disentangling the universal element beneath empirical laws. Moreover, they were representatives of differing disciplines and generations. Savigny was 23 years Trendelenburg's senior and—with Gustav von Hugo (1764–1844)—a founding figure of the Historical School of Jurisprudence (*Historische Rechtsschule*) that consisted almost exclusively of jurists. Trendelenburg, in contrast, was a philosopher and philologist who integrated historical developments into his idealist system, which was highly influential in the debates on the methodology of the history of philosophy.

5.2.1 Historicist Tendencies in Rudolf Stammler's Kantian Socialism

Stammler was deeply impressed by the transcendental method as Cohen had developed it in *Kants Theorie der Erfahrung* (1871), and, in many ways, their views align. Stammler agrees with a critical interpretation of Kantian philosophy that grounds the logic of cognition on an a priori idea of systematicity. In the same vein, he follows Cohen's rejection of psychological approaches. In *Rechts- und Staatstheorien der Neuzeit*, Stammler explicitly criticizes the concept of *Volksgeist* as it "mistakes the mind for a psychic phenomenon" (1925a, 50–51). Like Cohen, Stammler rejects purely psychological approaches for their unscientific foundation and argues that the legal sciences should deal with the transcendental logic of legal judgments. However, as I will show in this section, Stammler's position differs from Cohen's account in two crucial respects: he rejects Cohen's proposal of an ethical foundation of law and argues for the need to include inductive research on the historical and empirical conditions of a society.

Stammler differentiates between the "formal" or "legal" and the "material" or "economic" side of sociality. On a formal level, Stammler excludes ethics from the legal sphere. In a letter from 1892 to Stammler, Natorp suggests reading Cohen's classification of the cultural sciences in *Kants Begründung der Ethik* (KBE) (Stammler 1892/1896, 213). In his response, Stammler writes: "Having reread [Cohen's] justification of ethics [KBE], I see now clearly that moral laws cannot exist in our experience at all" (Stammler 1892/1896, 213). The moral law—taken as the formal principle governing the internal state of the moral agent—could never "come

into congruence" with the social norms that are "empirically conditioned" (Stammler 1892/1896, 213). According to Stammler, Kant rightfully differentiated between the a priori conditions of legal judgments, dealing with heteronomous and external laws regulating the social sphere, and the a priori conditions of moral judgments, dealing with internal laws. His understanding of legality, however, also differs fundamentally from the Kantian natural law deduced by an account of external freedom. Stammler's *Wirtschaft und Recht* (1896) grounds an epistemic "natural law," which goes as follows:

> By natural law, I understand legal propositions which contain the theoretically correct law under empirically conditioned circumstances; which do not yet have positive force merely because of this insight but function as a source of law demanding a change or reorganization of the law in force. (Stammler 1896, 185, emphasis added)

Stammler's "theoretically correct law" is not based on a practical account of freedom that sets the foundation for normative statements. Instead, the "theoretically correct law" is a scientific ideal that grounds the telos of both the natural and legal sciences.

Stammler argues that there is only one type of cognition (*Erkenntnisart*), theoretical reason, that grounds the foundation of law. Stammler's "theoretically correct law" presupposes free agents capable of setting rules for themselves. However, instead of providing an account of legality that deduces a system of rights from a positive account of freedom (as we find in Cohen and Kant), Stammler takes legal norms in their substantive and changing nature as they appear in the sphere of causality. This does not mean that Stammler gives up on a neo-Kantian foundation of law. However, he objects to Cohen's claim that there are two types of cognition— theoretical and normative cognition—and argues that, as in the natural sciences, we should pursue a systematic formulation of laws that grounds a just regulation of the empirical (economic) conditions. "The regular repetitions of certain phenomena, united to the respective unity, are called laws. And all individual laws are only possible by the fact that a generally valid lawfulness of nature lies at the basis without which every single law of nature in itself would be completely groundless and without the provable value of knowledge" (Stammler 1896, 350). Stammler formulates the "theoretically correct law" as a principle that follows from the same account of systematicity as the natural realm.

While Cohen opts for deductive judgments and focuses on ideas and their (un)ethical function in a society instantiated in materialized normative concepts, Stammler's deductions are based on empirical facts that need to be obtained with empirical methods based on inductive reasoning. The underlying idea is the following. While the economy follows its own rules, it is our task to observe

economic relations and bring the "blind forces" under control (Stammler 1896, 29). According to Stammler, economic conditions constitute social conditions. However, it is possible to intervene in such naturally evolved economic processes by regulating the market. Stammler illustrates this with the following analogy: "If a mountain stream runs the risk of flooding the lowlands, we calculate and construct streambeds to contain and control the flow" (Stammler 1896, 50). Social nature, too, demands regulations; the legal system has the power to regulate and fix misguided developments by steering them in the right direction (Stammler 1896, 51–52).

What follows from the "theoretically correct law" under "empirical conditions" is an account of social progress that requires two methodologies: (i) an examination of empirical facts requiring inductive reasoning; and (ii) rendering the acquired facts deductively under the idea of a more unified or balanced picture of society. "[N]ot the exact collection of isolated data is what makes a good historian, but rather the right synthesis of the universal concept of law" (Stammler 1896, 23). Once we realize that "under this economic foundation [...] there still hovers the old legal order of times long past" (Stammler 1896, 47), we have the epistemic means to overcome the social tensions expressed in class struggles. In this vein, Stammler emphasizes that, technically speaking, it would be wrong to call the capitalist system "unjust"; instead, it would be more apt to call it "economically outdated" (Stammler 1896, 47–48). Progress is the "human attempt" to "regulate and guide the otherwise wild and unbridled forces of social production" (Stammler 1896, 30).

The reason why Stammler thought of the "theoretically correct law" as a principle free from a normative conception of justice remains unclear.[58] More importantly, Stammler's engagement with the empirical material that combines inductive examinations of class struggles and a deductive rendering of empirical facts under the idea of systematicity reflects his educational background in the Historicist School of Savigny. Cultural progress does not involve the contemplation of a practical law, guiding the morally right path. Instead, the progress of legal systems is measured by a theoretical principle and informed by empirical circumstances.

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[58] Stammler was indecisive in terms of how his epistemological foundation related to ethics or normative questions more generally. This provoked a harsh critique from Max Weber, who accused Stammler of falling back on "an 'unconditional' point of view" that Stammler sought to prevent (Weber 1985, 302). In *Lehre des Richtigen Rechtes* (1902), Stammler refrains entirely from a natural law principle, thereby defining four a priori principles that refer merely to the *application* of the law (1902, 208, 211). Stammler does not mention Weber explicitly. However, this decision might have been a reaction to Weber's critique.

Stammler reads Lange against this background when characterizing him as a theorist of "social materialism." Following the empiricist line of argument in Lange, he claims: "The lawfulness of the social life of people is, according to the doctrine of social materialism, a regularity of economic phenomena" (Stammler 1896, 29).[59] For a successful rendering of empirical facts that inform our political action, we need to conduct inductive examinations of the "economic phenomena" constituting a society, which allows us to gain insights into the origins of class struggles (Stammler 1896, 29).

Stammler's epistemological principle of the "theoretically correct law" grounds a principle of cultural progress, which holds that bringing empirical forces under a systematic order leads to a more balanced satisfaction of needs. Reminiscent of Savigny and Lange, then, Stammler's account focuses on the origins of class struggles in order to gain information on how to reform the legal system.

5.2.2 The "Scientific Dispute"

The "scientific dispute," to use Natorp's term, started in the early 1890s. Stammler was from the outset frustrated by Cohen's attempt to ground all social norms on an ethical foundation without acknowledging their a priori systematic differences.[60] Their main disagreements can be summarized in three topic points.

First, their views on the demarcation between law and morality fundamentally differ based on their outlook on what the critical method is supposed to achieve. Cohen is inspired by Trendelenburg's category of coming-into-being and Lange's critical use of the idea of harmony that allows identifying conceptual inconsistencies with the moral law or the "*Allheit.*" Cohen does not simply forget to include the coercive and heteronomous characteristics of positive laws and he does not deny the power given to institutionalized rules. He rejects a systematic separation of law and morality because accepting a foundation that allows for coercive and heteronomous laws would undermine the critical aspect of his methodology that identifies conceptual inconsistencies. Thus, for methodological reasons, Cohen refutes the Kantian distinction between the internal, ethical, autonomous, and sub-

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59 Stammler's "social materialism" is introduced by a quotation by Lange that says: "Materialism is the first, the lowest, but also the comparatively firmest stage of philosophy" (1896, 25; Lange 2015, 553).

60 Natorp tries to function as a mediator between these two positions. In *Sozialpädagogik* in 1899 and in the article from 1913, Natorp claims that the disagreement was solvable on a modal level. While Cohen's ethics were concerned with claims of logical necessity, Stammler moved in the empirical world dealing with probability claims (Natorp 1913, 68).

jective domain of morality on one side and the external, legal, and coercive realm on the other.

By contrast, Stammler adopts a different view on what the critical method is meant to achieve. It is not the task of philosophy to identify ethical inconsistencies; instead, we must engage with empirical facts provided by inductive methods of the empirical sciences to understand the origins of class struggles that lead to an uneven satisfaction of needs. The a priori conditions of legality do not include a natural law based on a practical account of justice. His conception of the "theoretically correct law" is meant as an epistemological principle that grounds social progress. Thus, Stammler too has a methodological reason to reject the Cohenian idea of a universal moral principle underlying his critique of the capitalist legal system because it would undermine the fact that legal contents are continuously changing.

Second, their varying conceptions of legality trace back to a different methodological take on dealing with "facts." Cohen historicizes reason to show that some social norms are based on ethical judgments even though they are interwoven with causal factors. This provides the critical foundation based on which societal developments are evaluated.[61] Cohen's critique engages with ideas materialized in the legal foundation constituting society. However, his methodology is based on deductive reasoning. Stammler's methodology, on the other hand, is twofold: it is based on deductive reasoning and asks additionally for inductive investigations of the social reality (statistical knowledge). While Cohen's conception of contradictions is based on ethical deliberation, Stammler takes the inconsistencies between law and economy as empirically measurable phenomena, materialized in the social class struggles. Stammler's account is based on the requirement to obtain empirical knowledge with the methods of the empirical sciences; Cohen's historical facts of culture are taken as a given.

Third, based on their different methodologies, Cohen and Stammler criticize capitalism on different levels. Cohen's ethical critique is based on a concept of change that requires action from the bottom up. His methodology is meant to critique singular developments instead of a whole economic system—an idea illustrated in his affirmative attitude toward workers' unions (*Genossenschaften*). Stammler's socialism, however, includes a top-down approach as it is meant to investigate economic systems and the "suitedness" of the corresponding legal system. In more modern terms, one could say that Cohen's socialism has more liberal tendencies, arguing for the individual right to be treated always as an end in oneself. Meanwhile, Stammler's socialism seeks to change the economic flow on a system-

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61 Similarly, Schwarzschild argued that, for Cohen, "history [...] must be a rational science" (1956, 426).

atic level, thereby moving to an economic system that is centrally organized and one that gives more power to the state. Although on a practical level, these approaches are not mutually exclusive, their underlying method with which they come to these conclusions is different: Cohen's socialism is based on the deliberation about laws that protect the individual's fundamental right to a dignified life. Stammler's conception of socialism is meant to correct the laws that create empirically measurable societal problems and injustices.

The "scientific dispute" shows that the political philosophies of the Marburg School were not easily dissolvable. Although Cohen and Stammler were both inspired by Friedrich Albert Lange's views on socialism and sought to overcome a Darwinist justification of the "worker's question," they worked out two fundamentally different theories of Kantian socialism. Cohen's approach, which justified the democratic state and workers' unions on ethical grounds, was inspired by the natural law tradition, and especially the version proffered by the Aristotelian Adolf Trendelenburg. Stammler, however, aimed to work out a left-leaning and critical-idealist alternative inspired by Friedrich von Savigny's "historical school." Whereas Cohen's methodology sought to identify conceptual inconsistencies measured by an ethical ideal (the moral law), Stammler approached class struggles as a result of an "outdated" legal system regulating the economic sphere. According to Stammler, governmental interventions ought to correct the arbitrariness of economic relations.

Their differences show that Marburg neo-Kantian socialism was not a coherent current, seeking an ethical justification for socialism. Admittedly, there is reason to regard them as part of the same philosophical school considering their critical-idealist take on Kant and their reaction to a form of idealism that did not engage sufficiently with the empirical aspects of society. However, like their predecessors, Trendelenburg and Savigny, they differed in age and disciplinary background, and thus their philosophies diverged fundamentally regarding the conception of law, history, and their view of what the critical method was meant to achieve. Their theories disembogued, consequently, into two distinct camps: an ethical and epistemic justification of socialism. Thus, it is misleading to speak of a coherent school of thought.

Given these differences, we are better advised to let go of descriptors such as "Marburg neo-Kantian socialism" or "ethical socialism," which mistakenly imply a coherent foundation of socialism. As indicated in the introduction, their approaches were part of a philosophical current that includes various left-wing interpretations not only within but also beyond the Marburg School.

5.3 Marburg Left-Kantianism and the World Wars

One cannot write a book on the political philosophies of the Marburg School without mentioning their stance toward the First World War. Cohen and Natorp saw the First World War primarily as a cultural war. They truly believed that Germany would justifiably demand to spread their culture because the German mind was rationally the most evolved one—an idea that sounds highly problematic, especially in light of the Second World War. Cohen and Natorp supported the First World War even when it was obvious that Germany was not fighting a war of defense but rather an imperialist war. While there is clear evidence that both Cohen and Natorp defended imperialist ideas, it was Natorp who took the time and efforts to work out his cultural-hegemonic views systematically in *The German Vocation* (1915/1918). As the following passages show, we find several nationalist and imperialist arguments in this book, which appear problematic when judged by historical, and even more so by today's, standards. Because two of the main proponents of the Marburg School were standing on the wrong side of history, their political philosophy had a hard time surviving amidst the ruins of the lost war. But as I claimed earlier, the Marburg School was not a coherent school of thought. As I will show later, crucial elements of Cohen's ethics also served for a more fruitful account as we find it in Cassirer's critique of fascism *The Myth of the State*, which was published as a reaction to the Second World War in 1946.

5.3.1 Natorp's Hegemonic Views

While Natorp's pedagogics was praised for his influence on the worker movement (Marxen 1984, Tucker 1984, Giesecke 1994), his political views need to be enjoyed with caution. The central claim in Natorp's *German Profession* is that the national spirit of Germany is, compared to other Western societies, the most progressive. Only the German people can fight for the right cause because the German consciousness is familiar with the concepts of freedom and reason that bring about moral progress. The right to "call oneself a German" entails the duty to fight against the unenlightened powers.

   The *Volksgeist* was, according to Natorp, comparatively progressive because of the idea of the concept of the absolute, which the Germans took on from "Hebrew prophecy" (TGV, 12). The German consciousness would not get lost in retrospective considerations but would be directed toward ideal and normative deliberations (TGV, 12). Kant's methodological criticism, Natorp claims, made it possible to recognize the "eternal task" of humanity (TGV, 19). This development, however, should

not be seen as a peaceful process, as Natorp emphasizes: "The higher the goal, the harder the struggle will be" (TGV, 20).

Natorp states that the history of mankind follows a three-stage pattern—a claim that also appears in his *Social Pedagogics* (1899). In both works, Natorp compares the stages of humanity to the mental development of a singular human being. The first stage is characterized by "drive" (*Trieb*), the second by "will" (*Wille*), and the third by "reason" or "freedom" (*Freiheit*). Based on this schema, Natorp predicts that at some point in history, the necessity of violent wars will be overcome. But first, we will need to cultivate a "spirit of freedom" (TGV, 24).

Natorp substantiates this thesis in a treatise on the historical-spiritual products of culture. To show that only German-Jewish thought has a sense of the teleological principle of human history, Natorp examines and compares cultural products of various cultures and ages. By starting out with the "Indian folk spirit," Natorp moves on to examine the "Western spirit," which finds its origins in Judaism.

Natorp's knowledge of Indian culture and philosophy is admittedly limited. Nevertheless, to support his hegemonic thesis, Natorp relies on the work *Sadhana* (1913): a collection of lectures by Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941), which had been translated into various languages at the time. The "oriental world of thought," Natorp argues, was in a phase that is comparable to the "occidental Middle Ages" and thus to protagonists of that period such as Dante, Francis of Assisi, Nicholas of Cusa, Pico della Mirandola, Cardano, and Luther (TGV, 40).

Natorp claims that the Indian culture contains a pre-critical concept of the absolute, which shows signs of an ethical consciousness. He argues that their concept of the absolute resembles the Western concept of god during the Middle Ages. Both concepts would ground "the absolute" sensually: "all life, all soul" breathes "*one* breath" (TGV, 41, emphasis added). The "religion of the Indians" teaches that we "can become more and more one with him" (TGV, 43). According to Natorp, Tagore still thought "too much like an oriental man" as to promote a critical conception of the absolute (TGV, 43). Because the idea of "ultimate truth" was still missing from Indian thought (TGV, 47), Natorp concludes that "the old rift of worldview between East and West" existed, but was not "unbridgeable"—a view that the British, due to their "imperialistic mind," were incapable of grasping (TGV, 48).

What follows is a revisionist historical treatise of humankind that is meant to sketch out the superiority of Western thinking. When Natorp finally reaches the period of modernity, he juxtaposes the British mindset to that of the German. Natorp does not mention the nationalities; it is clear that what Natorp is after is a cultural war between Germany and England. While England is represented by Shakespeare, Germany is represented by Goethe. Natorp's goal is to show that

the British failed to go through the final step of the Enlightenment—a step that Germany had successfully mastered.

Pace Thomas Carlyle (1795–1881), Natorp acknowledges Shakespeare as a thinker who was ahead of his time. However, he criticizes his thinking for lacking a sense of teleological history (TGV, 105–106). Goethe, the "son of the happy age of humanity," got to know a version of Europe that was not so much characterized by "self-destruction" as by "reason" (TGV, 124). This pessimistic outlook that one finds in Shakespeare is, according to Natorp, characteristic of the "unfortunate Baconian 'kingdom of man,'" which would try to destroy the refined German culture in the course of its "imperialist greed" (TGV, 125–126). While, according to Natorp, the Germans have a methodological understanding of the absolute, the British mind lacks an ethical consciousness, which disqualifies the British from fighting for the right cause. Natorp closes with a quotation from Goethe with the aim of making the German youth fit for fighting: "The spirit world is not closed, your mind is closed, your heart is dead! Up, bathe, pupil, undaunted. The earthly breast in the dawn!" (TGV, 128).

The cultural chauvinism is not only devastating from a political point of view; it also does not do justice to the positions the Marburgers had carefully developed over the years. One of their strongest points was to provide a critical foundation on the basis of which cultural developments could be criticized without relying on speculations. One could claim that Cohen and Natorp ignored their own principles in their pro-war literature. Whereas Cohen did not live long enough to see the end of the war, Natorp gradually moved into a more right-wing camp. As unpublished letters from the archive in Marburg attest, Natorp was in contact with Wilhelm Schäfer (1890–1896): a writer who gained great popularity under National Socialism for his writings on the "German folk soul" (*Germanische Volksseele*). Together with Alfons Paquet (1881–1914), they planned to found a German socialist fraternal organization with the purpose of spreading their political ideas (Schäfer 1918, 1).

Although Natorp took a path that seems lenient toward national-socialist ideas, it would be wrong to claim that this was the only effect of Marburg left-Kantianism. As the following sections set out, Cassirer incorporated crucial elements of Cohen's thinking in order to *criticize* fascism.

5.3.2 Relative Truths and Functional Unity in Ernst Cassirer's Politics

As I have claimed somewhere else, Cassirer is one who, compared to the other philosophers discussed in this book, has garnered a lot of attention in the past twenty years (see, e.g., Friedman 2000; Gay 1977; Gordon 2010; Ihmig 2001; Luft 2015; Math-

erne 2021; Moss 2015; Paetzold 1995; Pollok and Filieri 2021; Renz 2002; Schwemmer 1997; Skidelsky 2008, see Widmer 2024). Yet his practical philosophy is still puzzling. In the theoretical sphere, Cassirer seems to follow Hermann Cohen's functional reinterpretation of the Kantian framework that takes rationality as a historical practice, defined by its "unifying function" and reflected in the reality-shaping "facts of science," which, on Cassirer's account, grounds science as a symbolic form. In the practical sphere, the issue appears to be more difficult. Throughout his works, most notably in *Freedom and Form* (1916/1918) and *Axel Haegerstroem* (1939), we find various comments indicating that Cassirer favored Kantian ethics. In *Myth of the State* (1949), Cassirer even takes an ethical normative stance to highlight the wrongs of fascist mysticism. But Cassirer did not defend socialism, nor did he work out a moral theory or introduce morality as a symbolic form (see Widmer 2024).

This notwithstanding, we have good reasons to believe that Cassirer, in his critique of fascism, was influenced by the Cohenian system. Judged by his scarce comments on Kantian ethics, Cassirer seems to endorse the "pure will" as a function of consciousness, which he takes to be a necessary condition of the possibility of objective ethical normativity. At the same time, this entails a historically sensitive account of rationality that goes beyond Kant in crucial ways.[62] Cassirer lets go of the implicit assumption of the "existence" of formal laws. He argues that "each function is inevitably represented in [empirical] 'reality'" (FF, 237).[63] This *embeddedness* is a crucial feature of Cassirer's conception of the pure will.

> The function of the pure will cannot be thought of without its relation to the empirical object [...]. Moral doing (*das sittliche Tun*) is directed toward the world of observed objects, but they [empirical objects] do not define it [morality] in its true determinants. [It instead creates] concepts based on autonomy. (FF, 238)

In *Axel Haegerstroem*, published 18 years after *Freedom and Form*, Cassirer still endorses crucial systematic concepts of Kant's ethical theory as an expression of the "function" of ethical consciousness.

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62 Note that Cassirer uses the term "function" in more than one way. Katherina Kinzel argues that "function" is "operative in all symbolic forms," as it is directed toward the "whole of relations, and [...] the particular element" (Kinzel 2023). In this paper, however, I focus only on Cassirer's use of the pure will as a function of moral cognition.
63 As Anne Pollok has rightfully pointed out, there is more to this thesis. Representation grounds meaning because we produce meaningful relations only through the mediated symbolic forms (Pollok 2015).

> [T]he pure meaning of Kant's concept of duty and ethical autonomy can be peeled out and corrected without establishing it in the same way as Kant—by the distinction of the "mundus sensibilis" from the "mundus intelligibilis." Here [...] a certain *functional* meaning of the basic ethical concepts remains, which is not bound to their metaphysical-substantial conceptual mantling. (AH, 83, emphasis added)

Cassirer accepts a functional interpretation of the moral law actualized in our practices. To avoid Kant's static notion of the formal laws that indicate, according to Cassirer, a metaphysical understanding of consciousness, he opts for a "dynamic" understanding of rationality, sensitive to form changes (see Friedman 2000; Luft 2015).[64] In the current literature, we find two distinct interpretations of Cassirer's account of ethical normativity, each of which comes with a distinct notion of moral objectivity (see Widmer 2024).

The "meta-philosophical" view argues that ethics in Cassirer is to be understood as a "self-liberation" process (Recki 2003; Luft 2015; Truwant 2015; Kinzel 2023). According to this view, the functional understanding of the pure will deviates crucially from Kant's moral law.[65] It suggests that Cassirer's increased engagement with various life forms would show that we approximate an ideal of ethical autonomy even though we never reach it. We find this view supported in passages such as where Cassirer claims that "only very gradually the basic theoretical concepts of cognition—the concepts of space, time, and number; the concepts of law and community, such as the concept of property; or the individual configurations of economics, art, and technology—*free themselves* from their containment" (PS II, xxx/xi, emphasis added). The reflective task of philosophy is taken as a genuine *ethical* task. As we culturally progress, we gain more insight into the conditions of our thinking, leading us to more liberating and ethical forms of living. Objectivity is thought of as a historical telos we gradually approach (see Widmer 2024).[66]

The "Kantian" interpretation, in contrast, argues that Cassirer makes use of the moral law principle as an evaluative logical principle, providing us with *normative* insights into right and wrong (Lofts 2021; Gregory 2021). This reading is supported by passages we find for example in *Freedom and Form*, where he claims:

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64 It may be said that Cassirer uses his "functional" interpretation of the "pure will" interchangeably with the "concept of duty" and "ethical autonomy."

65 Kant also has a teleological conception of human history; however, this is not systematically embedded in the moral law. As the paper progresses, I will show that Cassirer's interpretation of the moral law entails an account of history.

66 As scholars have noted, this interpretation comes close to the Hegelian understanding of rationality as a collective experience, entangled in lived contradictions that lead to new synthesized forms of living that are more liberating than the earlier forms (cf. Pollok 2021, 17–18; Friedman 2000, 99–101).

"In the concept of autonomy the inconsistency between two contradicting moments is annulled. Real freedom is directed toward the *form of the law*" (FF, 237). The Kantian interpretation suggests that Cassirer takes the Kantian moral law as the decisive "value by which cultural forms ought to be evaluated" (Gregory 2021, 181). Cassirer's historical focus in his philosophy of culture appears then "as an expansion of the Kantian critical project" (Gregory 2021., 188). Objectivity is thereby taken as a notion grounded in the logic of the moral law, which is capable of redirecting and "actualizing" the normative sphere ethically (see Widmer 2024).

To make better sense of Cassirer's *prima facie* inconsistent notions of objectivity, I argue that his functional notion of the moral law entails both—a teleological moment based on a genealogical study of earlier ethical concepts and a prescriptive critique of norms that are conceptually inconsistent with the moral law. Scholars have highlighted the importance of interpreting Cassirer in light of the Marburg School (Ferrari 2015, 12, and 2021; Mormann 2015, 35; Luft 2015). I follow them and analyze Cassirer's interpretation of the moral law against the background of Cohen's functionalist interpretation of the moral law (see Chapter 4). This shows that Cassirer follows Cohen's ethics as he deploys a functionalist account of ethical objectivity that includes a culturally relative notion of moral truth (see Widmer 2024).

Placing Cassirer in the field of Marburg neo-Kantianism comes with the risk of overemphasizing the role of transcendental logic in his system. Because the focus on the formal and necessary conditions of knowledge cannot sufficiently account for Cassirer's methodology, Lydia Patton has recently suggested locating Cassirer's "logic" within the tradition of Steinthal's *Völkerpsychologie*—a current characterized by an increased focus on the material manifestations of epistemic concepts, grounding the conditions of culture (Patton 2021, 276).[67] Patton's concern is justified if Cassirer's engagement with cultural expressions is compared with the early years of the Marburg School. However, Cohen's mature ethics, where we find an increased focus on the historical and psychological analysis of theoretical and ethical knowledge, has crucial parallels to *Völkerpsychologie.* I have shown that we find two features in Cohen's late philosophy: an ahistorical understanding of functional unity and a historically relative notion of moral truth. These are echoed in Cassirer (see Widmer 2024).

Just like Cohen's take on Kant, Cassirer's interpretation does not exclude but demands engagement with substantiated forms of knowledge. Despite their differences, the notion of relative truths and functional unity are two features that were originally developed in Cohen's ethics and are echoed in Cassirer's political philos-

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67 For a more detailed discussion of *Völkerpsychologie,* see Chapter 3, § 5.

ophy. Even though Cassirer did not provide a substantive normative theory, his neo-Kantian approach is reflected in *The Concept of Substance and the Concept of Function* from 1910, and the Inaugural Speech "Forms and Form Changes" from 1929. In *Substance*, Cassirer states that the "system of cognition does not tolerate any isolated "formal" determination that has not continued to contribute to the scientific tasks and solutions as a whole" (vii). An illustrative example of his functionalist alternative is illustrated in his take on the category of space. Reminiscent of his Marburg predecessors, Cassirer criticizes materialism and physicalism for basing their theory on a circular argument: "they presuppose already a general knowledge of that 'outside,' which needs yet to be derived" (SF, 308, Widmer 2024).

To avoid this problem, Cassirer answers with a *functionalist* "Kantian" solution. He agrees with the psychologist camp in so far as we would necessarily take in a *perspective* that is bound to our conditions of perception (SF, 383). This is the basis for Cassirer's relative conception of truth that he presupposes in the Inaugural Speech (F, 344).[68] However, despite our limited access to knowledge, Cassirer claims that we necessarily assume an idea of systematicity—the "absolute and divine original Being" (*Ur-Sein*)—which grounds our knowledge (F, 344). The fact that we gain various differing pictures and yet subsume them to one concept is only possible due to a "law" that orders the pictures structurally, which is grounded in our "consciousness." Cassirer claims that we would not be able to "produce the idea of a corporeal object if not the idea of a rule would be added, by which a certain order [...] is assigned to each of them" (SF, 383). Like in Cohen's mature philosophy, Cassirer argues that we necessarily rely on contingent language concepts. Although we cannot know external objects, we can focus on the "conceptual relations" in which the function of our consciousness is reflected (SF, 399, Widmer, 2024).

The same philosophical commitments are to be found in his later study, *Axel Hägerström. A Study on Contemporary Swedish Philosophy* (1939). While scholars question the relevance of this commentary with regard to Cassirer's systematic view, Cassirer presents here Kantian morality through the eyes of Cohen. Like Cohen, Cassirer talks of ethics as an "*Erkenntnisart*," which can be translated into a "(sub-)discipline to epistemology" that is separated from theoretical cognition as it seeks an independent inner-logical system of *ends* based on free causation (AH, 98). Like Cohen, who distinguishes the "facts of science" and the "facts of culture," Cassirer adheres to the "facts of culture," arguing that "the concepts of law are concepts of experience" (AH, 98). "Ethical experience" may not be under-

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[68] "To anticipate the whole of my explanations in a short formula, I will call them the hierarchical, the rationalistic, and the positivistic concept of truth" (F, 344).

stood as the immediate reflection of existing norms, but as normative concepts prescribing how the social realm ought to be regulated. Just like theoretical cognition grounds the logical foundation according to which we create a systematic order of laws of nature, ethical experience seeks a coherent system of action-guiding laws, thereby providing us with insights into what ought to be in place. In this sense, Cassirer takes ethics as a "scientific discipline" (AH, 63, Widmer 2024).

Here, again, we see the social and teleological conception of the Cohenian interpretation of the moral law reflected. By taking ethics as a scientific discipline, Cassirer does not take ethics as a matter of individual experience, but as a discipline dealing with *social* norms. The *teleological* element comes to the fore in a passage, where Cassirer claims:

> One day, we will look back to some of these moral teachings, which are still often proclaimed today as "the last word in wisdom," and we will see that they relate to *ethical experience* just like alchemy relates to chemistry or astrology relates to scientific astronomy. (AH, 63)

As the natural sciences go through manifold stages, liberating from mythical elements, Cassirer takes ethics as a scientific discipline in its infancy, awaiting for its moment when the underlying logical structure is sufficient to account for their own discipline. Cassirer deploys a functionalist interpretation of the categorical imperative that goes as follows:

> [T]he pure meaning of Kant's concept of duty and his concept of ethical autonomy can be peeled out and fixed without establishing it in the same way as Kant—by virtue of the distinction of the "mundus sensibilis" from the "mundus intelligibilis." Here, too, a certain *functional* meaning of ethical concepts remains, which is not bound to their metaphysical-substantialist conceptual mantling. (AH, 83, emphasis added)

This passage indicates that Cassirer seeks more than simply to set out the Kantian framework in *Axel Hägerström.* Cassirer is critical of the Kantian moral law because it relies on metaphysical claims. It is for this reason that he prefers a functionalist over a metaphysical interpretation to ground the foundations of the *social* realm. It allows him to focus on political movements and developments in cultural history (Widmer 2024).

Having set out the functionalist interpretation of the Kantian moral law, I now turn to Cassirer's philosophy of symbolic forms. In an *Essay of Man*, Cassirer not only presupposes a pure ideal form in theoretical cognition but also an ethical ideal unfolding in religion. "Religion in its highest theoretical and ethical development is under the necessity of defending the *purity of its own ideal*" (EM, 95–96, emphasis added). As the following paragraph shows, the "pure ideal" is synonym with his functionalist adaptation of the moral law.

Cassirer's genealogical view on religion stands in direct relation to the sciences. While in mythical thinking the sense of agency is intertwined with phenomena that are to be considered under causal laws, the rise of the natural sciences comes along with the abandonment of thought systems that missed differentiating between the theoretical and the practical sphere. Cassirer thereby draws on what he takes to be the Bergsonian distinction between "static religion" and "dynamic religion." Static religion is a "product of social pressure"; "dynamic religion," however, breaks with "all the former social bonds" and seeks autonomous life forms (EM 116).[69] What underlies this claim is Cassirer's functional notion of the moral law with which he differentiates between free and oppressive systems of thought (Widmer 2024).

Most notably, we find this functionalist analysis in Cassirer's discussion of monotheistic religions. Echoing Cohen, Cassirer argues that while the polytheistic belief system did not have yet the conceptual tools to differentiate between right and wrong, monotheistic belief systems introduced a concept of the "absolute Divine," which facilitates a systematic differentiation between right and wrong. "It is quite a different aspect of the Divine we meet in the great monotheistic religions. These religions are the offspring of moral forces; they concentrate upon a single point, upon the problem of good and evil" (EM, 130 – 131). In contrast to Cohen, Cassirer does not restrict his observations to Jewish monotheism. The Iranian religion of Zoroaster, as well as Christianity, are likewise discussed as "a purely ethical force[s]" that attacked "[p]rimitive mythology" (EM, 130 – 131). The underlying argument, however, remains the same. Greek religion was stuck in "mythical indifference," whereas monotheism is "not a product of mythical or aesthetic imagination" but rather "the expression of a great personal *moral will*" (EM, 131). The crucial difference is that only the latter provides the concept of the absolute, grounding a free form of religion.

> All the higher religions—the religion of the prophets of Israel, Zoroastrianism, Christianity—set themselves a common task. They relieve the intolerable burden of the taboo system; but they detect, on the other hand, a more profound sense of religious obligation that instead of being a restriction or compulsion is the expression of a new positive ideal of human freedom. (HM, 141 – 142)

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69 Cassirer critically points out that Bergson's understanding of religious movements is based the idea that "sudden crisis" would push forward religious thought systems, thereby contrasting the idea of a "continuous process," leading gradually "from one form to the other" (EM 118).

Here we see most explicitly that Cassirer presupposes a functionalist understanding of the moral law, capable of differentiating between "static" religion *hindering* moral progress, and "dynamic" religion *promoting* moral progress (Widmer 2024).

This distinction is informative when it comes to the types of normative judgments we find in Cassirer. By investigating the ends of various thought systems —each of them presupposing their own ontological order and conception of truth—Cassirer provides a foundation based on which he endorses or refutes certain developments of thought systems. His anthropological writings are meant to set out different stages of the emergence of symbolic forms. Later, however, in his discussion of fascist myth, we also find negative judgments where Cassirer condemns the reintegration of mythical contents (Widmer 2024).

So far, I have tried to show that Cassirer echoes Cohen by presupposing a functional notion of unity that allows for the identification of moral movement despite the relative notion of ontological concepts. In the next step, I shall show that Cassirer does not exclude ethics from his program. Ethics is rather taken as the secular version of religion that evolved in more recent times and *should have* marked the beginning of the secular age, which was destroyed by the rise of fascist myth (Widmer 2024).

5.3.3 Ethics in *The Myth of the State*

In mythical thinking, the sense of agency is far less distinct than in dynamic forms of religion. Cassirer engages with myth in at least two distinct ways. In his anthropological writings, myth is an expression of the *animal symbolicum*, pregnant with the concepts evolving from it. "Fascist myth," on the other hand, is an intentional elimination of agency for manipulation purposes during a period when mythical thinking was meant to be overcome (cf. MS, 3). Martina Pluembacher has recently claimed that *Myth* would "mark the point of view that leads ethical thinking out of the religious contexts" (Pluembacher 2021, 249). I take a step further and argue that Cassirer introduces in *Myth* secular ethics as a symbolic form. Because Cassirer discusses in *Myth* the nourishing ground for fascism *after* Kant, he now discusses ethics as a symbolic form that saw the emergence of secular ethics when a Kantian sense of agency was part of the cultural consciousness (Widmer 2024).[70]

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70 The sciences have the "function" that aims to "unify thought," (MS, 37). Religion and myth serve a social purpose, namely, to constitute "a unity of feeling" among the people (MS, 37). It is due to this *unifying* function that Cassirer spends great efforts in defending mythical thinking against philosophical and psychological theories that dismiss mythical thinking as irrational. Myth not only serves a crucial social purpose, but it is also an expression of the ontological and normative

To explain how the destruction of a secular form of agency came about after the awakening of the moral self in the enlightenment, Cassirer discusses several theories—Carlyle, Gobineau, Hegel, and Heidegger—that constituted the "fascist soil." Thomas Carlyle's influential lecture "On Heroes, Hero Worship and the Heroic History" (1840) marked a crucial step backward in the development of human culture as it destroyed the concept of moral freedom (MS, 213) and demanded the subordination of individuals (MS, 214). Likewise, Arthur de Gobineau's essay "Sur l'inégalité des races humaines" from 1853 would have established a new "race worship." Gobineau's deterministic—or, to use Cassirer's term, "fatalistic"—history would have led to the destruction of any sense of free human agency (MS, 225). To Gobineau, "race worship was […] the highest form of worship" (246). Later, these ideas were radicalized in Spengler's fatalistic *Decline of the West* essay from 1919 and Heidegger's *Geworfenheits* philosophy in *Sein und Zeit.* Together these theories provided the ideological soil based on which National Socialism flourished. While "myth has always been described as the result of an unconscious activity," Cassirer claims, "[t]he new political myths are artificial things fabricated by very skilful and cunning artists" (MS, 282, see Widmer 2024)).[71]

This focus marks a crucial difference from Cassirer's earlier engagement with myth. In *An Essay*, Cassirer deploys a Cohenian-functionalist interpretation of the moral law methodologically in order to evaluate the function of belief systems to distinguish dynamic from oppressive forms. However, when Cassirer analyzes the transition from polytheism to monotheism, there are no cultural manifestations of an ethical symbolic form. Ethics is solely discussed in *religious* terms. In *Myth of the State*, however, Cassirer focuses on the period *after* Kant. Modern fascist myth originates in the early nineteenth-century post-Kantian era when a secular form of ethics was part of the culture. To avoid anachronism, we find a genealogy of symbolic forms in Cassirer that judges belief systems by the conceptual conditions of their time. Monotheism, for example, is not judged by its progressiveness today but by its ethical function it had on the cultural sphere within which it first

order of scientific and moral concepts of a specific period. In this sense, Cassirer objects to theories that take myth to be merely subjective, myths ought to be studied as "an objectification of man's social experience" (MS, 47). In this sense, myth is not only instructive in understanding ourselves as symbolically expressing beings; studying myth also allows us to have insights into the ontological and normative order of a certain stage of humanity.

71 To illustrate this, Cassirer discusses the difference between "*Siegfriede*" and "*Siegerfriede.*" The nazis gave new meaning to words. While the first means "peace through German victory," while "*Siegerfriede*" means the opposite, peace through the enemy's victory. This novel, nuanced, and intentional re-integration of mythical elements makes them "masters of their art of political propaganda" (ibid.).

appeared. While the enlightenment would have proffered a belief system capable of resolving ethical contradictions, fascism hindered modern times from progressing (Widmer 2024).

Cassirer now discusses the Kantian moral law on two levels. On a methodological level, he presupposes—like in *An Essay* and *Symbolic Forms*—a functionalist interpretation of the categorical imperative to evaluate cultural developments in their purpose to progress. Cassirer discusses the moral law also on a genealogical level, thereby focusing on the notion of autonomy in its materialized and substantiated form in human culture. An illustrative example is to be found in the passage where Cassirer discusses Gobineau:

> These ideas [humanitarian and egalitarian principles] were not based upon religion but upon a new type of philosophical ethics. They had found their clearest systematic description in the work of Kant, the cornerstone of which was the idea of freedom—and freedom meant "autonomy." It is the expression of the principle that the moral subject has to obey no rules other than those which he gives to himself. Man is not only a means that may be used for external ends; he is himself the "legislator in the realm of end." That constitutes his true dignity, his prerogative above all mere physical being. [...] All this was not only entirely unintelligible to Gobineau, but simply intolerable. (MS, 235)

Just like Cassirer claimed that religion is a symbolic form emerging out of myth, he now takes Kantian ethics in its historical impact as a form of a *secular* religious belief system. Ethics is thereby taken as yet another stage emerging from dynamic religion (Widmer 2024).

There are two worries against my interpretative suggestion. First, scholars have argued that Cassirer's proposed symbolic forms constitute a complete set of symbolic forms. Tobias Endres claims that the "expressive," "presentative," and "purely significative" functions are exhaustingly presented in the "mimetic," "analogical," and "symbolic" forms, thereby constituting "a matrix that encompasses the totality of humanity's spiritual i. e. cultural life" (Endres 2021, 124). However, this interpretation of Cassirer's system does not interfere with my claim that takes religion as a symbolic form emerging organically from Greek mythical polytheism to a religious stage before entering a purely ethical stage. Cassirer emphasizes that the transformation between myth and religion is often obscure and proceeds gradually. The same can be said about the cultural transformation of a stage in human history from religion to ethics. In the stage of monotheism, the "I" stands in relation to an idea of the absolute. During secular times, however, the symbolic form of agency that underlies our conception of the social world takes on a "purely significant" symbolic form. *Myth* shows that our faith in god can yield a more secular understanding of universality centered around the self-legislating agent. Secular

ethics is the pure ideal of consciousness, guiding the telos of rationality (Widmer 2024).

Second, Cassirer did not make the ethical symbolic form explicit. Why should we assume that there is a "hidden" form of morality if he refrained from making the form explicit? Here, again, it is important to note that Cassirer does not introduce a novel function, which remains throughout history the same but a symbolic form of morality as a novel *historical-cultural* phenomenon. Because his earlier treatise focused on times that did not show any signs of a secular form of morality, we lack a consideration of such form. As we learned earlier, Cassirer thought of the ethical sciences being stuck in their infancy. This becomes apparent considering these developments (Widmer 2024).

The Myth of the State shows that Cassirer draws on a Cohen-inspired functionalist interpretation of the moral law that includes an ideal account of ethical objectivity and a relative notion of truth. Cohen and especially Natorp became over the years nationalist defenders of the German *Reich*, leaving Marburg left-Kantianism with an unpleasant aftertaste. Cassirer, however, showed how their political philosophies also provided a fruitful foundation to criticize fascism. Although, given that he did not provide a defense of socialism, he was not a Marburg *left*-Kantian in a strict sense, he knew how to transfer central thoughts into a theory equipped for the challenges of the early twentieth century (Widmer 2024).

6 Summary and Conclusion

This book has attempted to provide a comprehensive analysis of the political philosophies developed by the Marburg School. Although primarily a historical exposition, my aim was to emphasize the philosophically and systematically intriguing aspects of their work. The study of a field that is not widely known in the philosophical community offers the opportunity to shape and define the philosophical problems surrounding their philosophies. Still, this is a first and selective attempt to draw out only a few systematic aspects. Many fascinating questions remain yet to be researched.

This book had two particular objectives. First, it aimed to demonstrate that the left-Hegelian and Marxist traditions were not the sole significant philosophical sources of socialist critique in nineteenth-century Germany. I have sought to highlight and rectify the unjustifiable neglect of the tradition of Marburg left-Kantianism. Second, the study aimed to challenge the neo-Kantian literature's suggestion that the political philosophies developed in the Marburg School could be comprehensively characterized as a unified school of "ethical socialism." Throughout the book, I have shown that their school was not a unified school of thought when it came to political philosophy. I have also highlighted the depth of the members' theories, hoping to convince readers that this philosophical current is worth acknowledging. This leaves me with the first objective, which I have only touched on in the introduction so far. The following few paragraphs are meant to summarize the chapters while emphasizing the novelty of their approaches in opposition to the materialist tradition.

In the second chapter, I introduced Friedrich Albert Lange as a naturalist thinker who offered a psychophysiological interpretation of the Kantian framework. This means that he grounded the a priori conditions of experience in psychology. I defended two claims. First, I argued that Lange's social and political philosophy builds on his neo-Kantian framework. Although Lange did not sufficiently outline the Kantian foundation, I maintained that his social and political philosophy involves a naturalized understanding of the categories that ground an aesthetic theory, which he implicitly presupposes when dealing with questions of normativity in *The Worker's Question*. Second, I showed that his adherence to materialism and idealism was reflected in Stammler's and Cohen's socialism, respectively.

To support my claim, I argued in the first step that Lange started out as a liberal. The economic upswing in the mid-1850s led to the emergence of the German Progressive Party, a strong liberal party with Hermann Schulze-Delitzsch as its main figure. Unlike Marx and Engels, Schulze-Delitzsch believed that worker

unions and loans would provide the working class with the means to improve their situation. Lange's justification of socialism incorporated these liberal aspects in his naturalist perspective on the social question. He argued that class division originates in the egoistic human nature seeking to gain an advantage in the evolutionary "struggle for survival." According to Lange, societal progress is not dependent on a revolutionary transformation but proceeds incrementally and requires legal reforms. Capitalism promotes competition, unequal opportunities, and entails a high degree of luck, while socialism strives for a just distribution of goods, equal opportunities, and the minimization of the role of chance in a person's destiny. Although both sympathy and egoism are natural dispositions, Lange emphasizes that sympathy is grounded in our rational and aesthetic consciousness. This is, I argued, where Lange deploys Kantian arguments.

Lange agreed with the materialists that objective empirical statements require inductive logic, but he remained Kantian as he explained the foundation of logic based on subjective categories of understanding. Lange argued that we necessarily create idealized concepts in science that play a crucial role in inductive inferences. He thereby changed the Kantian framework in fundamental aspects by rejecting the Kantian method, arguing for the empirical scrutiny of the conditions of experience. In his endeavor to find a theory that investigates the crucial role of mental idealizations in the logical foundation of science, Lange emphasized the idealist aspects in science—hypostatization, ideas, and presuppositions—that are part of scientific inferences.

I showed that the same idea is to be found in his moral philosophy. Lange argued that ethics is a fictitious but necessary idealist complement to the "world of being" and that the same principle that prevails in the realm of beauty, art, and poetry prevails in the realm of action as the true ethical norm. Lange adopted a Schiller-inspired concept of moral freedom, where the idea of human beings as ends-in-themselves does not allow for deductive inferences about the metaphysics of the intelligible world. Instead, a fictitious idea opens an ideal "standpoint" from which society is imagined. Here, Lange introduced another notion of objectivity that differed from the objectivity presupposed in empirical studies. For Lange, true art is not just fiction but conveys a statement that is considered objectively true. There is another systematic component in Lange's ethics that recalls Kant: the "general will" or the concept of the "absolute," which prompts us to imagine social norms as a coherent picture of the social realm. Lange thereby offered an aesthetic alternative to the rational and moral will that determines Kant's ethics.

Against this background, I concluded that Lange's social and political philosophy is deeply rooted in his neo-Kantian framework, which he modified to fit his naturalist perspective. His justification of socialism builds on a materialist and idealist line of argument, which resonates with the natural law and positivist tradi-

tions, respectively. I have also shown that Lange's adherence to both materialism and idealism generated an inspirational source for Cohen and Stammler.

Lange was an inspirational source for those troubled by the reductionist view of social norms in Marxism, which sought to explain natural catastrophes such as the Irish potato famine using the rules of the capitalist mode of production. By adhering to naturalism, Lange provided an essential critique of reducing the social realm to economic laws, a key tenet of the historical materialist tradition. Lange emphasized the importance of considering other factors that contribute to the emergence of social and economic injustices. This approach preserved a naturalist perspective on the social question, which helps identify the causes of social inequalities rather than obscuring them.

In the third chapter, I discussed Cohen's practical philosophy, which is usually considered to be anti-psychological in nature. I argued that Cohen's functionalist critique of capitalism—a matter I have introduced in Chapter 4—was paved by a thin program of *Völkerpsychologie* that continues to exist in his mature ethics and constitutes a necessary component for his functionalist critique of capitalism.

I showed that Cohen's neo-Kantian adaptation of Kantian theory involved a refinement of principles from his earlier work, *Kant's Foundation of Ethics.* Cohen grounded his understanding of ethical rationality in the "logic of the cultural sciences." According to Cohen, knowledge is based on logical operations that allow for objective insights into norms that ought to govern the cultural realm. Cohen argues that the systematic exploration of ends would ground the foundation of the cultural sciences investigating the "facts of culture." Here, the idea is that what we consider "real" are not the empirical social phenomena we perceive but the laws that we rationally construct by reordering the norms that guide action with respect to the "systematic idea of ends." Cohen's foundational principle of ethics states that no person is allowed to be used "merely as a means" and must always be treated as an end in themselves. Cohen combines the Formula of Humanity and embeds it in the teleological structure of the Formula of the Kingdom of Ends to formulate the "systematic idea of ends" as a theoretical principle that we presuppose when we deliberate ethically.

While Cohen deployed a strong version of *Völkerpsychologie* in his early years that thought of psychology separated from the conditions of knowledge, I argued that in his mature works he moved toward a purely regulative understanding of the conditions of experience, based on a concept of natural and normative reality created through scientific and ethical reasoning. I argued that his increased focus on history is an advancement of his psychology rather than a sign of him letting go of psychology altogether.

To underpin this claim, I followed Cohen's view on the form-matter distinction through several stages. Cohen sought a notion of experience that allows one to start with the empirical appearances of objective judgments. By highlighting the psychological aspects of Cohen's mature ethics, I demonstrated the similarities of his ethics with the weak *völkerpsychological* program advocated by Lazarus and Steinthal. Cohen's *Ethics of Pure Will* and the second edition of *Kant's Foundation of Ethics* highlight the importance of the "historical formations" of the "pure will" and an ethical evaluation of historical ideas similar to Lazarus and Steinthal. In his mature works, Cohen deployed a weak psychological program that included an emphasis on free will, the concept of motion in historical processes, and a critical view of a dialectic conception of history. By so doing, he offered an ethical evaluative criterion to judge causally developed and psychological ideas in history that is based on distinct logical presuppositions.

In the last step of Chapter 3, I paid more attention to these logical presuppositions. Cohen's transcendental philosophy was influenced by the concepts of "movement" as we find it in Trendelenburg and the "critical" methodology as it can already be found in Lange. Trendelenburg employed the idea that legal judgments are grounded on a principle of justice that is innate to human nature or rationality. Trendelenburg developed a historically embedded view of practical rationality, materialized in a "concrete" conception of the Kantian notion of universality, which grounded the basis for his natural law theory. He reformulated an account of historical reason by using the sense of "coming-into-being," which enables us to recognize ideas in their transitional state between autonomy and heteronomy. The critical methodology of Lange also influenced Cohen's approach, which entails a critical evaluation of the underlying principles of a particular philosophical concept from an ethical standpoint. With these influences, Cohen provided a novel understanding of practical rationality in the tradition of natural law theory that targets historical ethical movements. This is presupposed in his functionalist critique of capitalism.

In Chapter 4, I focused on Cohen's functionalist critique, which has been largely overlooked, partly because of the neglect of the psychological embeddedness of his theory. The functionalist aspects of his ethical critique are important, as they highlight the aspects where he deviates from Kant's ethics that still deal with metaphysical assertions. More importantly, Cohen thereby creates an ethical theory that takes the historical emergence of norms as seriously as the tradition of historical materialism, but, importantly, without letting go of an ethical-normative point of view.

More specifically, I showed that Cohen's functionalist account evaluates factual norms in terms of their function to promote societal or ethical progress. He argues that social norms have two aspects: they explain *and* prescribe social develop-

ments. In contrast to the Kantian system, Cohen's functionalization of ethical rationality shows that social norms are functionally reflected in our historical social facts. Cohen posits the existence of a free moral will in historical deeds, referring to the notion of systematic ends as the "pure will," which does not manifest itself as such in the empirical world. Nevertheless, as rational beings, we create concepts that represent this idea to enable its comprehension. In this way, Cohen attempts to reconcile the tension between the abstract nature of the pure will and its concrete expression in historical events. He recognizes the significance of human agency and the role of ethical principles in cultural development, seeking to provide a more nuanced view of cultural evolution and the potential for continued progress toward a more just and equitable society.

We find this idea in Cohen's view on the Jewish concept of God and its role in establishing an ethical culture. Cohen argues that the Jewish conception of a monotheistic God provided a coherent moral belief system that overcame the cruelty of pagan polytheistic belief systems. He also differentiates between symbolic and ethical Jewish practices, where ethical rules survive critical scrutiny even if they are intermingled with pre-critical conceptual elements. Cohen's counterfactual functional critique targets Christianity's regression in the evolution of moral reason by reintroducing a metaphysical conception of God and the concept of an "immortal soul."

Cohen's functionalist interpretation of the pure will also provide the foundation for his critique of capitalism, where he examines historically shaped social norms not only in their factual state but also in their ethical purpose. According to Cohen, if Kant's notion of practical reason were thought through, we would conclude that democratic socialism was the only ethically justified governmental form to combat unethical practices in capitalism. His commitment to a functional interpretation of the subjective categories of consciousness that are reflected in historically formed concepts is also reflected in his view on objectivity and truth. While he presupposes an a priori notion of objectivity, it is inevitably tied to a relative notion of truth that refers to the substantive truth concepts at the time.

Cohen provided, with his ethical theory, a critique of Marxism that highlighted the problems of a theory that leaves the normative implications undiscussed. Cohen criticized Marxists for relying solely on empirical investigations ("plurality judgments") and for falling short in accounting for the ethical motivation that underlies the socialist movement. In order to establish a culture in which laborers are treated accordingly, Cohen argued for a reconsideration of *legal* concepts that justify wrongs in capitalism. Apart from Cohen's critique of laws that protect the growth of capital rather than the dignity of the citizens, he also argued that the worker unions were a desirable "expression of ethical rationality" as they longed for humane working conditions that align with the ethical idea of systematicity.

Cohen thereby provided a teleological theory that was not committed to an antithetical progress. Instead, Cohen's critique of inhumane practices and his demand for socialism appeared as a contemporary ethical answer to capitalist ideas materialized in legal institutions causing structural-societal problems. Just like Judaism sought to ethicize culture, socialism is taken as an ethical movement seeking a more just society—a perspective hitherto alien to the Marxist tradition.

Stammler and Cohen offered valuable ideas for critiquing capitalism from different perspectives. While Cohen's adaptation of Kant's moral law was used to criticize capitalist norms ethically, Stammler separated law from morality and based his political critique on the inconsistencies between the legal system and the material or economic conditions. He drew on Savigny's legal philosophy, which restricted investigations in legal science to historically formed legal contents, measuring justice by the standards of the period in which judgments emerged. Law, according to Savigny, was not based on a rational order but evolved in relation and interaction with the general political culture of a society. Stammler translated this positivist account into a neo-Kantian foundation of legality, which he believed was based on theoretical rather than ethical insights.

Stammler distinguishes between the "formal" or "legal" and the "material" or "economic" aspects of sociality. He excludes ethics from the legal sphere on a formal level, and his "theoretically correct law" is a scientific ideal that grounds the telos of both the natural and legal sciences. The distinct feature of the legal sciences is the presupposition of free agents capable of setting rules for themselves while the legal norms are investigated in their substantive and changing nature as they appear in the sphere of causality. Stammler argues that economic conditions constitute social conditions, while believing it possible to intervene in naturally evolved economic processes by regulating the market. Social progress requires two methodologies: an examination of empirical facts requiring inductive reasoning and rendering the acquired facts deductively under the idea of theoretical unity. The "theoretically correct law" is a principle free from a formal conception of justice, and Stammler's engagement with the empirical material combines inductive and deductive methods, aiming to regulate and guide the forces of social production.

In contrast to the Marxist tradition, Stammler's legal-positivist approach provided a fruitful foundation to identify normative demands without falling into ethical considerations that might be considered vulnerable to ideological convictions. While Stammler's account shared some similarities with Marx in that he took sociality as a material matter that needed to be studied theoretically, he emphasized a scientific ideal and provided a valuable alternative to the Marxist tradition.

The critical interpretation of Kantianism by the Marburg School redirects attention toward cultural developments, allowing normative questions to be de-

fined in relation to the cultural studies. Although none of the Marburg School members conducted empirical research, their philosophical theories demonstrated great sympathy for an empirically informed account of idealism. This relationship is not only significant in the context of the emergence of the social sciences at the beginning of the twentieth century, but it is also valuable in relation to contemporary issues. One of the strengths of their critical, functionalist, or positivist interpretation of the Kantian system is that it surpasses the limiting aspects of Kantian metaphysics and individualism. Due to the societal problems that emerged in capitalism, the Marburg School recognized the importance of developing a normative framework that could address these challenges. While Kant's ethical theory was primarily concerned with the individual and the law, and his legal philosophy with setting out the transcendental conditions of a republican state, the Marburg School viewed the Kantian system as a critical methodology that lays out the logic of justice, which is fundamental for the legal and social sciences. As we confront problems of inherent social injustices that require empirical research, their political philosophies offer productive approaches that allow us to dynamically rethink Kantian logic so that empirical issues of injustice shape the questions and scope of our normative work. Although this book's primary objective was to accurately portray their philosophies systematically and historically, the Marburgers provided fruitful ideas that may have great potential to help us address current issues of injustice with which we deal in the social sciences and the humanities.

This book has focused only on a small part of the untold story of left-Kantianism in the long nineteenth century. While the history of philosophy field is under constant pressure to demonstrate the relevance of its work, investigating our past is also an anthropological endeavor that shapes our view of ourselves and our society. In recent years, we have witnessed an increasing awareness of the need to explore the history of philosophy from the margins, particularly with regard to forgotten female philosophers. Historians of philosophy have identified gaps in our canonical decisions that demonstrate how selective and biased our engagement with the history of philosophy has been. In our case, left-Kantianism was overshadowed by Marxist or left-Hegelian developments. Although this had a significant impact on the philosophical discourse, with critical theory engaging closely with Kant and Marx, it did not involve the left-Kantians. The perceived divide between liberalism and Marxism is also deeply ingrained in our cultural memory. As the social-liberal approaches of the left-Kantians are understudied, it has obscured the less radical and more centrist left-wing developments that allow for a more nuanced understanding of democratic and republican forms of socialism that counteract the simplistic equation of socialism with Marxism. It is crucial to challenge these narratives, not only

for the sake of a wholesome account of the history of philosophy, but also to counteract a narrative that depicts our past in its most extreme forms, which are implicitly repeated in the current political discourses. Since we have only recently begun to rethink canonical choices that are highly susceptible to biases, I hope that the study of left-Kantianism will also be discussed as an important aspect of the history of socialist thought.

Abbreviations

Ernst Cassirer

AH Cassirer, Ernst (1939): *Axel Haegerstroem. Eine Studie zur schwedischen Philosophie der Gegen-wart. Collected Works.* Hamburg Edition. Ed. by Birgit Recki, vol. 21.

EM Cassirer, Ernst (1944): *An Essay of Man. Collected Works.* Hamburg Edition. Ed. by Birgit Recki, vol. 23.

F Cassirer, Ernst (1929): "Formen und Formwandlungen des philosophischen Wahrheitsbegriffs," speech delivered at the celebration of the change of rectorship on November 7, 1929, Hamburg.

FF Cassirer, Ernst (1918): *Freiheit und Form. Studien zur Deutschen Geistesgeschichte.* 2nd ed. Leipzig: Spamersche Buchdruckerei.

MS Cassirer, Ernst (1949): *Myth of the State.* New Haven: Yale University Press.

PS Cassirer, Ernst (1925): *Philosophie der Symbolischen Formen. Zweiter Teil: Das mythische Denken.* ECW 12.

SF Cassirer, Ernst (1910): *Substanzbegriff und Funktionsbegriff. Untersuchungen ueber die Grundfragen der Erkenntniskritik.* Berlin: Bruno Cassirer.

Hermann Cohen

EPW Cohen, Hermann (1904/1908/1981): *Ethics of the Pure Will [Ethik des reinen Willens].* 5th ed. Helmut Holzhey (Ed.). Hildesheim: Olms [quotations refer to the 2nd ed. from 1908].

KBAE Cohen, Hermann (1889/2009): *Kants Begründung der Ästhetik.* 2nd ed. Helmut Holzhey (Ed.). Hildesheim: Olms.

KFE Cohen, Hermann (1877/1910/2001): *Kant's Foundation of Ethics [Kants Begründung der Ethik].* 3rd ed. Helmut Holzhey, Peter Müller, and Peter A. Schmid (Eds.). Hildesheim: Olms [A refers to the 1877 edition; B refers to the 1910 edition].

KTE Cohen, Hermann (1871/1987): *Kants Theorie der Erfahrung.* Helmut Holzhey (Ed.). Hildesheim: Olms [quotations refer to the 1st ed.].

LPK Cohen, Hermann (1902/2005): *Logic of Pure Knowledge [Logik der reinen Erkenntnis.].* Helmut Holzhey (Ed.). Hildesheim: Olms.

PIM Cohen, Herman (1883/2005): *Das Prinzip der Infinitesimal-Methode und seine Geschichte.* Helmut Holzhey (Ed.). Hildesheim: Olms.

RR Cohen, Hermann (1919/1966): *Religion of Reason out of the Sources of Judaism [Religion der Vernunft aus den Quellen des Judentums].* Darmstadt: Joseph Metzler.

Immanuel Kant

G Kant, Immanuel (1785/2016): *Grundlegung der Metaphysik der Sitten.* 2nd ed. Bernd Kraft and Dieter Schönecker (Eds.). Hamburg: Felix Meiner.

MM Kant, Immanuel (2009): *Metaphysics of Morals [Metaphysik der Sitten].* 3rd ed. Bernd Ludwig (Ed.). Hamburg: Felix Meiner [quotations refer to the Akademieausgabe].

PR Kant, Immanuel (1788/2003): *Critique of Practical Reason [Kritik der praktischen Vernunft].* Heiner Klemme and Horst Brandt (Eds.). Hamburg: Felix Meiner [quotations refer to the Akademieausgabe].

Friedrich Albert Lange

HM   Lange, Friedrich Albert (1866/1875/2011): *History of Materialism* [*Geschichte des Materialismus und Kritik seiner Bedeutung in der Gegenwart. Erstes und zweites Buch*]. 2nd ed. Berlin: Contumax [the added numbers refer to the Suhrkamp edition].

MAS Lange, Friedrich Albert (1866): *Mill's Views* [*J. St. Mill's Ansichten über die soziale Frage und die angebliche Umwälzung der Sozialwissenschaft durch Carey].* Duisburg: Falk & Lange.

SPP Lange, Friedrich Albert (1897): *Einleitung und Kommentar zu Schillers philosophischen Gedichten.* Otto A. Ellissen (Ed.). Bielefeld and Leipzig: Verhagen und Klasing.

WQ   Lange, Friedrich Albert (1865/1870): *The Worker's Question* [*Die Arbeiterfrage. Ihre Bedeutung für Gegenwart und Zukunft].* 2nd ed. Winterthur: von Beuler-Hausheer & Co.

Paul Natorp

GV   Natorp, Paul (1918): *The German Vocation* [*Der Deutsche Weltberuf. Die Weltalter des Geistes*]. Jena: Eugen Diederich.

SI   Natorp, Paul (1920): *Sozial-Idealismus. Neue Richtlinien sozialer Erziehung.* Berlin: Julius Springer.

SP   Natorp, Paul (1899): *Social Pedagogics* [*Sozialpädagogik. Theorie der Willenserziehung auf der Grundlage der Gemeinschaft*]. Stuttgart: Frommanns.

Rudolf Stammler

DCL Stammler, Rudolf (1902): *The Doctrine of Correct Law [Die Lehre vom richtigen Rechte].* Berlin: J. Guttentag.

EL   Stammler, Rudolf (1896): *Economy and Law* [*Wirtschaft und Recht nach der materialistischen Geschichtsauffassung. Eine sozialphilosophische Untersuchung*]. Leipzig: Veit & Comp.

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