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978-0-521-77273-0 - The Cambridge History of Philosophy in the Nineteenth Century (1790–1870)

Edited by Allen W. Wood and Songsuk Susan Hahn

Excerpt

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INTRODUCTION

ALLEN W. WOOD

Nineteenth-century philosophy witnessed the development of intellectual projects and movements for whose invention the eighteenth century deserves primary credit. It might even be said that it was largely constituted by the fruition of such projects. Both empiricism and German idealism were essentially products of the Enlightenment: empiricism was born of a creative reading of the moderately skeptical rationalist philosopher John Locke, mainly by French and Scottish philosophers such as Étienne Bonnot de Condillac and David Hume. Just as Condillac attempted to treat the theory of knowledge as a natural discipline based on the psychological investigation of the human senses, so Hume thought to apply to metaphysical and epistemological subjects the same method that had been seen to have such great success, applied to nature as a whole in Newton's physics. German idealism was the attempt to fulfill – usually by “going beyond” – the project of transcendental philosophy invented by Immanuel Kant (1724–1804). But whereas Kant devised the transcendental approach as a way of responding to problems of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries – problems about the roles of reason and experience in knowledge and the recognition of the limits of metaphysical cognition – his immediate followers saw this approach as opening up a new kind of philosophical method, a new and radical answer to an equally radical skepticism by which they felt knowledge was threatened, and at the same time as an invitation to a new and higher kind of scientific systematicity than philosophers had hitherto known.

The truly revolutionary figure here was Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762–1814), who devised a new “synthetic method” of transcendental inquiry that overcame what he and his contemporaries viewed as the false and artificial “dualisms” – between sense and understanding, reason and empirical desire, theory and practice – that Kant had set up and had even attempted to mediate in his third critique, *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (1790). Fichte's approach was the gateway to later “speculative” systems and also to a variety of criticisms of

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systematic philosophy, which also emerged out of Enlightenment and counter-Enlightenment approaches that arose in the middle to late eighteenth century.

At the end of the eighteenth century, in fact, there were a number of widely differing conceptions of philosophy and its relation to Common Sense, the sciences, and social practice. One strain in Enlightenment thought rejected the idea that philosophy should constitute itself as an esoteric or specialized discipline and favored the idea that it should devote itself to the task of public education, with a view to directly improving cultural and political conditions. Even when philosophy was thought of as reflective inquiry, there were those such as Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi (1743–1819) and the Scottish common sense philosophers who thought that philosophy ought to be rooted in ordinary life or common sense and opposed a “scientific” or “systematic” conception of its vocation. Yet others saw philosophy as a fundamental science capable of grounding all the sciences, but of this science there were widely differing conceptions, some speculative, others empiricist, such as French *idéologie*, others critical. The Kantian revolution itself gave rise to a variety of attempts to complete or correct the Kantian system: K. L. Reinhold’s *Elementarlehre*, Fichte’s *Wissenschaftslehre*, and the speculative philosophy of F. W. J. Schelling (1775–1854) and G. W. F. Hegel (1770–1831). A survey of the “Kantian aftermath” is presented by Robert B. Pippin in Chapter 1 of this volume.

In the early nineteenth century, philosophy was related in a variety of ways to social, educational, state, and private institutions. In the seventeenth century, the forefront of philosophical activity was situated outside the academy, but by the end of the eighteenth century, philosophy was once again centered in the universities, at least on the Continent and in Scotland. Until the late nineteenth century, the center of much philosophy in England and the United States was still nonacademic. Other official institutions supported it as well, such as the French Institut National and the Prussian Royal Academy. There were also unofficial institutions, such as the salons of Mme. de Stael, Mme. Helvetius, Rahel Levin, and Johanna Schopenhauer. Under this heading, we should also include the publication and dissemination of ideas in philosophical, literary, and political journals and reviews, such as the *Revue philosophique*, the *Athenäum*, the *Kritisches Journal der Philosophie*, and the *Westminster Review*, some of which were the center of important philosophical movements. In Chapter 2, Terry Pinkard treats the institutional context of nineteenth-century philosophy, with special attention to the German university system.

As in other volumes in the Cambridge History of Philosophy series, “philosophy” refers mainly to European philosophy. In the nineteenth century, however, European imperialism had resulted in contact with non-European cultures and ideas, which began to have an impact on European philosophy.

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Interest in the theme of cultural diversity and its moral, political, and philosophical implications really began in the eighteenth century, with thinkers such as Rousseau and Herder, and it was given much impetus by Johann Friedrich Blumenbach (1752–1840) and his students, including the explorers Alexander von Humboldt (1769–1859) and Friedrich Hornemann (1772–1801).

Philosophically, this interest came to fruition only much later: the first major history of philosophy to give an important place to non-Western philosophy was *General History of Philosophy* (1894–1917) by Paul Deussen (1845–1919). Yet as Michael N. Forster discusses in Chapter 28, historians of philosophy, such as Gladisch and Röth, had included “oriental” philosophy in their histories even earlier. The religious aspect of Indian thought had an early impact, as in *Language and Wisdom of India* (1808) by Friedrich Schlegel (1772–1829) and *The World as Will and Representation* (1818) by Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860). As Edward Said has shown in his books *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism*, exoticism was a persistent theme in nineteenth-century literature. And nineteenth-century European thought developed numerous theories of race and culture. Racism is a perceptible ingredient in the European philosophy of this period and central to the thought of men such as Joseph Gobineau (1816–82). The most significant phenomenon in early-nineteenth-century philosophy was the German idealist movement. From the start it saw itself as a movement in process, seeking the definitive systematic form proper to philosophy. Initiated by Fichte, who responded to the skepticism of Salomon Maimon (1753–1800) and Gottlob Ernst Schulze (1761–1833) and the critical “philosophy of elements” by Karl Leonard Reinhold (1757–1833), German idealism developed through Schelling’s philosophy of nature and speculative system of identity and reached its culmination in the mature system of Hegel.

Alternatives to the movement of systematic German idealism can be found later in Schopenhauer, Johann Friedrich Herbart (1776–1841), Sir William Hamilton (1805–65), and Rudolph Hermann Lotze (1817–81). A second important and sharply contrasting philosophical trend of the period is positivism, both in Auguste Comte (1798–1857) and in other empiricists, who had quite distinctive views on such topics as the a priori and naturalistic approaches to epistemology. John Stuart Mill (1806–73) also had a systematic approach to philosophy and distinctive motivations for thinking that systematicity was important to philosophy. This, too, would be a place in which to consider systematic “theories of knowledge,” such as those developed by Friedrich Eduard Beneke (1798–1854) and Antoine Augustin Cournot (1801–77).

Quite a different conception of the relationship of philosophy to ordinary consciousness can be found among the Scottish common sense philosophers – Thomas Reid (1710–96), James Oswald (1703–93), Dugald Stewart

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(1753–1828) – and their French followers, Pierre-Paul Royer-Collard (1763–1845) and Victor Cousin (1792–1867); and the Harvard philosophers in the United States took a contrasting approach, but with similar aims and also influenced by Scottish common sense philosophy; the same philosophical impulse is found earlier in the German counter-Enlightenment thought of F. H. Jacobi. The claims of philosophical reason were also regarded as problematic in relation to social tradition by Romantic and conservative thinkers: Edmund Burke (1729–97), Louis Gabriel Ambroise Bonald (1754–1840), August Wilhelm Rehberg (1757–1836), Joseph de Maistre (1753–1821), and Hugues Lammenais (1782–1854).

Criticisms of philosophical systematicity by Søren Kierkegaard (1813–55) and Friedrich Nietzsche might also be considered. In America, Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–82) was a critic of systematic philosophy. The very idea of a philosophical system, however, was challenged at the end of the eighteenth century by philosophers such as Jacobi, Johann Georg Hamann (1730–88), and Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803), and these challenges were taken up by later antisystematic philosophers. Systematic philosophy in the German idealist tradition, and challenges to them, are discussed by Rolf-Peter Horstmann in Chapter 3.

LOGIC AND MATHEMATICS

At the end of the eighteenth century, Kant could still regard Aristotelian logic as an unproblematic and complete (forever closed) body of theory. Between Kant and the revolution in logic accomplished by Frege, Russell, and others who came after the period covered by this history, there were a number of thinkers such as Bernard Bolzano (1781–1848), George Boole (1815–64), Augustus De Morgan (1806–71), and Charles Sanders Peirce (1839–1914) who made significant contributions to the coming revolution. Alongside them were philosophers who contributed in one way or another to broadening the subject matter of logic, rendering it problematic and thereby open to revolutionary revision: not only Hamilton, Mill, Adolf, Lotze, Trendelenburg (1802–72), and Christoph von Sigwart (1830–1904), but even Fichte and Hegel may be considered in this light. These nineteenth-century attempts to rethink logic are treated in Chapter 4 by Jeremy Heis.

The nineteenth century was also a creative period in the history of mathematics. Carl Friedrich Gauss (1777–1855), Nikolai Ivanovich Lobachevsky (1792–1856), and János Bolyai (1802–60) recognized the independence of the parallel postulate, pointing the way to non-Euclidean geometries by Bernhard Riemann (1826–66) and Hermann von Helmholtz (1821–94) and forcing

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revisions in the standard philosophical treatments of geometry (by Kant, for example). Both C. S. Peirce and his father, Benjamin Peirce (1809–80), contributed to thinking about mathematics. Significant work in the foundations of mathematics was done by Bernard Bolzano (1781–1848), Augustin-Louis Cauchy (1789–1857), Leopold Kronecker (1823–91), Karl Weierstrass (1815–97), and Richard Dedekind (1831–1916). Also important were developments in probability theory, from those of Pierre Simon LaPlace (1749–1827) to those of John Venn (1834–1923). In Chapter 5, Janet Folina discusses these significant nineteenth-century developments in the philosophy of mathematics.

NATURE

Much philosophy in the nineteenth century is preoccupied with either natural science or philosophy's relationship to it. At the end of the eighteenth century, an educated person could still keep abreast of the current state of all the empirical sciences. Hence it was still possible to entertain the hope that a single philosopher might synthesize their results into a comprehensive philosophical system. Such syntheses were undertaken, in very different ways, by Schelling and Jean Louis Cabanis (1816–1906), among others. But sometime early in the century, the increasing specialization of the sciences made this no longer possible. It is significant that the very concept of “science” (*scientia*) underwent a change during this period, shedding the Aristotelian-Scholastic connotations it had retained even in altered forms in philosophers from Descartes to Hegel, and came to be understood in the way we have now come to understand it in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. As a sign of this change, the word “scientist” itself was coined in the first half of the nineteenth century by William Whewell (1794–1866).

This profound change went pretty much unnoticed by systematic philosophers such as Hegel, but it accounts in part for the decline in the influence of Hegelian philosophy (which had begun even before Hegel's death in 1831). This led, on the one hand, to the idea that philosophy was itself some kind of specialized discipline, operating alongside the special sciences, and, on the other, to the notion that it perhaps lay “beneath” them, providing their epistemological or transcendental foundations. Whewell was one of the first who attempted a reconceptualization of “science” that might be adequate to the new cultural reality of scientific specialization.

That approach played an important role in the resurgence of Kantian (or neo-Kantian) philosophy in the middle and late nineteenth century. Another manifestation of it was the attempt to merge philosophy into the special science of human psychology that was in the process of being invented during this

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period. (In psychologistic versions of neo-Kantianism we see both tendencies operating at once.) This close association of philosophy with psychology, or “mental philosophy,” persisted throughout the nineteenth century and even lasted into the twentieth. On the other hand, in some quarters the success of the special sciences led to the idea that “philosophy” as a whole was an out-dated and discredited pseudodiscipline, destined to be replaced by the positive sciences.

At the same time, developments in the special sciences themselves were to have an important philosophical impact. Among these are the work of Antoine Lavoisier (1743–94) in chemistry, John Brown (1735–88) in medicine, William Herschel (1738–1822) in astronomy, and John Clerk Maxwell (1831–79) and Ludwig Boltzmann (1844–1906) in physics, various results challenging the notion that all natural processes could be reduced to a mechanistic corpuscularian physics, and, of course, the revolution in biology associated with Charles Darwin (1809–82), which affected the way people thought about many things, including life, natural kinds, and the relation of nature to history. The scientific work of Goethe also had significant philosophical influence. German idealism tried to develop a systematic philosophy of nature. A contrasting approach was found in the scientific materialism of Ludwig Büchner (1824–99), Jacob Moleschott (1822–93), Karl Vogt (1817–18), and Heinrich Czolbe (1819–73). An attempt to synthesize the two is found in Friedrich Engels (1821–95). Among philosophical conceptions of science were German idealism’s “philosophy of nature,” the antiphilosophical materialism of Büchner, the positivism of Comte, and the beginnings of a modern philosophy of science based on its history and practice, which we also find in Whewell. This is one of the headings under which we should also consider Darwinism and its influence on the conceptions of science held by such figures as Herbert Spencer (1820–1903) and Chauncey Wright (1830–75). Another strikingly common view is some version of vitalism or panpsychism (which could be considered an extension of the approach of Spinoza and Leibniz), in which even “dead” nature is in some sense really living or spiritual. Such views can be found in different forms in Schopenhauer, Lotze, and Gustav Fechner (1801–87).

The very scope of what counts as “nature” begins to expand as geology and biology come to be seen as dealing with distinctive natural forms. In early modern philosophy and science, there was a strong movement to conceive of human beings as part of the natural world as portrayed in mechanistic physics. This was continued in the nineteenth century by Cabanis and the ideologues, and later by proponents of scientific materialism, such as Ernst Haeckel (1834–1919). Reacting against such a picture, German idealism developed a concept of the human being as essentially embodied, as part of a natural world,

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whose essence, however, was organic rather than mechanistic, and ultimately spiritual in nature. The Romantics developed this idea in a subjectivistic-aesthetic direction, seeing nature as material for imaginative transformation. For common sense philosophy, in both its Scottish and French versions, an important issue was how to find a place for freedom and spirituality; this was also important to later philosophers. Lotze is especially significant in this connection. Schopenhauer developed an original and influential way of conceiving of human nature as grounded in the will, a metaphysical reality that is vital, physiological, and irrational. Darwinism, as represented by Thomas Henry Huxley (1825–95) and John Fiske (1842–1901), also had an obvious and controversial impact on the way human beings were seen as part of nature. A contrasting interpretation of the implications of Darwin is found in Helmholtz and Emil du Bois-Reymond (1818–96). Nineteenth-century conceptions of nature are treated by Alexander Rueger in Chapter 6, while the sciences of nature are discussed by Philippe Huneman in Chapter 7.

MIND, LANGUAGE, AND CULTURE

In the wake of Condillac's sensationalism, Humean skepticism, and Kant's transcendental idealism, it was natural that nineteenth-century philosophy should be concerned with replies to skepticism and issues about how the mind knows the world and issues about the dependence of the object of knowledge on its subject or its independence of the subject. The first problem concerned common sense philosophers; the second, the ideologues and François-Pierre-Gonthier Maine de Biran (1766–1824); the third, the German idealists and other post-Kantian philosophers, such as Herbart and Schopenhauer. Questions here are partly in the field of epistemology as traditionally conceived, but what must be emphasized is the way that the whole conception of a "theory of knowledge" was being radically transformed in the nineteenth century.

The nature of self-awareness and selfhood is a principal theme in the early nineteenth century – especially with an emphasis on volition and agency as revelatory of the self. This is seen in Fichte and his idealist followers, in the ideologues and Maine de Biran, and in Reid's conception of the "active powers" of the self. Central to topics about the self is the conception of freedom, which was basic to the whole German idealist tradition. Fichte initiated a radical revolution in the Cartesian conception of the self, and Schopenhauer's conception of will and its later development by Nietzsche called into question the possibility of human freedom and self-knowledge.

Perhaps the most important development in nineteenth-century thought in this area, however, was a development already mentioned: the emergence

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of psychology as a special field of scientific endeavor is treated here by Gary Hatfield in Chapter 8. The science of psychology was often conceived physiologically, as by Ernst Henrich Weber (1795–1878), Georg Elias Müller (1850–1934), Fechner, and Helmholtz. But it was also sometimes related to the older, introspective “empirical psychology,” regarded as a part of philosophy itself, and even as playing a fundamental role in philosophical inquiry. Psychology was a major theme among philosophers, such as Herbart, Beneke, and Lotze; others, such as Dugald Stewart and John Stuart Mill, wrote on psychology as part of their theories of mind.

The nature of language was first focused on as a central philosophical problem in the early nineteenth century, despite anticipations found earlier in Locke, Leibniz, Condillac, Hamann, and Herder. This can be seen in the ideologues – Antoine Louis Claude Destutt de Tracy (1754–1836); Constantin François de Chassebœuf, comte de Volney (1757–1820); Marie-Joseph Degerando (1772–1842); and Cabanis, but also in Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767–1835), Otto Friedrich Gruppe (1804–76), Alexander Johnson (1786–1867), Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832), and John Stuart Mill. In Chapter 9, Michael N. Forster treats the origins of a new approach to language, arising from Hamann’s and Herder’s reflections in the eighteenth century, and later bearing fruit in the work of Humboldt, Schlegel, Mill, Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834), Fritz Mauthner (1849–1923), and Gottlob Frege (1848–1925).

It was one of the nineteenth century’s proudest perceptions of itself that, in contrast to the preceding century, it had begun to understand human nature in a cultural and historical context. Ernst Cassirer has shown that this perception underestimates the extent to which the nineteenth century was merely using what had been given it by the Enlightenment, but the investigation of human nature and the methodology of the human sciences were surely major themes in nineteenth-century thought. Many distinctive conceptions of the human sciences arose and flourished during this time: Hegel’s, Mill’s, and Marx’s, to name just three. The German term *Geisteswissenschaften*, widely used for such studies in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, was coined by F. M. Schiele (for the English term “human sciences”) in his 1849 translation of Mill’s *System of Logic*. The rise of the human sciences in the nineteenth century is treated by Rudolf A. Makkreel in Chapter 10.

One major concern of nineteenth-century thought in the realm of culture was the role of art in human life. It is no coincidence that a natural point at which to begin the period is the year in which Kant’s *Critique of the Power of Judgment* was published. Very soon Friedrich Schiller (1759–1805), Friedrich Hölderlin (1770–1843), Schelling, Schlegel, Schopenhauer, and Hegel all related art in

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various ways to vital questions in metaphysics, morality, religion, and politics. Nineteenth-century aesthetics is discussed in Chapter 11 by Paul Guyer.

ETHICS

Following Kant, an important tradition in early-nineteenth-century ethical thought took rational self-legislation or the actualization of selfhood or individuality to be the basis of morality. The rise of a “positive” conception of freedom is important here. There were contrasting views, however, arising from different conceptions of the self and its freedom and self-actualization. Thinkers differed over the respective roles of reason and feeling in selfhood (the critique of Kant by Schiller and Hegel) and over the importance of individual differences and peculiarities in actualizing the self (the critique of Kant by Schleiermacher and the Romantics). Many of these ideas provide the background for Kierkegaard’s conception of the ethical life and of the problematic self as subject to despair. There is a perceptible influence of this tradition on Mill’s conception of the value of individuality and on the modifications he makes in utilitarian ethical theory. The role of selfhood in nineteenth-century ethics is explored by Bernard Reginster in Chapter 12.

Another main focus of ethics in the nineteenth century was the relation of moral conduct to the collective good of human beings or the health of the social order. This theme is explored by John Skorupski in Chapter 13. This was the chief concern of the utilitarian tradition, from Jeremy Bentham to Henry Sidgwick (1838–1900). But it was also dealt with by a strong “communitarian” strain in German ethical theory (Fichte, Hegel, and the Romantics) and the British idealists Thomas Hill Green (1836–82) and Francis Herbert Bradley (1846–1924). The social Darwinism of Herbert Spencer provides yet another perspective on this theme, along with responses to it by such figures late in the period as Chauncey Wright and John Dewey (1859–1952).

Nineteenth-century philosophers discussed several issues about the epistemic status of moral principles and about how moral truths are known. Some held that morality is founded on an a priori principle, while others held that its basis is empirical. German moral philosophers such as Kant, Fichte, and Jakob Friedrich Fries (1773–1843) defended the claim that conscience is “infallible” but gave it radically different interpretations. In Britain, the debate between utilitarians and intuitionists over the source of moral knowledge provided the background for Sidgwick’s treatment of such topics. Moral intuitionism was also developed by the American transcendentalists. The relation of morality to culture and issues surrounding moral differences and relativity were raised

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during this period as well. Nineteenth-century moral epistemology is treated in Chapter 14, coauthored by J. B. Schneewind and me.

It is platitudinous to say that the nineteenth century was the heyday of the idea of progress. It is also true that for many leading thinkers of the period, the thesis that the human race is in some sense progressing plays an important role in their conception of morality. Hegel's theory of the modern state and Mill's social theory, as well as future-oriented social views of Comte and the utopian socialists, belong here. Among them there are not only different conceptions of what "progress" consists in but also different views about how certain it is that it is taking place and about what moral conclusions should be drawn from it.

Along with the idea of moral progress, however, were radical philosophical attacks on morality itself. I explore several prominent ones in Chapter 15. Clearly the most famous antimoralist was Nietzsche, but he has a number of nineteenth-century predecessors, such as Hegel, Schlegel, Max Stirner (the pen name of Johann Kaspar Schmidt, 1806–56), and Karl Marx (1818–83). Starting from the generally Kantian conception of the individual as bound only by self-legislation, Schlegel and Stirner raise far-reaching questions about the claims of morality over us, while Hegel and Marx consider the social roots of moral thinking and its limitations in relation to historical agency. Nietzsche's critique of morality adds a psychological dimension drawn from Schopenhauer's theory of the will and the irrational processes through which it manipulates our conscious life.

RELIGION

Until the second half of the eighteenth century, the chief rationalistic challenges to religion, as represented by Spinoza, Voltaire, Kant, and such movements as socinianism, deism, and neologism, did not question the fundamental truth or value of religion but remained in an important sense internal to religious thought. Overtly atheistic or agnostic challenges to religion first arose among the French *philosophes* and other Enlightenment thinkers such as Hume. In the nineteenth century, however, these more radical challenges began to take many forms and were supported by a variety of metaphysical, moral, and political motivations – among ideologues, utilitarians, Young Hegelians, positivists, Marxian socialists, scientific materialists, and Darwinian evolutionists. *The Essence of Christianity* by Ludwig Feuerbach (1804–72), Mill's *Three Essays on Religion*, and Nietzsche's radical attack on the whole of Christian culture belong here. Van A. Harvey discusses radical nineteenth-century critiques of religion in Chapter 16.