

INTRODUCTION

A Scientific Intellectual Biography between Biedermeier and Modern Cosmopolitan Thought

The Harvard philosopher and psychologist William James mentioned Hermann Lotze (1817–1881) in a letter to G. S. Hall at Clark University in 1879: “He keeps flying the standard of a *rounded* mental character, the very notion of which would be forgotten if the laboratory blackguards all had their way.” The Yale moral philosopher George Trumbull Ladd, who translated Hermann Lotze’s lectures, remarked in 1885: “Yet the entire philosophical system of their author is distinctively, and almost in a unique manner, founded upon the ethical idea.”¹ Several of my readers have urged a unified statement of Lotze’s philosophy, quite apart from the individual chapters. I shall attempt to highlight themes in his life and thought here; however, I do so from my own postcolonial perspective, emphasizing power, race, and gender. In so doing, I hope to connect with the insights of James and Hall, and to leave intact my earlier cross-disciplinary framework, while adding a male feminist touch.²

Lotze’s numerous learned textbooks in ten disciplines made him a key figure in the upper bourgeois scientific and literary communities of his day. I depict him as a scientific and philosophical iconoclast who supported constitutional monarchy. The three parts of this book tell the story of the origin and reception of his disciplinary reconstructions in

¹ James to Hall, Sept. 10, Oct. 10, 1879, quoted in R. B. Perry, *The Thought and Character of William James* (Boston, 1935), 2, 16–17. G. T. Ladd, “Editor’s Introduction,” R. H. Lotze, *Outlines of Practical Philosophy (OPP)* (Boston, 1885), vi.

² W. R. Woodward, “Beyond the white male canon: Teaching postcolonial history of psychology,” *Psychologie und Geschichte*, 7 (1995), 200–211. Carol Berkenkotter (ed.), “Boundary Rhetorics and the Work of Interdisciplinarity,” *Social Epistemology*, 9 (1995), 89–204. Sandra Harding, “Can Men Be Subjects of Feminist Thought?” in Tom Digby (ed.), *Men Doing Feminism* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 171–196.

Europe, Asia, and North America. Through examining our use of the parts of speech in language – “abstracting the content” of nouns, verbs, and adjectives – he probed in directions that led directly to analytic philosophy and phenomenology. By his reworking of concepts, he contributed to professional disciplines. When writing for the public, he inspired an ethical life in relation to the community and the state. Here, his understanding of values is key.

I want to urge that Lotze be rehabilitated into the canons of medical, philosophical, and psychological thought, where he held a preeminent place in the nineteenth century. He earned this position as “the general of the . . . troops” (James’s phrase) by an eclectic method in the best sense of the word. He synthesized and corrected his post-Enlightenment predecessors’ insights, using their “modernist” approaches. I here follow Robert Pippen’s evocative overview, *Modernism as a Philosophical Problem*, from 1991. Modernism means rejecting metaphysics and observation in favor of a critical approach to knowledge that seeks the conditions of its possibility in each domain, or discipline. Lotze systematically corrected aporiae, dichotomies, or contradictions, beginning with simple concepts and proceeding to the highest ones – for example, “metabolism,” “vital force,” “pleasure,” “states of affairs,” “values,” and “validity” that came to underpin the modern disciplines as they differentiated into professions during the nineteenth century. Thus, in German philosophy, Fichte, Schelling, Herbart, Fries, and Hegel extended the so-called modernist canon from Enlightenment and Romantic periods, while in medicine, Johannes Müller and Johann Lucas Schönlein come to mind for the comparative anatomy and therapy schools as they challenged Romantic medicine and the natural history school. In experimental psychology, one thinks of G. T. Fechner and E. H. Weber as the founding generation in the mid-nineteenth century. This scientific-philosophical biography goes into detail regarding what Lotze borrowed and how he reshaped it.

PART I. YOUTH IN BIEDERMEIER

Lotze’s youth belongs to the Biedermeier, a literary designation for a period of “home and hearth” values that stretched from the Napoleonic Wars ending in 1815 to the failed revolution of 1848. His sociopolitical views have roots in his family’s past. His mother was the daughter of a school principal. His father, a medical surgeon who took on foreign assignments in Russia, was descended from government officials in

Sorbia, region of white Slavic ethnic minorities.³ This wider heritage underlay the son's Saxon loyalty to Greater Germany rather than Prussian Lesser Germany. After his father's death when Hermann was seven, he and his mother lived in the home of his sister and brother-in-law, an attorney. In adolescence, Lotze's literary friends experienced the winds of the 1830 revolution in France as a cynical joke, for liberal constitutional progress there contrasted the Restoration atmosphere pervading Saxony. Saxony was caught between Metternich's Austrian conservatism and Prussia's growing military and economic power.⁴ Political views grow early in life, and even Lotze's teenage letters reveal sarcasm toward oppressive police and the dream of emigrating to North America, along with resolve to make a difference.

Lotze would later write, with eyes open to oppression and injustice in history, that "the assumption that black people (*der schwarzen Race* [sic, French term]) have less capacity of development is scarcely worthy of refutation . . . white people (*die weiße Race*) have conquered the world, not by their superior morality, but by the obstinate perseverance with which they attacked all those who would only oppose passionate ebullitions and unconnected sacrifices to their merciless penetration and the consistency of their well-laid plans. The Negro's temperament gives no promise of any such results."⁵ This fluid translation, by the way, comes from Miss E. E. Constance Jones, an English philosopher of repute who had spent her early teenage years, from 1861 to 1864, near Cape Town, South Africa.

In 1834, Lotze entered the University of Leipzig, where the "Friday club" of married Saxon professors provided role models and a home away from home for a decade. Gustav Theodor Fechner inspired Lotze to set to work in the medical sciences, to place them on a firm

³ Richard Falckenberg, *Hermann Lotze. I. Das Leben durch die Briefe* (Stuttgart, 1901). Max Wentscher, *Hermann Lotze, I. Lotzes Leben und Werke* (Heidelberg, 1913). Reinhardt Pester, *Hermann Lotze. Wege seines Denkens und Forschens. Ein Kapitel deutscher Philosophie- und Wissenschaftsgeschichte im 19. Jahrhundert* (Würzburg, 1997), 13.

⁴ See Ch. 1 below and letters of Lotze to Kämmel, 1833–1834, LK. In Reinhardt Pester (ed.), *Hermann Lotze, Briefe und Dokumente* (hereafter HLBD) (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2003).

⁵ Lotze, *Microcosmus (Mic)*, 2, 235; Lotze, *Mikrokosmus (Mik)*, 3, 114. Conversation with Rodney Brown, July 5, 2003. Mary Ellen Waithe & Samantha Cicero, "E. E. Constance Jones (1848–1922)," in M. E. Waithe (ed.), *A History of Women Philosophers* (Dordrecht, 1995), 25–50. Jones was recommended to H. Bosanquet as translator by her teachers, Henry Sidgwick and James Ward.

foundation of hypotheses grounded in the research of the day. Lotze meticulously weighed alternative explanations of vital phenomena, and then extended this scientific mode to other disciplines. By 1843, he had published books on poetry, pathology and therapy, metaphysics, and logic and made his mark as a scholar. Lotze frequently visited the Fechner flat, where he was surrounded by intelligent women.⁶ Clara Volkmann Fechner mothered him. She was the daughter of a retired Leipzig judge (*Stadtrichter*), Johann Wilhelm Volkmann, and the sister of the physiologist Albert Volkmann and the attorney Julius Volkmann, both friends of Fechner. Fechner, her physicist husband, had such poor eyesight after the Christmas of 1839 that friends frequently dropped by to read to him. “Lotze came the most often, partly in the afternoons, partly evenings, to read aloud and merely to converse.” The Fechners were childless, but they took in Fechner’s nephew Johannes Emil Kuntze, a law student, the first son of Fechner’s widowed sister Emilie. Another of Fechner’s sisters, Clementine, married the piano dealer Friedrich Wieck in Leipzig, who had a daughter, Clara. Against the father’s wishes, piano prodigy Clara Wieck wedded the composer Robert Schumann in 1844, whereupon they moved to Dresden.⁷

Since Lotze spent so much time at Fechner’s, their social circle was well known to him. Alfred Volkmann’s family visited Fechner’s almost daily, as did Grandfather Volkmann. Volkmann’s wife, Adele Härtel Volkmann, was sister of the music collector and attorney Hermann Härtel. Härtel, in turn, was married to Luisa Baumeister Härtel, daughter of the Hamburg merchant. The Härtel’s home formed a center of Leipzig cultural life. As an attorney, Härtel had a social conscience: “At the time we called him the advocate for the poor, probably a reference to Jean Paul’s advocate for the poor Siebenkäs, and because they said of him that he would rather defend cases for the poor than for the rich.” Härtel also owned the Fechner’s apartment, adjacent to his lavish house and gardens that he sold for a tidy sum in 1837; he was a

⁶ Gustav Theodor Fechner, *Tagebücher 1828 bis 1879*, eds. Anneros Meischner-Metge & Irene Altmann (Leipzig: Verlag der Sächsischen Akademie der Wissenschaften; Stuttgart: F. Steiner, 2004), Oct. 13, 1842, 1, 128 [277], and Oct. 16, 138 [312]. Cf. Hans-Jürgen Arendt, *Gustav Theodor Fechner: Ein deutscher Naturwissenschaftler und Philosoph im 19. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt, 1999), 84, 87–89, 67, on the Wiecks.

⁷ The husbands of two of Fechner’s three sisters died early, leaving children. Fechner admired his sisters for their success at childrearing as single mothers. Lotze took all this to heart, having been raised by a single mother himself.

collector of painting, sculpture, and music.⁸ Hosts for the Friday circle included Fechner, Härtel, and Klee, since Lotze, Haupt, and the English teacher Monicke were bachelors and the Volkmanns had seven children. Another participant was the high school teacher Julius Ludwig Klee, whose wife, Therese Klee, was the sister of Dr. Christian Albert Weinlig, a writer in chemistry.

Another hometown friend, Moritz Haupt, five years older than Lotze, became associate professor of classical and Old German studies. In 1842 he married Luise Hermann, the daughter of the philologist J. G. Hermann and a childhood friend of Clara Fechner. Haupt's father was known as a liberal mayor in Zittau, and Hermann himself took an active role in the 1848 revolution, supporting the liberal wing of the Leipzig German Association (Deutscher Verein) and democratic government, in company with Hermann Härtel. The German Association, which Fechner, E. H. Weber, C. H. Weiße, and Karl Reimer also joined, had 2,300 members, making it the largest of forty-two such associations in Germany. It stood for freedom of the press and of association, the right of men to vote, the formation of a parliament, and a national election. However, a split occurred in April to July of 1848, when Weiße called democracy "the despotism of the people" and Fechner explained that the people do not actually know "what is in their best interest." These two thought democracy went too far; however, the majority led by historian Karl Biederman, joined by Haupt and Härtel, believed in "the sovereignty of the people." Lotze, I will argue, sided with his more conservative mentors, Fechner and Weiße. Fechner received a state pension after giving up his right to teach due to the eye problems. Weiße lived in Stötteritz with his wife, Luisa Richter Weiße, and their two young children outside the city on an estate inherited from his father. Indeed, he resisted the demands of the farmers in a demonstration in April 1848.⁹

PART II. EMERGING BOURGEOIS LIBERALISM

Lotze's portrait as a young man reveals a short, slight, and handsomely stern man (see Figure 0.1). After a precocious but well-deserved call to a Göttingen professorship in 1844, the diminutive twenty-seven-year-old Lotze married Ferdinande Hoffmann, a petite village pastor's daughter.

⁸ Fechner, *Tagebücher*, Oct. 16, 1842, 140 [319]. Arendt, *Fechner*, 69. Karl Hase, *Ideale und Irrtümer. Jugenderinnerungen* (Leipzig, 1890), 199, quoted in Arendt, *Fechner*, 47. Cf. G. Frank, "Hase, Karl August von," *ADB*, 50 (1905), S. 36–47. <http://www.deutsche-biographie.de>.

⁹ Fechner, *Tagebücher*, Oct. 16, 1842, 1, 139 [315, 317]. Cf. Arendt, *Fechner*, 111–115.

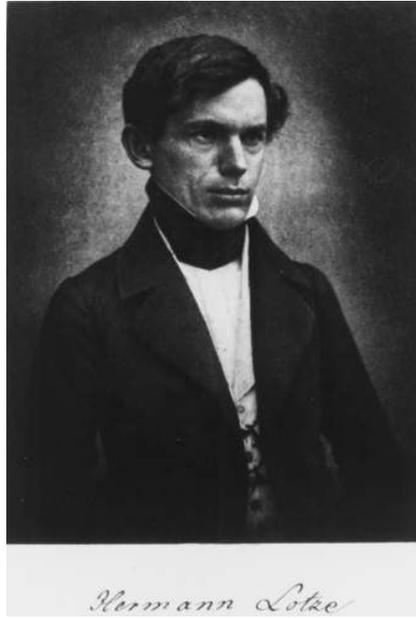


FIGURE 0.1. Lotze at age twenty-six in Leipzig. Niedersächsische Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Göttingen.

She was the object of humor for her colloquialisms when she accompanied Lotze to Leipzig after their hometown wedding on October 16, 1844. Wrote Fechner: “Lotze had polished her up nicely and he himself radiated a glowing red vest, sticking out wildly against the black suit, which amused Härtel especially. Lotze always wants to have something outside the ordinary.”¹⁰ As we have seen, Lotze was tiny of stature, and he did indeed manifest an extraordinary drive to stand out – especially through publishing bold books.

Ferdinande Lotze gave birth to four sons by the mid-1850s and assumed the household work along traditional lines, with a relative to help with childcare (see the young family with three of the four children in Figure 0.2).¹¹ Although a pastor’s daughter, a single postcard to family friend Hirzel reveals the handwriting of a person with only an elementary

¹⁰ Fechner, *Tagebücher*, 1844, Oct. 16, 1844, 292 [114]. Julius Baumann, “Zum Gedächtnis Hermann Lotze’s,” *Philosophische Monatshefte*, 17 (1889), 613–623. Cf. Julius Baumann, “Persönliche Erinnerungen an Hermann Lotze,” *Annalen der Naturphilosophie*, 8 (1909), 175–182.

¹¹ Lotze to Hirzel, *LH*, letters convey information about Lotze’s many residential moves. Walter Nissen, *Göttinger Gedenktafel* (Göttingen, 1982), 102–103, lists his home



FIGURE 0.2. The Lotze family, ca. mid-1850s. Niedersächsische Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Göttingen.

school education. Lotze was a congenial correspondent, and he entertained students on Tuesday evenings. Students reported that Frau Professor Lotze managed the home, sometimes warning them not to seek Lotze out on his days with headaches, which he treated with heavy smoking despite a delicate constitution and recurrent angina. She said that she learned early in marriage not to take his silences personally; after rising at dawn to write in a cold attic dormer, where breakfast arrived through a pulley contraption, he was frequently tired and taciturn.

A stable family life, and equanimity in his family relations, made possible this dedication to his philosophical scholarship and to teaching. While Ferdinande (Figure 0.3) chiefly raised their three sons (one other died in childhood), he was not inattentive. He included good-humored news of the boys in the letters to his best friend and publisher, Salomon Hirzel, the godfather of the firstborn (see Figure 0.4). A gentle if remote father, he was proud of these sons, two of whom became physicians like their paternal grandfather, while another became an attorney like his

addresses; Carl Stumpf, “Zum Gedächtnis Lotze,” *Kant-Studien*, 22 (1918), 3, reports about Tuesday evening invitations.



FIGURE 0.3. Portrait of Ferdinande Hoffmann Lotze. Gift of Werner Kuhn, Soest, Germany, 1986.

uncle. None followed their maternal grandfather or their father Lotze into education, and two served in the Franco-Prussian War.

Ferdinande helped care for Lotze's widowed mother in the 1840s, since her pension was inadequate. After his sister died, her son came to study in Göttingen, and he roomed with them. Lotze remained cordial with but distant from his brother Robert, an apothecary. Lotze's repeated negotiation of life insurance benefits from his university reflects a devotion to family and a prudence inspired by his own painful experience of loss.¹² A shy family man, he seldom ventured out and preferred to find relief in his garden, where he loved to trim the fruit trees. Though infrequently seen at social functions, he and Ferdinande did host his favorite students on Tuesday evenings at a family dinner. Ferdinande died in 1875, and a niece took over his housekeeping. Depressed, he accepted a call to Berlin in 1880, where in 1881 he died at age sixty-four of pneumonia contracted

¹² His mother's request for the pension is found in *BH*. Requests for insurance benefits in letters to Royal Ministry of Education (*das Kuratorium*), *UAG*. See also the personal files in *DSA* regarding his call to Leipzig: Lotze to Theodor Ruete, July 20, 1859 [Göttingen], *HLBD*, 347–348, requests widow's insurance of 300 *Reichsthäler* and an additional total sum of 500 thalers payable to his children until their twentieth year. Minister Johann Paul Freiherr von Falckenstein to Lotze, July 26, 1859, offered the Leipzig position with insurance of 50 thalers per year per child.

on the train from Göttingen. In any case, the story told here deals less with the family than with Lotze's ideas.

One historian terms the 1850s the *Stillhaltezeit*, the time to keep quiet, following the failed liberal revolution of 1848. Yet even as a scholar, Lotze's words were geared toward practical action. In medicine, he emphasized the need for practical maxims for the physician to follow. In physiology, he described middle-range mechanisms of instinct and drive. In psychology, he elucidated functions of perception, cognition, and will in terms of bodily movements and intentions, such as responsibility in crime or beneficence. In aesthetics, he coined the concept of empathy for those emotions that we experience as we feel our way into a work of art. Lotze shaped the public mind, not just preserving but transforming values of an open society and setting standards for bourgeois sensibility.¹³

During 1856 to 1864, with five textbooks in medicine and philosophy behind him, he composed *The Microcosm – An Essay concerning Humans and Their Relation to the World*, which met with tremendous public reception through Russian, Italian, English, and French editions from 1856 to the early 1900s. His reconciliation of science and world religions provided a theistic world view. Lotze was a nonpracticing Lutheran whose closest lifelong friend remained his publisher, Salomon Hirzel, a Swiss Jew (Figure 0.4). Lotze's religious philosophy included non-Christian faiths.¹⁴

¹³ Theodor Schieder, *Vom Deutschen Bund zum Deutschen Reich*, 6th ed. (Munich, 1981 [1975]), 127. See Erich Becher, "Hermann Lotze und seine Psychologie," *Die Naturwissenschaften*, 5 (1917), 325–334 on the details of his psychophysiological views in relation to the concept of mind.

¹⁴ On his Lotze's support of Jewish colleagues, see R. Focke to Lotze, no date [Berlin], *BH, HLBD*, 700: "I have so far not gone to [Adolph] Lasson's [1832–1917] because I think he is too upset about the annoying events that occurred in his lectures because of the Jewish question. This unfortunate situation stands at the head of general interest here." On Lotze's public reception, see Konstantinos Porphyropsychos to Lotze, Feb. 1/13, 1869 (Athens), *BH, HLBD*, 507–509: a former student requests his lectures on aesthetics and practical philosophy for high school lectures. On Lotze's support of Catholic colleagues, see Franz Susemihl to Lotze, May 31, 1873 (Greifswald), *BH, HLBD*, 586–587: he asks Lotze's opinion about two candidates, both Catholic, Carl Stumpf and Wilhelm Schuppe, and writes, "I would resist with all my might the recommendation of a Catholic who has not openly distanced himself from Ultramontanism." Ultramontanism emphasizes the authority of Rome over all other religious leadership. Franz Karl Lott [1807–1874] to Lotze, Aug. 22, 1872, *BH, HLBD*, 472–473, agrees to advance the renegade Catholic Franz Brentano's candidacy as his successor in Vienna, requesting "a letter to you, dear dean, that he (F. Br.) recognizes no authority above scientific research. Anything else seems completely superfluous, even inadvisable. Minister Stremayr is no secret supporter, but only an anxious opponent of Ultramontanism." Brentano to Lotze, Jan. 18, 1874 (Aschaffenburg), *BH, HLBD*, 595–596, thanks Lotze for his recommendation.

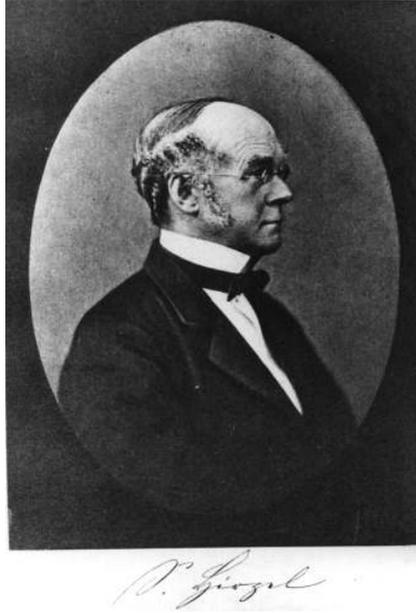


FIGURE 0.4. Salomon Hirzel, publisher and friend in Leipzig. University Library of Leipzig (Shelfmark: Vit. 331-lt).

Later on, he would play an active role in recommending liberal Catholics Franz Brentano, Wilhelm Schuppe, and Carl Stumpf for positions at a time when their careers were in jeopardy of official censure. His record in the support of women, for its time, was exemplary. G. S. Hall wrote: “there are now few thinking men over forty-five in Germany who are not more or less indebted to Lotze for mental poise, intellectual tastes, or elements of a general culture which enable them to look beyond their own individual department of activity.”¹⁵

In private life, his six moves within Göttingen belie his seemingly settled life there. His repeated search for an abode with a study in a high dormer symbolizes his desire to view the macrocosm from the microcosm. More prosaically, he sought to write in air above the urban stench in an era

¹⁵ G. Stanley Hall, *Founders of Modern Psychology* (New York, 1912), 71. On Lotze’s support of a woman for a doctorate, see Karl Weierstrass to Hermann Lotze, Berlin, June 27, 1874, Aug. 14, 1874; Sophie von Kovalevsky to Lotze, Berlin, Aug. 14, 1874, *BH*, *HLBD*, 601–602. See Edna E. Kramer, “Kovalevsky, Sonya,” *Dictionary of Scientific Biography*, 7, 477–480. Ann Hibner Koblitz, “Science, Women, and the Russian Intelligentsia. The Generation of the 1860s,” *Isis*, 79 (1988), 208–226, rpt. in *History of Women in the Sciences* (1999).