

Reading Nicolai Hartmann. Ideas and Dialogues







Introduction to the Issue

Alicja Pietras, Frédéric Tremblay, Leszek Kopciuch

This special issue is devoted to the philosophical legacy of Nicolai Hartmann (1882–1950), one of the most compelling and systematic thinkers of twentieth-century philosophy. In recent decades, Hartmann’s work has attracted renewed scholarly interest, particularly in light of contemporary debates in ontology, philosophical anthropology, epistemology and the theory of values. Researchers have begun to rediscover the depth and relevance of his layered ontology, his concept of the real, and his critical engagement with both Neo-Kantianism and German idealism. They are also starting to explore the Russian context of Hartmann’s thought.

Although Hartmann’s influence has long been overshadowed by more dominant philosophical movements of the twentieth century, his thought offers an intellectually rigorous alternative to both existential phenomenology and analytic metaphysics. Recent studies emphasize his unique position as a thinker who bridges tradition and innovation—someone who maintained a deep respect for classical metaphysics while proposing a new, dynamic understanding of being and knowledge.

This issue brings together contributions that reflect the diversity and vitality of current Hartmann scholarship. Rather than offering a unified interpretation, it aims to open a dialogue—between Hartmann and his contemporaries, between his ideas and current philosophical concerns, and among the scholars who continue to explore the significance of his work. Our hope is that this issue will further stimulate critical engagement with Hartmann’s philosophy and contribute to a broader recognition of his place within the canon of twentieth-century thought. Some of the articles in this issue have been selected from the papers presented at the Nicolai Hartmann

✉ Alicja Pietras, University of Silesia in Katowice, Poland  alicja.pietras@us.edu.pl  0000-0002-5562-1221
✉ Frédéric Tremblay, University of Moncton, Canada  frederic.tremblay@umoncton.ca  0000-0003-3977-5201
✉ Leszek Kopciuch, Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, Poland  leszek.kopciuch@mail.umcs.pl
 0000-0001-9128-697X

International Conferences in Katowice, Poland (13–14 June 2019). Others—namely, those of M. Gargani, J. Fischer and L.F. Mendoza Martínez—are invited contributions.

In *Nicolai Hartmann and Vasily Sesemann: The Ontological Turn and the Dialectics of Being*, Alicja Pietras examines the parallel ontological turns of Hartmann and his friend Vasily Sesemann, where these are closely tied to their understanding and interpretation of Hegel's dialectics. She argues that Hartmann and Sesemann, who inspired each other, not only called for an ontological turn but also carried it out. According to Pietras, the essence of their ontological turn lies in an attempt to define being as a dialectical process.

Andrzej J. Noras (1960–2020) and Alicja Pietras, in *Nicolai Hartmann and the Marburg School*, explore the Marburg Neo-Kantian context of Hartmann's thought in order to shed new light on it. The novelty of their interpretation lies in the claim that a deeper understanding of the relationships and developments internal to the philosophical theories of the Marburg Neo-Kantian School (especially Hermann Cohen and Paul Natorp) reveals that Hartmann's project of a new ontology should not be seen as a complete departure from Neo-Kantianism, but rather as a critical continuation and reformulation of its ideas.

In his paper *The New Ontology and Modern Philosophical Anthropology: On the Elective Affinity between Two Twentieth-Century Theories*, Joachim Fischer discusses what he calls, using a Goethean expression, the "elective affinity" between Hartmann's ontology and the anthropological theories of Max Scheler, Helmuth Plessner and Arnold Gehlen. He argues that the relationship between Hartmann's ontology and philosophical anthropology is twofold. On the one hand, Hartmann's project of a new ontology was a condition for the possibility of modern philosophical anthropology; on the other hand, the emergence of philosophical anthropology played a crucial role in shaping the content of Hartmann's new ontology. Fischer refers to this interplay as the "Cologne constellation" of twentieth-century German philosophy.

Luis Fernando Mendoza Martínez, in his paper *Hartmann versus Heidegger on the Question of the Gnoseological Relation*, explores the concept of the gnoseological relation in Hartmann and Heidegger. The author defends Hartmann's ontology of cognition against Heidegger's criticism. Through a careful analysis of Hartmann's theses, he demonstrates that—contrary to Heidegger's claim—Hartmann neither conceives of the subject as an enclosed entity, nor grants ontological primacy to knowledge over experience in our access to the world.

The Hegelian theme in Hartmann's thought, touched upon by Pietras, is also developed by Matteo Gargani. His paper *Nicolai Hartmann's Interpretation of Hegel's Dialectics* offers a concise presentation of Hartmann's reading of Hegel in its historical context and outlines its principal historiographical aims. Gargani argues that Hartmann's interpretation of Hegel's dialectic as a "real dialectic" is closely connected to his engagement with the relationship between Aristotle and Hegel.

In *Nicolai Hartmann's Concept of Critique*, Bianka Boros explores the elements of Hartmann's philosophy that are most closely related to the concept of critique, including the tension between problem-thinking and system-thinking, the notion of the irrational, and critical approaches to ontology, epistemology and metaphysics. She also briefly presents the Hungarian philosopher László Tengelyi's criticism of Hartmann's concept of infinity and offers her own response to it.

The paper *Echoes of Nicolai Hartmann in Czech Philosophy*, written by Miloš Kratochvíl, addresses the reception of Hartmann's philosophy in Czechoslovakia—more specifically, in the thought of four Czech philosophers: Ferdinand Pelikán, Vladimír Hoppe, Jan Blahoslav Kozák, and Vladimír Kubeš. He shows that Hartmann's philosophy was well known among several Czech thinkers during the first half of the twentieth century.

In *Nicolai Hartmann's Conception of Freewill in the Context of the Debate Between Compatibilism and Incompatibilism*, Leszek Kopciuch presents a detailed and systematic analysis of Hartmann's concept of free will in the context of the debate between compatibilism and incompatibilism. He identifies internal tensions within Hartmann's ontology of freedom and argues that Hartmann's conception ultimately leads to the acceptance of indeterministic elements in the structure of reality.

This special issue also includes a translation, by Alicja Pietras and Predrag Cicovacki, of Hartmann's review of Vasily Sesemann's paper "*Die logischen Gesetze und das Sein*" ("Logical Laws and Being"), originally published in *Kant-Studien* in 1933 and republished in Hartmann's *Kleinere Schriften III* in 1958. The translation directly complements Pietras's paper on Hartmann, Sesemann and their dialectics of being.

All the papers contained in this issue were initially proofread by Frédéric Tremblay. For this service, the authors and the other editors would like to thank him most sincerely. We would also like to thank Leszek Kopciuch, Jacek Surzyn and Fernando Mendoza Martínez for their support at various stages of preparing this special issue. Special thanks are also due to Carl Humphries for proofreading the translation of Hartmann's text included

in the issue. And last but not least, we would like to thank all the reviewers for their valuable comments, which helped to improve each of the papers.

Alicja Pietras
Frédéric Tremblay
Leszek Kopciuch
Guest Editors