

# Nicolai Hartmann and the Marburg School

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**ABSTRACT** The paper deals with the Marburg Neo-Kantian's context of Nicolai Hartmann's (1882–1950) thought to show it under new light. The novelty of his view consists in claiming that a deeper knowledge of relationships and developments within the philosophical theories of the Marburg Neo-Kantian school (Hermann Cohen and Paul Natorp) leads to the recognition that Hartmann's project of a new ontology should no longer be seen as a complete departure from Marburg Neo-Kantianism but rather as a project born out of a criticism and reformulation of their thoughts.

**KEYWORDS** consciousness; Hartmann, Nicolai; Marburg School; metaphysics of cognition; Natorp, Paul; neo-Kantianism; ontology; phenomenology

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Ten years after Nicolai Hartmann's death, Herbert Spiegelberg published a book devoted to the phenomenological movement. Spiegelberg admits that counting Hartmann among the members of the phenomenological movement is at the very least questionable:

The right and the need to include Nicolai Hartmann in an account of the Phenomenological Movement are by no means beyond dispute. His inclusion will have to be justified by his actual significance for the development of the Movement, regardless of his own ambivalent relationship to it. (Spiegelberg 1960, 358)

Hartmann is undoubtedly difficult to classify. This difficulty has to do with the fact that Hartmann is also a Neo-Kantian, at least genealogically-speaking, and that his philosophy should be considered in light of Marburg Neo-Kantianism, amongst others. Martin Morgenstern confirms this difficulty. Writing about Hartmann's relationships with other twentieth-century metaphysicians, including his relationship with Max Scheler in the context of axiology and critical ontology, he notes: "this classification based on the history of philosophy does not yet provide an adequate picture of Hartmann's work."<sup>1</sup>

As a matter of fact, Hartmann's philosophical path did not begin in Marburg, but rather in St. Petersburg, or even in Dorpat. Hartmann studied medicine there, moving to St. Petersburg two years later. In St. Petersburg he met Nikolai Lossky and Alexander Vvedensky. This meeting can be seen as crucial for the philosophical development of Hartmann's thought. It is not without reason that Wolfgang Harich (1923–1995) associates the philosophy of Hartmann with that of the Russian thinkers. Harich writes:

Further characteristic of his background in the Russian cultural sphere are the early familiarity with Christian Wolff's ontology, which is by no means dependent on Hans Pichler, and the adoption of a "science of logic" that is independent of the German Hegelian Renaissance and contradicts its tendencies.<sup>2</sup>

1. "Diese philosophiegeschichtliche Einordnung liefert . . . noch kein adäquates Bild von Hartmanns Werk" (Morgenstern 1997, 7).

2. "Charakteristisch für seine Herkunft aus dem russischen Kulturkreis sind bei ihm ferner die frühe, keineswegs auf Hans Pichler angewiesene Vertrautheit mit der Wolffschen Ontologie und eine von der deutschen Hegelrenaissance unabhängige, ihren Tendenzen widerstrebende Rezeption der Wissenschaft der 'Logik'" (Harich 2000, 5). One must not forget that the revival of ontology in the early 1920s was generally associated with Pichler.

Hartmann's scientific path was closely connected to Marburg Neo-Kantianism, even though it later deviated from this movement. Although the scope of this deviation is the subject of much debate, it is nevertheless a fact. It is therefore advisable to examine Hartmann's scientific path to find out the sources of his inspiration and to thereby better understand his critical ontology. In this context, Hans-Johann Glock characterizes Hartmann's metaphysics as an "awakening of metaphysics." (Glock 2002, 98)<sup>3</sup>

Hartmann arrived in Marburg in the spring of 1905, year of the first Russian revolution. Władysław Tatarkiewicz, a Polish student in Marburg and a friend of Hartmann, writes about the unity of thought that was prevailing in Marburg at that time and about how this unity was shaped by the philosophies of Cohen and Natorp (Tatarkiewicz 2005, 277). It can also be assumed that problems with the unity of thought between the creator of the Marburg School, Hermann Cohen, and its co-creator, Paul Natorp, existed long before the appearance of Hartmann and Tatarkiewicz in Marburg. It is most often recognized that the turning point in the work of Hermann Cohen was his book *Logik der reinen Erkenntnis*, published in 1902 as the first part of a system of philosophy. However, the situation seems to be more complex. First, it seems unlikely that *Logik der reinen Erkenntnis* marks the moment of Cohen's departure from Kant. It rather seems like Cohen departed gradually from the *Critique of Pure Reason* and that this departure is linked to his recognition of Plato's special place in the Marburgian doctrine. Second, in connection with Plato's presence in the Marburgian doctrine, Karl-Heinz Lembeck claims that Natorp was never just an epigone of Cohen.<sup>4</sup> This entails that the problem of the relationship between Natorp and Cohen is, in fact, more complex than is often believed. Third, it must be admitted that Natorp's departure from Cohen was traditionally associated with the publication of the former's famous work in the field of psychology, *Allgemeine Psychologie nach kritischer Methode*, in 1912 (Natorp 1965). But a farther-reaching deviation occurred in 1917. This situation is well explained by Lembeck, who references Helmut Holzhey's book *Cohen und Natorp*. Lembeck names four reasons why Holzhey ends his comparative study of Cohen and Natorp at the year 1912: (1) there is no question that the late Natorp (especially since 1917) goes far beyond Cohen;

3. Glock cites Herbert Schnädelbach, who writes: "Nach der Jahrhundertwende nun kommt die Rede von der 'Wiedergeburt,' dem 'Wiedererwachen,' der 'Auferstehung' der Metaphysik auf" (Schnädelbach 2013, 232).

4. "In Wahrheit aber ist Natorp nie ein schlichter Epigone Cohens gewesen" (Lembeck 1994, 172).

(2) the doctrine of the Marburg School becomes significant, especially in the works of Cohen, Natorp, and Ernst Cassirer, from 1902 to 1912; (3) Cohen and Natorp's cooperation in Marburg ended in 1912 with Cohen retiring and moving to Berlin; (4) in 1912, Natorp published *Allgemeine Psychologie nach kritischer Methode*, considered a turning point of his philosophical path.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, it is clear that the problematic nature of the unity of the Marburg School also affects the perception of Hartmann's position within the framework of the largest Neo-Kantian school.

2. THE QUESTION OF THE BEGINNING OF HARTMANN'S PHILOSOPHICAL PATH  
Joseph Klein (1896–1976), who had been Hartmann's student and who was appointed to the University of Göttingen Georg-August in 1949, gave a speech on November 25th, 1950, in the auditorium of the university to commemorate the late Nicolai Hartmann, who had died on October 9th. This speech was later published in a commemorative book, which had previously been planned as a jubilee book on the occasion of Hartmann's seventieth birthday (Heimsoeth and Heiß 1952). Klein made Hartmann's attitude toward the Marburg School the subject of his analyses. It is therefore worth pointing out some of the key elements of Hartmann's doctrine that Klein discussed. Klein writes: "It was symptomatic of the beginning of our century when a scientifically-interested philosophical mind like Nicolai Hartmann looked at Marburg and finally, in 1905, at the age of twenty-three, found himself at the center of methodical idealism."<sup>6</sup> However, Klein's assessment of the situation is not entirely correct, because it does not take into account the four-year period after Hartmann had graduated from high school. Hartmann began medical studies in Dorpat (Tartu) in 1901.<sup>7</sup> After two years of study in Dorpat, Hartmann returned to St. Petersburg. Indeed, Klein

5. "Helmuth Holzhey hat diesen Sachverhalt in seiner bemerkenswert eindringlichen Studie *Cohen und Natorp* ausführlich belegt. Sein Vergleich beschränkt sich aus verschiedenen Gründen auf die Zeit bis 1912. Denn erstens ist es keine Frage, daß der späte Natorp (deutlich ab 1917) weit über Cohen hinausgeht; zweitens wird die Marburger Schuldoktrin vornehmlich in den Werken Cohens, Natorps und Cassirers aus der Zeit von 1902 bis 1912 signifikant; drittens ist das gemeinsame Wirken von Natorp und Cohen in Marburg 1912 beendet, weil letzterer nach seiner Emeritierung nach Berlin zurückkehrt; und viertens schließlich erscheint im selben Jahr Natorps *Allgemeine Psychologie nach kritischer Methode* (AP), die vielfach bereits als Wendung in seiner philosophischen Konzeption betrachtet wurde" (Lembeck 1994, 172).

6. "Es war auch noch für die Jahre zu Beginn unseres Jahrhunderts symptomatisch, wenn ein wissenschaftlich so interessierter philosophischer Kopf wie Nicolai Hartmann nach Marburg schaute und schließlich im Jahre 1905 im Alter von 23 Jahren den Weg zum Zentrum des methodischen Idealismus nahm" (Klein 1952, 106).

7. One outstanding philosopher to have taught at the University of Dorpat is Gustav Teichmüller (1832–1888), who was primarily known as the founder of the conception of the history

does not refer to Hartmann's connection to Russian philosophy as Harich points out, citing from Hartmann's 1912 letter to Heinz Heimsoeth. Hartmann's words in this letter are not only characteristic of the beginning of his thought, but express his attitude toward the Marburg School in general. Herein, Hartmann writes: "Marburgian 'pure thinking' has long been foreign to me. Ten years ago, my first philosophy teachers in Russia taught me that there is 'intuitive and discursive thinking.'"<sup>8</sup>

There thus seems to be two different interpretations of Hartmann's philosophical development. The first is presented by Klein, who ignores or disregards the beginnings of his intellectual development in Dorpat and St. Petersburg. The second interpretation is proposed by Harich, amongst others, who takes into account the Russian beginning of Hartmann's philosophical path, thereby suggesting an explanation for Hartmann's later deviation from the doctrine of the Marburg School. Morgenstern rather connects this future deviation with phenomenology, writing that the influence of phenomenology was decisive for Hartmann's break with Neo-Kantianism.<sup>9</sup> Of course, one should ask whether this is justified, since Hartmann himself refers to his Russian teachers and since, at the same time, one should pay attention to the philosophy of Paul Natorp and to Hartmann's attitude toward it. Whereas Klein overlooks the Russian roots of Hartmann's philosophy, Harich claims that Hartmann comes to Marburg aware of the need to distinguish between intuitive and discursive thinking. Whereas Hartmann admits of a form of intuitive thinking in his ethics, the Marburgians did not accept such a mode of intuition.

### 3. DID HARTMANN DEPART FROM NEO-KANTIANISM?

However, there are also many reasons to claim that the philosophy of the Marburg Neo-Kantians strongly influenced Hartmann's thought. First of all, Klein emphasizes the importance of the scientific philosophy of the Marburg School for the young Hartmann: The Marburgian philosophy started as a critique of science, and philosophy as a science continued to be a predominant theme in Hartmann's intellectual life. We can already observe the beginning of these influences in the book that constitutes an extended

of philosophy as a history of concepts (Teichmüller 1874; 1876–1879). However, Teichmüller was already dead when Hartmann studied there.

8. "Das Marburger 'reine Denken' liegt mir seit lange etwas fern. Mir ist vor zehn Jahren von meinen ersten philosophischen Lehrern in Rußland eingepaukt worden, daß es 'intuitives und diskursives Denken' giebt" (Hartmann and Heimsoeth 1978, 127).

9. "Entscheidend für seine Loslösung vom Neukantianismus war der Einfluß der Phänomenologie" (Morgenstern 1997, 12).

version of his doctoral dissertation, namely, *Platos Logik des Seins*, published in 1909. Klein writes that “Hartmann’s book on Plato is a *hymnus demonstrativus* to Cohen’s philosophy of the origin. In this work, methodological idealism is presented in a manner in which not even the heads of the school had succeeded.”<sup>10</sup> Klein speaks of the complexity of the entire situation a few lines later, writing that this first work of the talented twenty-seven-year-old already contains statements that shed light on the position of his later works.<sup>11</sup> Hartmann therefore expresses the school’s position, while at the same time slowly beginning to distance himself from it. However, this distantiation happens gradually. In 1912, Hartmann publishes “Systematische Methode,” which is said to be the most perfect formulation of the Marburgian conception of the transcendental method.<sup>12</sup>

Regarding the questions of whether, when, and to what extent Hartmann’s analyses begin to depart from the Marburg Neo-Kantian program, one must consider that the year 1912 marked a breakthrough for the Marburg School. There are at least two reasons of that. The first one is the retirement of Hermann Cohen, who applied for retirement on June 5, 1912, and who subsequently moved to Berlin, where he became involved in activities of the Jewish community. The second reason, which seems to be much more significant, is Natorp’s publication in the field of psychology (Natorp 1965), which reveals far-reaching differences from Cohen’s position on this issue. Furthermore, it can be assumed, as both Christoph von Wolzogen (Wolzogen 1984) and Jürgen Stolzenberg (Stolzenberg 1995) have done, that Natorp’s conception of consciousness, presented in this book, is some form of deviation from Cohen’s doctrine, which played an important role not only for Hartmann’s philosophy, but also for that of Martin Heidegger. The publication of Natorp’s *Allgemeine Psychologie nach kritischer Methode* (1912) is almost groundbreaking for Marburg Neo-Kantianism, although, in principle, this book is a revised edition of a book from 1888 entitled *Einleitung in die Psychologie nach kritischer Methode* (Natorp 1888). In addition, in 1904 Natorp published his lectures on psychology—*Allgemeine*

10. “N. Hartmanns Platonbuch ist ein Hymnus demonstrativus auf Cohens Philosophie des Ursprungs. Der methodische Idealismus erfährt in diesem Werk eine Darstellung, wie sie den beiden Häuptern der Schule selbst nicht geglückt ist” (Klein 1952, 109).

11. “schon in dieser Erstlingsschrift des hochbegabten, aber noch ganz der Schule des meisters verhafteten Gelehrten von 27 Jahren finden sich Sätze, die ihr Licht auf Positionen seiner späteren Werke vorauswerfen” (Klein 1952, 110).

12. As Hartmann writes, “Transzendental ist eben ein Prinzip, sofern es die Bedingung der Möglichkeit von etwas Wirklichem ist. Und transzendente Methode ist dann dasjenige Verfahren, nach welchem man, von der Wirklichkeit des Gegenstandes ausgehend, die Bedingungen seiner Möglichkeit erschließt” (Hartmann 1912, 125).

*Psychologie in Leitsätzen zu akademischen Vorlesungen* (Natorp 1904). The concept of consciousness that Natorp presents in these lectures is important in the context of Husserl's analyses from the fifth logical investigation, "On Intentional Experiences and their 'Contents'" (especially §§. 4–8) (Husserl 2001, 85–93). Moreover, Natorp's subsequent approaches to logic should also be mentioned, namely, those from 1914 and 1916, as well as his latest works, i.e., his lectures on practical philosophy published in 1925 by Hans Natorp and his Marburg lectures from 1922/1923 published only in 1958 by Hinrich Knittermeyer (1891–1958) (Natorp 1958).

One could surmise that the beginning of the interpretation of Hartmann's philosophy as a departure from the Marburg School was a witticism that Heinz Heimsoeth made in his letter from November 28, 1915, to Hartmann: "in this Marburgian exile, we must form an 'alliance,' a community (more than three people. . .); we have to go around and recruit new, young, potential people and friends."<sup>13</sup> Hartmann, who was in Bytów at the time, replied in a letter from December 6: "How do you imagine this alliance? Totally free and pointless or with certain tasks? My hopes are not very great. I have always sought my real friends in the student body thus far."<sup>14</sup> Although the friends were just bantering, this banter had a source in reality. It seems that at least Heimsoeth noticed that their (i.e., his and Hartmann's) analyses departed from the way of thinking of their Marburg teachers. Morgenstern claims that the motive of such departure is Hartmann's orientation towards a realistically-understood ontology: "Hartmann's departure from Marburg Neo-Kantianism occurred as a result of the fact that he distanced himself from the idealistically grounded renunciation of metaphysics and made the rehabilitation of realism and ontology his philosophical life goal."<sup>15</sup> At the same time, Morgenstern rightly draws attention to the possible influence of Christian Wolff, although he omits to mention the significance of Hans Pichler's book, published at the beginning of the twentieth century, which describes the relationship between Wolff and Kant (Pichler 1910). In any

13. "wir müssen in dieser Marburgischen Verbannung einen 'Bund' zustande bringen, eine Gemeinsamkeit (von mehr als 3 Menschen. . .); wir müssen herumgehen und um neue, junge, mögliche Menschen und Freunde werben" (Hartmann and Heimsoeth 1978, 208).

14. "Wie stellen Sie sich denn Ihren Bund vor? Ganz zwang—und zwecklos oder mit gewissen Aufgaben? Meine Hoffnungen sind nicht sehr groß. Ich habe mir meine wirklichen Freunde und Freundinnen bisher immer in der Studentenschaft gesucht" (Hartmann and Heimsoeth 1978, 211).

15. "Hartmanns Loslösung vom Marburger Neukantianismus erfolgte dadurch, daß er sich von dessen idealistisch begründetem Metaphysikverzicht distanzierte und die Rehabilitierung von Realismus und Ontologie zu seiner philosophischen Lebensaufgabe machte" (Morgenstern 1997, 10).

case, the importance of Wolff and Pichler for the development of Hartmann's ontology cannot be overstated (D'Anna 2011, 253–68; Noras 2020, 488).

#### 4. RUPTURE IN THE UNITY OF THE MARBURG SCHOOL

The most conspicuous token of Hartmann's break with the doctrine of the Marburg School is his book *Grundzüge einer Metaphysik der Erkenntnis* from 1921, which took its final shape in 1925. One only need to glance at the history of philosophy to find traces of the view characteristic of *Grundzüge einer Metaphysik der Erkenntnis*. Jürgen Bona Meyer, who published four articles on the controversy over materialism, writes in the fourth article: "I believe that the relationship between body and soul is one of the problems that lie beyond the horizon of our knowledge; I believe that all metaphysical problems are of this kind, and I am of the opinion that Kant has proven it clearly enough for all time."<sup>16</sup> Hartmann's understanding of metaphysics and metaphysical problems is very close to that. According to his own definition, metaphysical problems are these problems that can never be completely solved because they contain an irrational rest. In this sense, this kind of problems are at least in some aspects beyond the horizon of our rationality and knowledge.

At the same time—as has already been mentioned—a gradual rupture in what may be called Marburg unanimity had been gradually taking place since 1912. This rupture, which begins with Natorp, is described in great detail by Helmut Holzhey in his two-volumes dissertation *Cohen und Natorp* (Holzhey 1986). This dissertation is worth mentioning here insofar as it changed the general opinion about the unity of the Marburg doctrine. In 1912, Natorp introduced the mature form of his psychology, which radically differed from Cohen's doctrine. As has already been mentioned, Natorp had already devoted several earlier texts to the issue of psychology. Already in 1888, he had argued that the answer to the question of consciousness must take into account that consciousness is a three-factor relation consisting of:

1. the content of consciousness,
2. the awareness of this content,
3. the act of awareness (the act of consciousness) (Natorp 1888, 11).

16. "Ich glaube allerdings, daß das Verhältniß von Leib und Seele zu den Problemen gehört, die über dem Horizont unserer Erkenntniß liegen; ich glaube, daß alle metaphysischen Probleme dieser Art sind und bin der Meinung, daß Kant für alle Zeiten dies scharf genug bewiesen hat" (Meyer 1857, 399).

This theme reappeared in Natorp's lectures in psychology published for the first time in 1904, wherein he writes:

In the basic fact of consciousness, several moments can be distinguished, which are indeed inseparably one, but may be kept strictly distinguished in reflection: 1. the content of which one is conscious (the content of consciousness), 2. the being-conscious of this content or its relation to a common center, the ego; which can be distinguished from the relation itself by a further abstraction as the third moment of the fact of consciousness.<sup>17</sup>

This thesis, which takes its final form in 1912, postulates the need to distinguish three moments in the concept of consciousness:

1. something of which someone is conscious,
2. someone who is conscious of something or of someone,
3. the relation (*Beziehung*) between them: the fact that someone is conscious of something.

Natorp adds, "solely for the sake of brevity, I call the first *content*, the second *the self*, the third *consciousness*."<sup>18</sup>

Natorp's departure from Cohen, for whom consciousness was a unity of scientific consciousness and in this sense a complement to the philosophy that established the fact of science as a starting point, is contained in what is said. That is why Siegfried Marck is correct when he writes that Natorp's book *Allgemeine Psychologie nach kritischer Methode* followed a new path not entirely accepted by Cohen.<sup>19</sup> In this environment, the prevailing understanding of philosophy in the Marburg School began to change. With Cohen's death on April 4th, 1918, the idea of consciousness understood as a relation began to dominate Natorp's thought.

At this point, the paths of Natorp and Hartmann are slowly beginning to converge again. The new work of Natorp, who is now departing from

17. "In der Grundtatsache des Bewußtseins lassen sich mehrere Momente unterscheiden, die darin zwar wirklich untrennbar eins, aber in der Betrachtung streng auseinanderzuhalten sind: 1. der Inhalt, dessen man sich bewußt ist (Bewußtseinsinhalt), 2. das Bewußt-sein des Inhalts oder seine Beziehung auf ein gemeinsames Zentrum, das Ich; welches man durch eine fernere Abstraktion als drittes Moment der Bewußtseinstatsache von der Beziehung selbst unterscheiden kann" (Natorp 1904, 3–4).

18. "Ich nenne, lediglich der Kürze der Bezeichnung halber, das Erste den Inhalt, das Zweite das Ich, das Dritte die Bewußtheit" (Natorp 1965, 24).

19. "Natorps 'Allgemeine Psychologie nach kritischer Methode' ging zuerst diese ungewohnten und auch vom Schulhaupt Cohen nicht voll gebilligten Wege" (Marck 1987, 21).

Cohen's doctrine, contains elements similar to Hartmann's views. Not only that, but Natorp's new work also bears similarities to the work of another important Marburgian philosopher, namely, Heidegger. In contrast, the third great disciple of the Marburg Neo-Kantians, Cassirer, definitely follows Cohen's path. Hartmann can thus be seen—contrary to Cassirer—as following in Natorp's footsteps. This interpretation is consistent with Klein's point of view, who writes: "Hartmann's ontology represents nothing else and nothing less than an attempt at a partial, because it is possible only in this way, implementation of the program of the categorial foundation of all philosophy, which was repeatedly expressed by P. Natorp."<sup>20</sup> Not only the paths of the Neo-Kantian masters, but also those of their students diverge among themselves. Whereas Cohen's idea that consciousness is the unity of scientific consciousness is echoed in the works of Cassirer, for whom consciousness is the unity of cultural consciousness, Natorp's conception of consciousness as a relation is also found in Hartmann.

However, when analyzing Natorp's understanding of consciousness, it is necessary to go back to the year 1910, when Natorp published a work in the field of logic entitled *Die logischen Grundlagen der exakten Wissenschaft*, wherein he writes that "thinking in general is a relating" (*Beziehen*).<sup>21</sup> Natorp associates his understanding of relations with Kant's philosophy and says that, although Kant did not use this term, he did use the expression "*dynamische Verknüpfung*" (dynamic connection) (Kant 1904, 176 [B 248] and 502 [B 798]). A year later, Natorp published a book on the basic problems of philosophy, in which he writes that "the being of thought can only be a being of relations more precisely of relations that 'are.'"<sup>22</sup> Karen Gloy is therefore correct, bearing in mind the Neo-Kantian attempts to understand consciousness, especially those undertaken by Heinrich Rickert and Paul Natorp, when she writes that Natorp understood consciousness as a relation between two different elements (Gloy 2004).

## 5. DIVERGENCE FROM NEO-KANTIANISM

Naturally, Hartmann's philosophy also diverges from the philosophy of the Marburg School. This divergence first became visible with the publication of *Grundzüge einer Metaphysik der Erkenntnis*. Joseph Klein writes that

20. "Hartmanns Ontologie stellt nichts anderes und nicht weniger als den Versuch einer partialen, weil nur so möglichen Durchführung des von P. Natorp immer wieder ausgesprochenen Programms der Kategorialen Grundlegung aller Philosophie" (Klein 1952, 106).

21. "Denken heißt überhaupt Beziehen" (Natorp 1910, 67).

22. "Das Sein des Denkens kann nur Sein der Beziehung sein; Beziehung eben 'ist'" (Natorp 1911, 37–38).

Hartmann's *Metaphysik der Erkenntnis* definitively breaks away from Marburgian Neo-Kantianism as a system and its "epistemological monologue," summarizing everything that had hitherto been achieved in that area.<sup>23</sup> The situation with the new ontology is unclear, however. Two issues need to be discussed from the outset. The first is the nature of this new ontology, which, despite having nothing to do with the doctrine of Cohen, might nevertheless be linked to the ideas of Natorp. The second pertains to what we have called "Post-Neo-Kantianism" (see Noras 2004; 2007; 2012b; Pietras 2011; 2012). The Post-Neo-Kantians start with Neo-Kantianism, but are convinced that Kant has been misinterpreted in Neo-Kantianism. On this issue, Joseph Stallmach writes that Hartmann's radically ontological thesis of the existence of a being-in-itself (*Ansichsein*) clearly indicates a confrontation with Neo-Kantianism.<sup>24</sup>

The question of who truly understands Kant's philosophy—not its letter, as the early Neo-Kantians wanted, but rather its spirit—can be considered fundamental to all of Neo-Kantianism.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, Hartmann shows that Cohen goes beyond the philosophy of his time and that he follows the spirit of Kant's doctrine, but that he does so in a way that is unacceptable from the point of view of critical ontology (Hartmann 1912, 125; 1921, 277; 1955, 122). This is one of the ways in which Hartmann dissociates himself from Marburg Neo-Kantianism.

Therefore, it is better to speak in terms of a divergence from the Marburg School instead of a complete rupture with its program. In *Studien zur Transzendentalphilosophie* (1965), Manfred Brelage is not so much concerned with the development of Hartmann's philosophy as with its reception

23. "Das Werk N. Hartmanns, in dem die definitive Abrechnung mit dem Neukantianismus Marburger Prägung als System und seinem erkenntnistheoretischen Monolog erfolgte und das alles in dieser Hinsicht bisher Geleistete und Erarbeitete zusammenfaßte, ist seine 'Metaphysik der Erkenntnis' von 1921" (Klein 1952, 122).

24. "Die radikalontologische Ansichseinsthese Hartmanns trägt deutlich die Züge der Auseinandersetzung mit seiner eigenen Herkunft aus dem Neukantianismus" (Stallmach 1982, 616).

25. Hartmann raises this question when referring to his teacher: "Die reife Formel dieses Kategorienverhältnisses wurde auf dem Boden des transzendentalen Idealismus von Kant gefunden und als Identitätsthese ausgesprochen. Sie wurde dann durch die spekulativen Systeme des deutschen Idealismus völlig verdeckt und in dem langjährigen Kampf des Positivismus gegen die letzteren vergessen. Erst die weiseren unter den Neukantianern (Hervorhebung von mir) haben sie aus ihrer Vergessenheit wieder hervorgeholt und sie an die ihr gebührende Stelle gesetzt auch sie immer noch auf idealistischen Voraussetzungen fußend und ohne die ganze Tragweite des von Kant Geleisteten erfassen zu können, denn zu ihrem vollen Sinn kommt die Identität von Erkenntnis—und Seinskategorien erst auf dem Boden der Ontologie." (Hartmann 1955, 122)

by contemporaries and by posterity. He writes that at first Hartmann appeared as a phenomenologist, who had realized the implicit intention of phenomenology to arrive at an ontology of the real world, and that it was only in the recent years that the continuity of Hartmann's ontology with the thought of his Marburg teachers had become apparent. According to Brelage, after having been viewed as an antipode of Neo-Kantianism for a long time, Hartmann now rather appears as a continuator and "over-comer" of criticism. His philosophy cannot be understood without referring to it. In "Nicolai Hartmann 1882–1982" (1982), Josef Stallmach claims that by recovering ontology, Hartmann had put an end to Marburg Neo-Kantian idealism and that he had gnoseologically grounded critical realism anew on Kantian soil.<sup>26</sup>

Other commentators also speak in terms of partial divergence rather than in terms of complete departure from Neo-Kantianism. Morgenstern, for instance, writes that in his essays published in 1912, especially in *Systematische Methode* (1912) and *Systembildung und Idealismus* (1912), Hartmann began to carefully distance himself from Marburg idealism without openly breaking with it.<sup>27</sup> In his text on the history of philosophy, Klein notes that Hartmann's *Der philosophische Gedanke und seine Geschichte* (1936) contains the results of his polemic with the historical construction of Marburg Neo-Kantianism.<sup>28</sup> The problem of the history of philosophy and of its method was one of the most important issues within Neo-Kantianism and Hartmann's conception of these problems should be seen as a creative development and reformulation of Neo-Kantian ideas rather than as their rejection (see Noras 2012a).

## 6. CONCLUSION

An attempt at summarizing the above considerations must lead to the conclusion that the perception of Hartmann's philosophy in the secondary literature changes in light of what is believed to be Hartmann's principal sources and influences. Four different approaches can be distinguished

26. "Hartmann hat mit der Wiedergewinnung der Ontologie einen Schlußpunkt hinter den Marburger neukantischen Idealismus gesetzt, er hat gnoseologisch den Realismus, einen kritischen Realismus, im Lande Kants neu begründet" (Stallmach 1982, 615).

27. "In den Aufsätzen dieser Zeit, besonders in *Systematische Methode* (1912) und *Systembildung und Idealismus* (1912), beginnt eine vorsichtige Distanzierung vom Marburger Idealismus in methodischen Fragen, ohne daß jedoch ein offener Bruch erfolgt wäre" (Morgenstern 1997, 18).

28. "Das Ergebnis der Auseinandersetzung N. Hartmanns mit der Geschichtskonstruktion des Marburger Neukantianismus findet sich in einer seiner kostbarsten Abhandlungen 'Der philosophische Gedanke und seine Geschichte' (1936)" (Klein 1952, 121).

in Hartmann scholarship wherein it has been shown that elements of the Marburg School are present in his philosophy.

Undoubtedly, the first approach is taken by these scholars who consider as most important the year 1921, year of the publication of *Grundzüge einer Metaphysik der Erkenntnis*. According to this approach, Hartmann is considered a phenomenologist with no ties to Neo-Kantianism (Spiegelberg 1960, 358–89).<sup>29</sup>

The second approach involves the assumption that Hartmann comes from the Marburg School, considers its problems, and analyzes them (Klein 1952). Adopting this approach, some have argued that what Hartmann criticized was not Neo-Kantianism in general, but rather Cohen in particular, whose doctrine he saw as an idealism (Noras 2005, 219–25; Brelage 1965, 159–60). On this interpretation, as a critical realist Hartmann is strongly opposed to Cohen's transcendental idealism.

The third approach corresponds to the recognition that Hartmann's departure from Marburg Neo-Kantianism is also a return to Kant. When I speak of a "return to Kant," I mean Hartmann's Post-Neo-Kantianism (Noras 2004; 2007; 2012b; Pietras 2011; 2012). In this context, however, it should be remembered that Hartmann is a thinker of the movement that, at the beginning of the twentieth century, interprets Kant's philosophy metaphysically, i.e., ontologically. This movement includes thinkers, such as Martin Heidegger, Karl Jaspers, and Richard Höningswald, who go beyond the boundaries of epistemologically-oriented Neo-Kantianism and turn toward ontology.

Finally, the fourth approach consists in an attempt to better illustrate the sources of Hartmann's philosophy in the context of the Marburg School (Noras 2005). On this approach, Hartmann is seen as a thinker who, unlike Cassirer, ceases to follow Cohen, and who follows in the footsteps of Natorp instead. This hypothesis looks promising but needs to be examined in further details.

Therefore, Hartmann's relationship with the Marburg School is undeniable, but not as simple as it may appear at first sight. As I tried to show above, there are several reasons for that. First of all, the question of the relevance of Russian thinkers for Hartmann's thought still needs to be considered (Pietras 2025). In this context, the question arises as to whether

29. It may be tempting to identify Hartmann as a phenomenologist because of the phenomenological part of his ontological method. But one must remember that this is only the first step of his philosophical method and that it is followed by two further steps, namely, those of aporetics and theory (Hartmann 1921).

Hartmann's development truly begins with Neo-Kantianism. Secondly, even if we acknowledge that at least some parts of Hartmann's philosophy start with essentially Marburgian problems, can we say that at the beginning he was part of the school and that he suddenly at one point turned against it? Maybe one should speak not in terms of a complete rupture, but rather in terms of a partial divergence from Neo-Kantianism. And, thirdly, the thesis of Hartmann's divergence from Neo-Kantianism starts to look more questionable when we consider ongoing research on the Marburg School, especially on the relations between Cohen and Natorp, in which it has been shown that Marburg Neo-Kantianism was not as united as it might have appeared at first sight. Hartmann, just like Heidegger, seems to be particularly indebted to Natorp, but not to Cohen (Stolzenberg 1995, 259–94).

#### AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Alicja Pietras: Argument Development, Formatting, Editing, Proofreading.

Andrzej Noras: Literature Review, Conceptualization.

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