

## INTRODUCTION

### I. A REVOLUTIONARY HALF CENTURY

This book is about German philosophy from 1840 to 1900. All periodizations are artificial, and this one is no exception. But there are still good reasons for choosing these dates. 1900 is the beginning of a new century, one more complex, tragic, and modern than any preceding it. 1840 is significant because it marks both an end and a beginning. It is the end of the classic phase of Hegelianism, whose fortunes were tied to the Prussian Reform Movement, which came to a close in 1840 with the deaths of Friedrich Wilhelm III and his reformist minister Baron von Altenstein.<sup>1</sup> 1840 is also the beginning of a new era in German philosophy. In that year Adolf Trendelenburg published his *Logische Untersuchungen*, and Hermann Lotze finished his *Metaphysik*,<sup>2</sup> two works which broke utterly with the Hegelian heritage and which pushed metaphysics in a new direction. Shortly thereafter, in 1843, Ludwig Feuerbach published his *Grundsätze der Philosophie der Zukunft*,<sup>3</sup> settling his accounts with Hegelianism and initiating a new materialist-humanist tradition in philosophy.

The chief focus of this book is, therefore, German philosophy in the *second* half of the nineteenth century. It is an unusual topic, since most books on German philosophy in the nineteenth century concentrate on the *first* half century. And with good reason. The first three decades of this century were some of the most creative in

1 On the significance of this date for the Hegelian movement, see my *Hegel* (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 311–13. On the important ties between Hegelianism and the Prussian Reform Movement, see John Toews, *Hegelianism: The Path toward Dialectical Humanism, 1805–1841* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), pp. 95–140.

2 Adolf Trendelenburg, *Logische Untersuchungen* (Berlin: Bethge, 1840); and Hermann Lotze, *Metaphysik* (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1841). Lotze wrote his book from May till December 1840; it appeared in early 1841. For an analysis of both of these works, see my *Late German Idealism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 28–68, 153–64.

3 Ludwig Feuerbach, *Grundsätze der Philosophie der Zukunft* (Winterthur: Fröbel, 1843).

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modern philosophy. They coincide with the formation and consolidation of the idealist tradition and with the growth and spread of Romanticism, two of the most influential intellectual movements of the modern era. By contrast, the second half of the century seems less creative and important. Idealism had fallen into decline, and Romanticism was a rapidly fading memory. No intellectual movements of comparable stature grew up to replace them.

The common opinion about German philosophy in the second half of the nineteenth century, even among German contemporaries,<sup>4</sup> was that it was a period of decline and stagnation. The great creative “age of idealism” had passed away with Hegel’s death, it seemed, only to be succeeded by “an age of realism,” which was more concerned with empirical science and technical progress than philosophy. The little philosophy done in this period—so it was said—had been conducted either by idealist epigones, who were not original, or by materialists, who were not really philosophers at all.

All this leaves us with the question: Why write about the second half of the century at all? What of philosophical significance transpired in this half century that it deserves to be treated in a monograph like this one? The short and simple answer to this question is that the common opinion is just false, and that the second half of the century, though written about much less, is more important and interesting philosophically than the first half. There are several reasons why this is so.

The second half of the nineteenth century was a period dominated by crises and controversies, whereas the first half was one of consolidation and consensus. The idealist and romantic traditions had already come into their own by the first years of the nineteenth century, and it was only a matter of establishing themselves in universities and the public consciousness. The decline of the idealist and romantic traditions by the 1840s, however, led to a period of

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Friedrich Albert Lange, *Geschichte des Materialismus*, Zweite Ausgabe (Iserlohn: Baedeker, 1875), II, 64–65; Eduard Zeller, “Ueber die gegenwärtige Stellung und Aufgabe der deutschen Philosophie,” in *Vorträge und Abhandlungen* (Leipzig: Fues, 1877), II, 467–78; and Rudolf Haym, *Hegel und seine Zeit* (Berlin: Gaertner, 1857), pp. 5–6.

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disorder, confusion, and ferment. This disorder and confusion was also the womb of creativity and rebirth, the start of a new era of philosophy.

Normal times in philosophy are those when there is a settled and agreed definition of philosophy, when philosophers have a general consensus about the nature of their discipline and the tasks it involves. Revolutionary times are those when there is no such definition, when there are many conflicting conceptions of philosophy. Following these definitions, the late eighteenth, early nineteenth, and late twentieth centuries were normal times. The latter half of the nineteenth century, however, was revolutionary. For this was an age when there was no settled or agreed definition of philosophy, when there were many conflicting conceptions of the discipline. Philosophers asked themselves the most basic questions about their discipline: What is philosophy? How does it differ from empirical science? Why should we do philosophy? We will have occasion to examine some of the answers to these questions in chapter 1.

The second half of the nineteenth century was revolutionary for another reason: the rise of historicism. It was during this period that historicism came into its own as a self-conscious intellectual movement in German life and letters. “Historicism” has many meanings,<sup>5</sup> of course, but not the least of them is the thesis that history is a science in its own right, independent of art, philosophy, and the natural sciences. This thesis was a new development of the nineteenth century, one of its characteristic doctrines. For millennia, history had been regarded as more art than science, more pastime than discipline, because the paradigm of science had been strictly mathematical. Only mathematics, it seemed, could achieve the universality, necessity, and certainty required of science. But if this were so, then how could history, which concerns particular and contingent events from the past, about which nothing is certain, be a science? Never before was this question posed so explicitly, and never before treated with such depth and finesse, as in the second half of the nineteenth century, which not for nothing be-

<sup>5</sup> On the many meanings of the term, and for a general introduction to the topic, see my *The German Historicist Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

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came known as “the age of history.” We shall consider some of the central debates about the scientific status of history in chapter 4.

The second half of the nineteenth century is revolutionary for still another reason: namely, it marks the greatest break yet with the Judeo-Christian heritage. It was the most secular age in two millennia. When Nietzsche famously declared that God is dead in the 1880s, he was only articulating an attitude that had already become commonplace decades before. It is surely telling that some of the most famous philosophers of this age—Feuerbach, Stirner, Büchner, Marx, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche—were atheists. The first half of the century, however, was far less secular; it still clung to the remnants of religion. While theism and deism had declined by the end of the eighteenth century, they were replaced with pantheism. During the first decades of the nineteenth century, pantheism enjoyed a renaissance. It was reborn because it seemed the most viable solution to the latest conflict between reason and faith, the conflict which had emerged in the 1780s during the famous “pantheism controversy” between Jacobi and Mendelssohn.<sup>6</sup> Spinoza’s famous phrase “*deus sive natura*” made it possible to both divinize nature and naturalize the divine. Following that dictum, a scientist, who professed the most radical naturalism, could still be religious; and a pastor, who confessed the deepest personal faith in God, could still be a naturalist. Pantheism thus became the popular, unofficial religion of the *Goethezeit* and the *Vormärz*.

It is a token of the greater secularization of the second half of the nineteenth century that it questioned the pantheist synthesis of reason and faith held during the first half of the century. The materialism controversy of the 1850s, which we will examine in chapter 2, assaulted the old *via media* of pantheism. This controversy posed once again, in the most dramatic fashion, the age-old conflict between reason and faith; but it did so in a more radical and uncompromising manner than ever before, one which forbade any religious solution, not even pantheism. The dilemma is now between a complete materialism or an irrational leap of faith,

<sup>6</sup> On that controversy, see my *The Fate of Reason: German Philosophy between Kant and Fichte* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), pp. 44–126.

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where not only theism and deism but even pantheism is regarded as a form of faith. “Pantheism,” as Feuerbach once put it, “is *theological atheism* . . . the *negation of theology* but from the *standpoint of theology*.”<sup>7</sup> It was now time to push over that standpoint of theology, which was wobbling and ready to collapse. Rationalism no longer meant just a complete naturalism but also the critique of all forms of hypostasis, which appeared in *any* belief in the divine, even pantheism. For the materialists and radicals of midcentury, pantheism was just another form of religious hypostasis, the alienation or surrender of human powers to the divine. The process of rationalization, the culmination of criticism, was therefore a complete humanism and atheism.

We do well to remind ourselves that, in the modern movement toward secularization, Germany was in the very forefront of modern Europe. One reason for this is the rise of modern biblical criticism in the 1830s and 1840s. The criticism of the Old Testament by Wilhelm Vatke (1806–82) and the criticism of the New Testament by David Friedrich Strauss (1808–74) and Bruno Bauer (1808–82) had undermined more than ever before the authority of the Bible as the source of Christian Revelation. Another reason for Germany’s leading position is the rapid rise of a native materialist tradition, which played a prominent and dramatic role in intellectual debates beginning in the 1850s.<sup>8</sup> A final reason for Germany’s leading position was the rapid ascent of Darwinism.<sup>9</sup> Though Darwin was an English import, his doctrines found a much quicker and friendlier reception in Germany than in England and the United States. This is partly because the ground had been prepared for him by the German materialists, and partly

7 Feuerbach, *Grundsätze*, §15.

8 On this tradition, see Frederick Gregory, *Scientific Materialism in Nineteenth Century Germany* (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1977); and Annette Wittkau-Horgby, *Materialismus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998).

9 On the reception of Darwin in Germany, see Alfred Kelly, *The Descent of Darwin: The Popularization of Darwinism in Germany, 1860–1914* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981); Eve-Marie Engels and Thomas Glick, eds., *The Reception of Charles Darwin in Europe* (London: Continuum, 2008); and Robert Richards, *The Tragic Sense of Life: Ernst Haeckel and the Struggle over Evolutionary Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

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because of the advanced state of physiological and biological research in Germany.<sup>10</sup>

The rapid and radical secularization of Germany in the second half of the nineteenth century had, of course, profound philosophical consequences. It meant that some of the most important philosophical questions were now given, for the first time, a completely secular meaning. For millennia the questions of evil and the meaning of life, which had dominated philosophy and theology, reflected the Judeo-Christian belief in providence. The existence of evil was a problem because it seemed to contradict the existence of a wise and beneficent deity; and the meaning of life was a mystery because it was determined by an inscrutable divine design, by one's place in the providential order. In the first half of the century, these age-old questions were still interpreted in a pantheistic sense; by the second half, however, they were reinterpreted in completely secular terms, so that they were free of any assumption about the existence of God, providence, and immortality. Now that there was no divine providence to give meaning and value to life, the question arose whether it had any meaning or value at all. As always, evil and suffering were real and omnipresent; but their existence could no longer be explained away by divine providence, which had once redeemed all evil and suffering. And so the question inevitably arose: "Is life worth living in the face of evil and suffering?" From the 1860s until the end of the century, not only philosophers but also the general educated public in Germany became obsessed with this question. We will examine in chapter 5 the controversy surrounding the negative answer to this question: pessimism.

So, contrary to its reputation, it is difficult to imagine a more rich and revolutionary age for philosophy than the second half of the nineteenth century. What is philosophy? Is science inevitably heading toward materialism? What are the limits of scientific explanation? What makes history a science? And, last but not least, what makes life worth living? These were some of the grand questions discussed by philosophers in the late nineteenth century.

<sup>10</sup> On the advanced state of scientific research in nineteenth-century Germany, see John Merz, *A History of European Thought in the Nineteenth Century* (Edinburgh: Blackwood & Sons, 1904–12), I, 157–225.

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It was their great merit that they discussed these questions in great detail, and with great subtlety and sophistication, while never losing sight of the fundamental problem underlying them. The age that cured itself of Fichtean and Hegelian jargon realized all too well the great bane of needless technicality and the great value of clarity and common sense.

### 2. THE STANDARD NARRATIVES

Because it was such a fecund and revolutionary age, the late nineteenth century poses great challenges to the historian. The chief problem is doing justice to so many significant developments. It is fair to say that scholarship of this half century, and indeed the whole nineteenth century, has not met these challenges. This is mainly because this scholarship has been in the stranglehold of two narratives, which have imposed a rigid canon about which thinkers of the nineteenth century deserve examination. Unless we break free from this canon, our understanding of nineteenth-century German philosophy will be historically inaccurate and philosophically impoverished.

According to one narrative, whose roots we can trace back to Karl Löwith's seminal *Von Hegel zu Nietzsche*,<sup>11</sup> German philosophy in the nineteenth century is essentially the story about the revolutionary transformation of Hegel's philosophy by the young Hegelians, Marx, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche. This transformation gave rise to two major philosophical traditions, Marxism and existentialism, which are seen as the main intellectual legacy of nineteenth-century philosophy.

Though rarely read today, Löwith's narrative has been profoundly influential. It has been the chief source for many popular histories of philosophy in the Anglophone world,<sup>12</sup> and it has formed the syllabi for countless courses on nineteenth-century philosophy

<sup>11</sup> Karl Löwith, *Von Hegel zu Nietzsche. Der revolutionäre Bruch im Denken des 19. Jahrhunderts*, Zweite Auflage (Vienna: Europa Verlag, 1949).

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, Robert C. Solomon, *Continental Philosophy since 1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988); and *The History of Continental Philosophy: Nineteenth Century Philosophy: Revolutionary Responses to the Existing Order*, ed. Alan Schrift and Daniel Conway (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).

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in Anglophone universities. The standard course on nineteenth-century philosophy includes, just as Löwith would have it, Hegel, Marx, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche. The guiding assumptions are that these thinkers are the most important ones and that by reading them alone students can know at least something about the most important philosophy in the nineteenth century.

Brilliantly conceived and executed, Löwith's history deserves all the acclaim it has received. It is a well-told narrative, which captures some of the most important developments of nineteenth-century German philosophy, viz., Marxism and existentialism. The problem with Löwith's history lies less with itself than its reception. It is only *one* narrative about German nineteenth-century philosophy; but it is treated as if it were authoritative, the sole or major narrative, when there can and ought to be many others. If we take Löwith's as the only or best narrative, we will have a very limited view of the field.

What would we be missing? What is left out of Löwith's narrative and the standard histories that follow it? These are just some of the major developments.

1. The rise of neo-Kantianism, which was the dominant philosophical movement in Germany from 1860 to 1914.
2. The materialism controversy, one of the most important intellectual disputes in the second half of the century.
3. The growth of historicism, which is not an historical but a philosophical movement about the logic of historical discourse, a movement so important that it has been described as "one of the greatest intellectual revolutions in western thought."<sup>13</sup>
4. The roots of modern logic, which begin with Frege's writings in the early 1880s.
5. The rise of pessimism in the 1860s and the intense discussion about the value of life, of which Nietzsche was only one interlocutor.

<sup>13</sup> In the words of Friedrich Meinecke, *Die Entstehung des Historismus* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1965), p. 1.

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The other narrative that has dominated our conception of nineteenth-century philosophy came from one of the major thinkers of that century: Hegel himself. In his *Geschichte der Philosophie*,<sup>14</sup> which first appeared from 1833 to 1836, Hegel described the idealist tradition as a movement beginning with Kant, passing through Reinhold, Fichte, and Schelling, and then culminating in himself. Hegel saw his own system as the grand synthesis of all that came before it, leaving out nothing of philosophical merit. The romantics played a minor role in this self-aggrandizing tale of dialectical triumph—Hegel gave a page each to Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis—but then they fell under the patronizing rubric “*Hauptformen, die mit der Fichteschen Philosophie zusammenhängen*.”<sup>15</sup>

Hegel’s account of the idealist tradition has been remarkably influential. Although it too was only one narrative, it became the standard account, the prevailing paradigm. This is partly because of the enormous influence exerted by the Hegelian school in the first half of the nineteenth century. But it is also because Hegel’s history was reaffirmed later in the nineteenth century by two major philosophical historians, Johann Erdmann and Kuno Fischer,<sup>16</sup> who, not accidentally, were Hegelians themselves. Hegel’s history was then revived in the twentieth century by two more major philosophical historians, Richard Kroner and Frederick Copleston,<sup>17</sup> who, though no Hegelians, were happy to follow Erdmann’s and Fischer’s precedents. Recent histories of nineteenth-century philosophy have, by and large, followed the Hegelian tradition.<sup>18</sup> It is necessary to add

14 G.W.F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, in *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, ed. Karl Michel and Eva Moldenhauer (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1971), XX, 341–462.

15 *Ibid.*, XX, 415–19.

16 Johann Erdmann, *Die Entwicklung der deutschen Spekulation seit Kant*, Band V of *Versuch einer wissenschaftlichen Darstellung der Geschichte der Philosophie* (Stuttgart: Frommann, 1977), first published 1834; and Kuno Fischer, Band V of his *Geschichte der neueren Philosophie* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1872–75).

17 Richard Kroner, *Von Kant bis Hegel* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1921); and Frederick Copleston, vol. 7 of *A History of Modern Philosophy: Fichte to Hegel* (New York: Doubleday, 1963).

18 See, for example, Hans Jörg Sandkühler, ed., *Handbuch Deutscher Idealismus* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2005); Brian O’Connor and Georg Mohr, *German Idealism: An Anthology and Guide* (Edinburg: Edinburg University Press, 2006); and *The Age of*

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that Löwith, who saw Hegel as the culmination of the idealist tradition, never questioned his history.

Although still the standard model, Hegel's account of the idealist tradition is very problematic, chiefly because of its grave omissions. Hegel wrote a history that made sense of *his* philosophical development; and he omitted everything not necessary to that narrative. All his opponents he treated superficially (e.g., the romantics) or ignored entirely (e.g., Fries, Herbart, Beneke, Schopenhauer). It is obvious that it should not be taken seriously as history; but that is exactly what has happened. All histories of German idealism end with Hegel's death, just as "*der Verewigten*" would have wanted it.

Hegel's narrative, no less than Löwith's, severely limits our vision of nineteenth-century German philosophy. It has three major omissions. First of all, though Hegel could never have known it, the idealist tradition continued long after his death. There were three major thinkers after Hegel whose chief intellectual goal was to revive the legacy of idealism: Adolf Trendelenburg (1802–72), Hermann Lotze (1816–81), and Eduard von Hartmann (1842–1906). Although Trendelenburg, Lotze, and Hartmann were sharp critics of the *form* or methods of the idealist tradition, viz., intellectual intuition, the dialectic, and a priori construction, they were very eager to defend its *content* by basing it upon the results of the new empirical sciences. The self-conscious aim of their major works was to defend a teleological-vitalistic metaphysics—what Trendelenburg called "the organic view of the world"—against the growth of materialism and Darwinism. It would be groundless to dismiss these thinkers as if they were mere epigones, minor figures of little historical significance. They were some of the most influential writers and teachers of the late nineteenth century.

Another major omission of Hegel's history is a whole tradition of idealism, one contemporary to his own and its chief competitor. This tradition consisted in three thinkers: Jakob Friedrich Fries (1773–1843), Johann Friedrich Herbart (1776–1841), and Friedrich Beneke (1798–1854). Since this tradition has been so forgotten, we might as well call it the "lost tradition." Its members were opposed

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*German Idealism*, ed. Robert C. Solomon and Kathleen Higgins (London: Routledge, 1993).

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to the Fichte-Schelling-Hegel tradition in several respects: (1) they upheld Kant's transcendental idealism in its original form (i.e., the distinction between appearances and thing-in-itself); (2) they affirmed Kant's dualisms between understanding and sensibility, form and content, concept and intuition, essence and existence; (3) they kept Kant's regulative constraints on teleology; and (4) they attacked the rationalist methodology of Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel, advocating instead an empirical methodology modeled on the natural sciences.

Although Fries, Herbart, and Beneke did not form a self-conscious school, an alliance with a self-conscious agenda, they had so many attitudes, values, and beliefs in common that we are justified in treating them as a distinct tradition. They shared an allegiance to transcendental idealism, a program for reforming epistemology through psychology, a firm belief in the reliability of the methods of the empirical sciences, a theory about the close connection between ethics and aesthetics, and last but not least a deep antipathy to the speculative idealism of Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel. Placing Fries, Herbart, and Beneke in one tradition is not simply a post facto intellectual construction, given that they corresponded with one another, that they reviewed one another's work, usually favorably, and that Beneke even proposed collaboration with Herbart.

The final omission of Hegel's history is the strange but remarkable figure of Arthur Schopenhauer, who finds no mention at all in his narrative. Though Schopenhauer clearly belongs in the idealist tradition, Hegel was only too glad to exclude the most vocal of all his rivals. Unlike the late idealists or the lost tradition, Schopenhauer has always found some degree of begrudging acceptance in the current canon. He is included in the relevant literature, though he is usually discussed as a precursor and teacher of Nietzsche. Löwith found it fitting to ignore him entirely. Schopenhauer has always been a troublesome figure to accommodate for the standard history, because he clearly does not fit smoothly into the progression from Fichte to Hegel. He has been treated as an eccentric, maverick, and loner—an image for which Schopenhauer himself bears much responsibility. But there is a serious problem in downplaying Schopenhauer or in placing him on the periphery

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of nineteenth-century philosophy. He should be front and center. The reason is this: after his death in 1860, Schopenhauer became *the* most important and influential philosopher in Germany until the beginning of the First World War. He not only set the major problem of German philosophy in the second half of the nineteenth century—the question of the value of life—but also stated the most controversial solution to that problem—pessimism. We cannot measure Schopenhauer’s influence simply by those who were positively influenced by him—Thomas Mann, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Eduard von Hartmann, Richard Wagner, and Friedrich Nietzsche—we also have to take into account even those who were deeply opposed to him. The neo-Kantians and positivists not only wrote biographies of and polemics against Schopenhauer, but they also changed their conception of philosophy because of him. It was thanks to Schopenhauer that neo-Kantianism and positivism did not degenerate into scholastic movements devoted to little more than the analysis of “the logic of the sciences.”

Once we break with the Löwith and Hegel legacies, our picture of nineteenth-century German philosophy begins to look markedly different. We can no longer talk about the end of the idealist tradition in 1831, but we have to extend it until the end of the century. We can no longer write about one idealist tradition, but we have to consider a second competing one. We can no longer assume that Marxism and existentialism are the chief intellectual movements in the second half of the century; we also have to include many other movements, viz., late idealism, historicism, materialism, neo-Kantianism, and pessimism. Last but not least, we can no longer treat Schopenhauer like a maverick, and we should begin to recognize him as the most influential philosopher in the second half of the nineteenth century. This means that we should consider his influence upon a host of thinkers, of whom Nietzsche is only one example.

When we take this broader view, our history of nineteenth-century German philosophy becomes richer but also more complicated; it ceases to be the subject of one narrative and becomes that of many narratives. The *dramatis personae* of the period increase greatly and cease to be limited to the same stock canonical figures, the old chestnuts written about over and over again. We find that

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we have to read many “minor” thinkers who are now unfamiliar to us, though they were major players in controversies that still interest us. But none of this should be treated as a chore to trouble and burden ourselves. Rather, it should be taken as an opportunity to enrich and broaden ourselves. As much as German philosophy in the nineteenth century has been studied, there are still large tracts of unexplored territory awaiting the young, the curious, and the adventurous.

### 3. METHOD

There is an old complaint that the history of philosophy lacks philosophical motivation and merit. To be told what philosophers thought in the past does not necessarily help us solve philosophical problems in the present, and it easily degenerates into antiquarianism, the study of history for its own sake. For this reason some historians of philosophy tend to rewrite the past according to our contemporary interests and problems. This approach, however, invites the objection of anachronism, so that we read the past in the light of *our* rather than *its* concerns. And so the history of philosophy tends toward either antiquarianism or anachronism.

The approach taken in this book attempts to escape this dilemma. It organizes its history not according to thinkers or themes but controversies. These controversies concern issues which are still of interest today, thus avoiding the danger of antiquarianism; but they were also important to contemporaries themselves, thus escaping the difficulty of anachronism. This approach also has the merit of broadening our horizons beyond the standard thinkers and themes. Because most of the contributors to these controversies are not well-known or completely forgotten, we learn about new thinkers beyond the standard repertoire. We can see that, even though obscure or forgotten, these thinkers are still interesting in their own right. They often made important contributions to controversies, made interesting or illuminating points about fundamental problems that are still of concern to us.

One of the worst mistakes in the history of philosophy is to assume that what exists in the standard curriculum, or what is accepted in the canon of major thinkers, exhausts what is of

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philosophical merit from the past. We inherit a scholarly tradition and assume in good faith that it has brought us all that is of interest and merit from the past. We think that the “major thinkers” are those we study and that everyone else is a “minor thinker,” either deservedly forgotten or only “a transitional figure.” In this way we foster prejudice. “*Was ein Bauer nicht kennt, frißt er nicht.*” Scholars, like peasants, do not eat what they do not know.

Scholars who make this assumption are like travelers who never venture deep into the wilderness, allowing explorers to bring them back a few token treasures from unknown territory. They never see for themselves the rich treasures buried in the inner wilderness but rely on others to explore it for them. All historians of philosophy should be explorers; only when they venture for themselves into the greater expanses and deeper recesses of the past will they see the many treasures that await them.