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THE PHILOSOPHY OF NICOLAI HARTMANN

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of Nicolai Hartmann

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Chapter 12: Nicolai Hartmann as a Post-Neo-Kantian

Alicja Pietras

12.1 Introduction

In this paper I propose an interpretation of Hartmann and Heidegger's ontological projects as forms of what I call 'Post-Neo-Kantianism'.¹ I explore both Hartmann and Heidegger's interpretations of Kant, their different approaches to Kantian issues such as the problem of the ambiguity of the notion of "thing in itself" and the problem of the distinction between being and irrationality, and compare the philosophical projects that ensue, namely Hartmann's critical ontology and Heidegger's fundamental ontology.

12.2 Hartmann and Heidegger: a metaphysical interpretation of Kant

Hartmann, just as Heidegger, was strongly influenced by Neo-Kantianism.² He was a student of the Marburgian Neo-Kantians Herman Cohen and Paul Natorp. As befits a student of a Neo-Kantian school, Hartmann makes Kantian philosophy one of the most important starting points of his own philosophical thinking. But just as Neo-Kantians wanted to go back to Kant from German Idealism, Hartmann wants to go back to Kant from Neo-Kantianism. At the time, there are two Neo-Kantian mainstreams – Marburgian Neo-Kantianism (Herman

1 The term 'Post-Neo-Kantianism' was coined by Andrzej J. Noras to name a group of contemporary thinkers including Nicolai Hartmann, Martin Heidegger, Karl Jaspers, Heinz Heimsoeth, and Richard Höningwald, who developed a new interpretation of Kant's philosophy, diverging from that of the Neo-Kantians. See: Noras 2005, Noras 2004, Pietras 2008.

2 About Neo-Kantianism as a philosophical movement, see Makkreel and Luft 2010, 1–21; Ollig 1979.

Cohen, Paul Natorp and Ernst Cassirer) and Badenaeen or Southwestern Neo-Kantianism (Wilhelm Windelband, Heinrich Rickert and Emil Lask). Both schools interpreted Kant's philosophy as a theory of cognition (*Erkenntnistheorie*). Moreover, Neo-Kantians claimed that Kant rejected metaphysics and wished to set up the theory of cognition as a new *philosophia prima*. In contrast, Hartmann and Heidegger, emphasize the metaphysical meaning of Kant's philosophy. They both claim that there is no theory of cognition without ontology and metaphysics.

Hartmann and Heidegger were not the first, however, to give a metaphysical interpretation of Kant's thinking. In 1889 Friedrich Paulsen published *Immanuel Kant. Sein Leben und seine Lehre* where he claimed that Kant, at least in his personal conviction, was a real metaphysician. This book started a serious discussion between Paulsen and the Neo-Kantians, in particular Herman Cohen and Hans Vaihinger. The second important metaphysical interpretation of Kant's philosophy can be found in the PhD Dissertation of Konstantin Oesterreich titled *Kant und die Metaphysik* (1906). But the real rise of the metaphysical interpretation of Kant's thought occurs in the 1920s. The crucial year was 1924, which is known in the German literature as an *Epochenjahr*. It's the year of the two hundredth anniversary of Kant's birth. In this year were published several important books, stressing the metaphysical meaning of Kant's philosophy: *Kant und das Ding an sich* by Erich Adickes, *Diesseits von Idealismus und Realismus* and *Kant und die Philosophie unserer Tage* by Nicolai Hartmann, *Die metaphysische Motive in der Ausbildung des Kantischen Philosophie* by Heinz Heimsoeth, *Kantinterpretation und Kantkritik* by Julius Ebbinghaus and last but not least *Kant als Metaphysiker* by Max Wundt. So, as we see, Hartmann's and Heidegger's metaphysical interpretations of Kant's thought are not the first. But there is something that distinguishes Hartmann's and Heidegger's interpretations from all others: both are ontological.

Christian Baertschi in his PhD dissertation *Die deutsche metaphysische Kantinterpretation der 1920er Jahre* (Baertschi 2004) divides all the "metaphysical" (in the wide sense of the term) interpretations of Kant into either "ontological" or "metaphysical" (in the narrow sense). Baertschi writes:

In this work a distinction should be drawn between the "metaphysical" and "ontological" interpretations of Kant's philosophy. A basis for this distinction is the traditional understanding of metaphysics, the kind Kant grew up with. 'Metaphysical interpretation of Kant' is an expression that, broadly understood, includes all efforts to interpret Kant's philosophy as metaphys-

ical, divided into *metaphysica generalis* (ontology as a determination for the most general predicates of being) and *metaphysica specialis* (cosmology, psychology, theology). The term “ontological interpretation of Kant” is reserved for such sub-group of Kant’s interpretations that looks at Kant in light of ontological inquiry. One can speak of “metaphysical interpretation of Kant” in a narrow sense about interpretations that address Kant’s positive statements about the World, Soul, and God (Baertschi 2004, 12).³

In the group of ontological interpretations, Baertschi includes only Hartmann’s and Heidegger’s, whereas he qualifies of “metaphysical in the narrow sense” all the other German metaphysical interpretations of Kant in the twenties (interpretations of Friedrich Paulsen, Konstantin Oesterreich, Max Wundt, Erich Adickes and Heinz Heimsoeth).

This serves as a justification for comparing Hartmann’s and Heidegger’s interpretations of Kant’s thought. Both attempt to create a new ontological viewpoint. Both see in Kant’s philosophy a good basis for the realization of this task. In spite of that, their interpretations of Kant’s philosophy, their attitude to Neo-Kantianism and consequently their own perspectives on being are quite different. I claim that to find the reason for this difference, we must look at the Kantian notion of “thing in itself” with its variety of possible interpretations.

12.3 The ambiguity of the Kantian notion of “thing in itself”

As has been pointed out in the contemporary Kantian literature the notion of “thing in itself” (*Ding an sich*) is more Kantian and Post-Kantian than Kant’s original notion. About this problem Gerold Prauss writes in

3 “In dieser Arbeit soll zwischen ‘metaphysischer’ und ‘ontologischer’ Kantinterpretation ein Unterschied gemacht werden. Die Grundlage für diese Unterscheidung bildet jene traditionelle Auffassung von Metaphysik, mit der Kant aufgewachsen ist. Der Begriff der ‘metaphysischen Kantinterpretation,’ verstanden in einem weiten Sinne, umfasst demnach alle Bemühungen, Kant im Sinne der metaphysica, die sich in *metaphysica generalis* (Ontologie als Bestimmung der allgemeineren Prädikate des Seienden) und *metaphysica specialis* (Kosmologie, Psychologie, Theologie) teilte, zu interpretieren. Der Name der ‘ontologischen Kantinterpretation’ steht dann für die Untergruppe jener Auslegungen, die Kant speziell unter einer ontologischen Fragestellung lesen. Von einer ‘metaphysischen Kantinterpretation’ in engerem Sinne kann im Blick auf jene Interpretationen die Rede sein, die sich Kants positiven Aussagen zu Welt, Seele und Gott zuwenden.”

his work *Kant und das Problem der Dinge an sich* (Prauss 1974), that the phrase *Ding an sich* is rather rare in Kant's work. He writes:

When we consider the expression Kant uses when he wants to speak about *Ding an sich*, we discover something extraordinary. Not only that Kant in place of *Ding* purposefully uses *Gegenstand*, *Objekt* and *Sache*, whereas authors of Kant-literature from the beginning almost unanimously replace this variety of terms with the term *Ding*. First of all we discover that Kant himself uses only a few times the phrase 'an sich', which Kant-literature replaces with 'Ding an sich'. His standard phrases are rather 'Ding an sich selbst', 'Gegenstand an sich selbst', etc. That which was an exception in Kant's works becomes a rule in Kantian-literature (Prauss 1974, 13).⁴

This is not the only problem. Some authors emphasize also that we can't find in Kant's works the notion of "Ding an sich" that we can only find the notion "Ding" and the adjective "an sich" or rather "an sich selbst" is added to this notion. Moreover, Kant never writes in the singular form "Ding an sich selbst" ("thing in itself") but only in the plural form "Dinge an sich selbst" ("things in themselves").

But "Ding an sich" became a specially emphasized notion in the literature on Kant, in Kantian and Post-Kantian philosophy, where it was adopted and popularized. Furthermore, it played a crucial role in Post-Kantian philosophical discussions. We may recall F. H. Jacobi, who writes: "Without this supposition (of things in themselves – A.P.) I can't fathom Kant's system, but with it I can't stay inside this system (Jacobi 1787, 223)."⁵ Kantians (K. L. Reinhold, J. H. Schultz, G. E. Schulze, S. Maimon, J. G. Fichte) and Anti-Kantians (J. G. Herder, J. G. Hamman, F. H. Jacobi) argued about this notion. But if we carefully review the matter we can see that it has at least two different under-

4 "Sieht man einmal die Ausdrücke durch, die Kant verwendet, wenn er von Dingen an sich sprechen will, so entdeckt man etwas Merkwürdiges. Nicht nur, daß Kant zu diesem Zweck ganz unbedenklich neben 'Ding' auch noch 'Gegenstand,' 'Object,' 'Sache' benutzt, während man in der Kant-Literatur von Anfang an diese Bunte Mannigfaltigkeit ohne besondere Verabredung nahezu einhellig zugunsten von 'Ding' bereinigt. Man entdeckt vor allem, daß Kant selbst dabei von jener Bildungsweise durch 'an sich,' welche Kant-Literatur mit dem Ausdruck 'Ding an sich' zur Standardform erhebt, nur in verschwindend wenigen Fällen Gebrauch macht. Sein Standardausdruck lautet vielmehr 'Dinge an sich selbst,' 'Gegenstand an sich selbst' usw. Was bei Kant also seltene Ausnahme ist, wird in der Kant-Literatur die Regel."

5 "ich ohne jene Voraussetzung (Dingen an sich – A.P.) in das System nicht hineinkommen und mit jener Voraussetzung darin nicht bleiben konnte."

standings. The thinkers who reject the possibility of the existence of a thing in itself and those who claim that the existence of a thing in itself is undeniable talked about totally different things.

We can mention Hegel, for instance, who in *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences* writes: “The Thing-in-itself (and under ‘thing’ is embraced even Mind and God) expresses the object when we leave out of sight all that consciousness makes of it, all its emotional aspects, and all specific thoughts of it. It is easy to see what is left – utter abstraction, total emptiness, only described still as an ‘other-world’ – the negative of every image, feeling, and definite thought” (Hegel 2005, 72).

And we can compare this statement with Adickes’s, Paulsen’s or Hartmann’s statement about the thing in itself. Erich Adickes in his work *Kant und das Ding an sich* writes: “One and the same object is at the same time *thing in itself* and *appearance*, a thing in itself is in appearance, indeed unknown, but it is appearing exactly in appearance, it is manifest itself in it (Adickes 1920, 20).”⁶ Hartmann in *Grundzüge einer Metaphysik der Erkenntnis* writes: “The theory of appearance is necessarily a theory of the appearing of a being in itself (Hartmann 1949, 234).”⁷

As we have just seen, Hartmann and Adickes understand the expression ‘thing in itself’ differently from Hegel. They understand something independent of our cognition which can also appear as an appearance, whereas Hegel means something which is not for us. Indeed, Hegel means “object when we leave out of sight all that consciousness makes of it” (Hegel 2005, 72). This ambiguity, which we find in the Kantian literature, has its origin in the ambiguity of Kant’s philosophy. Kant himself, when he speaks about *things as they are in themselves*, at one time means things independent of our cognition, and at another time means the non-cognizable side of things. Both Kant’s and Kantian terminology is ambiguous (Pietras 2008a, 20–24).

Therefore, I propose to distinguish the *epistemological* and *ontological* meanings of this notion (Pietras 2008a, 24–39). The epistemological meaning of the notion of “thing in itself” is the thing that is not for us, which does not and cannot appear to us. This is the non-cognizable

6 “ein und derselbe Gegenstand zugleich Ding an sich und Erscheinung ist, das Ding an sich in ihm zwar unerkennbar, aber doch eben in ihm erscheinend, in ihm sich manifestierend.”

7 “Eine Theorie der Erscheinung ist notwendig zugleich Theorie des erscheinenden Ansichseienden.”

side of something. The ontological meaning of the notion of “thing in itself” is the being-in-itself; the self-existing being, independent of our knowledge. It is the existence of all (cognizable and non-cognizable) sides of something. For the ontological meaning of the notion of “thing in itself” Hartmann uses the term *Ansichseiende* (*Ansichsein*), which we may translate by “self-existing-being” or “being-in-itself.”

We observe a huge difference between Hartmann and Heidegger’s interpretations of Kant’s notion of the “thing in itself.” Hartmann notices the ambiguity of the Kantian notion and uses it in his own philosophical research, whereas Heidegger rejects the ambiguity – an attitude that reflects his monistic tendency (Pietras 2008a, 67–71, 100–105, 118–124).

12.4 Hartmann’s interpretation of Kant’s philosophy⁸

Hartmann claims that the Kantian notion of “thing in itself” means: (1) irrationality (*Irrationalität*) and (2) epistemically independent self-existing-being (*Ansichsein*). According to Hartmann, this ambiguity is the cause of all the misunderstandings that have been taking place in post-Kantian philosophy (e. g., Jacobi, Maimon).

But is it simply Kant’s mistake? Hartmann claims, that this case is not so simple. The ambiguity of this notion in Kant’s works shows that Kant was a philosopher of problems not a philosopher of systems. Hartmann puts this ambiguity to use in his critical ontology.

He writes: “In fact the thing in itself is a critical motif in “critical philosophy;” its rejection by Neo-Kantians and in Neo-Kantianism is a rejection of the critical position” (Hartmann 1949, 184).⁹ Hartmann objects to the Neo-Kantian claim that the notion of the “thing in itself” is a non-critical element of Kant’s philosophy and that we must either reject it or understand it as a limiting concept. The Neo-Kantians completely ignore this notion’s ontological meaning and view it as useless. They identify “thing in itself” with another of Kant’s terms “transcend-

⁸ Hartmann 1949; Hartmann 1957; Hartmann 1958, 268–313.

⁹ “Das Ding an sich ist das eigentlich kritische Motiv in der ‘kritischen Philosophie’; erst seine Preisgabe bei Nachkantianer und im Neukantianismus ist Preisgabe der kritischen Position.”

dental object *X*” (*Transzendental Gegenstand X*) “which actually is always one and the same for all our knowledge = *X*” (Kant 1880, A 109).¹⁰

According to Hartmann, the most important consequence of the Neo-Kantian rejection of the ontological meaning of “thing in itself” is to lose the critical consciousness of irrationality, which is the basis of critical philosophy. Hartmann claims that Kant’s thought about the unknowability of the thing in itself wakes our consciousness of irrationality. Ontologically, the notion of a “thing in itself” includes all sides of a thing regardless of whether (1) we know it, (2) don’t know it, but can know it or (3) cannot know it. Here, we have Hartmann’s doctrine about the two boundaries of cognition: the boundary of actual *objectivation* (*objectivisation* – but this term is unfortunate here, because Hartmann uses it in his philosophy of spirit in a completely different meaning) (what we actually know) and the boundary of *gnoseological* rationality (what we can know in general). Behind this boundary there are the non-cognizable sides of things, whose existence we should presuppose because we can observe some phenomena like the consciousness of a problem, i. e., the consciousness of knowing that we ignore something.

Hartmann criticizes the Neo-Kantians’ tendency to create a philosophical system. Neo-Kantians reject the ontological meaning of “thing in itself” just because it cannot be included in their system of transcendental idealism. Moreover, they resented Kant for this notion, because, according to them, it makes his system incoherent. For the Neo-Kantians, the ontological aspect of the thing in itself is non-critical, because for them “non-critical” means “accepted without proof.” This meaning was in no way new. It was common, e. g., in positivism. Anyway, also today for many people “to be critical” means “not to accept anything without proof.” Hartmann shows us the other side of the coin. The same non-critical tendency, which we observe when somebody “accepts something without proof,” we observe also when somebody “rejects something without proof.” Where is the proof, asks Hartmann, that unknowable things do not exist? (To assume that something does not exist just because we cannot know it is to commit the fallacy of “argumentum ad ignorantiam”.) To be a real critical thinker according

10 Kant writes: “The pure concept of this Transcendental Gegenstand (which actually is always one and the same for all our knowledge = *X*) is that with, in all our empirical concepts, can generally bring about a relation to a Gegenstand, i.e. objective reality” (Kant 1880, A 109).

to the German philosopher Josef Pieper means, “to take care not to omit anything.”

According to Hartmann, Kant’s statement about the unknowability of the thing in itself has an important methodological meaning. We have to remember that beyond appearances there are things in themselves, which we never know in their totality. There are two reasons for that. The first reason is that our cognition is an endless process (endless *fieri*). This is the lesson that Hartmann learned from his Marburgian teachers. But there is also a second reason, which his teachers missed. There are some impassable limits of our knowledge. Thinking about the possibility of the existence of something that is non-cognizable or non-cognizable in all its qualities is necessary in order to be “critical.” Hartmann’s “metaphysics of cognition” arises from this point of view

According to Hartmann, all philosophers who want to do epistemology without ontology – all philosophers who reject the ontological aspect of the thing in itself – cannot grasp the problem of cognition. As he writes: “There is no question about knowledge without a question about being. Because there is no knowledge that is not knowledge about being. Knowledge as a matter of fact is a relation between our consciousness and a self-existing-being” (Hartmann 1958, 269).¹¹ With the rejection of the ontological meaning of the notion of “thing in itself,” the transcendental idealism of the Marburgian school excludes from epistemology very important questions such as the questions about the possibility of grasping being, questions about the limits of knowledge, and questions about the identity between the categories of cognition and the categories of being (Pietras 2008b, 100–101, 108–109).

12.5 Heidegger interpretation of Kant’s philosophy¹²

On the contrary Heidegger, who also criticizes the Neo-Kantian interpretation of Kant’s philosophy because of its rejection of ontological problems ignores the ambiguity of the notion of “thing in itself.” As I have mentioned, the main reason for this is Heidegger’s tendency toward unity and monism. Like the Neo-Kantians, Heidegger is looking

11 “Es gibt keine Erkenntnisfrage ohne Seinsfrage. Denn es gibt keine Erkenntnis, deren ganzen Sinn nicht darin bestünde, Seinserkenntnis zu sein Erkenntnis ist eben ein Bezogensein des Bewußtseins auf ein Ansichseiendes.”

12 Heidegger 1991; Heidegger 1977; Heidegger 1976, Heidegger 1984.

for unity in Kant's thought. So, like the Neo-Kantians he goes to extremes, but to different extremes. For Heidegger, Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* is not epistemological. In fact, according to him, Kant is not concerned with the problem of cognition at all.¹³ The only problem Kant is concerned with in his *Critique* is that of metaphysics. For Heidegger, Kant's *Critic* creates a basis for a new, fundamental ontology. The ontology is the ontology of *Dasein*, i. e., the ontology of temporal being, the ontology of "somewhere" and "somewhen" located appearances.

Heidegger's verbal form of the term 'being' which, according to him, should replace the noun 'being', stresses the temporal character of all being. Heidegger inverts the classical ontological order. In classical ontology the real being was eternal, unchanging. The temporal and changeable being was only a shadow of real being, a manifestation of it. In contrast, for Heidegger all being is temporal and changeable. In reality there is nothing unchanging, nothing eternal. Human beings create the concepts of an eternal and unchanging being because of their nostalgia for something constant that can give our lives a meaning. But all this is only an illusion, the sign of the *Falling* of *Dasein*. On this point Heidegger claims that Kant was the philosopher who gave him the basis for this step.

If we compare *Being and Time* (1927) with *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* (1929) we see how Heidegger's ontology is related to his ontological interpretation of Kant's *Critique*. As I have said, Heidegger's interpretation of Kant is opposite to the Neo-Kantian interpretation. But just for that reason his interpretation is characterized by the same one-sidedness. For example, the Neo-Kantians claim that Kant's *Critique* is epistemological, Heidegger claims that it is ontological. The Neo-Kantians emphasize Kant's *transcendental logic* and reduce Kant's dualism of two sources of human cognition (sensibility and understanding) to understanding, they proclaim the priority of thinking, Heidegger emphasizes the *transcendental aesthetics*, reduces Kant's dualism to sensibility and proclaims the priority of intuition. The Neo-Kantians reduce all human cognition to the spontaneity of the conceptions, Heidegger claims that Kant's two sources of human cognition spring out of a common root – transcendental imagination. He claims that the most important thing in all of Kant's *Critique* is the chapter *Of the schematism of the*

13 "Die Kritik der reinen Vernunft hat mit 'Erkenntnistheorie' nichts zu schaffen" (Heidegger 1991, 17).

pure conceptions of the understanding, where Kant demonstrates the priority of *transcendental schemas*, which are sources for all our conceptions. The transcendental schema is the “transcendental determination of time.” So now we understand why Heidegger’s ontological time is the universal determination of all being.

Heidegger interprets Kant ontologically, but it does not mean that he grasps the ontological meaning of the notion of “thing in itself” in the sense that I have presented. I claim that he does not grasp the ambiguity of this notion, so he confuses its ontological and epistemological meanings (Pietras 2008a, 91–124). He starts from the epistemological meaning of this notion. “Thing in itself,” which he identifies with “being” means the same as “nothing.” He quotes Hegel’s famous statement that “*Pure being and pure nothing* are, therefore, the same (Hegel 2005, § 134).” Being, which is a real thing in itself, is nothing, because it is nothing ready, it is nothing constant, is pure becoming, we cannot give any determination of being. Pure being like pure nothing is absence of all determination and content. When we think about pure being we think only about some pure, indeterminate “something” (*Etwas überhaupt*). Being is like Kant’s transcendental Object X. It cannot be grasped, because we can grasp only something that is determinate. But Heidegger gives this epistemological understanding of the notion of “thing in itself” an ontological sense. He gives “pure something” and “pure nothing” an ontological sense. Being is nothing for us, so being is nothing at all. His ontology has no place for something independent of our cognition, but only for our understanding of being.

Josef Stallmach, who compares Hartmann’s and Heidegger’s projects, gives a better definition of Heidegger’s ontology. Heidegger’s ontology, he says, is an ontology of “*Seinverstehen*,” an ontology of the “understanding of being,” whereas Hartmann’s ontology is an ontology of “*Ansichsein*,” an ontology of the “self-existing-being” independent of our knowledge (Stallmach 1987).

We can now ask which project is more Neo-Kantian. I claim that Hartmann is much more Post-Neo-Kantian than Heidegger, because he transcends the epistemological Neo-Kantian perspective, whereas Heidegger wants to create a new ontological viewpoint but remains captive of the epistemological perspective which reduces the notion of “thing in itself” to its epistemological meaning.

12.6 The critical ontology of Hartmann vs. the fundamental ontology of Heidegger

Hartmann and Heidegger both create new ontological viewpoints. But as we have seen, these two ontological projects are different.

Hartmann's new ontology is a critical analysis of categories. Categories are principles of being. The object of Hartmann's ontology is the same as the object of classical ontology. His ontology is new, not in this sense that it has a new object, but only in the sense that it tries to avoid the mistakes of the old ontology. Hartmann identifies these mistakes in "Wie ist kritische Ontologie überhaupt möglich?" (Hartmann 1958, 268–313). The main reason for these mistakes is the tendency of human reason to generalize, to unify, i. e., the tendency toward monism. We discover a principle of some region of being, but then we unlawfully generalize and attribute this principle to the whole of being. Hartmann writes about the old uncritical ontology that it was a dogmatic and synthetic ontology, whereas the new ontology should be critical and analytic. The old, classical ontology starts with providing the most fundamental and undeniable principles of being and then extends from these principles to all varieties of beings. Classical ontology was monistic or alternatively dualistic. It was the biggest mistake of all ontological research. Therefore, according to Hartmann, the new, critical and analytic ontology should start as an analysis of the given phenomena.

This element of Hartmann's project causes his philosophy to be commonly included in phenomenology. But Hartmann proposes a notion of "givenness" different from that of Husserl, and this notion is a very important component of his project. It makes his ontology critical in the sense that I have mentioned earlier, according to which "to be critical" means "to take care not to omit anything." Hartmann's notion of "givenness" is the widest notion of "givenness" in all the history of philosophy. The new ontology should start from the analysis of all givenness, from all that we experience and Hartmann means not only scientific and philosophical experience but also life experience. Hartmann's new ontology is pluralistic. We cannot reduce all varieties of beings to one or two principles. There is a plurality of principles. We can distinguish between the principles of cognition and the principles of being, between the principles of ideal being and the principles of real being, and between the principles of particular strata of real being,

etc. There are always some fundamental categories. All this we must first very carefully test and not judge without examination. The new ontology should try to be systematic but not systemic. So Hartmann does not call ontology *philosophia prima*. He calls it *philosophia ultima* (Hartmann 1949, 227), which means that our knowledge of being and its categories are never absolute and unquestionable, because we can always find some new phenomena and when we face them we may have to change our earlier accepted convictions.

In contrast, Heidegger's new ontology, which he qualifies of "fundamental," is rather monistic. Fundamental ontology is concerned with the fundamental determinations of being in general. He does not want to analyze particular regions of being. He claims that, before building any regional ontology, we must establish its ground through fundamental ontology. Questions about being in general should preface questions about the variety of beings. In this aspect Heidegger's ontology is not new, because he wants to start from the same standpoint as classical ontology. But it is new for a different reason. Instead of beginning with an analysis of the object, like classical ontology, his ontology starts with an analysis of the subject. In this respect Hartmann's ontology is more classical. Heidegger's fundamental ontology arises from a transcendental position. If we want to know the "sense of being" (*der Sinn von Sein*) we should ask about the being of the subject, the being of the human being, which he calls *Dasein*, which means "being somewhere and some-when." It is an effect of transcendental thinking. The only sense of being is our understanding of being, so if we want to know the meaning of 'being' we must first know who we are and what is the meaning of our being. Heidegger's fundamental ontology is transcendentalism. It is a continuation of the modern philosophy of the subject. After his analysis of *Dasein*, Heidegger provides the fundamental determinations of being. All being is temporal. In *Being and Time* he analyses the human being (*Dasein*) to uncover the most fundamental determination of being: *time*. All being is temporal and changeable. There is nothing eternal, timeless and unchanging.

We can ask, why Heidegger's philosophy is so popular, whereas Hartmann's ontology, which in my opinion is much truer and scientifically more useful, is not. One of the possible answers is that (1) Heidegger's position is much more extreme¹⁴ and (2) probably unfortunately

14 Frank-Peter Hansen (Hansen 2008, 12–15) explains that Heidegger's fundamental ontology is much more popular than Hartmann's critical ontology be-

more extreme statements are more noticeable and popular. I say “unfortunately” because really critical thinkers like Hartmann know that reality is not so easy, monistic and extreme as described in these popular, extreme conceptions. To make this difference more evident we can summarize and confront some of Heidegger’s and Hartmann’s statements (Table 12.1).

Table 12.1

Heidegger	Hartmann
There is only a temporal, changing being.	Being contains a temporal, processual real being, and an eternal, unchangeable ideal being.
There is only our understanding of being.	We should distinguish our understanding of being, which is something real and important and being in itself (<i>Ansichsein</i>), which is independent of our cognition, and exists even if we don’t know about it.
Real cognition is receptive. Any spontaneity of the conceptions misrepresents real being. Concepts only deform being.	Our cognition is and has to be at the same time receptive and spontaneous. Our category of cognition and the category of being are partially overlap.
Kant was an ontologist. The <i>Critique of Pure Reason</i> is not a theory of cognition, but an ontology.	Kant’s <i>Critique of Pure Reason</i> is a theory of cognition as well as an ontology. His philosophy is not systemic, but systematic. Kant’s notion of “thing in itself” is ambiguous.
The Neo-Kantian interpretation of Kant is completely wrong.	The Neo-Kantian interpretation of Kant is not wrong, but one-sided.

We can find much more examples of Heidegger’s and Hartmann’s statements that show us that Heidegger’s fundamental ontology is much more extreme and one-sided than Hartmann’s critical ontology. Paradoxically, Heidegger, whose desire to overcome the Neo-Kantian philosophical perspective is more intense than Hartmann, remains more

cause Heidegger gave us more conclusive answers to fundamental human questions about the meaning of life. I agree with this point of view. Hartmann did not give us answers to this important question, because he wants to avoid all world views, which are always, according to him, “-isms.”

Neo-Kantian than Hartmann. “The young” and “the early”¹⁵ Heidegger continues the transcendental project of philosophy. Hartmann, however, is aware of his intellectual roots, and that’s why he can take from his teachers the elements that he appreciates and reject those that he considers to be weak. His new ontology transcends transcendental philosophy, from which it takes only that which is the best.

12.7 References

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15 I use Theodore Kisiel’s periodization of Heidegger’s career: Up to 1919 – ‘the young Heidegger,’ 1919–29 – ‘the early Heidegger,’ the 1930s to 1950s – ‘the later Heidegger,’ late 1950s – ‘the old Heidegger’ (Kisiel 1995, xiii).

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