Introduction. Philosophers and World War I. Scheler and Natorp as Exemplars of the German “Mandarin” Class. German War Philosophies

As is widely known, the onset of the First World War in 1914 produced a wide range of reactions from the intelligentsia of the countries at war, not only in Germany, but also, particularly, in France and England as well. Nevertheless, in Germany it was especially the philosophers who felt called upon to explain the meaning of the war in their own domain, i.e., philosophically. In this paper I will focus on the reaction of intellectuals in Germany, specifically the reaction of philosophers. There are many scholarly works that deal with the general public reaction to the outbreak of the war on the part of the intelligentsia,1 but less with those thinkers who professed particular “war philosophies.” Here I want to focus specifically on the publications of two important representatives of German philosophy, Max Scheler (1874-1928) and Paul Natorp (1854-1924), who made attempts at such a doctrine. As I will try to show, moreover, their “war philosophies” present two distinct but paradigmatic tendencies of explaining war in German philosophy, more generally of making war a philosophical issue. It is hence justified to juxtapose both thinkers in this common attempt.2 As ideological as these writings may be, I will attempt to judge them on philosophical grounds. Yet in the concluding part, I will discuss the question whether these “war philosophies” were truly ideologies, perhaps necessarily so.

In general, the war had been perceived, and even welcomed, as an international wake-up call with respect to competing political systems and ideologies. The war was also about asserting a nation’s intellectual superiority. Not only countries and their peoples were at war; rather, the war was one of ideas and rivaling political and, a fortiori, philosophical systems. The war was a war of ideologies; but behind ideologies stand, to wit, ideas, i.e., philosophical concepts (rightfully or not). It is hence not surprising that especially in a country such as Germany—a country rich with philosophical tradition and around 1900 arguably the strongest nation in the world in its philosophical output and influence—the war would become a prime topic of philosophical interest.3 Hardly any professional philosopher did not voice a decisive opinion about the war, even those who did not publish.4 Interestingly, though not surprisingly, the philosophers’

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1 Especially the works by Ringer 1969, Lübбе 1974, and Flasch 2000 present overall excellent studies, yet with very different emphases.

2 Lembeck 1997 has also compared Scheler and Natorp in their war philosophies. My reading will, however, be quite different from Lembeck’s. I will discuss Lembeck’s text subsequently.

3 The war was also a topic of discussion in France and England. In France, its spokespersons were no lesser philosophers than Henri Bergson and Émile Boutroux, in England J.W. Allen and G.K. Chesterton. For a summary of their ideas see Lübбе 1974, pp. 171-176.

4 This goes, e.g., for Edmund Husserl, the founder of the phenomenological movement. Interestingly, he felt more drawn to Natorp’s war philosophy than to that of his colleague Scheler. Husserl writes to Natorp on June 29, 1918, upon reading Natorp’s Deutscher Weltberuf, unequivocally endorsing Natorp’s work (Husserl 1994, p. 138): “I can completely take up without any alienation what you have clarified as the meaning of the development of the world,
explanation of the war was immediately linked to a given philosopher’s standpoint. What interested many philosophers in that time were not so much the reasons for the outbreak of the war, but rather war as a philosophical topic \textit{per se}. Was war a special, and unwelcome, state of affairs or was it part of the “essence” of life itself? Is the war an inherently bad thing or can one make the case for a just and “good” war, and how would one go about doing this? Is war or strife even, as already Heracleitus claimed, the “father of all things”?\footnote{This famous fragment of Heracleitus, pólemos patèr pantôn (fragment 53 Diels/Kranz), was quoted oftentimes by “war philosophers,” especially Scheler. We shall return to this issue in the discussion of Scheler’s war philosophy below.} Those were the kinds of questions that those philosophers who partook in the flurry of publications in the time of the war reflected upon. To be sure, the degree of “aloofness,” of philosophizing in the ivory tower, varied. While some, like Eucken, gave fiery speeches to big and mainly non-philosophical audiences, others, like Natorp, were intent on not getting their hands dirty in the daily business of warfare and politics but preferred an “unparticipating” standpoint.\footnote{Scheler fiercely attacks the stance of the “unparticipating observer,” a stance that his phenomenological colleague Husserl declared as the only position from where to truly do philosophy after having broken with the everyday “natural attitude.” Cf. Hua. VI, p. 242.} In any case, it is remarkable that in Germany especially, philosophers felt that they had to contribute to commenting on the war in a specifically philosophical manner. Obviously, they were serving a demand: many of these books sold well over the course of the war and even beyond.\footnote{Strangely enough, some of these books were read even after the Second World War, perhaps to recapture the enthusiasm of Germanness in the post-war period. If this is any indication at all, the version of Natorp’s \textit{Deutscher Weltberuf} which the author was able to retrieve in an antiquariate, was purchased by the original owners in 1957!}

There were certainly more popular figures within the philosophical scene of the time than Scheler and Natorp, above all fashionable figures such as Rudolf Eucken and Ernst Troeltsch, i.e., in the case of Eucken, philosophers who deliberately left the ivory tower and felt compelled to “become active.” Both Eucken and Troeltsch had an active following and both gave many highly attended public lectures and turned out an impressive amount of war literature.\footnote{It is thus highly interesting to note that \textit{Scheler} fiercely attacks the stance of the “unparticipating observer,” a stance that his phenomenological colleague Husserl declared as the only position from where to truly do philosophy after having broken with the everyday “natural attitude.” Cf. Hua. VI, p. 242.} Instead, there are good reasons for deciding to focus on our two philosophers who as \textit{philosophers} are certainly not less known, quite to the contrary. One of the reasons for this focus is that, precisely as philosophers, the level of their philosophical reflection by far exceeds that of other, more popular figures who fed the masses, precisely because the former did not make extreme (though some) concessions to popular appreciation. Scheler and Natorp were decidedly not so-called “\textit{Popularphilosophen},” but very much maintained the formal air of their profession as university teachers. Their reflections are decidedly more philosophical than those of others. Furthermore, and more importantly, they represent two of the dominant philosophical schools in the last decades of the nineteenth and the first decades of the twentieth century: Scheler was a reputed member of the “Phenomenological Movement,”\footnote{It was actually also the protestant clergy that partook heavily in transmitting war philosophies and ideologies to the people. The clergy, in this sense, popularized many philosophical doctrines. This is the thesis of Luft 1966.} a “school” that had been inaugurated by Edmund Husserl and that had, by 1914, grown to be the main challenger of the other school of “imperial stance” (Habermas)\footnote{The main publishing organ of the Phenomenological Movement, the \textit{Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung}, was co-edited by Husserl, Scheler and Alexander Pfänder (Munich).}:

\textit{Neo-Kantianism. One of the main figures in Neo-Kantianism was undoubtedly...}
Paul Natorp, besides Hermann Cohen and Ernst Cassirer a representative of the so-called “Marburg School,” in addition to the other “stronghold” in Heidelberg and Freiburg—the “Southwest School” (whose most distinguished members were Wilhelm Windelband, Heinrich Rickert and Emil Lask). Both Scheler and Natorp, hence, embody the two dominant philosophical tendencies in Germany around the time of the first war. Since both schools differ significantly in their philosophical character—indeed, their methods and scopes are sometimes perceived as opposites—their strategies of explaining and dealing with the war in the framework of their philosophical “systems” will also differ significantly—although not necessarily solely for the sake of belonging to a specific “camp.”

In general, however, both Scheler and Natorp are outstanding representatives of what Fritz Ringer has famously called the “Mandarin class” of German intelligentsia, more specifically the “German academic humanists and social scientists.” The specifically philosophical contributions of Scheler and Natorp will also have to be assessed in the context of the “German Mandarins,” a group they were decidedly part of. The overall feeling of the Mandarins was “that they were living through a profound crisis, a ‘crisis of culture,’ of ‘learning,’ of ‘values,’ or of the ‘spirit.’” As Ringer shows, this feeling began to form already in the last decade of the nineteenth century, only to intensify in the time of war. The term “crisis,” thus, was not only a term that was ubiquitous in the confusing interwar period and after 1933, but came to be employed heavily already in the time of the First World War. It was an abbreviation for the situation as such. Many thus welcomed the war as a “cleansing” of culture and civilization that had become polluted and poisoned. The war was but the tip of the iceberg of the overall crisis in politics, science, and culture at large. The storm thus was necessary to clear the air, as many thought. It was therefore not just the war, but the cultural situation as such that required a philosophical interpretation, an assessment that would also lead the way out of the crisis of modern mankind. This is why the discussion of the war could open up the debate towards a general “renewal” of culture, and why philosophers were needed to tackle such grand issues. Remarkably, now, this way out was in all cases connected to the special fate of the German people—even, as Natorp insisted, after the defeat. This owed, in the perception of philosophers such as Scheler and Natorp, to the great tradition of German philosophy that had peaked, and eclipsed, with the great systems of German Idealism in the nineteenth century. There were, however, quite different strands of German philosophy to which each latched on in assessing the crisis and overcoming it.

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11 It was the members of the respective schools themselves who perceived themselves to be in opposition to the other school. Especially Husserl, the founder of phenomenology, viewed his fact-oriented phenomenology in opposition to Neo-Kantian idealism. Heidegger’s scathing critiques of the Neo-Kantians in his Marburg lectures of the 1920s are well-known as well. However, Husserl later, after his turn to transcendental idealism in 1913, found the opposition to Neo-Kantianism less severe. Cf. Crowell 2001, esp. pp. 3ff. and 23ff., who has argued in this manner of opposition between both schools. In a recent article, I have tried to argue that the phenomenological and Neo-Kantian methods are not incompatible but rather reciprocal (Luft 2004). To discuss this interesting question lies beyond the scope of this paper.


14 Ibid., p. 3.

15 The probably most famous usage of the term “crisis” in the philosophical context is Husserl’s celebrated last work of 1936, The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Philosophy.

As I will try to show, both tactics of explaining the war identify themselves with essentially opposing philosophical tendencies that were present in the philosophical scene in nineteenth century Germany. Part of the self-understanding of German philosophy entailed, however, its general opposition to French and, more importantly, English philosophy. Whereas France and England were nations of unsystematic, rhapsodic and “empiristical” philosophy, only Germany could rightfully claim to be the land of “true” philosophy, i.e., philosophy as idealism or metaphysics, and only as such a true heir of philosophy since its inception in ancient Greece. What both Scheler and Natorp have in common, thus, is that both strongly perceive the war as a “metaphysical” entity. Only a treatment within a philosophy that subscribes to metaphysics can claim to explain the war in any satisfying philosophical manner. The World War is not a merely contingent event in the political landscape of Europe and the world at large; and it cannot merely be explained by considering the political, economical, and military, etc., constellations in the countries at war. The war is, rather, a metaphysical event of world-historical dimension that has come about with an almost “metaphysical necessity.” In other words, only a decidedly philosophical reflection on the war can truly comprehend this event. And, true philosophy is at home only in Germany. This was, in short, the general reasoning.

Thus, in the following I shall discuss Scheler’s as well as Natorp’s philosophical interpretations of the phenomenon of war. I will limit myself to their specifically philosophical arguments involved in assessing and comprehending this phenomenon. That is to say, neither is really interested in explaining the coming about of the war, its multifarious reasons and motives. Therefore, I believe, historians, political scientists, and sociologists are much better suited to explain precisely why and how this specific war came about. As specialists for generalities, philosophers traditionally do not bother with these kinds of “mundane” things. They go soaring to the realm of ideas and attempt to grasp the war in its “essence.” This means, however, that philosophers should, according to their own “job description,” at the same time leave behind national biases and prejudices. A truly philosophical attitude is incompatible with nationalistic chauvinism. It is known that most philosophers did not adhere to this ideal but in many respects remained caught up in the muck of their nationalistic and chauvinistic biases. It will thus be an important question how philosophers such as Scheler and Natorp reconciled this blatant contradiction. Thus, the concluding section will discuss whether these philosophers in question actually remained true to their ideal or whether they did not, rather, incorporate national stereotypes into their supposedly purely philosophical speculations. In other words, I will discuss the question whether Scheler’s and Natorp’s “war philosophies” in the end had not better be considered ideologies, and just that—that is, as documents of their time that had better be

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17 Both Scheler and Natorp mainly take issue with the “English spirit” and not so much with France. This might have been due to the factual war situation itself, in that many Germans hoped to win the French as allies. This is why, in the following discussion, French philosophy is essentially out of the picture. It also enables the reconstruction to be clearer in presenting the opposition between (British) realism/empiricism and (German) metaphysics/idealism.

18 In his interesting account of the history of how pragmatism was received on the European continent, Joas (Joas 1999, p. 124) writes: “Der Erste Weltkrieg selbst erschwerte dann jede sachliche Auseinandersetzung mit dem Denken eines Kriegsgegners noch weiter. Das nationalistische Fieber stieg in den Jahren vor dem Krieg immer mehr und ließ den freien geistigen Austausch zwischen den Nationen immer mehr als suspekt erscheinen, bis der Ausbruch des Krieges bei allen beteiligten Seiten zur Entstehung hemmungslos einseitiger Darstellungen der Geistesgeschichte der Kriegsgegner und der Herleitung des Kriegsverhaltens aus diesem „Geiste“ führte.” This is especially interesting, because he goes on to make a convincing case that there are “hidden” pragmatic elements in Scheler as well (cf. ibid., pp. 125 ff.). In other words, nationalistic clichés cemented the view of fundamental philosophical “styles” as being bound to specific nations, yet, in their philosophical work, philosophers such as Scheler were closer to the enemy than they thought!
forgotten. It is true that scholars of both figures usually pass over their war publications in ashamed silence.\(^\text{19}\) Yet, this disregard of their war philosophies is justified neither historically nor philosophically, for many reasons, the most obvious being that both Scheler and Natorp \textit{themselves} took these writings as direct emanations from their overall philosophical standpoints.

In a time such as ours, when again issues of a “just war,” preemptive strikes, a “war of cultures,” and cultural superiority are discussed vigorously, one ought to perhaps pay more attention to what philosophers said about the first war of the twentieth century, biased or even blinded by national enthusiasm and chauvinism as they might have been.\(^\text{20}\) This is not to say that this author endorses their views, or that one in any way can endorse their war philosophies without falling back into nationalistic or other stereotypes. Indeed, these writings are tedious and sometimes downright offensive to the modern reader. Presenting these ideas philosophically—and judging them on this basis—not evaluating them from the stance of an arrogant, all-knowing moral high ground is the purpose of this paper. However, one might see these reflections, unencumbered as they are by “political correctness,” as interesting inspirations on how war has been explained by philosophers in the past.

1. German Philosophy Against the Rest of the World: Metaphysics Versus Empiricism and Skepticism. Rationalism and Irrationalism in Nineteenth Century German Philosophy

Before discussing the tendencies within German philosophy of the nineteenth century, one has to appreciate the larger picture, as least as it was perceived by philosophers in the then-contemporary Germany. This sketch will have to remain a rough one; it is only meant to give a general impression of the European “scene.” Opposed to Germany’s supposed inherent “metaphysical” or “idealistic” tendency there stood, as the traditional counterpart, the empiricism ascribed mainly to the philosophers on the British Isles. This movement goes back to the British Empiricists of the early modern period, Locke, Hume, and Hobbes. Already Kant viewed the philosophers on the British Isles in this manner.\(^\text{21}\) The battle in Modern philosophy was that between, roughly, empiricism and metaphysics, or realism and idealism.\(^\text{22}\) What does one mean

\(^{19}\) Concerning Scheler, there is hardly any discussion of his war philosophy in Scheler scholarship, and those that discuss these writings for the most part try to exculpate him (cf. Lembeck 1997 and Schneider 1995). Frings (Frings 2003, pp. 162 ff.) discusses the topic of war in the context of Scheler’s analysis of drives. While he points out that these analyses are “very likely […] motivated by feelings of a pervasive German resentment of envy of the expansion of the British Empire” (ibid., p. 162), he then goes on to discuss Scheler’s views on war completely neutrally, as it were “philosophically,” without any view on his specific war literature. The same situation is present with respect to Natorp with the big exception of Jegelka’s study (Jegelka 1992), who even makes the attempt to integrate Natorp’s war writings into his overall interpretation of Natorp’s political and pedagogical philosophy. I shall discuss these contributions subsequently.

\(^{20}\) For a good overview of current discussions of war, cf. Coppieters & Fotion 2002. In the introduction (by Fotion, Coppieters and Appressyan) these authors discuss the general tendencies of thought on war and place them into the categories of realism, militarism and pacifism. They themselves profess the so-called “just war theory” with its categories of “\textit{jus ad bellum}” (justified reasons for going to war) and “\textit{jus in bello}” (just behavior in war). It would be an interesting task to compare the war philosophies of Scheler and Natorp in this context and assess where they would fit and whether they have other arguments to further either theory. The most interesting question here, it seems to me, would be whether or not Scheler and Natorp believe the war had anything to do with \textit{morality}. This would be, however, the topic of another paper. (I thank Nick Fotion for pointing me to this anthology.)

\(^{21}\) Cf. Kant’s \textit{Prolegomena}, where he gives these characteristics. To be sure, one ought also to remember Kant’s positive assessment especially of Hume who, in the famous phrase, awoke Kant from his “dogmatic slumber.”

\(^{22}\) I do not use the traditional term “rationalism” here because I reserve that for the two tendencies within Germany, rationalism vs. irrationalism. Moreover, this characterization is by no means my invention but summarizes a
with these “-isms”? Empiricism, to begin with, is the philosophical standpoint that bases its theses and arguments on experience, and experience only (from Greek *empeiría*, experience). It has its firm seat in reality as humans experience it. Metaphysics or idealism, on the other hand, bases its philosophical claims on that which lies beyond or “above” experience. It prefers high-flying speculation to realistic, sober assessments of worldly affairs. Empiricism’s philosophical aspirations, hence, are much more modest and down-to-earth. Those who endorse metaphysics have thus always accused empiricism of selling philosophy short, of shying away from the “big questions” or the “real problems” that cannot be solved by basing one’s reflection merely on experience. Philosophy is inherently “more” than what experience gives us, and more than the academic disciplines that are based on experience: the positive natural sciences such as biology, chemistry, and physics. The sciences base their reflections on experience and, hence, can never enter the “true” realm of philosophy, which lies over and beyond that which the sciences thematize. Empiricism thus ends up in skepticism as its reflections are always merely relative to the given experience over which one disposes, in a certain contingent time and place. True philosophy, however, deals with supra-temporal, eternal truths. Philosophy as it should be is about the timeless essence of things, not their concrete and contingent instantiations in a given situation. Philosophy that endorses empiricism will, hence, never even enter the antechamber of the palace in which true philosophy resides.

Again, it is clear that these are sketchy oversimplifications and clichés. However, German philosophy after Kant widely perceived itself in such a way, as the heir of ancient Greek (Platonic) metaphysics, now dressed in the gown of modernity under the title of transcendental or absolute idealism. German Idealism, especially Hegel, is the most popular representative of this tendency, arguably the strongest philosophical phase that Germany has experienced. Germany’s world reputation in philosophy is based on the philosophical work in this time, i.e., approximately between 1780 and 1830. Whether this assessment is fair to German philosophy between Kant and Hegel cannot be discussed here. It is true, however, that Hegel’s idealism of absolute spirit indeed presents the peak of this German tendency towards idealism—or, for that matter, the peak of a development that had begun with Plato and came to its grandest shape in Hegel’s philosophy. In many presentations of the history of philosophy, German or otherwise, Hegel is the philosopher of the German “spirit,” both because he stood at the end point of a philosophical development that had started in Germany with Kant and was continued by Fichte and Schelling (all German), and because he completed a “metaphysical” development that was perceived as inherently “German,” if, that is, one endorses this assessment of the history of modern philosophy. This Hegelian “Germanness” was both revered and ridiculed.

Tersely put, Hegel introduces a *teleological* element into the development of the history of philosophy, which is, indeed, a history of *reason itself*. History is first and foremost a development of human spirit (*Geist*) in its dialectical development from thesis, antithesis, to new

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23 This is different from ideology as it is described below in the conclusion: ideology inherently serves an *interest* and can, hence, never be a philosophical doctrine, unlike empiricism.

24 One would have to consult the famous histories of philosophy by W. Windelband and K. Fischer to verify this claim.

25 Cf. also Pinkard’s study who reconstructs German philosophy between 1760 and 1860 similarly. He also sees the main tenet of German philosophy in this period in idealism, cf. esp. the conclusion (Pinkard 2002, pp. 356-67).
(syn)thesis, and it is a development that has a clear direction and reaches its endpoint in nothing other than Hegel’s philosophy itself, oftentimes provoking the jocular naming of Hegel as “Mr. Absolute.” Hegel’s philosophy is “absolute idealism” because it purports to “sublate” (the untranslatable “aufheben”) all traditional philosophical theories into a higher form in which all differences become reconciled. Philosophy that has begun in antiquity reaches its highest peak and celebrates its homecoming in Hegel’s system itself. It is thus not surprising that such high-flying ambition produced a plethora of criticism. Indeed, the further development of nineteenth century philosophy, the so-called “decline” or “collapse of German Idealism,” can be seen as a critical renunciation of Hegel’s system. The most outspoken critics of Hegel’s system were Schopenhauer, Feuerbach, Marx, Kierkegaard and, later, Nietzsche—again, except for Kierkegaard (a Dane who had studied in Berlin with Hegel), all Germans. Thus, the further development of philosophy in Germany can be seen as a critical demolition of Hegel’s philosophy which, however, remained committed to viewing philosophy as metaphysics. Thus, although most important philosophers after Hegel were mostly critical of the latter, they were nevertheless for the most part in opposition to empiricism. The battle within German “metaphysical” philosophy was, rather, a battle over rationalism and irrationalism.

The main point of contention was that Hegel’s system was allegedly overly rational, i.e., that it had an overly positive view of reason in history. History as history of spirit, of reason hence, was perceived as unrealistic, preposterous and altogether too “speculative.”26 Hegel’s teleology was a philosophical wish, nothing more. There were several suggestions or candidates for what was the “true” motor of history: blind will (Schopenhauer), human labor (Marx), pre-rational life or will to power (Kierkegaard, Nietzsche). All of these can be subsumed under the title of “irrational” forces that govern the world rather than reason. The true movens or agens of history is anything but reason or spirit, but rather irrational powers that are not to be comprehended by human reason, and if they can be, human reason certainly cannot alter the course of the world. The strongest philosophical current these tendencies flowed into is the movement of philosophy of life (Lebensphilosophie) around the turn of the century, the dominant figures of which were philosophers such as Simmel and Dilthey—and Scheler, as we will see. Its overall aim was to open philosophy up to these irrational forces in life, to life itself that escapes reason and philosophical reflection. Philosophy can reflect upon this brute force of life but cannot govern it. It can at best try to make sense of it, but it would be ridiculous to believe that the world behaves according to reason—the outbreak of the war is the best proof for this assessment. The idea that life is inherently rational is but an innocent and unrealistic dream. Rather, one has to embrace life itself and not let it dissipate in detached, philosophical reflection.

Opposed to this there still stood those who believed in the project of idealism that had begun with Kant, of laying an ultimate foundation of knowledge in reason. Granted that Hegel had gone too far with his absolute idealism of absolute spirit, but the main intentions of Kant’s critique of reason, the transcendental turn to subjectivity, was still valid and deserved to be preserved. Giving up this ideal would lead to irresponsible relativisms and skepticisms. Hence, as of ca. 1880, from many sides the call “back to Kant!” The Neo-Kantian movement27 hence became the main philosophical movement in Germany (over against the individuals mentioned above). One reason for its dominance in the philosophical mainstream was that it was mainly represented by philosophers who were university professors, i.e., respected members of society (“Mandarins”),

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26 The critique of philosophy after the Second World War, especially by Adorno/Horkheimer (the Dialectics of Enlightenment), is prefigured here.

27 The development of this movement can be traced in detail in Köhnke 1986.
as opposed to other figures such as Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, who had mocked the allegedly conservative class of philosophers in academia. The Neo-Kantian movement is too diverse to be summarized in one sentence here; already the two “main” schools in Southwest Germany and Marburg are much too differentiated to be even considered as part of one school. If there is one character trait that the Neo-Kantians did have in common it was their philosophical tendency to hold steadfast to the ideal of reason, to the project of enlightenment. Philosophy is about rationality if it is to be called philosophy at all, whereas thinkers such as Nietzsche did not even care to call their attempts “philosophy.” Thus, in a very broad range of the term, the Neo-Kantians were rationalists, whereas most other influential philosophers at the end of the nineteenth century, such as the Lebensphilosophen, were “irrationalists,” i.e., they did not believe in the global, historical importance and meaning of reason. Both tendencies, however, still conceived of their attempts in opposition to empiricism and the ensuing skepticism. For instance, although the early Husserl was anything but an “idealist,” the main targets of his famous refutation of psychologism in the first volume of the Logical Investigations (1900) were skepticism and relativism. In other words, despite the stark oppositions within German philosophy, they still believed empiricism to be the downfall of philosophy.

The point of this narrative now was, on the one hand, to lay out in broad strokes the intellectual matrix in German philosophy around the turn of the century. My claim is, on the other, that both Scheler and Natorp can be classified into the group of irrationalists and rationalists, respectively, while at the same time viewing themselves in opposition to empiricism. Empiricism, however, was perceived as an inherently British phenomenon, whereas the home of true philosophy as metaphysics was (or had become) Germany. Thus, while both irrationalists and rationalists were opposed to each other, they still had a common enemy, and since this enemy came from across the Channel, it was, in the end, a battle between England and Germany over the superiority of their respective philosophical systems. Yet, whereas Natorp, as a distinguished member of Neo-Kantianism, remained committed to rationalism and its teleological conception of reason, Scheler on the other hand was attracted to the philosophy of life and its irrational tendencies. Concerning Scheler, this is particularly interesting, because despite this irrational tendency he still adhered to the Platonic-phenomenological method of “seeing essences.” It is clear that both philosophical outlooks would have an essential influence on how to view war. As “metaphysicians,” however, both Scheler and Natorp saw in the war a metaphysical force at work that could not be explained by politics, history, economy, science, in short, by any form of empiricism. War demanded a truly philosophical treatment.

2. Scheler and the Genius of the German War (1915)

Max Scheler’s Der Genius des Krieges und der Deutsche Krieg (The Genius of War and the German War), written in a frenzy of enthusiasm right after the outbreak of the war and dedicated to “my friends in the field,” was published in the early days of 1915. It is a significant tome of almost 450 pages. In the “passionate activity of the heart [Gemüt]” that enraptured him, Scheler admits, more than once did he have to set aside the pen; so much was he given over to this ecstatic mood in the early days of the war. Although Scheler’s book is composed in a passionate and high-spirited style, it is nevertheless a decidedly philosophical work and evokes, and heavily draws from, elements of his philosophy laid out in publications prior to 1914, most

28 Scheler 1915, front page.
29 Ibid., p. 2 of the unpaginated “Vorrede.”
Scheler was a phenomenologist. As such, he utilized what was considered the defining trait of phenomenology, its method. The phenomenological method as it was presented first by Husserl in his ground-breaking work *Logical Investigations* (1900/01) can be characterized as a methodology of “seeing essences.” Scheler in principle took over this method but creatively applied it to regions far beyond the scope that Husserl had envisioned, most importantly moral philosophy. Husserl’s basic idea was that with the method of “eidetic intuition” one could actually “see” the essence of a specific object, and phenomenology’s task is to describe this essence thoroughly and in an unprejudiced way. The specific exemplar which one sees before one’s (material or mental) eyes is merely an exemplar of this essence. Although Husserl vigorously denied this, his phenomenology was oftentimes identified as a modern form of Platonism.  

So, for instance, when seeing a red brick house, I at the same time see the redness of the red bricks; vice versa I can identify the bricks as red because I always already see the redness of this red exemplar. Phenomenology as the logos or doctrine of the phenomenon attempts to see things as what they really are, i.e., as what they show themselves, how they appear (as phenomenon denotes “appearance” from the Greek phainesthai), in other words, how they really are in their “essence.” It is about getting to how things show themselves as they really are, i.e., in their true nature, their essence. For, most of the time things do not show themselves as they really are; they are hidden, concealed etc. Getting to the essence of things, thus, is the main goal of phenomenology in its famous call “to the things themselves!” Phenomenology is hence an eidetic science of how things appear to human beings when we experience the world. It is a descriptive doctrine of essences, hence a method of description.  

While Husserl mainly applied this method to the intuition of mathematical and logical objects (and later to the structure of consciousness), Scheler took this method most famously to the realm of moral behavior and ethics. In a rather liberal interpretation of Husserl’s method (with which Husserl was quite dissatisfied), Scheler utilized the methodological tools of phenomenology to describe the essences of morality, i.e., values. Famously critiquing Kant’s ethics for its formality and cold-hearted “rigorism,” Scheler’s material ethics of value strived to describe values as those essences that govern moral life. Moral actions and deeds are actually exemplary instantiations of values as the essences of certain acts. The essence of act X is that it embodies the value of, e.g., goodness. The goal of his material (as opposed to Kant’s formal) ethics is to essentially furnish a compendium of these values and describe their essence and their respective hierarchies. This is Scheler’s great counter-theory to Kant’s formal ethics that deliberately does not make any value judgments but postulates as the only criterion for an action’s moral justification that the maxim of the action’s underlying will must conform to the general moral law (the famous “categorical imperative”). By contrast, to Scheler, only describing values in their actual validity for us can be a just rendering of how we actually make moral decisions and judge actions in our daily life-

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30 Cf. also Flasch’s account of Scheler’s biography and his helpful but somewhat over-simplifying summary of his philosophy (Flasch 2000, pp. 103 ff.).
31 It was no other than the Neo-Kantianism Plato expert Paul Natorp who proposed this reading of Husserl’s method!
32 I cannot discuss the consequences that phenomenologists drew from this basic idea, i.e., whether phenomenology should be committed to realism or idealism. Whereas Scheler remained an idealist in the early conception of phenomenology, Husserl later turned to idealism.
33 As Lembeck (Lembeck 1997, p. 226; genius is “ein vorbildlicher Gesamtpersonentyp”) has pointed out, the “genius” that Scheler is evoking in his war book is actually an ideal type of person that Scheler already discerns in his magnum opus, *Der Formalismus in der Ethik und die Materiale Wertethik* of 1913 (second installment 1916).
world. The philosopher is not himself supposed to make value judgments; rather, his stance must remain distanced and unprejudiced. Hence Scheler remains, in a basic manner, committed to phenomenology’s method of description.

Judging from this background, it is quite natural that Scheler’s “obsession” with essences in general becomes utilized in his discussion of war as an element of the life-world. This is not to say that war is itself an issue of moral philosophy, yet it is “an event in the moral world,” that is, it is an event, not of nature’s brute force, but of human life (evoking the traditional opposition of nature and spirit). In order to arrive at the essence of things warlike, thus, one needs to apply the phenomenological method to war as well. To treat the war and the issues belonging to it philosophically, in other words, means describing the essence of war as well as the essence of concomitant phenomena, such as peace, honor, life, spirit, nation, death, etc. The main target of these discussions is at all times the “British mind” that dissolves these essences into empirical phenomena. Only a “metaphysics of war” can grasp the war’s essence. The British mind, by contrast, since it is entirely grounded on empirical explanations, does not see the difference between facts and essences. This is why the British can preposterously declare facts for essences. Concretely, the British mind is entirely given over to its “cant” to which Scheler devotes a whole concluding “appendix” and he tops it off with a list of concepts that show how the British equivocate certain “essential” terms with its degenerate factual (British) versions thereof: When the Englishman says “culture” he means “comfort”; he confounds “truths” with “facts,” “the useful” with “the good,” “loyalty” with “exactitude in keeping one’s contracts,” “morality” with “right,” “person” with “gentleman,” “love” with “solidarity in interests,” and, what is perhaps most revealing: “human nature” with “Englishman.”

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Tersely put, since the Englishman cannot transcend his or her nationalistic boundaries s/he generalizes that which goes for themselves only, for everyone. They commit, hence, a classical category mistake. Obviously now, Scheler cannot be so foolish as to simply lapse into the same chauvinism with regard to the German mind. And yet, his discussions are drenched in nationalistic rhetoric. So how does he go about squaring the generality of war, its essence, with “the German war”?

As mentioned, Scheler is non-judgmental with regard to the goodness or badness of the war. To make any such value judgment would be un-phenomenological (more than mere description). Instead, a just description of the war reveals the fact that the war is a metaphysical event in the life of Western civilization. Contrary to Kant’s famous vision of “eternal peace” as a hopeful state of mankind’s future, war is a “natural occurrence in the world” and as

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34 p. 1 of the unpaginated “Vorrede.”
35 These are the main topics Scheler deals with in the “philosophical” passages of this work. In the last two parts of his work (“Die geistige Einheit Europas und ihre politische Forderung,” pp. 251 ff., and “Los von England,” pp. 335 ff.) he actually comments on the factual political situation of his time. These passages have mainly the character of scathing polemics against (mostly) the British.
36 Scheler 1915, p. 117.
37 Ibid., pp. 383ff.
38 Cf. ibid., pp. 442f.
39 Lübbe points out that in this existential reading Scheler was also influenced by the war writings of Georg Simmel, cf. Lübbe 1974, pp. 218f.
40 Ibid., p. 9. Indeed, Kant and others are mocked for their “pacifism.” Comparing Kant’s ideas on “perpetual peace” with Scheler’s assessment might reveal Kant in fact not to be a pacifist in the sense that Fotion et al. (Coppieters & Fotion 2002) characterize it. Reading Kant’s text only superficially makes it clear that to him, “perpetual peace” is a regulative idea, and his text with this title actually formulates criteria for what one could call a “just war theory,” e.g., axiom no. 6: “No state at war with another shall permit such acts of hostility as would make mutual confidence impossible during a future time of peace.” (Kant 1970, p. 96). This would fall under the category of “jus in bello” within just war theory.
such a “miracle” in the sense that one cannot explain it empirically. Rather, it must be embraced by those, “who experience this war, not as a bad dream or nightmare, but as an almost metaphysical awakening from the dull state of a heavy dream.” Scheler’s alleged irrationalism comes most clearly to the fore in his celebration of the “genius of the war” and in his vigorous attacks on naïve enlightenment thought which he sees most clearly represented in Kant’s idea of “eternal peace.” There is no teleological development of the human race; rather, war is an unquenchable element of life itself. Moreover, truly experiencing the presence of war calls us, as Germans, forth to awake from our dreary slumber and finally come into our own—as a nation. War first of all molds peoples into nations and calls on them to make a decision as to who they really are or want to be. War is a moment of decision. Yet, although the war is part of human life, Scheler goes through pains to emphasize that it is not part of organic life. Life can only truly be explained metaphysically, not physically (or positivistically, vitalistically or economically). Life is a spiritual category. As such, it can neither be good nor bad, as this would be applying inadequate categories to a basic life phenomenon, like applying the category of “goodness” to e.g., a sculpture. War is, a fortiori, not just any element, but part of the essence of life. Any explanation that applies empirical or value judgments to this phenomenon would be skewed from the very start.

As part of life itself—life in the spiritual sense—war is “the dynamic principle kat’ exochen of history.... Every war is a return to the creative origin from which the state as such arose.” Life itself has the trait of living itself out according to the law of its own, inner nature, but the motor of this movement is war, not peace. Heracleitus’ famous fragment and Nietzsche’s “will to power” loom large, although neither is mentioned. War as life’s motor expands nations and peoples according to their inner law of development. As such, neighboring peoples, cultures, nations etc., if they have an active life with its own distinct character, by necessity must clash, for life’s essence is to assert itself, to bring itself to fullest fruition, not to spare the weaker. “Indeed, the state waging war is the state in the highest actuality of its existence.” War is thus the necessary result of different nations’ lives. Peace, on the other hand, is nothing but a lazy compromise, an almost insulting ignorance of the other’s and one’s own essence. War is asserting oneself and one’s unique identity. That is to say, nobody can nor ought to be blamed for going to war. Waging war is, on the contrary, merely a nation’s healthy way of letting its inner truth roam free. “The true root of the war lies therein that in all life—indepedent of all its specific and changing surroundings and its sensations—inhers a tendency towards increase, towards growth and towards an unfolding of its manifold types.” Moreover, the more a country or nation let their inner life roam freely according to its true essence, and not empirical (military, economical etc.) interests, the more it can be said to be acting according to its own essence. “Meaning and existence of nations and national states thus rest entirely on supra-utilitaristic concepts, it rests on the values of life and culture, power, honor, spirit.” These latter concepts adumbrate essences that do not belong to any specific nation; yet, by contrast, there are countries

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41 Ibid., p. 2.
42 Ibid., p. 4.
43 Cf. Scheler’s attacks on Kant’s vision in Scheler 1915, pp. 18ff.
44 Cf. ibid., pp. 10f.
45 Ibid., p. 17. On p. 43, Scheler say that war is “rooted in life itself.”
46 Flasch (Flasch 2000, p. 115) also points out Nietzsche’s influence on Scheler as of 1913/14.
47 Ibid., p. 43.
48 Ibid., p. 36. Cf. also the Nietzschean passage on p. 41, bottom.
49 Ibid., p. 33. To be sure, “utilitarianism” is a pejorative term designating “British thought.”
that instantiate these essences better than others—and there are nations that do not even care for these essences, like the British.

Concerning the victory in the war, it relies entirely upon the power of the nations at war. The stronger nation will by necessity win, and what makes it stronger than others is the power of its inner life, its adhering to the true essences of greatness, spirit, power, etc. In other words, it is not nations per se that win, it is their truthfulness to the spirit of life to which they owe their victory. In the end, all wars are spiritual battles, and that country wins by necessity which is the most spiritual. Thus, although the war might bring factual and material suffering to individual peoples, it also has a spiritual side: “War always carries within itself these two opposite traits: the character of a basic, spiritual-vital event of nature ... and a conscious purposeful activity of the statesperson with more or less clearly defined ‘demands’ upon an alien state.”50 Thus, the war is a good, useful thing in that it sorts out better from worse nations (worse, that is, in adhering to essences). War is the final arbiter over superior spiritual systems; war is a form of God’s judgment day on earth: “The more valuable ‘state’ ‘ought to’ reign and war makes decisions according to the ‘higher justice’ of a divine council in active deeds .... Precisely in this way is the ‘just war’ the vehicle through which the respective higher justice and the mediating systems of its instantiation, i.e., the higher-valued and ‘more just’ systems of rights and laws on earth, grow in the maximally optimal way.”51 By severing the just from the unjust, the war is also the “most powerful creator of unity,”52 insofar as it for the first time has the capacity to give unity to a people in its becoming of a nation, a culture, instead of merely a federal country or a civilization. War frees people from their unhealthy self-centeredness and egotism53 and creates the new unity of a genuine “we” (as the call “United We Stand” after 9/11 was meant to unify the country in a time of need). If this unity is achieved in the waging of the war itself, then war is “just”:54 “In the ‘just war’ even the bloodiest defeat will not lead to permanent hatred but solely to the spiritual-moral inwardness [Einkehr] of a given people ....”55 In this sense, war is not an act of hatred but of love.56 In war, one can risk one’s life and only in war can one truly gain it, even in death. Only in dying does one have the opportunity to become a hero in gaining the essence of one’s life (even if one’s loses one’s existence!). In war, “everyone becomes a metaphysician.”57 War brings us before the threshold of transcendence, the “threshold of religious immortality,”58 and “tears down the masks that have been furnished by peace.”59 As such, war has the capacity of a metaphysical “critique” in that it reduces the existence of people to its “essential content.”60

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50 Ibid., p. 57.
51 Ibid., p. 91.
52 Ibid., p. 97.
53 Cf. ibid., p. 98. Indeed, war can function as a sort of “psychotherapy of the peoples” (p. 100). Scheler quotes Binswanger’s study on “The Spiritual Effects of War” (ibid., footnote 64, p. 365) where the latter asserts that many men in his mental hospital (“anxious, timid, hesitant, weak-willed”) in one instant, at the outbreak of the war, became sane and “to this day” not have had relapses into their old, insane, state of affairs.
54 As an aside, this would certainly count as one of the maxims of the modern just war theory, as there are: “just cause,” “legitimate authority,” “right intentions,” “likelihood of success,” proportionality,” “last resort” (cf. Coppieters & Fotion 2002)!
55 Ibid., p. 105.
56 Cf. ibid., p. 150. To wit, victory in the war is due to God who is a “God of love” (ibid.). Consequently, war is an act of love as well.
57 Ibid., p. 124.
58 Ibid., p. 127. Compare this to Heidegger’s famous analysis of being-towards-death (Sein zum Tode) in Being and Time. Here Heidegger claims the contrary, that the anticipation of my own death precisely makes me aware of my essential finitude. A philosopher’s all-too-human reaction to Germany’s defeat in the Great War?
59 Ibid., p. 134.
60 Ibid., p. 143.
It is clear what Scheler alludes to with the term “critique”; only the war can provide, not a critique of pure, but of “metaphysical reason.” The war is thus beneficial for philosophy itself, it motivates philosophers to step back from “splitting hairs” in purely academic questions to again attempt to gain an “autonomous, original intuition of the world.”

So, to summarize Scheler’s overall argument: War as an essential element of life ought to be embraced, not shunned. It brings out the best, so to speak, in any nation. Thus, one ought to seek it out, experience it to the fullest, in order to become purified in one’s essence and unified into a nation that knows what it wants because it has made the effort to rise above national, individual particularities. When a nation does this, it is no longer German, French or English. What one reaches in this “metaphysical move” is the realm of “absolute realities.” Thus, one needs these extreme circumstances to have the disposition in the first place (the condition of possibility, as it were) to experience these absolute realities. Thus, Scheler asserts, whoever thinks that only an aloof, unparticipating stance will enable one to reach philosophical heights is tragically mislead; he rhetorically asks thusly: “What does reality care about the conditions of knowledge that the scholars want to impose upon reality?” “Such a meaning that enables cognition to experience absolute realities only belongs to war, only belongs to the peculiar upward soaring of the spirit that is called for by war to an extraordinary degree.” In more simple terms: Insofar as other nations, such as the British, ignore and disregard the importance of these “absolute realities” they do not even qualify to be a “chosen nation.” The Germans, on the other hand, due to their traditional metaphysical propensity, embrace these absolute realities. This is why this war is decidedly a “German war,” as the title of Scheler’s book already asserts. Thus, Scheler’s philosophical “trick” is this: It is not because they are Germans that they are a chosen people, but it is because they, more than all others, embrace the metaphysical dimension of the war. War produces special dispositions that enable a nation to become true to essences or absolute realities. It is, hence, up to the nations themselves to open themselves up to these higher spheres. The Germans, as a profoundly philosophy-friendly nation, do this quasi-automatically as they are a metaphysical nation already. This is why “this great mission” of establishing true greatness and “universal love” is Germany’s alone. More tersely put: Germany’s war is great and not because it is Germany’s, but because the Germans better than any other nation have the capacity to comprehend and realize the war’s essence, an essence which lies above any particular nation or culture.

It is easy to dismiss this theory altogether, to see it as a mere product of war enthusiasm. Yet, one makes things too easy on oneself. And, neither does one do Scheler any good by attempting to “salvage” Scheler the philosopher by pointing out that he became a critic of the war after 1918, even a pacifist. Nor does it help to merely dismiss these reflections as just short of utter

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61 Ibid., p. 144. Indeed, as Scheler says here, the Persian War has helped Plato and Aristotle to become great philosophers!
62 Ibid., p. 119.
63 Ibid.
64 Ibid.
65 Cf. ibid., p. 173. Flasch quotes Helmut Kuhn as calling Scheler’s a “religious nationalism” (cf. Flasch 2000, p. 121).
66 Lübbe, e.g., judges Scheler’s view of Germany to be a “synthesis of Fichte and Krupp” (Lübbe 1974, p. 225), i.e., of nationalistic philosophy and militant industrialism. While there is certainly some truth to this catchy phrase, it is still too simplistic to get a good handle on Scheler’s thoughts on war.
67 Lembeck 1997 and Schneider 1995 point this out. Whereas Lembeck, however, attempts to exculpate Scheler by simply pointing out that he turned to pacifism (cf. Lembeck 1997, p. 231, merely speaks of “corrections” in Scheler’s views), I also fail to see any real philosophical reasons in Schneider’s account. Flasch, however, remarks
stupidity. Rather, as should have become clear, these reflections are a direct result of Scheler’s philosophical standpoint. Scheler’s philosophical genius in fact demands that these reflections be taken seriously, and this means, that a critique of these ideas should attempt to meet them eye to eye on the philosophical level as well. Thus, what is problematic about this theory? How can one respond to his claim that the Germans realize these essences better than other nations? First off, one can respond with a counter-question: How does, how can one know this? How can Scheler the German be so sure that the Germans touch upon essences and other nations don’t? Furthermore, how does he know that the essences he discerns are really the true essences whereas the British counter-concepts are not? What makes Scheler so sure that “his” concepts are essences whereas those of others are not? Although Scheler claims that only the war creates the disposition to intuit these essences such as honor, life, etc. in their most original way, these essences cannot be bound to the trenches in Verdun or Belgium. One still needs philosophical reflection to come up with such “essences.” War cannot create the essence of life, it can only make if manifest. Counter to Scheler’s claim, his own “philosophical disposition” displays, upon closer inspection, the same philosophical aloofness that he criticizes in other philosophers. It is a philosophy that does not want to get its hands dirty in the daily business of blood, sweat and tears. Nolens volens also in Scheler, fact follows from essence, not vice versa. Furthermore, one can question the plausibility of applying the phenomenological method to this sort of “essences” such as nation, culture, loyalty, democracy, faith, etc. There is no supra-temporal essence of culture, there are only the Western, Eastern, French, German, American cultures. Although everyone can see that there is a difference between culture and civilization, as concepts, this still does not justify the philosopher speaking of these concepts as a-temporal essences. Democracy is likewise not some ideal state of human cohabitation but a form of government that arose in a certain period of Western civilization that cannot be comprehended without the Greek polis, Christianity, and the European Enlightenment. This is not to doubt its greatness, but this supposed greatness cannot lie in its being an essence that was realized by certain nations and that therefore can be imposed upon other nations with other histories and cultures.

In other words, what accounts for problems in Scheler’s theory is precisely his “drunkenness with metaphysics” and the concomitant, fatal separation between the “metaphysical” and the “real” (or theoretical and practical) world. Only this strict separation makes it possible to remain a philosopher, i.e., someone who does not want to get involved, instead of seeing that a war is, to be sure, a war of ideas as well, but not exclusively, and that the strict separation of the real and the ideal by necessity makes the philosopher blind toward the actual reality of the real—as opposed to how one wants it to be. As Flasch rightly says, “Scheler’s theoretical concepts did not motivate him to uncover the historical-factual mistakes of this German propaganda thesis [sc., of the Germans being a “chosen” nation]. These theoretical concepts prevented him especially from grasping the inner contradiction between [these concepts and the historical-factual mistakes],” Scheler’s war philosophy amounts to a privileging of the ideal over the real. Where the ideal is more important than the despised real, atrocities in reality become possible and, what is worse, permissible, for reality is treated no different from a misbehaving child that does not live up to the wishes of the parent.

that it is less a change in Scheler from war-monger to pacifist but rather a change in his assessment of how the benign ideas and values have become implemented in the war (Flasch 2000, p. 122). This conforms to my reading according to which Scheler judges the reality by the idea and is, as it were, “upset” that the reality does not do what it is supposed to according to its “essence”!

68 This seems to be Flasch’s view. Cf. his short preface (Flasch 2000, pp. 7-11) as well as his final assessment of Scheler’s war literature, ibid., pp. 124-128.

69 Flasch 2000, p. 125.
3. **Natorp and Germany’s World Vocation (1918)**

Paul Natorp’s *Deutscher Weltberuf: Geschichtsphilosophische Richtlinien* (German World Vocation: Guidelines With Respect to the History of Philosophy) consisting of two parts (I: *Die Weltalter des Geistes, The Spiritual Ages of the World,* and II: *Die Seele des Deutschen, The Soul of the German*) was published in 1918 with the imminent defeat already in view. Natorp had already earlier, beginning in 1914, published some “war texts,” mostly (collections of) speeches, i.e., short pieces written on the spur of the moment. The reason I am focusing on this late work is that it presents Natorp’s most mature and extensive treatment concerning our topic in question. Also, the fact that it is also written towards the end of the war most likely accounts for the fact that Natorp’s judgment is much more measured than that of his philosophical colleague discussed previously. While it is clear from what was said about Scheler, i.e., that he counts as an “irrationalist,” this section is to show how Natorp can be considered a “rationalist.” Since he is committed to rationalism in his general philosophical outlook, his style is at no point as “hot-headed” as Scheler’s (who wants to, as it were, emulate the furious spirit of his times in his writing). However, Natorp’s two-volume work is by no means as dense and difficult as Natorp’s other writings. Indeed, it presents a deliberately more popular book written for a wider audience. Natorp takes, in a sense, the war and its world-historical meaning as an opportunity to illustrate the main tenets of his philosophy. The war is the grand occasion to talk about the historical meaning of the world and how the Germans factor into this picture. But before we turn to this discussion, how can one summarize Natorp’s general philosophical standpoint?

Natorp is a member of the Neo-Kantian movement that had begun around 1880 with the call “back to Kant!” Kant’s philosophy was seen as the antidote to the unhealthy developments in philosophy, and culture at large, in the latter half of the nineteenth century—the discussed irrationalism as well as scientism, i.e., the belief that positive (natural) science could solve humankind’s problems. It was not a naïve return to Kantian philosophy like a religious invocation turning its back on the present. Instead, the Neo-Kantians attempted to redress the main tenets of Kant’s philosophy in the light of contemporary challenges. The spirit of enlightenment that had peaked with Kant had to be recaptured, yet in a modified way. That is, the fundamental thesis of the Enlightenment is that the ultimate grounding of knowledge must lay in reason alone. The Neo-Kantians were committed to the project of laying an ultimate

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70 A list of these publications can be found in Jegelka 1992, pp. 354 f. Most importantly, the short booklet *Der Tag des Deutschen* (*The Day of the German*) in 1915, consisting of four speeches and articles written in 1914. The title is a quotation from Schiller: “Jedes Volk hat seinen Tag in der Geschichte, doch der Tag des Deutschen ist die Ernte der ganzen Zeit.” “Each people has its day in history, but the day of the German is the harvest of all time.” Interestingly, also Scheler quotes Schiller time and again in his war literature.

71 Natorp, who died in 1924, was also at this time at the summit of his philosophical development. In his latest phase everything to him seemed to fall into place. Before his death he managed to finish two last works, the *Lectures on Practical Philosophy* (that appeared in 1925) and his *Philosophical Systematics* (edited and published posthumously by his son in 1954). For an assessment of this late phase, cf. Stolzenberg 1995 and Wolzogen 1985.

72 It is dedicated to the “young generation [dem jungen Geschlecht], the bearer of the future of our fatherland,” Natorp 1918, p. vi. Though one cannot tell if this was Natorp’s wish, the book is also typeset in the old German “Gothic” font which indicates that the book is meant to be more popular vis-à-vis the “scientific” or “academic” style of Latin typesetting.

73 Famously, the “first Neo-Kantian” Otto Liebmann in his book *Kant und die Epigonen* (1865) gave a survey over several systematic fields of philosophy and ended each chapter with the sentence “Also muß auf Kant zurückgegangen werden.” (“Thus one needs to revert back to Kant.”). Cf. Ollig 1979, pp. 10 ff.
foundation of knowledge in reason. This was the infamous problem of Letzbegründung, to which especially Natorp subscribed. However, reason itself is not a rigid or static structure that remained unchanged (like an essence). Reason cannot be divorced from that which thinking and rationally acting subjects do in the course of history. The world is a world of human production over the course of history. Indeed, reason is itself subject to a dynamic development over the course of history. Philosophy has the task to reconstruct this dynamic development, just like a therapist would reconstruct an individual patient’s spiritual development. The manner of performing such a reconstruction calls for a special method. Natorp, the “methodical fanatic” of the Neo-Kantian movement, thus further developed the “transcendental method” (originally sketched by Hermann Cohen) in order to come to grips with this task.

The Neo-Kantian transcendental method can be understood as the critical counterpart to the phenomenological method. Kant’s famous transcendental (“Copernican”) turn was a turn of attitude from talking about the world as it exists in itself (the ominous “thing in itself” of which we, strictly speaking, cannot know) to talking about the world insofar as it is experienced. Transcendental philosophy, in making recourse to the experiencing subject, thematizes the conditions of that which makes this experience possible. The transcendental question, thus, asks: “How is experience possible?” This is the classical transcendental turn that was first introduced by Kant and was further developed, criticized, radicalized, most importantly by the German Idealists. Now, as mentioned, insofar as this experiencing of world has a dynamic character, thematizing this experience of the world amounts to characterizing, or recounting a (hi)story, of how the world has become experienced by human consciousness. The world itself, as an object of human experience, thus is a construct through this ever-expanding experience. Philosophy’s task then is to re-trace, to reconstruct this experience that is always already occurring in different regions of experience (nature, morality, art, religion), thereby constructing (different forms of) reality. Human experience always accomplishes something, it constructs a new part of reality, be it when I see an object (and hence “construct” it as an experienced object for me) or discover a new animal species under the microscope or am filled with spiritual inspiration in a religious ceremony. Human consciousness or experience is, in its “accomplishing” nature, goal-oriented, in other words teleological. Hence, Natorp’s teleological conception of human reason in history. This does not entail a value judgment, such as there would be an ever-expanding progress in history; rather, human reason cannot but ever expand itself and further develop and in so doing, its current activities always rest on older ones. Suffice this to elucidate Natorp’s general method.

Focusing more on content, it is important to point out that Natorp was also a devout socialist—not primarily in the political sense. Instead, his socialist ideals flowed from this philosophical presupposition, which one might call “idealistic” in the ordinary sense of the word. Natorp’s idealism was more precisely a social idealism. “Social idealism: This word is to say that the idea must again find itself in unison with society, the society with the idea, if at all both, idea and society, are further to exist in the history of mankind. A healthy idealism must not soar into the far regions of ‘ideas’ far-removed from life. Rather, it must find its home in the midst of life, in

75 This method of reconstruction is first laid out in Natorp’s Einleitung in die Psychologie Nach Kritischer Methode (Introduction to Psychology According to Critical Method, 1888) and further fleshed out in the expanded second edition of this work, the Allgemeine Psychologie nach Kritischer Methode (General Psychology According to Critical Method, 1912). Both works were highly acclaimed books of the time.
76 Indeed, Natorp says (Natorp 1918, p. vii), “‘philosophy of history’ is a pleonasm.”
The most arduous life of striving mankind.” Thus the high ideal of the Enlightenment must become implemented in the middle of the communal life of society itself. Natorp’s philosophical zeal is driven by this enlightened impulse to radically enlighten, that is, free and better society and the individuals in it. The goal of his philosophy is ultimately pedagogy, i.e., the attempt to make these ideals real through educating the youth and guiding them into the right direction from the very start. In this capacity, Natorp concretely was a consultant to the Prussian ministry of education concerning school curricula, gave talks throughout the nation and professed ideas—such as that of the Gesamtschule, a common school for all pupils instead of the still-existing three-tier system in Germany—ideas that were again discussed in the context of the leftist student revolts in the late 1960s. Now all of this—in short, philosophy as expressing idealism and enlightenment—is presented, in 1918, before the backdrop of a profound crisis of mankind that had engaged in a global war. War is not itself the crisis, but its most visible symptom. Philosophy can help solve the crisis by giving an anamnesis, as it were, of the current situation, i.e., by reconstructing the teleological development of human reason and the moment where it went awry.

The point of Natorp’s historical account in Deutscher Weltberuf is thus to retrace this teleological development over the course of mankind’s history (beginning with antiquity). There are essentially three stages of mankind. The first phase is dominated by farming and cattle-keeping, politically by despotism. The second phase is that of the “free contract”—essentially capitalism. The third phase, inaugurated by the French Revolution, ultimately leads into socialism. The title of the book already indicates where this socialism becomes implemented realiter, or rather, who, which nation, is called upon to overcome the crisis by taking on this nation’s global vocation. Whereas volume I of this work traces the history of human civilization in general, volume II zeroes in on the specifically German contribution to civilization. In the course of the retelling of this history, Natorp will come upon, and explain, the meaning of war. Contrary to Scheler’s assessment, the war is not something to be embraced (because it is part of life itself, part of its “essence”), but something inherently evil yet inevitable given the current circumstantial crisis. In this sense, Natorp is both more rational and realistic than Scheler.

The crisis is one of humanity as a whole, yet it is especially a vital question (Schicksalsfrage) of the German people. While it is a crisis of the “spirit” of mankind, the crisis has descended especially upon the German “soul”—in 1918, it is not surprising that one would reach this conclusion. Whereas philosophy is not herself an activity, a deed, she nevertheless has the task to explain the present situation, to “put it in words” as Hegel might say, but in so doing, recapture the true spirit of mankind, its general character, and not remain bound to individual peoples’ “souls.” “Philosophy has at all times attempted to grasp in earnestness the ‘spirit’ of history in unity.” In this sense, Natorp’s aim is not to come to a nationalistic-chauvinistic conclusion according to which the spirit of mankind’s culture reaches its highest peak in a specific nation’s

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77 Natorp 1920, p. iii.
78 Natorp was very fond of pedagogy. Not only was pedagogy part of the description of his chair at the University of Marburg; he also published pedagogical books, e.g., on Social Pedagogy and on the pedagogue Pestalozzi. Jegelka in his study of Natorp makes the political, pedagogical Natorp the main axis of his interpretation and he even interprets his “theoretical” philosophy purely in terms of his overall “political” views; cf. Jegelka 1992, pp. 265ff. I believe this sells Natorp’s achievements in theoretical philosophy short. I agree here with Stolzenberg (Stolzenberg 1995, p. 13, note 38), who asserts that Jegelka’s long awaited (“längst fälllige”) rehabilitation of Natorp’s philosophical work as a whole—especially in its originality vis-à-vis Cohen’s oeuvre—is carried out at the price of his essential “Abblendung der Psychologie, in der Natorp seine theoretische Selbständigkeit schon früh bewiesen hat” (ibid.).
79 Natorp 1918, p. viii.
soul. Rather, he focuses on the German soul simply because it has been hit hardest by the current crisis. Yet, in the course of this critical process the German people have attempted to become a nation by moving from a mere world civilization to a culture. It is therefore that the Germans have become a “world people” (Weltvolk), i.e., a nation with a special culture and special mission that is no longer bound to Germany or “Germanness.” Both civilization and culture are something general, something independent of individual traditions and nations. Yet whereas the majority of nations have embraced what can be called Western civilization—the ideals of the French Revolution—the true peak of mankind is nevertheless culture. Whereas the former denotes an indifference—something that one could call, with modern terms, “Coca Cola culture” or “McDonaldization”—the latter, culture, stands for more, for the ideal, the spiritual, the metaphysical. Whereas “civilization” is “merely external,” culture “emphasizes an upward-nurturing from the kernel upwards out of an inner, genuine sprouting.” This is opposed to the alleged “general” bourgeois structure of “freedom, equality, fraternity.”\(^{80}\) Natorp is not against those ideals per se, but rather against the notion that they be static structures instead of something dynamic that would have to be actively achieved by human agents. Ideals are never essences, like in Scheler, but constant works in progress.

It is this grand culture that needs to become implemented in the overcoming of the crisis of modernity in order to further write “the book of history [which is] the revelation of world reason.”\(^{81}\) With this teleological view of world reason is also implied the “idea of a continual ascent”\(^{82}\) of reason. “In this elementary sense, history is a matter of ‘freedom’, not of ‘necessity’; a matter of willing, not blind obligation; matter of fact: matter of doing, not of being done; of life, not of being lived.”\(^{83}\) In a world-historical gesture, Natorp is here merely recounting the main tenets of his method: Kant’s factum of the world, its sheer givenness, is in fact a fieri, a doing, a deed, something that humans accomplish. As such, it is not a deed out of blind, irrational will: “[T]he spiritual that unfolds in history is irrational in the strict sense of something that rationalizes itself into eternity, thus never to be fully accomplished for finite creatures.”\(^{84}\) In this sense, the spiritual that unfolds over the course of history can also be called life, yet it is not a brute, incalculable force but a rational unfolding that has its aim in eternity. “Life in the end wants nothing but—itsel: eternal striving towards immortality, not mere always unchanging, never-ending existence. This alone is eternity and immortality for mortals: eternal new creating, self-creation anew.”\(^{85}\) Thus, while Natorp (like Scheler) allows for an “unexplainable” moment in life, it is not itself irrational but self-rationalizing. More simply speaking, life might seem irrational over the course of history, but it strives towards the ultimately rational that we, as finite beings, are not in a position to comprehend fully. Life is ultimately good—we just cannot always see this due to our limited perspective. And, although we might not be able to fully grasp it, it is nevertheless philosophy’s task to articulate it. In fact, this is philosophy’s highest goal. “Yet this includes the entire, uncanny power of abstraction, in which consists philosophy, it includes in the idea of God the idea of humanity, in the idea of future (which does not merely denote tomorrow and the day after tomorrow) the idea of an eternal future. Yet this is philosophy, that is, ultimate, uninhibited striving for unity.”\(^{86}\) In assessing Natorp’s view on war and Germany, one has to

80 Ibid., p. 10.  
81 Ibid., p. 3.  
82 Ibid., p. 5.  
83 Ibid., p. 7.  
84 Ibid.  
85 Ibid., p. 9.  
86 Ibid., p. 17.
acknowledge this original and, to say the least, unusual view of philosophy itself. Philosophy, it seems, nearly takes on the role of prophecy.\textsuperscript{87}

In view of this ascent of reason, what now is the role of war? While “eternal peace” is the ultimate goal of mankind, and be it as a Kantian regulative idea, in the current situation the war is a necessary but unavoidable evil.\textsuperscript{88} War is something that one has to take into consideration as \textit{ultima ratio} in the present situation, especially when one has in view the ultimate goal. It is thus not really a moment of the spirit, a metaphysical entity thus, but an external event. Thus, although “life wants to live, and living means fighting,”\textsuperscript{89} it is an external strife that has as its goal “the deeper, the true ‘external’ peace.” This peace means, however, nothing less than a dull unchanging indifference; rather it means the merely ideal, never experienced but eternally striven for inner harmony of the rhythm of this eternal symphony of mankind’s development.\textsuperscript{90} Thus, while war and disharmony are elements of life’s will, they are merely externalities \textit{vis-à-vis} the “true” inner teleological development towards peace. From this philosophical bird’s eye view, war is merely a small disharmony in the grand “rhythm” or “symphony” of life. This is why it is just to fight for peace if, that is, one has this grand goal in view. War itself functions “with the self-assuredness of a natural law”\textsuperscript{91} because it is something external; yet the harder the battle becomes, the deeper it lets one delve into the depths of one’s soul where one can discover the true meaning of this war: to lead to a higher goal in eternity. But this goes not only for the individual: “At the least one can conceive that hopefully finally, finally the sublime meaning of the ascent to the eternally far heights will become clear \textit{to everyone}.”\textsuperscript{92} In other words, ideally all peoples and nations at war should come to the realization that they are ultimately all engaged in the “good battle” if they realize that the ultimate goal is eternal peace and that this grand goal justifies every means, even the atrocities of war. “Then the battle will become a victory to all of them, then in the midst of strife the ever-renewing harmony will become clear to all of them and the souls of the battling parties will become unified on the deepest level.... The circularity [of history] becomes a spiral .... Nothing perishes, yet nothing remains in the same spot or returns in complete sameness .... Thus groweth the soul, it groweth eternally because it is eternal ....”\textsuperscript{93}

Nevertheless, despite these Heracleitean sentences, Natorp is at all times frank about the gruesomeness and cruelty of the war, but the war is sublimated (“sublated”!) into the grand scheme of things. Now what about the Germans in this grand scheme?

In this critical situation of world dimension, the Germans, in the eye of the defeat, welcome this “collapse”\textsuperscript{94} of their state system. It “could not be avoided,”\textsuperscript{95} and since this defeat came with an inner necessity, it is now (in 1918) the Germans who, despite suffering the most profound crisis, have the once-in-a-lifetime chance to \textit{really} overcome the paralyzing crisis, whereas other nations that did not suffer defeat, cannot even \textit{perceive} the profundity of the crisis. The only way to

\textsuperscript{87} This is consistent with Natorp’s other late writings, esp. in the \textit{Philosophische Systematik}. Cf. Natorp 2000, part IV, pp. 383 ff., esp. the last lecture, p. 408.

\textsuperscript{88} Natorp 1918/II, p. 184, the war is a \textit{“Notkrieg.”} And in 1920, in his \textit{Sozialidealismus}, Natorp again stresses the atrocities of war, its “cruelty, hate, deceit, overturning of all moral order, destroying of man’s power and work” etc. (cf. Natorp 1920, p. 33).

\textsuperscript{89} Natorp 1918/I, p. 25.

\textsuperscript{90} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{91} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{92} Ibid., italics added.

\textsuperscript{93} Ibid., pp. 25 ff.

\textsuperscript{94} Natorp 1918/II, p. 189.

\textsuperscript{95} Ibid.
overcome “fatalism” in the current situation is a reflection upon the “German-idealistic kernel”\textsuperscript{96} that was present in German philosophy. Only a newly constituted state—as realized solely through philosophical reflection—can overcome the crisis, and since the German state will have to be re-erected, this is the time to forge such a constitution according to idealistic ideals. In other words, the defeat in the war and the collapse of the German state gives Natorp the opportunity to propose his ideals of the state, a state that could make possible “a state of human culture”\textsuperscript{97} through a new trinity of an economical, just and pedagogical state that constitutes the true state according to the guidelines of social idealism.\textsuperscript{98} The German people and the German culture have an inborn drive to socialism, and the crisis is now the chance to finally realize this ideal that the whole of mankind has striven towards, but from which it has gone astray in its most recent crisis. The new German state can lead the way for the rest of mankind into this development that is “common ... to all peoples of the earth and that will finally lead them all into the same common goal.”\textsuperscript{99} What the Germans and their inborn idealism have contributed to realizing this ideal is its genuine “method”: To build a culture, “to this end, the German may not have first found effective methods, but he has further conceived them and has further developed them in a way that only he can put them to use.”\textsuperscript{100} This is “the German’s vocation.” In order to remain true to it the German people have to pick themselves up again from where they are and “continue fighting,”\textsuperscript{101} not for external success or victory, but for the inner realization of mankind’s ideals, essentially that of a socialist state, to which the German idealistic tradition has had an internal tendency. It must reawaken those “good” elements in its inner nature and bring them to full fruition. In this, the German people in their “new state” can herald the way for a new “day of mankind,” as Natorp says, quoting Schiller.

Thus, to summarize Natorp’s train of thought: It is not due to Germany’s “special” nature or “essence” that it has this vocation, as it were, inborn in it. Rather, Germany, precisely due to it being hit hardest by the current crisis and, in fact, being severely hit to the ground from where it can make a fresh start, must assume this role. However, it can only do this because, as its “condition of possibility,” it has in the teleological growth of mankind developed with Kant’s philosophy an idealism that, if turned into a social idealism, can be a model for all other nations. The war, as atrocious as it might be “externally,” “internally” is a good thing as it forces the Germans into assuming their role of true world importance.\textsuperscript{102} War might seem like a crisis to us, but sub specie aeterni it is helpful as it brings humanity—through the Germans—back on track to finally create a factually existing socialism. The Germans and “their” war are special, not because they are Germans, but because they just happen to be in this position in this situation in the development of history and can become “model citizens” for a new world culture where the spirit truly reigns in its unknown capacity, instead of some indifferent “civilization.” The Germans did not put themselves into this position (obviously, because they were defeated), rather, the spirit of the world has placed them into this position, where they have the choice to either go down in flames or resurrect themselves on the basis of the true idealistic ideals.

\textsuperscript{96} Ibid., p. 190.
\textsuperscript{97} Ibid., p. 191.
\textsuperscript{98} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{99} Ibid., p. 197.
\textsuperscript{100} Ibid., p. 202.
\textsuperscript{101} Ibid., p. 203.
\textsuperscript{102} Jegelka 1992, pp. 131ff. (ch. 2.6) makes the case that Natorp fought for an “organic pacifism” all along and chastises the primitive idea of pacifism that many pacifists professed at the time. A true pacifism can only be based on the principles of Kant’s philosophy (cf. ibid., p. 137).
As asserted at the outset, Natorp’s view is much more rational and rationalistic than Scheler’s and as such also less chauvinistic. Natorp’s assessment is guided by the ideals of rationalism, teleology and socialism. These I do not want to criticize; perhaps the idea of enlightenment entails clinging to these ideals, no matter how much they may have suffered criticisms from all sides after the decline of communism. It is rather this alleged ideal of enlightenment that Natorp supposedly professes, that I take issue with. In spite of his enlightenment ideal, Natorp ultimately has an uncritical view of philosophy as teleology insofar as he claims that the real goal of history lies beyond our comprehension. On the one hand, he reconstructs a teleology in history starting from antiquity to German idealism—something one can rightfully take issue with. Yet, what is more problematic is his claim that the true motor of history and its ultimate meaning, where mankind is headed, lies beyond our finite grasp. On the one hand, this exculpates the atrocities of the war as necessary moments on the way to eternal bliss. This is not so far from Hegel’s famous phrase of history as the “Calvary [Schädelstätte] of absolute spirit.” On the other, it binds all of history together into a teleology, the meaning of which remains unknown to us. Again, one can ask critically: If man is finite, how can Natorp himself know of the meaning of history as the “eternal rationalization of the irrational”? It is, in the end, an unwarranted, and unwarrantable, claim. Worst of all, Natorp himself would admit this: In the end, the theme or vocation of philosophy is to attempt to “eff the ineffable,” to point to something that philosophy, i.e., rational thought, can only vaguely anticipate but what can be articulated or grasped only be religious insight. With this move, Natorp himself is giving up the ideal of enlightenment and self-grounding rationality. As philosophically warranted and original as this step (or rather leap) may be—the true realization of reason lies in seeing its limits—it nevertheless gives up on the ideal of self-responsible and autochthonous reason. Since nobody, as a finite being, can have the viewpoint sub specie aeterni, no one can claim to see its inner logic. From an imagined viewpoint, the war might be a good thing in the eternal development of reason, from the viewpoint of finite beings it is—and remains—an atrocity. In the end, though in a completely different manner and style, Natorp’s amounts to the same type of interpretation of the war as Scheler’s: an interpretation based on high-flying speculation that does not want to get its hands dirty in the daily business of warfare. Both have attempted to leave the Ivory Tower but, in fact, have been unsuccessful in doing so.

**Conclusion. War Philosophy—Philosophy or Ideology?**

In this final part, I want to discuss the crucial issue of whether these “war philosophies” professed by Scheler and Natorp are, and can rightfully be called, “philosophy” or whether they not rather merit the (pejorative) title of ideology. This again raises the important question of what makes

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103 Jegelka 1992, p. 126, also points out Natorp’s strong public reaction against anti-Semitism already before the war. Lübbe presents Natorp’s war philosophy very much along the lines of Scheler (with Fichte’s writings in the background), which seems a bit unfair given his overall sober view of the war. Cf. Lübbe 1974, pp. 194-201. For a completely dismissive account, cf. Flasch 2000, pp. 320-328.

104 In the conclusion of his last work, *Philosophische Systematik*, Natorp formulates as the ultimate goal of philosophy that of determining the limit between what can be known and what one cannot articulate, between entities and the ultimate (das Letzte), cf. Natorp 2000, p. 401.

105 I am discussing here the opposition between philosophy and ideology in general, and not whether Scheler’s and Natorp’s ideas qualify as specific “war ideology.” This is the narrow focus of Losurdo’s work (Losurdo 1995), who wants to establish a connection between the war ideologies of the First and Second World War (especially in the work of Heidegger). While there can be no doubt about the kinship of Heidegger’s rhetoric of 1933 with that of the war books of 1914-1918, he seems to oversimplify issues by not even asking what ideology as such can mean vis-à-vis philosophy. By immediately qualifying the war books of the first war as “war ideologies” he
philosophy into ideology, or where the point has come where philosophy degenerates into ideology. Does philosophy perhaps have to become ideology in order to reach the masses? In the course of my critical exposition I have tried to make the case for Scheler’s and Natorp’s war writings as at least conceived of by their authors as parts or expressions of their philosophies. Both were too sophisticated to produce merely war agitation and propaganda. Both made the attempt to give war a philosophical interpretation or spin, even if, as I have tried to make the case, in the end both are internally, philosophically, flawed. Yet, they might be flawed because they, in good faith, slipped into ideologies. Maybe there is a necessary tendency in philosophy to succumb to ideology once it starts to become political? Is political philosophy eo ipso a slippery slope into ideology? Let us first talk about criteria for ideology.

First off, how can one characterize ideology in opposition to philosophy? It was famously Hermann Lübbe in his well-known book on “political philosophy in Germany” who has reflected upon the difference between ideology and philosophy, drawing on important sources in the current discussion in the aftermath of World War II. To begin with, he claims, ideology comes into play when philosophy becomes decidedly political, i.e., when it deliberately wants to interpret, comment on, or intervene in the political situation of its time. In this sense, the first “fall from the heavens” concerns philosophy’s self-understanding as situation-bound and no longer a supra-temporal philosophia perennis. It decidedly and willingly comes into contact with the Zeitgeist—critical as well as serving or commenting etc. (and other alternatives are conceivable). As such, philosophy puts herself into the service of something concrete, she becomes, with a Sartrean term, engagée. Philosophy in its political “occupation” can, thus, no longer be about “objective truth”; rather, it is about making a case for something concrete that is believed or thought to be the right thing. To be sure, philosophy finds reasons for this concrete thing or issue—otherwise it would no longer be philosophy—but it does this out of the belief in serving the right cause. In other words, philosophy becomes ideology when it follows an interest. As such, it “objectifies what is non-objective,” as Lübbe quotes Theodor Geiger. The moment, it no longer serves or strives for pure theoría, uninterested contemplating, it is already halfway on the way to ideology.

The crucial criterion for Lübbe now is that ideology follows its cause motivated by, or for the sake of, interests, whereas philosophy, looking for “eternal truths,” does this through reasons. The question now is, whose interests is one serving? Thus, firstly, philosophy only truly becomes full-blown ideology if it mistakes (or supplants) interests for reasons not for the sake of deceiving others, but for deceiving itself. The opposite is the type of the Sophist, who deceives others (and invents devices for doing so). The self-deceit is the crucial step where philosophy reaches the state of a “self-alienation” of its own principal idea (i.e., to contribute to the philosophia perennis); it becomes a “lazy reason” that takes things for granted where its business, in fact, has not yet been finished. It declares, e.g., theses for premises, prejudices for arguments, and, obfuscates any differences that do exist between simple “war mongers” and other, more reflective philosophers, such as Natorp. Moreover, it is simply not true to claim that “a large part of German philosophy” (ibid., p. 247) was in fact “war ideology.” This work as a whole—in many passages sloppily written and researched—seems entirely thesis driven in this respect, more specifically in wanting to demonstrate that Heidegger was a “war ideologue” essentially from his early writings around 1914 “till the end” (ibid., 248). This hasty conclusion can only be reached when one does not discuss the question that arises first: what exactly is ideology? This is the focus of this conclusion.

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108 Ibid., p. 15.
109 Cf. ibid., p. 17.
thereby, puts itself to rest instead of inquiring further—to the limits of what can be rationally conceived (Kant’s notion of critical philosophy). Tersely put, philosophy turns into ideology where it makes itself believe that it is telling the truth, whereas it is, in fact, merely following particular interests. It has become complete ideology where it no longer realizes this difference. It lives in the state of complete self-deceit or “bad faith.”

So much for a summary of Lübbe’s argument. Now, Lübbe claims, the “entire” war philosophy of World War I (he is talking about Germany) was “merely ideological”¹¹⁰ in his sense. With respect to how I have discussed Scheler’s and Natorp’s writings, is this assessment correct? The argument of “lazy reason” is, to be sure, not meant as an exculpation of philosophy, in the sense that philosophy “could not help it” but was just, due to circumstances or whichever other motivation, “forced” to think in this way. This cannot be what Lübbe has in mind. It means, rather, that a given philosopher’s reasoning puts brakes on itself too quickly, that it did not go beyond its mere interest-driven aims and laid itself to rest all-too quickly before its job is carried out fully. An ideology will take interests for arguments and will make false inferences based on faulty or hastily conceived premises. Now, although I never denied the nationalistic chauvinisms and stereotypes in Scheler and Natorp—in the former more than in the latter—and their respective clear intentions to “serve their country,” to say that their writings displayed a “lazy reason” surely cannot be the case. Rather, as I have tried to show, their war writings were both the product of their “systematic” philosophical standpoints as well as argued for in a most sophisticated way. Only she who does not immerse herself into these writings themselves—as tedious as they may be—can claim that they are a product of mere “lazy reason” or even stupidity (Lübbe is not guilty of this assessment, but others are).

Where these writings are ideological is that they clearly serve an interest, namely to engage themselves in the current situation, Scheler as well as Natorp for patriotic reasons (or interests). It is not so much the premises and the arguments that are at fault, as their conclusions. As such, they are not per se ideologies, but rather faulty or flawed philosophies. They become flawed precisely at the point where, in a colorful metaphor, “the rubber hits the road,” where the philosophical deduction reaches the factual. Whereas Scheler subsumes the factual under the ideal, Natorp places the messianic mission of the whole human race on the Germans. So I would expand Lübbe’s assessment and modify his claim by saying, not reason is lazy per se (because in the course of arguing it is not), but it becomes lazy where philosophy attempts to make the leap into reality. Lastly, the point of a self-deceit that lies in this move towards the political life is actually a hermeneutical question. It is asking for an alleged discrepancy between what an author wanted to say and what he did not want to say but actually said. But how could one know this? Can we leap into the mind of another human being and discern what she actually wanted to say and what she actually thought but did not say or did not want to convey? Not even a psychotherapist will claim to accomplish this fully. The criterion for reason’s self-alienation or self-deceit can only come from an “outside” perspective that can judge these claims based on “the truth.” In other words, it can only be discriminated by contrasting situational and eternal truths, or by contrasting philosophy with ideology. Lübbe thus tacitly takes the stance of the “eternal philosopher” when he talks about ideology. But how is this possible if political philosophy, as ideologized or not, deliberately does not want to be judged on the basis of eternal truths? Who is to judge? The philosopher, the ideologue, or the citizen? Thus, regarding the question whether the war philosophies discussed are philosophy or ideology, the question asks for a wrong alternative. If it is good philosophy, i.e., soundly argued for, it cannot be ideology. It becomes

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 22.
ideology in the eye of the beholder—the militaristic politician who bases her politics on this philosophy, the soldier in the field who takes these books as further motivation to go out and kill, and even the philosopher who takes his own ideas to further the cause of his nation.

This whole issue again comes down to the question concerning the relationship of philosophy and life, of theory to practice, of idea to its instantiation. Whereas I was critical with respect to Scheler’s and Natorp’s arguments themselves (or their consequences), it is a whole other question whether philosophy’s engagement itself in the political world is justified, necessary, laudable, whether philosophers would be irresponsible not to engage themselves or had better leave this business to others. This is nothing but the old question of philosophy stepping down out of its “Ivory Tower.” The need has been felt by philosophers as early as Plato and up to, in Germany, most famously by Heidegger. For the most part, philosophers did a poor job at this. This question, broadly conceived between philosophy and life, however, pertains to the entire meaning of philosophy, and at this point I am happy to leave this question to others.
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