

Platonism in the Philosophical Systems of Thinkers Associated with the Baden and Marburg School: Review of Selected Positions

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The present article examines the interpretations of Platonism in the philosophical systems of selected representatives of the Baden and Marburg schools of neo-Kantianism. Using the method of comparative analysis and focusing on epistemological, metaphysical-ontological, mathematical, and historical interpretations of Plato's idealism, I present the philosophical positions of the following Baden thinkers: Wilhelm Windelband, Emil Lask, Jonas Cohn, Karl Jaspers; and the following Marburg thinkers: Hermann Cohen, Paul Natorp, August Auffarth and Elisabeth Rotten. The choice of these philosophers is deliberate and related to different ways of interpreting ancient Platonic idealism. The historical-philosophical approach in this article consists in describing various ways of interpreting Plato's philosophy at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries in the circles of German philosophers inspired by the philosophy of Kant. I will address this research topic using a novel method, considering selected assumptions of the broadly understood intellectual environment associated with critical philosophy.

Keywords: Plato – Kant's transcendentalism and apriorism – neo-Kantianism – Baden school and Marburg school – epistemology and ontology – history of philosophy

Introduction

In this article, I address the reception of Plato's system of philosophy in neo-Kantianism. I examine interpretations of Plato's philosophy put forth by chosen

German philosophers whom history of philosophy associates with the neo-Kantian movement, and specifically with the Baden and Marburg schools. The neo-Kantians whose systems I refer to are authors of publications devoted to Plato's philosophy while, due to the postulates they accept – directly, indirectly or conditionally – being also regarded as representatives of either the Baden or the Marburg school of neo-Kantianism (Noras 2012, 720).

My analysis is a comparative review aiming to show that the philosophical programs of both Baden and Marburg philosophers are evidence of the high esteem in which they held Plato's philosophy and of the ways it encouraged them to formulate their several philosophical programs. Besides the figure of the Philosopher, they were also inspired by the idealistic assumptions of his system, including the cognitive dualism of the senses and the reason, the dialectic ascent from sensory to rational cognition, and from dianoetic and rational to noetic cognition (Lübke 1984, 57 – 63).

I posit that aspects of Plato's philosophy, especially those related to his theory of ideas and to epistemological dilemmas raised by the idealist-rationalist mode of justification, contributed to the formation of neo-Kantian systems. To be sure, these systems are intellectually powered by the spirit of Kant's philosophy (Liebmann 1865, 218), but their creators also eagerly drew on the guidance of ancient sages, among whom Plato and his philosophy played a leading role (Windelband 1911, 598; Matherne 2015, 203; Renz 2021, 695, 702 – 703).

I. The Baden and Marburg Schools of Neo-Kantianism: An Outline of the Philosophical Programs

The Baden School also tends to be called the South German or Southwest German school. Its main assumptions were formulated at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and adopted by several leading European philosophical centers, which collectively became the cradle of Baden neo-Kantianism and include the Chairs of Philosophy at the universities of Heidelberg, Freiburg im Breisgau and Straßburg (then within the borders of the German state, now located in France) (Noras – Kubalica 2011, 11; Noras 2012, 453). In this article, I analyze the Platonism of the main representatives of the Baden school, i.e. Wilhelm Windelband, Emil Lask, Jonas Cohn, as well as apologists for what we can call the Baden system of ideas, including Karl Jaspers (Szyszkowska 1970, 28; Noras 2012, 11).

The other school of neo-Kantianism I will be referring to, called the Marburg School, gathered scholars associated with only one center, namely the

Philipps-Universität Marburg (Noras – Kubalica, 2011, 13; Noras 2012, 543 – 544). The characteristic feature of the Department of Philosophy of the Marburg research center was the concentration of research on issues of philosophy as a science, on critique in the Kantian sense of the term, and – in the words of Polish philosopher Hanna Buczyńska – on “analysis of the logical structure of natural sciences” (Buczyńska 1963, 18). It is worth noting at this point that the distinguishing feature of the Marburg School is its pronounced emphasis on transcendental logic, which earned it the name of panlogical.

My treatment of Platonism in this article follows the interpretation of the leading Marburg neo-Kantians, including Hermann Cohen and Paul Natorp, as well as August Auffarth and Elisabeth Rotten, belonging to the neo-Kantian philosophical circle of Philippina (Sieg 1994, 483; Gordon 2010, 52 – 69).

II. Plato’s Philosophy in the Baden School

Issues related to Platonic idealism interested the founder of the Baden school of neo-Kantianism, Wilhelm Windelband (1848 – 1915), whose book *Plato* first appeared in German in 1900 (Kontkiewicz 2023). In his study, Windelband sees in Plato a man and a teacher, a politician and a writer, an outstanding philosopher, a representative of aretaic ethics, and at the same time a sociologist and prophesying theologian propagating new, vital, even groundbreaking philosophical concepts capable of transforming Greek politics, society, and culture (Kahn 2021, 365 – 402; Lübke 1984, 100 – 105). Plato defined and developed these concepts in his dialogues, whose characteristic feature is great diversity of topics. For this reason, Windelband sees Plato as an unsystematic writer, an author who pursues a wide range of themes. He argues that some of the dialogues belong to the category of juvenilia, while others are distinguished by an anti-sophistic tone. Plato’s subsequent dialogues are a testimony to an almost unbounded creativity in thinking, and also an expression of political interest in the state, the quality of the state law and the level of Greek culture/civilization.

Plato’s interest in politics was combined with his philosophical pursuits, especially natural philosophy; that latter interest was in turn combined with emphasis on the supersensory. These varied interests give Plato’s most important works – as Windelband believes – an outstanding quality due to a strong idealist and metaphysical orientation, which determined Plato’s philosophical attitude (Windelband 1894, 11; Windelband 1902, 144 – 172; Windelband 1958, 119; Blandzi 1992, 109 – 110; Lübke 1984, 58). Windelband argues that Plato is a philosopher who “raises the banner of the supersensory

above the corruption and decay of the existing Greek reality" (Windelband 1902, 246). And he adds that

no one except ancient Plato expressed so simply and wonderfully that specific internalization, that deepening of consciousness within itself, to which antiquity was supposed to have tended as the ultimate and highest goal of its civilization (Windelband 1902, 257).

Consequently, according to Windelband, Plato's philosophy "became the center of the greatest form of character formation that has ever happened in the history of human thought" (Windelband 1902, 168).

Plato's philosophical system also attracted the interest of Emil Lask (1875 – 1915). The Baden neo-Kantian, a student of Heinrich Rickert, Lask called his system the logic of philosophy, its central point being the theory of two worlds, which he developed by using Plato's epistemological theses (Lübke 1984, 65; Hobe 1968, 1; Schuhmann – Smith 1993, 448 – 466; Kahn 2021, 289; Ruge 2012, 20 – 44, 51 – 53, 57 – 60). Under the influence of the ancient Sage, Lask created his original and creative *Zweigegegenstandstheorie*. Evidence of his interest in Plato's thought, and especially of in Plato's dualism, is found in the statements in Lask makes in his treatise *Die Logik der Philosophie und die Kategorienlehre*. Here we read, for instance:

The dualism formulated before Plato, that theory of two spheres, repeated itself in a thousand variations of names and meanings. This dualism found its expression in numerous oppositions, e.g., the sensory – the supersensory; the sensory – the intelligible; appearance and true reality; appearance and idea; matter and form; matter and spirit; the finite and the infinite; the conditioned and the unconditional; the empirical and the supra-empirical; the relative and the absolute; Nature (Natur) versus Reason; Nature versus freedom, and time versus eternity (Lask 2003, 5; see Noras 2012, 508).

Lask's theory of two worlds testifies to the connection of his system with Plato's philosophy, or, to put it more accurately, with Plato's broadly understood dualism. In this dualism Lask sees an essential premise of Plato's philosophy, where „the non-sensory and the sensory, as it were, converge with logic and illogicality" (Lask 2003, 169). According to Lask, in Plato's dualistic system, the nonsensory, and hence also supersensory as theoretical conceptuality and abstractness, reveals itself in Truth, thus obtaining its legitimacy in the form of a logical universe. Lask states explicitly that after Plato the value of Truth should be associated with the supersensory in

general. He adds that the concept of supersensory Truth is also found in Aristotle, who, as a student in Plato's Academy, superimposes the theory of two substances on Plato's theory of two worlds, the sensory and the supersensory. The former would be called physical substance, while the other – supersensory, immobile and divine substance (Lask 2003, 168 – 169, 185 – 187, 192 – 193).

Lask developed his original theory of two worlds drawing on Plato's dualism of the sensory and the supersensory, αἰσθητὸν and νοητὸν, the sensible and intelligible, the phenomenal and the noumenal, the world of the senses and the world of reason. Plato's ancient rationalism is present both in the philosophical discourse and in the way of thinking, not only of Lask, but also of many other neo-Kantians (Lask 2003, 168). These philosophers, including Lask, searched for logical foundations of legitimate knowledge, arguing that scientific knowledge was constituted by rational, apriori factors, which makes the dualism of the senses and reason such a difficult issue for philosophy to deal with (Przyłębski 1993, 82 – 83).

The assumptions of Plato's philosophy were also studied by German philosopher and educator Jonas Cohn (1869 – 1947), a professor at the University of Freiburg and another representative of the Baden school of neo-Kantianism. In his approach to Plato's thought, Cohn considered a number of research angles, including the following ones:

- the biographical perspective, which allowed Cohn to see in Plato not only a philosopher, but also a citizen and a politician, and then to combine the civic-political themes in Plato's biography with Plato's theory of the soul and the state (Cohn 1921, 45, 60);
- the perspective of Plato's reflections on Truth (Cohn 1921, 48 – 51);
- the perspective of Plato's scientific views, including the sciences of nature and reflections on issues raised in ancient philosophy concerning φύσις, in particular issues concerning Nature and the cosmos (Cohn 1921, 35, 56 – 57);
- the perspective of the science of ideas: Cohn studied Plato's theses on the ontological-metaphysical status of ideas and the ways in which ideas participate in the world (Cohn 1921, 53 – 56, 59 – 60).

Cohn's *Geschichte des Unendlichkeitsproblems im abendländischen Denken bis Kant* asserts the strongly marked presence in Plato's system of the assumptions of the mystical-emotional current of Pythagorean thought. Palpable is also the influence of Zeno of Elea and the Elian school (Cohn 1896, 12, 27), namely, in

Plato's rejection of the possibility of indefinite regression, and thus also in his recognition of the importance of the problem of the limit. Plato discusses the meaning as *πέρας* and the status of the unlimited in the *Philebus* (Kahn 2021, 275, 285 – 294), where Cohn finds assertions which confirm both similarities and differences between Plato and Aristotle. Cohn believes that both philosophers associate the Good with order, concept, and limit (Cohn 1896, 33, 54). At the same time, Cohn admits that while Aristotle adopts Plato's understanding of the limited, after the Pythagoreans, he rejects the Platonic-Pythagorean substantialization of the infinite (*Substantialisierung des Unendlichen*) (Cohn 1896, 36).

Cohn notes Plato's fascination with religious-mystical and mathematical themes. Plato bestows on mathematics the status of both prolegomena to philosophy and a specific assistant or aide of philosophical reflection. As Cohn puts it, in Plato's system, mathematics is treated as defensive tool (*das Hilfsmittel*); it offers protection to philosophy and philosophical reflection (Cohn 1896, 84). As an apriori science related to philosophy, mathematics also bestows on philosophy the status of science. Thanks to mathematics, philosophy can assert and maintain its scientific character, which sums up the assisting function of mathematics, as hypothesized by Cohn. Cohn sees Plato as a Sage who distinguishes the created world of transience from the world of eternity as a world of a priori ideas (Kahn 2021, 288).

The style of Plato's considerations does not allow us, in Cohn's opinion, to call Plato a systematist, which makes Plato different from Aristotle (Cohn 1896, 35). Emphasizing the importance of mathematical truths, Plato, also unlike Aristotle, connects mathematical justifications with neither the physical-sensory continuum nor physics (Cohn 1896, 18). In Plato's philosophy, mathematics must remain free from material representation, as asserted by Cohn in these words: „Mathematicians are quite right in thinking that the whole area of mathematics, as Plato insists, remains free from all material representations“ (Cohn 1896, 120).

Plato's philosophy also influenced the system of Karl Jaspers (1883 – 1969), a student of Wilhelm Windelband, an esteemed philosopher of existence as well as a renowned psychiatrist. In Plato's idealist philosophy, the greatest system created by the ancients, Jaspers found subtlety and simplicity of thinking combined with tremendous intellectual depth. At the basis of Plato's system lay, according to Jaspers, the theory of ideas as a source of other areas of reflection, including theology, psychology, political theory, and cosmology.

Jaspers opines that Plato's formulations of religious-metaphysical issues shaped the theological thought of western culture and that Plato's theological ideas influenced not only the doctrines of the Christian churches, but also that of Islam. He adds, however, that nowadays, in these predominantly dogmatic religious systems, it is difficult to detect Platonic inspirations (Jaspers 1962, 46). At the foundation of Plato's philosophical and theological insights, Jaspers found a cosmology that considered the universe in metaphysical terms, an approach to Nature understood as *physis*, as well as the association of mathematical figures with the postulate of an idea that binds everything together (Olson 1979, 58 – 59).

A philosopher of existence, Jaspers did not fail to appreciate the significance and influence of Plato's assumptions on the quality of human life in the twentieth century and on that century's thought. In Hannah Arendt's English edition of his *Plato and Augustine: From the Great Philosophers*, Jaspers states: "Plato for the first time saw man in the situation of total disaster that arises through his thinking if it is false and fails to understand itself. Accordingly Plato sets the task of a radical turning of the mind" (Jaspers 1962, 58).

In Plato's philosophical attitude, Jaspers sees the beginning of a great intellectual movement, of a struggle against distortions and irregularities in man's cognition of the world. According to Jasper, Plato's philosophy sees man as a being on the move, a being who transcends the level of the senses on the way to transcendence. It is also a path of thought developed through dialogue as an effective means of communication and cognition. Dialogue is the principal method of conducting philosophical discourse and of creatively transforming its participants. Plato's philosophy offers a return to existence through thought, a way to find fulfillment and set the boundaries of thinking; it enhances understanding with the help of images and myths. Plato's philosophy is not *sophia*, but *philosophia*, that is, it is not knowledge, but knowledge of ignorance or knowledge through ignorance; it is growth into being through participation in being. The role of Plato's philosophy is to liberate man from the errors of thought and cognition. Jaspers calls Plato a master of tools. When analyzing ancient idealism through the prism of Plato's dialogues, Jaspers finds in them unsurpassed masterpieces which combine "poetry and digression" (Jaspers 1962, 6).

According to Jaspers, due to their great thematic scope, Plato's dialogues combine logical, physical-cosmological, and metaphysical issues. Plato raises all these issues to the rank of perennial problems and groups fundamental questions concerning the structure of reality and the speculative nature of

phenomena (Krämer 2014; Bańka 2001, 7). Plato's reflection is dynamic and unceasing. Jaspers argues that the dialogues and the problems raised and resolved in them cause us to enquire about Plato's relationship to the totality of reality and about the function and meaning of the dialogues in the context of reflections on man and his place in the world (Jaspers 1962, 7). We should seek the essence of Plato's philosophy in the way it makes man aware of the need to find the right path to knowledge, while endowing man with the potential of active search for Truth. This is the meaning of Plato's contribution to the independence and autonomy of human thinking. According to Jaspers, Plato teaches us how to „test the value of our own thinking“ (Jaspers 1962, 59).

III. Plato's Philosophy in the Marburg School

Great appreciation for what we may call Plato's architecture of thought is shown in the systems of two leading representatives Marburg neo-Kantianism, Hermann Cohen (1842 – 1918), and Paul Natorp (1854 – 1924), who proposed a novel interpretation of Plato's *Ideenlehre*, as they called the doctrine of ideas. Both Cohen and Natorp consider the idea „the essential property of the human spirit“ (Tatarkiewicz 2010, 48; Głombik 2005, 16 – 26). As they construe it, the idea is a concept that governs all scientific study and cognition of reality. At the same time the idea, in terms of its function, is also related to spiritual-logical and a priori thinking and thus to the development of concepts. This manner of understanding the idea can be found, for example, in a study by Władysław Tatarkiewicz, an outstanding Polish thinker and a graduate of the Marburg school:

It is through the idea that the world of concepts becomes something active, something that has its source in mental activity...; an idea is always a conceptual relation, a method and a principle. Thus understood, Plato is a great progenitor of knowledge and philosophy. And therefore, not only historical but also systematic interest makes us turn to him, because his works can teach us many more lessons relevant for today and tomorrow (Tatarkiewicz 2010, 58).

Among the Marburg neo-Kantianism, the system developed by the school's founder, Hermann Cohen, merits special attention. As the one who devised the Marburg program of philosophy, Cohen interpreted Plato's idealism from the perspective of Kant's transcendental logic and the accompanying logic of apriorism – strongly emphasized in the Department of Philosophy of the Philipps-Universität Marburg – as a form of rationalism free from the psychologism. A critic of psychologism and an advocate and popularizer of

the concept of scientific philosophy, Cohen sees in Plato's idea „a method of searching for the logical foundation of knowledge" (Tatarkiewicz 2010, 51) and associates this interpretation with Plato's achievements in mathematics (Lübke 1984, 57 – 58; Noras 2014, 417 – 443; Kahn 2021, 277 – 279, 290).

In *Platons Ideenlehre und die Mathematik*, Cohen writes:

The history of mathematics points to Plato as the creator of the analytical method, which consists in the fact that from data he goes back to the assumptions that must be made in order to derive theorems from them. The idea as hypothesis is simply a general, logical application of this method (Cohen 1878, 27).¹

In other words, ideas are Cohen's *Υποθέσεις*, assumptions and at the same time the basis of all assumptions, in the methodological and ontological-epistemological sense. It should be noted, however, that the Marburg School also gave ideas the role of *Grundlegungen*, that is, the foundations of mental being, "thought and language, or more precisely, existential foundations of truthful speaking and thinking" (Blandzi 1992, 111).

Among the Marburg Neo-Kantians, Paul Natorp (1862 – 1924) expressed interest in Plato's idealistic philosophy in his introduction to idealism, *Platons Ideenlehre, Eine Einführung in den Idealismus*, a book whose three hundred pages are devoted to an analysis of the principles of Plato's science. This work is an attempt at an original and at the same time systematic interpretation of ancient Platonic idealism (Natorp 2014). But Natorp also studied the source texts, including, besides the *Crito*, the *Protagoras*, the *Laches*, the *Charmides*, the *Menon*, the *Gorgias*, the *Phaedrus*, the *Theaetetus*, the *Euthydemus*, the *Cratylus*, the *Phaedo*, the *Symposium*, the *Republic*, the *Parmenides*, the *Sophist*, the *Philebus*, the *Timaeus* and the *Laws* (Natorp 2014, 3 – 4).

A Marburg neo-Kantian and philosopher and classical philologist, Natorp's undertook a systematic analysis of the fundamental problems of Plato's philosophy. He focused on epistemological issues, which included the description of the process of cognition, in particular – emphasized in this description – the critique of the sensory level of cognition, the dogmatism of representation, the issue of pure thinking and objects of pure thinking, as well as an outline of pure foundations of cognition and the justification of empirical judgments in pure retrospection (Natorp 2014, 71 – 82). Natorp was also interested in outlining the philosophical path of cognition as leading to unconditionality, an essential desideratum of philosophical cognition. He was

¹ See also Tatarkiewicz (2010, 51); Noras (2018, 61); Renz (2014).

concerned with the possibility of realizing that important epistemological postulate according to which every scientific knowledge should be characterized by certainty, necessity, and immutability.

Natorp's philosophical portrait of Plato involved interpreting Plato's idea of the Good, analyzing Plato's theory of experience, and defining the role of mathematics and astronomy in Plato's system of philosophy. He also reflected on Plato's logic, psychology, and metaphysics, as well as on the concept of substance in classical philosophy (Natorp 2014, 93 – 96, 125 – 133, 245 – 247, 251– 261).

Among the neo-Kantians of the Marburg school who studied Plato's philosophy, we must not omit August Auffarth (1855 – 1939). He focused on the epistemological problems related to intellectual and a priori criteria of cognition and addressed issues of Plato's idealism. Auffarth devoted his dissertation, *Die Platonische Ideenlehre*, to an analysis of Plato's system, where. Taking into account the assumptions of Plato's *Dialogues* – mainly the *Phaedrus*, the *Phaedo*, and the *Symposium* – he explores here the structure of the Platonic idea as representation (*Vorstellung*) and substance (*Substanz*), as well as their combinations. He interprets the idea as οὐσία and νοητόν and analyzes the substantial-noetic level of cognition as related to experience. Assuming the perspective of the Marburg school of neo-Kantianism and ancient Platonic idealism, Auffarth explores the concept of participation (μέθεξις) (See Olesiński 2003, 140) and examines Plato's doctrine of anamnesis (ἀνάμνησις) and immortality (ἀθανασία) (Mróz 2017, 135 – 148; Wojtczak 1993, 73 – 86).

In the spirit of the Marburg neo-Kantianism, Auffarth sees the Platonic idea as an objective law devoid of a subjective or psychological element. This law is not imposed by coercion; it is ethical (*ethisches Gesetz*). The knower partakes in this law and its rules, and this participation is, as it were, engages the interior voice of the spirit (Auffarth 1883, 57). In this way, Plato makes cognition dependent on an ethical-objective factor, which frees cognition from the sphere of the doxa (δόξα) and transfers the cognitive process into the area/sphere of noetic resolutions (νοητόν). According to Auffarth, the noetic sphere (νοητόν) becomes a fixed and permanent basis (οὐσία), a sphere of universal truth indicating the value of universal validity, universal rule, and necessity independent of any changeable, impermanent, and sensory reality. According to Auffarth, the ancient concept of οὐσία should be considered as the objective basis of cognition (*objektiven Erkenntnisgrund*), which, founded on a universal law/rule, is characterized by clarity and accuracy (Auffarth 1883, 53).

Among the Marburg neo-Kantians who studied Plato's philosophy we should also name Elisabeth Friederike Rotten (1882 – 1964), a social activist, a co-founder of the German League of Human Rights, wholeheartedly involved in the creation of the Internationalen Freuenliga für Frieden und Freiheit. She examined problems of Platonic philosophy in *Goethes Urphänomen und die platonische Idee*, a book published in Gießen in 1913, containing philosophical-philological studies on Goethe's idealism and work. Rotten draws on the work of other Marburg neo-Kantians, including Paul Natorp and Nicolai Hartmann (Rotten 1913, 5; Noras 2000, 65 – 73). The book gives an interpretation of the Platonic system in the perspective of the creative and intellectual activity of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, especially Goethe's method of natural research (Rotten 1913, 5).

Associating Goethe's approach with Plato's, Rotten rejects a purely naturalistic interpretation of Goethe's work as a pre-romantic poet of German classicism. Instead, she argues that, inspired by Plato's metaphysical philosophy, Goethe bases his entire research method in the idealistic structures of the Platonic system (Rotten 1913, 6). Being the most outstanding pre-Romantic poet of the *Sturm und Drang* period, Goethe sees in the metaphysical-ontological theses of Plato a thinker searching for the sources of all becoming. Goethe combines Plato's system into a unified whole, consisting of a metaphysical-ontological triad of Good, Truth, and Beauty. This triad penetrates the world, helping man to recognize its essence (Rotten 1913, 4). Consequently, Rotten sees a great deal of similarity between the creative attitudes of Plato and Goethe. In her opinion, Plato strives for a systemic unity of his thought. This system lays solid foundations of possible science and rejects hard dogmatism (*starres Dogma*) in favor of a critical attitude and rational models of demonstration (Rotten 1913, 5 – 6).

Rotten is aware that in the field of literary-philosophical criticism there are different ways of reading and presenting Plato's *Ideenlehre*. She recognizes that each of the possible interpretations of Plato's idealism is equally plausible: the one that emphasizes the meaning of ideas as *αισθητὰ ἰδέα*, the one that sees in the idea the metaphysical reality of an independent concept (*zu metaphysischen Realitäten verselbständigten Begriffe*), as well as the one that treats the idea as a hypostasis (Rotten 1913, 5).

IV. Conclusion

This article has presented interpretations of Plato put forth by selected philosophers associated with the neo-Kantian movement. The scope of this subject has been narrowed down to the presence of Platonism in the Baden and Marburg schools of Neo-Kantianism. This is also why Nicolai Hartmann's approach to Plato has been omitted, but it is worth mentioning that Hartmann also came up with an interpretation of Plato's ontology, giving it a systematic analysis in *Platos Logik des Seins*.

The neo-Kantian interpretations of Plato's system discussed in this article allow us to see in Plato an exceptional person, a teacher, a sensitive intellectual guide, a theologian, and even a prophet reflecting on the metaphysical problem of Truth. Neo-Kantians saw Plato as a philosopher who made repeated efforts to address both political, cosmological, ethical and psychological issues. The philosophers discussed here tended to see Plato as an outstanding ancient sage, whose system opened the minds and hearts of subsequent generations of philosophers, including those who, returning at the turn of the twentieth century to the postulates of Kant's transcendental philosophy, did philosophy in the spirit of Kantian criticism. Modern historians of philosophy call these philosophers participants in the great neo-Kantian movement. Within this movement representatives of the Baden and Marburg schools of Neo-Kantianism deserve special attention.

Finally, it is worth adding that historical and philosophical research on neo-Kantian interpretations of Plato's system conducted nowadays confirms the universality and multidimensionality of Plato's philosophy. These philosophers combined the theses of Plato's system of philosophy with the results obtained by scientists working in the field of formal and detailed sciences, for example mathematics and mathematical physics. Also Plato's ethical theory was appreciated by neo-Kantians. My research allows me to conclude that the reflection which – drawing inspiration from the teachings of Plato – was undertaken by distinguished neo-Kantians does not remain indifferent to the contemporary way of approaching epistemological, anthropological and ethical issues related to attempts to define the condition of man in the world.

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