**Vaihinger, Hans (1852-1933)**

Hans Vaihinger is known chiefly for the fictionalist outlook developed in his 1911 *Philosophie des als ob* (*The Philosophy of As-If*), a text that has resonated in the work of subsequent thinkers. Deriving partly from his intensive studies of Kant and partly from the influence of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, Vaihinger holds that the human quest for truth is inherently deluded and a source of unnecessary intellectual pain and frustration. We should therefore renounce it though not, like the sceptic, in a spirit of defeat but rather with a clear-headed fictionalist acceptance that we must carry on thinking and behaving *as if* certain truths existed and we were suitably placed to discover them. Such is the precondition for any viable approach to questions of decisive human significance whether in ethics, law, politics, aesthetics, or indeed, natural sciences. Nowadays there are those who take this view about numbers, sets, propositions, and other abstract entities or physical unobservables such as quarks; and about ethical values which some philosophers – ‘error-theorists’ – deem to be useful or beneficial fictions. Vaihinger’s ideas have had a varied reception-history, on the one hand denounced both by orthodox Kantians and upholders of a realist or objectivist outlook , while on the other endorsed by pragmatists, instrumentalists, relativists and postmodernists. His work can plausibly be seen as a proto-postmodernist take on certain Kantian-modernist themes.

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**List of works**

# Vaihinger, H. (1911) *Philosophie des als ob*. *System der theoretischen, praktischen und religiösen Fiktionen der Menschheit auf Grund eines idealistichen Positivismus. Mit einem Anhang über Kant und Nietzsche*, trans. C.K. Ogden as *The Philosophy of As-If: a System of the Theoretical, Practical, and Religious Fictions of Mankind,* , London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1924.

**References and further reading**

Hofmann, J. (1951) *An Examination of Hans Vaihinger’s Philosophy of Fictions*, Buffalo: State University of New York Press.