**Cohen, Hermann (1848-1918)**

Hermann Cohen was a respected Jewish-German philosopher who had a profound influence on various currents within the philosophical discourse of modernity. These included philosophy of mind, epistemology, philosophy of science, ethics, comparative theology, and the history and philosophy of religion. Known during his lifetime as a leading figure in the Marburg neo-Kantian school, Cohen advanced an objectivist and science-based interpretation of Kant which went clean against the then predominant subjective-idealist or psychologistic account. This was all the more heterodox for being combined with a historically sensitive understanding of the physical sciences. His approach thus retained Kant’s stress on the *a priori* structures of knowledge, judgment and experience but indexed these to successive (and presumptively advancing) stages of scientific theory-change. Cohen also followed Kant in the large-scale systematic character of his thought. However, he struck out in several new directions, not least by re-drawing the Kantian boundaries between epistemology, ethics and aesthetics. Still there is a clearly marked development away from basically revisionist commentary on Kant to the largely independent trilogy of works – *Logik der reinen Erkenntnis*, *Ethik des reinen Willen* and *Ästhetik des reinen Gefühls* – that made up Cohen’s *System der Philosophie* (1902-1912; *System of Philosophy*: *Logic of Pure Knowledge*, *Ethics of Pure Will* and *Aesthetics of Pure Feeling*). Another large claim to significance in the context of cultural modernity was his vigorous engagement in debates surrounding the question of Jewish intellectual, religious and political identity in relation to German and more broadly European Enlightenment (and counter-Enlightenment) thought. Most important in this respect was his late work *Die Religion der Vernunft aus den Quellen des Judentums* (*The Religion of Reason: Out of the Sources of Judaism*) where Cohen argued for the intrinsic rational and ethical superiority of a monotheistic belief-system grounded in truths attainable by all, whatever their specific doctrinal adherence.

*Christopher Norris, Cardiff University*

**List of works**

**Cohen, H. (1977--)** Werke, ed*.* Helmut Holzhey *et al.*, Hildesheim, Zürich and New York: Georg Olms, 18 vols.

**------** (1902) *System der Philosophie, Erster Teil: Logik der reinen Erkenntnis*, Berlin: Bruno Cassirer.

**------** (1904) *System der Philosophie, Zweiter Teil: Ethik des reinen*, Berlin: Bruno Cassirer.

**------** (1912) *System der Philosophie, Dritter Teil: Ästhetik des reinen*, Berlin: Bruno Cassirer.

------ (1919) *Die Religion der Vernunft aus den Quellen des Judentums*, Leipzig: Fock; trans. S. Kaplanas *Religion of Reason: Out of the Sources of Judaism*, New York: Unger, 1972.

**References and further reading**

Poma, A. (1997) *The Critical Philosophy of Hermann Cohen*, trans. J. Denton, Albany: State University of New York Press.