
Hermann Lotze had, until recently, been an almost entirely forgotten nineteenth-century German philosopher, whose importance and influence were taken to be insignificant in comparison to that of Kant or Hegel. Milkov is committed to overturning this amnesia, both reminding us of the popularity of Lotze’s philosophy during the nineteenth century and arguing that he was a significant influence on early analytic philosophers and on the phenomenological tradition. This is only one of a series of recent publications in which Milkov pursues this project, part of a wider revisionist emphasis on the influence of Lotze in general and on the roots of analytic philosophy in the German tradition, as argued in Early analytic philosophy and the German philosophical tradition (Bloomsbury 2020) edited with Volker Peckhaus. The collection reviewed here reprints, in revised form, articles published elsewhere by Milkov on Lotze, his life and works, and his influence on other more famous philosophers from Gottlob Frege, Edmund Husserl, Franz Brentano, Carl Stumpf, and William James to Bertrand Russell.

The book is divided into four parts, Part I is titled ‘Lotze’s Philosophy,’ and consists of three chapters, the first a general outline of Lotze’s philosophy, the second covering his ‘philosophy of psychology,’ in particular his attitudes towards materialism, science, and the soul, while the third concerns itself with his ‘philosophical anthropology’ and offers a precis of the topics covered in Lotze’s Microcosmos, written for a general audience. Part II, ‘Lotze and the Descriptive Psychology,’ contains two chapters, one on Lotze and Franz Bretano and the other on Lotze and Carl Stumpf. Part III: ‘Lotze and Bertrand Russell,’ is self-explanatory, while Part IV: Lotze and the Philosophy of Logical Empiricism,’ consists of a single chapter titled, ‘Lotze, Heinrich Rickert, and Logical Empiricism.’

Although the title of the first chapter suggests that an overview of Lotze’s philosophy will be offered, because the volume is put together from previously published papers, what we get is not so much a straightforward exposition of Lotze’s views, as an account of his philosophy oriented towards the demonstration of his influence on others. A certain unevenness results from the fact that the papers were written at different periods. For instance, we are told in the Introduction §3 that, ‘the special concerns of the present book [...] preclude an investigation of Lotze’s influence on Frege’ (3). But later we are told that Frege adopted from Lotze the distinction between the content and assertoric element involved in judgment (29) and that both the idea of truth values and ‘the distinction between the sense and meaning of propositions’ has its
roots in Lotze’s “greater” logic (30). It is also suggested that Lotze’s ‘minimalist metaphysics’ was ‘related to the minimalist metaphysics of the early analytical philosophers Frege, G. E. Moore and Russell’ (42). Somewhat bizarrely, in exploring a connection between Lotze and Carnap, in the chapter on logical empiricism, Milkov cites the Introduction §3, to substantiate the claim that Frege was ‘considerably under Lotze’s influence,’ despite having said at the earlier juncture that the question of Lotze’s influence on Frege would not be gone into, since it deserved a monograph of its own (161).

That Lotze was an influence on Frege was claimed by Hans Sluga as early as the nineteen seventies, but his now contentious view that this implied that Frege was a neo–Kantian is not developed by Milkov, who mentions in footnotes Gottfried Gabriel’s less ambitious reading of Lotze’s influence on Frege. What is certain is that Lotze drew a distinction between psychology and logic, between the genesis of ideas and the validity of conceptual truths, that was also adopted and developed by Frege, but, apart from this similarity, the evidence for the influence of Lotze on Frege is rather slight. Indeed, as Milkov admits (54), even the distinction between logic and psychology is implicit in Kant, who was clearly read by both Lotze and Frege, as well as virtually every nineteenth–century German philosopher. Since both Frege and Lotze had read Kant, is the similarity in their views evidence of direct influence, or simply evidence of a common influence? Although it is recognised, in this one place, that the distinction between pure reason, or logic, and empirical psychology is implicit in Kant, elsewhere Milkov calls Lotze ‘the father of the criticism of psychologism in philosophy’ apparently forgetting this ancestry (111). Which raises the question, how is the influence of a work established? We are not told what is required to demonstrate that one philosopher influenced another. Sometimes it seems to be assumed that if works were read, or lectures attended, then there was influence, but surely this is insufficient for what is generally intended by ‘influence’. We have all sat through lectures and read books that elicit the ‘rubbish’ response. Should we say that Mill was an influence on Frege because Frege read him and firmly rejected his account of number? At other times a similarity in doctrine is pointed to, but without proof that this similarity was not simply ‘in the wind’ or the result of some common influence, similarity in doctrine is not sufficient to demonstrate influence. The fundamental questions, ‘What is influence?’; ‘How can it be demonstrated?’; and ‘Why does it matter?’ are not addressed.

Demonstrating the connection between Frege’s views and Lotze’s is not, as noted, at the centre of Milkov’s concern in these essays, so it would be inappropriate to concentrate on that issue. More central is a line of affiliation connecting Lotze and Russell, the subject of Part IV. Milkov argues that, in so far
as Russell represented himself as having initially been a Hegelian, this is something of a misattribution and, in fact, he was far more significantly influenced by Lotze. Indeed, he claims that it was Lotze who ‘gave Russell both the specific themes and problems of his philosophy as well as theoretical means to deal with them’ (101). Milkov admits that Russell ‘rejected Lotze’s overall philosophical “system”,’ but argues that ‘he adopted the central role that relations play in Lotze’s philosophy as well as the objective content of judgments (propositions) and of sense perceptions (sense–data)’ (101).

But does a close reading of Russell bear this out? There are two references to Lotze in the index of Russell’s Principles of Mathematics (= PM). In both places, Russell is discussing a view concerning the nature of relations to which he is fundamentally opposed. Both Frege and Russell saw the old Aristotelean logic as having been defective, because the only logical form recognised was that of subject and predicate. Both developed logics which included relations as fundamental, aRb, in Russell’s notation – Ψ (x,y) in Frege’s. Russell discusses two ways in which the Aristotelean logician attempts to reformulate relations as properties of things, one he calls ‘monadistic’ and he claims that this is ‘represented by Leibniz and (on the whole) by Lotze’ (PM 221). Russell thus explicitly rejects Lotze’s view of relations. His notes on McTaggart’s lectures on Lotze, which Milkov helpfully publishes (125–140) include the sentence, ‘Relations can’t be between things but must be quality of something’ (129) this is the Leibniz/ Lotze doctrine that he rejects in Principles. Opposition to the consequences of this kind of view is also the purport of the second longer discussion of Lotze, a refutation of his arguments against absolute space. Russell concludes this discussion with the claim that ‘the theory of relations proposed by Lotze is, in fact, a theory that there are no relations’ (PM 447–448). He goes on to observe that this consequence of monadistic theories has been recognised by Spinoza and Bradley, ‘who have asserted that there is only one thing, God or the Absolute’ (PM 448). Since, at the conclusion of Microcosmos, Lotze also appears to have committed himself to the existence of a unifying Absolute, it seems that Lotze’s influence on Russell was akin to Mill’s influence on Frege. He had read him and, at least ultimately, heartily disagreed with him.

It may be that Russell had misread Lotze, as Bradley is accused of having done (112). To get around the fact that Russell criticised Lotze’s account of relations, Milkov, indeed, suggests that this was the case (121–122). It is very easy for a person to forget or mis–remember the source of an idea. This may have been that case with Russell, but this is a complex issue and quite unclear. As evidence for Lotze’s commitment to relations, Milkov quotes him as asserting, ‘the proposition “things exist” has no intelligible meaning except as they stand in relations to each other’ (15, 112). The idea also occurs in Russell’s lecture
notes (128). Unfortunately, although this is cited by Milkov as occurring in the second edition of Bosanquet’s translation of Lotze’s *Logic*, it is impossible to locate it in the first edition, which is available to be searched online, and the only edition to which I have access. So, I have been unable to assess the extent to which this is evidence that Lotze anticipated the logic of relations apparently pioneered by Frege and Russell. But even if Lotze recognised relations, which he did when they were relations among concepts, this is insufficient to show that he was committed to relations in the sense ultimately accepted by Russell, that is, relations that can’t be ultimately reduced to intrinsic properties of things.

The case in regard to geometry seems to be rather similar to that involving relations. Russell had read Lotze and disagreed with him. Russell’s *Essay on the Foundations of Geometry* (= *Essay*) explores the consequences of Riemann’s non–Euclidean geometries, which result in what Russell calls, ‘the Metageometry,’ for our philosophical understanding of space. Milkov quotes Russell as having asserted that Lotze’s discussion of space and time was ‘excellent in many respects’ and points out that there is a long discussion of Lotze’s views in the *Essay* (112). In the *Essay*, the discussion of Lotze follows an exposition of Kant’s account of space, where Russell argues that ‘the Metageometry has destroyed the legitimacy of [Kant’s] argument from Geometry to space’ and where he claims that it undermines the existence of synthetic a priori knowledge (*Essay* §§ 52–59). His discussion of Kant concludes with the observation that Herbart’s ‘psychological theory of space, his construction of extension out of a series of points, his comparison of space with tone and colour–series … gave rise to many of Riemann’s epoch–making speculations.’ This then results in a discussion and critique of Riemann (*Essay* §§ 60–65), followed by Helmholz (*Essay* §§ 66–73) and then Erdmann (*Essay* §§ 73–84). At the conclusion of his critical exposition of Erdman’s views he says his task now is ‘defending Metageometry, on its mathematical side, from the attacks of Lotze and others, and in vindicating for it that measure of philosophical importance … which it really seems to possess’ (*Essay* §84). In introducing Lotze’s critique of Metageometry he says, ‘although Lotze’s discussion is excellent in many respects, I cannot persuade myself that he has hit on the only true sense in which non–Euclidean spaces are possible’ (*Essay* §85). Indeed, he goes on in his critical discussion of Lotze’s rejection of Metageometry, to accuse him of making ‘a mathematical mistake which causes much irrelevant reasoning’ (*Essay* §87). There follows a detailed discussion and critique of Lotze’s arguments for rejecting the idea that there are non–Euclidean geometries. Thus, it appears that Lotze’s influence on Russell was, in this area also, like Mill’s influence on Frege, Russell had read him and disagreed with him (*Essay* §§ 85–97).
Unaccountably, Milkov sums up his claims by saying that ‘in Russell’s books on theoretical philosophy published between 1897 and 1903 (in Essay, Leibniz and Principles) Lotze, not Bradley was the most frequently quoted 19th–century philosopher’ (125). Yet, if one consults the indexes of these books, one finds that in Principles, Bradley is mentioned at ten places, Lotze at two, while in the index of Leibniz, Bradley occurs three times to Lotze’s five, meaning that taken together, in these two books there are almost twice as many references to Bradley as to Lotze. It is true that in the Essay references to Lotze outnumber those to Bradley, but this is because, as we have seen, this work contains a section devoted to criticizing Lotze, while Russell only makes a few passing references to Bradley, some of them positive. For instance when he claims to accept the premiss that ‘all knowledge involves a recognition of diversity in relation, or, if we prefer it, of identity in difference,’ he says that he accepts this premiss from Logic, ‘as resulting from the analysis of judgment and inference,’ but he says that to prove it, ‘would require a treatise on Logic’ and he refers the reader to ‘the works of Bradley and Bosanquet’ (Essay §189). It may be that Lotze is lurking here, and Russell is referring to Bosanquet’s translation of Lotze’s Logic, but even if this were to be so (and since Bosanquet published his own Logic in 1888 there is no reason to think so) it would then appear that Russell is tending to lump Bradley and Lotze together as he would later do in Principles.

In his discussion, ‘Frege, Lotze, and the continental roots of Early Analytic Philosophy’ Gabriel calls Bosanquet a ‘neo–Hegelian’ saying that the neo–Hegelians ‘mainly agreed with Lotze on his ontological holism’ (Gabriel 2002, 48), which grounded their holistic monism, and he finds this holism also in Bradley. In an article published in 1876, in the third issue of Mind, T. M. Lindsay had offered an account of Lotze’s philosophy, which he had called, ‘Ideal–Realismus’ and had characterised as ‘a philosophy which stands midway between the philosophies of Hegel and Herbart’ (Lindsay 1876, 363–364). The comparison is also made by Milkov (53). Like Herbart, Lotze believed in scientific psychology, but like Hegel reality involved the dialectical unfolding of Spirit (39, 52). Lindsay’s comment suggests that there was, prior to Russell attending Cambridge, a well–established perception of Lotze as at least somewhat Hegelian. In My Philosophical Development (Allen and Unwin, 1959) Russell identifies the rejection of holism as at the heart of his turn away from the ‘neo–Hegelian’ philosophy and represents this turn as hinging on his ‘doctrine of external relations’ and rejection of the ‘doctrine of internal relations’. It is exactly this doctrine of ‘internal relations’ that Russell finds in Lotze and rejects. This suggests that Russell intended to include Lotze among the neo–Hegelians that he represents himself as rejecting after 1898. So, in so far as
there was an early period during which Russell identified himself as influenced by Kant and Hegel, Lotze, particularly as transmitted by McTaggart, should be included as a writer within the rejected neo–Hegelianism against which he later rebelled. If this is what is intended by ‘influence’ then indeed Milkov has been successful in showing that Lotze was a negative influence on Russell, in the sense that he was a proponent of a view of relations that Russell came to reject, but often Milkov seems to imply that Lotze was a positive influence, in the sense that Russell adopted views already found in Lotze, and this he has not successfully demonstrated.

I have concentrated on the discussion of Russell because his works are more familiar to me than those of Husserl, Brentano, Stumpf, and James, but in these cases also Milkov tends to suffer from confirmation bias and to be somewhat vague over what counts as influence. The eighth chapter continues the case for the influence of Lotze on Russell by first suggesting that a line of filiation can be traced connecting Lotze, James, and Russell and then concentrating on Russell’s shifting and muddled discussion of belief, propositions, facts, and propositional attitudes which, were it to be proved to be the responsibility of Lotze, would hardly be to the latter’s credit.

The case made for Lotze’s influence on the broadly phenomenological tradition seems to me to be much stronger than that made in relation to the analytic tradition. In the second chapter Milkov concentrates on an exposition of Lotze’s philosophy of psychology and, in particular, on his distinctive solution to the problem of the relationship between mind and body or spirit and matter. Lotze accepts that the role of science is to provide mechanistic accounts of the workings of nature, and he rejects pseudo–scientific postulates such as elan vital, but he also dismisses the idea that mechanistic science can offer a complete description of reality. Besides matter there is a realm of spirit or teleology, and this realm cannot be mechanically explained. This results in two methodologies, appropriate to the two complementary dimensions of reality (40). He develops a principle of teleomechanism, that distinguishes these two methodologies, description and explanation, appropriate to the how and the why of things, saying that ‘one can describe the world scientifically but interpret it only teleologically’ (41). At the metaphysical level, body and mind are not separate entities and Milkov quotes Lotze as saying that, ‘they are different but coordinated kinds of the concept of substance’ (41–42). He suggests that for Lotze, what was important was the methodological distinction and the metaphysical element was ‘minimalist,’ related to the minimalist metaphysics of Frege, Moore, and Russell. This is not, however, how I read the following passage from Microcosmos.
The true reality that is and ought to be, is not matter and still less Idea, but is the living personal Spirit of God and the world of personal spirits which He has created. They only are the place in which Good and good things exist; to them alone does there appear an external material world, by the forms and movements of which the thought of the cosmic whole makes itself intelligible through intuition to every finite mind.

LOTZE 1885, II.9.v.728

To my untutored mind, this smacks of Spinoza and pantheism, but I can see how, once unencumbered by God, the view could transform into Russellian neutral monism. Even more clearly the passage evokes the popular religious tradition according to which man is a microcosm of a living conscious world, though Milkov claims that ‘Lotze’s project was of a different type’ to that found in this old tradition (59).

Milkov suggests that because there is no interaction between mind and body, Lotze is committed to Leibnizian occasionalism (43–44). However, since Leibniz is usually interpreted as postulating two different substances that develop in harmony, and Lotze is quoted as saying that mind and body are ‘coordinated kinds of the concept of substance’ the position appears to be monistic and closer to Spinoza’s double aspect theory than to Leibniz’s occasionalism. Later in the same chapter Milkov emphasizes that for Lotze ‘the soul is not a substance’ (51) and some of his comments suggest that Lotze thought of the soul as a perspective on the one substance (53). I have only recently become familiar with Lotze’s works and am by no means an expert on his views, but what I have read suggests that, ultimately, he thinks of minds or souls as each involving a unique finite perspective on a whole of which they are part, the character of each being determined by the physical and cultural moment in which the individual exists.

The chapters on Lotze and the philosophies of Brentano and Stumpf demonstrate that there were close connections between these philosophers. Lotze, we are told supported Brentano’s appointment to a position in Vienna, who then sent his students Anton Marty and Stumpf to study with Lotze (78). Stumpf and Brentano then influenced Husserl. Nevertheless, I found the discussion rather frustrating, Milkov often argues by referring to the secondary literature, or his own previously published works and so one ends up with a rather vague grasp of the exact character of both the views of the philosophers under discussion and of the relationships among those views. The discussion often operates at a high level of generality and is rarely substantiated by quoted passages or detailed discussion of any of the problematic issues of translation.
Milkov adopts an uncritical attitude towards Lotze and tends to want to claim that he influenced almost every important philosopher, despite the fact that the doctrines ultimately adopted by the various different people that he is claimed to have influenced end up being quite divers and even incompatible.

While the arguments developed intended to show that one particular philosopher was the source of a particular view found in another are not always persuasive, the more general claim that Lotze was translated, read, and admired by both British and German philosophers during the second half of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century is incontestably demonstrated. What is also undeniable is, as Milkov elaborates, Lotze developed, in detail, a philosophy derived from Kantianism that attempted to synthesize contemporary materialist science with the existence of normative ‘idealities’ that go beyond materiality (19). He attempted to show, as Kant had done, that a pure empiricism could not provide complete knowledge of reality, while arguably offering, under the guise of teleology or value, a less abstract supplement than Kantian pure reason. He was thus a philosopher of his time, whose orientation and fundamental purpose were of his time. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Germaine de Stæel had introduced Kant to the French and English–speaking worlds as offering a philosophy that incorporated both the senses and the soul, our exterior nature and our intellectual nature, thus avoiding the scepticism and atheism that were taken by many to be the consequence of Locke’s empiricism, particularly as developed by Hume. Such a reconciliation of the empirical with the transcendent was extremely popular, and Lotze offered a detailed and far more readable version of the same comfortable doctrine. Mechanism and teleology were deemed to be compatible, as were religion and mathematics. But the very fact that Lotze’s overarching project was, like Hegel’s, a dialectical unification of descriptive science and teleological value suggests why he ceased to be influential during the first years of the twentieth century. The problem that exercised so many nineteenth–century philosophers and was central to Kant’s project, how one was to save religious belief, the soul, and free will from the corrosive power of empiricism, lapsed. In Germany Heidegger, as heir to Hegel, attempted to retain spirit as the unfolding of time, but the analytic tradition turned its back on religion, sided happily with Hume’s religious scepticism, and concluded that all one needs is science. Frege may have attended Lotze’s lectures on the philosophy of religion, but there is almost no hint of religion in his positive philosophy. Russell, even more obviously, turned his back on all the lingering theological resonances found in the writings of Hegel and the neo–Hegelians. Whatever similarities one may be able to discover between some of Lotze logical doctrines and those of Frege and Russell, the fundamental project and orientation of the later philosophers
is quite different to his and so an exploration of his philosophy does little to illuminate theirs.

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